

**March 6, 2007: XIV:9**

**LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (216 minutes) 1966**

Directed by David Lean

Based on the writings of T. E. Lawrence

Screenplay by Robert Bolt and Michael Wilson (originally uncredited because blacklisted)

Produced by Sam Spiegel

1989 reconstruction and restoration produced by Robert A. Harris

Original Music by Maurice Jarre

Cinematography by Freddie Young

Film Editing by Anne V. Coates

Costume Design by Phyllis Dalton

Conductor: Sir Adrian Boult

Photographer, second unit: Nicolas Roeg

Peter O'Toole...T.E. Lawrence

Alec Guinness...Prince Feisal

Anthony Quinn...Auda abu Tayi

Jack Hawkins...Gen. Lord Edmund Allenby

Omar Sharif...Sherif Ali ibn el Kharish

José Ferrer...Turkish Bey (as Jose Ferrer)

Anthony Quayle...Col. Harry Brighton

Claude Rains...Mr. Dryden

Arthur Kennedy...Jackson Bentley

Donald Wolfitt...Gen. Sir Archibald Murray

Robert Bolt...Officer with pipe gazing at Lawrence (uncredited)

David Lean...Motorcyclist by Suez Canal (uncredited)

Runtime: 216 min / UK:187 min (1970 re-release) / UK:210

min (original version) / UK:222 min (premiere version) / UK:228 min (director's cut) / USA:227 min (restored roadshow version)

Sound Mix: 70 mm 6-Track (70 mm prints) / Dolby SR (35

mm prints) (restored version) / Mono (35 mm prints) (original release)

Academy Awards: Best Art Direction-Set Decoration, Color (John Box, John Stoll, Dario Simoni), Best Cinematography, Color (Freddie Young), Best Director (David Lean), Best Film Editing (Anne V. Coates), Best Music, Score -Substantially Original (Maurice Jarre), Best Picture (Sam Spiegel), Best Sound (John Cox).

Nominations for Best Actor in a Leading Role (Peter O'Toole), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Omar Sharif), and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium (Robert Bolt, Michael Wilson. The nomination for Wilson was granted on 26 September 1995 by the Academy Board of Directors, after research at the WGA found that the then blacklisted writer shared the screenwriting credit with Bolt.)

**DAVID LEAN** 25 March 1903, Croyden, Surrey, England—16 April 1991 (cancer). *Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia*: “Distinguished British filmmaker of impeccable taste, not nearly as prolific as his contemporaries but a much better craftsman than most. He was noted for the care he lavished upon his films, particularly in evoking time and place and in extracting perfect performances from his casts. Lean entered the film industry in the late 1920s, at first working as a clapper boy for cameramen, later graduating to the cutting room (editing 1938's *Pygmalion* 1941's *49th Parallel* and 1942's *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing* among others), finally wielding the megaphone (with Noel Coward) on *In Which We Serve* (1942). The film that cemented his reputation—and clinched his first Oscar nomination—was *Brief Encounter* (1945), the lyrical, romantic story of a housewife (Celia Johnson) tempted to have an affair with a doctor (Trevor Howard). Lean's two Dickens adaptations, *Great Expectations* (1946) and *Oliver Twist* (1948), are very likely the definitive screen translations of those endearing works; the former netted Lean his second Academy Award nomination for Best Director. The ever-meticulous director chose his subsequent projects—three of which starred his second wife, actress Ann Todd—carefully and bestowed upon them his customary attention to period detail, mood, and characterization. *Summertime* (1955), which starred Katharine Hepburn as an American spinster in Venice, earned Lean another Oscar nomination. *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), his magnum opus up to that time, finally won Lean the Oscar, one of seven the picture received. A commercial as well as critical success, it launched the director on a series of big-budget epics, including *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), his spectacular biopic of the enigmatic WW1 hero T. E. Lawrence (played by Peter O'Toole), and *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), one of the screen's classic romances. He won another Oscar for the former and secured another nomination for the latter. He was also nominated for directing, adapting, and editing *A Passage to India* (1984), a sumptuous adaptation of E. M. Forster's novel.”

*The images in the following pages all depict Thomas Edward Lawrence.*

**PETER O'TOOLE** (2 August 1932, Connemara, County Galway, Ireland) *Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia*: “Slender, blond, blue-eyed Irish actor who brings passion and intensity to his screen characters, more than a few of whom have been wildeyed visionaries. A graduate of London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and an acclaimed Shakespearean actor, O'Toole debuted on film in *The Savage Innocents* (1959), but shot to stardom in the title role of *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), earning an Academy Award nomination to boot. It's possible he'll always be associated with the role of T. E. Lawrence (though, ironically, he was a secondary choice, replacing Albert Finney); his intensely credible portrayal of this desert dreamer is one of the most dynamic in movie history. He's had no trouble moving on, however, to other larger-than-life roles, and has in fact earned another six Oscar nominations for playing King Henry II in both *Becket* (1964, opposite Richard Burton) and *The Lion in Winter* (1968, opposite Katharine Hepburn), the shy schoolteacher in the musical *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1969), a wacked-out British lord who thinks he's Jesus Christ in *The Ruling Class* (1972), maniacal movie director Eli Cross (inspired, O'Toole said, by David Lean) in *The Stunt Man* (1980), and washed-up, Errol Flynn-ish movie swashbuckler Alan Swann in the sweetly comic *My Favorite Year* (1982)....An admitted alcoholic, O'Toole squandered his fame (and, some say, his talent) on many projects clearly beneath his abilities. Nonetheless, he remains a compulsively watchable actor whose presence brings color (and some measure of

respectability) to any film or TV project in which he appears. In 1985 he lent his voice to a series of animated features about Sherlock Holmes. Among his television ventures: the miniseries “Masada” (1981), a 1983 remake of *Svengali* with Jodie Foster, a 1984 remake of *Kim*, *Crossing to Freedom* (1990), and *The Dark Angel* (1992). In 1992 he published his first volume of memoirs, “Loitering With Intent,” which was greeted with rave reviews. OTHER FILMS INCLUDE: 1960: *Kidnapped*, *The Day They Robbed the Bank of England* 1965: *Lord Jim*, *What's New, Pussycat?* 1966: *How to Steal a Million*, *The Bible* 1967: *Night of the Generals*, *Casino Royale* (just a cameo) 1968: *Great Catherine* 1969: *Brotherly Love* 1971: *Murphy's War* 1972: *Man of La Mancha* 1973: *Under Milk Wood* 1975: *Rosebud* 1976: *Man Friday* 1978: *Power Play* 1979: *Zulu Dawn* 1980: *Caligula* 1984: *Supergirl* 1985: *Creator* 1986: *Club Paradise* 1987: *The Last Emperor* 1988: *High Spirits* 1990: *Wings of Fame* 1991: *King Ralph* 1993: *The Seventh Coin*.”. And, after Maltin's 1993 note, O'Toole did a bunch of made-for-tv films, among them “Gulliver's Travels” (1996) in which he played the Emperor of Lilliput, “Joan of Arc” 1999 in which he played Bishop Cauchon, “Hitler: the Rise of Evil” in which he played Paul von Hindenburg, and “Augustus” (2003) in which he played Augustus. He was also in a number of films, the most recent of which are *Bright Young Things* (2003), *Troy* (2004), *Lassie* (2005), *Romeo and Me* (2006) and *Venus* (2006, for which he received a best actor Oscar nomination). He has one film scheduled for release in 2007 (*Stardust*) and another in

pre-production (*Love and Virtue*). Noel Coward famously said to him, "If you'd been any prettier, it would have been Florence of Arabia." O'Toole somewhere said, "I can't stand light. I hate weather. My idea of heaven is moving from one smoke-filled room to another." And, another time, "The only exercise I take is walking behind the coffins of friends who took exercise."

**ALEC GUINNESS** (2 April 1914, Marleybone, London, England—5 August 2000, Midhurst, Sussex, England, liver cancer) last appeared on the screen in a 1996 made-for-tv drama, "Eskimo Day." His role as Herbert in *Great Expectations* (1946) was his first screen performance (if you don't count his 1934 extra part in an orchestra scene in *Evensong*). In recent years he came to general fame for his role as Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars*, a role and movie he loathed because of "those bloody awful, banal lines." He talked George Lucas into killing the character off in the film so he wouldn't have to do sequels. He was superb in two tv miniseries based on John LeCarré novels, "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy" (1980) and "Smiley's People" (1982). Some of his notable film roles are *Kafka* (1991), *Little Dorrit* (1988), *Murder by Death* (1976), *The Comedians* (1967), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Our Man in Havana* (1959), *The Horse's Mouth* (1958), *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *The Ladykillers* (1955), *The Captain's Paradise* (1953), *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949 in which he played 8 roles) and *Oliver Twist* (1948). He was nominated for a best supporting actor for *Little Dorrit* and *Star Wars*, won an honorary Oscar in 1980, nominated for best screenplay for *The Horse's Mouth*, won an Oscar for best actor in a leading role for *Bridge on the River Kwai*, and nominated for best actor in a leading role for *Lavender Hill Mob*.

**From World Film Directors, V. I. Edited by John Wakeman. The H.W. Wilson Co. NY 1987. Entry by Teresa Grimes.**

Lean was very strictly raised by his Quaker parents and forbidden the cinema, but in his early teens became a secret addict. "It had an immediate magic for me," he says, "that beam of light travelling through the smoke. I used to go regularly to the films at the Philharmonic Hall, Croydon, and travelled all the world in the cinema. I remember...movies like Griffith's *Way Down East* with the camera floating downriver on an ice floe: I think this early passion for outdoor films explains why I've been drawn to exterior pictures all over the world. But the man who really got me going was Rex Ingram. . . in everything he did the camerawork was impeccable." After school Lean worked as a trainee in the office of his

father, a chartered accountant. He had no liking or aptitude for the work, and in 1928, in spite of his parents' disapproval, he got himself a job as a tea boy at the Gaumont British studios in London. Over the next few years Lean worked his way up through the studio hierarchy to become an editor.

It was upon this aspect of film production that Lean built his reputation, and he says that he has remained an editor at heart: "I can't keep my hands off the scissors." By 1930 he was chief editor at Gaumont British News, often writing and speaking the



commentary as well as editing the newsreels that were then an integral part of most movie programs. In the mid-1930s he began working on feature films and his editing credits include Gabriel Pascal's *Pygmalion* and *Major Barbara* and Michael Powell's war films *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel (The Invaders)* and *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*. It was an early indication of David Lean's fastidiousness that during this period he turned down chances to direct shoddy "quota quickies," content to work as "the highest paid cutter in Britain" until in 1942 he was invited by Noel Coward to codirect a screenplay Coward had written and intended to star in. (*In Which We Serve*).

Out of *In Which We Serve* emerged the partnership of Lean, Coward, the producer Anthony Havelock-Allan, and the cameraman (later director) Ronald Neame to form Cineguild, a production company that was to be responsible for Lean's next seven films. This development was part of a pattern that helped to establish and sustain a thriving British film industry during the 1940s, with small companies like Cineguild, The Archers, Individual Pictures, and Ealing Studios

retaining their own creative freedom while benefiting from the financial backing of such larger organizations as Two Cities and the Rank Organization. Lean's first three films as solo director were all derived from Coward plays, beginning a career that has involved him almost exclusively in literary adaptations or collaborations with distinguished writers. . . . *Brief Encounter* (1945), Lean's last collaboration with Coward, was adapted from a playlet called *Still Life*. . . . Lean believes that "sex is the trigger of the emotions" but also that "to reveal the animal beneath the skin of us all" can be very dangerous—that libidinal urges are "the more precious for being kept bottled up." This puritanical and peculiarly British spirit of self-sacrifice and renunciation—a recurring theme in his work—is nowadays likely to be scorned as the product of socially-induced guilt feelings and repression. Nevertheless, *Brief Encounter*, not particularly successful on release, has come to be recognized as a minor classic of the cinema—even as "the first British screen masterpiece."

*Great Expectations* (1946), adapted by Lean and Ronald Neame from Dickens' novel, was a project on a much bigger scale. In spite of his devotion to literature Lean says "I'm not a word man. I'm a picture man." The truth of this is evident from the moment at the beginning of the film when the boy Pip, kneeling alone by his father's grave, rises and turns straight into the arms of the terrifying escaped convict Magwitch. Lean took full advantage of a magnificently visual story, an accomplished crew, and a cast that included John Mills (Pip), Valerie Hobson (Estella), Bernard Miles (Joe Gargery), Finlay Currie (Magwitch), Margarita Hunt (magnificent as the tragically perverse Mis Havisham), Francis L. Sullivan (Jaggers), and Alec Guinness (in his first film) as Herbert Pocket.

The novel's criticism of the British class system and the spiritually crippling effects of the industrial revolution are implicit in the film also, and Lean imbued his black-and-white exteriors (shot by Guy Green on the Kent marshes) with his own kind of pantheism. Alain Silver and James Ursini in their monograph on the director describe how "Lean rapidly establishes the figurative tug of natural versus artificial impulses in Pip," and show how faithfully and skillfully he "adapts Dickens's literary tropes" into visual terms. The film enjoyed great critical and popular success, earning Oscars for best black-and-white photography, art direction, and set direction. The second stage in Lean's career, when he ceased to be a purely British director and became an international one, began modestly but successfully with *Summertime* (1955), adapted from Arthur Laurents' play *Time of the Cuckoo*. Shot by Jack Hildyard on location in Venice, it stars Katherine Hepburn as an American spinster on vacation and

Rossano Brazzi as the Venetian antique dealer she learns to love and decides to leave when he confesses that he is already married. . . . *Summertime* was released by Lopert Films and United Artists, and *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, which followed in 1957, was produced by Sam Spiegel for Horizon Pictures-Columbia. It was the first of the mammoth international productions for which Lean is most widely known. With American financing allowing for extended production time, starry casts, huge crews, and the most sophisticated technical resources, his films have become increasingly spectacular and increasingly perfectionist.

*The Bridge on the River Kwai* was made on location in Ceylon, under extremely difficult conditions, and it took sixteen months to prepare and film. . . . Lean intended the film as "a painfully eloquent statement of the general folly and waste of war."

Lean worked with Sam Spiegel again on *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). Based on T.E. Lawrence's autobiographical *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, it was the first of Lean's films to be written by Robert Bolt, who became an indispensable collaborator. Peter O'Toole plays Lawrence, the young British officer who united the desert tribes against the Turks in World War I, and the cast also includes Omar Sharif, Alec Guinness, Anthony Quinn, Jack Hawkins, Claude Rains, and Arthur Kennedy. Starting from Lawrence's memorial service in London, the film chronicles his achievements in a sustained flashback. There are as many different interpretations of what Lawrence did as there are interpreters. Lean's Lawrence is another of the director's obsessive dreamer-heroes, a visionary in the desert, struggling in the teeth of a rigidly limiting social structure (the army) and his own human weakness to become a god and ending as something like a demon.

*Lawrence of Arabia* was filmed on location in Super Panavision 70mm in Jordan, Spain, Morocco, and England. It employed thousands of extras, involved the partial reconstruction of several cities, and cost fifteen million dollars. It took three years to prepare and make, and in its original form ran for almost four hours. Nevertheless, according to Silver and Ursini, "the end result can objectively be viewed as a textbook example of economic and direct filmmaking." Every scene serves a purpose in furthering the narrative or revealing character, and not even the most beautiful sunset or stirring battle scene is extended for its own sake. In fact, as Stephen Ross points out, the desert landscape becomes "a presence with as much dramatic and thematic force as any character in the film"—it is "necessarily alien, inhospitable, and challenging, offering a source of escape and self-discovery." Once critic called this "the first truly satisfying film epic" and it received seven Oscars—for best picture, best director,

best color photography, color art direction, editing, music, and sound. It remains Lean's most impressive formal achievement.

There was a more equivocal reception for his next picture, *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), which was nevertheless more successful financially.

In October, 1984, Lean (who had previously received a CBE in 1953) was knighted by Queen Elizabeth.

Lean's films have won over twenty-five Oscars and earned huge profits. He has remained highly selective about the projects he is prepared to undertake, and is one of the few directors in the world able to command almost unlimited financial backing. His kind of

compulsive perfectionism is unfashionable, however, as are his commitment to stories with "a beginning, a middle, and an end" and his liking for mammoth international productions. Young *cinéastes* and critics tend to dismiss him as "a masterly technician without any very marked personal approach." His admirers, on the other hand, contend that even his late films "are supremely personal works, made within the unfashionable conventions of the international 'blockbuster.'" Those who seek to identify his approach place him in the English romantic tradition, citing his admiration for individualistic visionaries, his pantheism, his poignant sense of what "might have been."

### **LAWRENCE *The Uncrowned King of Arabia*. Michael Asher. The Overlook Press. Woodstock NY 2001**

[epigraphs from Lawrence] 'The story I have to tell is one of the most splendid ever given to a man for telling.' 'Il faut souffrir pour être content.' ['It is necessary to suffer to be happy.'] —Lawrence was the 2<sup>nd</sup> of five sons of Sarah Lawrence and Thomas Chapman, born 1888 in North Wales where his parents had eloped. Sarah had been governess to Chapman's family in Dublin, then mistress and common-law wife when Chapman's wife Edith refused a divorce. They left Ireland on a ferry on an evening towards the end of 1887. When they stepped ashore in North Wales the next day, they were no longer Thomas Chapman, landowner, and Sarah Lawrence, governess, but 'Mr and Mrs Thomas Lawrence'—identities they would continue to assume successfully for the rest of their lives.

They could scarcely have chosen a more repressive moment in the entire history of British morals in which to commit themselves to a common-law marriage. Since the end of the relatively liberal eighteenth century, society had been growing ever more puritanical under the influence of the Evangelical Revival—a movement to which, ironically enough, Sarah belonged. The year 1885 marked the climax of the so-called 'Purity Campaign'—a crusade against the lax sexual morals which had harnessed powerful Victorian terrors of social chaos and the degeneration of the 'Imperial race.' Sex had become the great taboo, and society was so fanatically leery of anything smacking of bodies or nudity that polite people went so far as to lap the legs of grand pianos in cloth so that they should not be seen 'naked'. The moral code was rigid. Chastity was the ideal, the family was sacrosanct, and 'the fallen woman' who had been 'seduced' was deserving of utter contempt. The pervading *omertà* on all things sexual led to such incredible ignorance at all levels of society that even a learned Oxford physician could be heard to declare that 'nine out of ten women are indifferent to sex or actively dislike it; the tenth, who enjoys it, will

always be a harlot.' The dark complement to Victorian prudishness, however, was captured with superb imagination by Robert Louis Stevenson in his novel *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, published in 1886. At the height of the purity campaign, London was actually an international centre of prostitution, where there were more brothels than schools. Many of these bordellos were frequented by respectable 'gentlemen', who, by day, were pillars of the establishment. Despite the strict ban on pre-marital sex, many middle-and upper-class boys had their first sexual experience with a female servant living in the same house....

To Sarah the world was either black or white, either right or wrong—there was no room for discussion, no margin for debate. The only yardstick of morality was God's ten commandments, the only authority the Bible. It is hardly surprising that the fundamentalist doctrine of the Evangelical Movement should have appealed to her. Her own venial sin of adultery with Thomas was a burden she would carry with her to the grave, yet her mantra 'God hates the sin, but loves the sinner' reminded her that redemption was possible. She glimpsed a path to redemption through the children of her sinful union, and made it her duty to rear them as immaculate soldiers for Christ.... Both Bob and Ned (T.E.) Lawrence were to become Sunday School teachers at St Aldate's and officers in the St Aldate's section of the Boys' Brigade. It was Sarah's highest ambition that they too would become missionaries, and thus redeem the unholy circumstances of their birth. By the time they reached Oxford, Sarah had long ago parted Thomas from the bottle and, as Sir Basil Blackwell later commented, the Lawrences had a reputation as 'punctilious, church-going and water-drinking' folk even by the strictest standards of the day....

Lawrence said later that he regarded his father as a friend rather than a figure of authority, suggesting an

equality unusual in father-son relationships of the time. In fact, Thomas was too gentle and imaginative to administer corporal punishments to his sons, and left the task to the more resolute Sarah—an inversion of the generally accepted Victorian ethos. Reared strictly by her puritan foster-parents,[she was the illegitimate daughter of a shipwright, deserted by her father and orphaned at nine by her alcoholic mother, brought up by an Episcopal minister and wife in the highlands of Scotland] she had imbibed the Biblical adage, ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child; but he who loves him chastens him betimes’, and would administer severe thrashings to the boys’ bare buttocks for disobedience, wilfulness or dishonesty, convinced that in doing so she was perpetuating God’s will. According to the Evangelical canon, babies were born not innocent, but tainted with the sins of their forefathers; the children of adulterous parents were likely to develop a premature sensuality themselves. As the boys grew up, Sarah exercised a hawk-like vigilance for the appearance of such sensual traits, ready to nip them in the bud with a sound thrashing. She stood guard over her brood with the possessive greed of one who has known abandonment,



distrusting women as dishonest schemers: ‘she never wanted any of the sons to marry,’ Mrs Ballard said....

Though he [T.E./Ned] was not her favourite son, she had great expectations of him, and for her he had to be perfect: brave, noble, strong, hard-working, honest, respectful, obedient and loving—a white knight, *sans peur et sans reproche* [without fear and without reproach]. Arnie revealed that it was Ned who received the lion’s share of Sarah’s beatings, and felt that his life had been permanently injured by her.

His need to protect his spiritual independence would emerge throughout his life in an obsession with images of siege warfare, of attack and defense: ‘I think I’m afraid of letting her get, ever so little, inside the circle of my integrity,’ he wrote of his mother, ‘and she is always hammering and sapping to come in...I always felt she was laying siege to me and would conquer if I left a chink unguarded.’ Even as a boy, he would tell his brothers an endless tale about the defense of a tower by warlike dolls against hordes of barbarous enemies, and the motif appears again in the study of crusader castles in Britain, France and Syria to which he devoted much of his youth, and which led to the thesis he presented for his degree....It was upon the military knowledge acquired from this study of castles that he would later found his theory of guerilla war. So it was that the pattern forged in the dark recesses of his childhood struggle would one day spill out into the light as the strategy he would wield to brilliant success in the Arab Revolt.

Nietzsche—whom Lawrence much admired—wrote that every profound spirit requires a mask: the mask Lawrence wore was one of paradox. His aloofness concealed a craving for the attention of others, for fame and distinction, which he despised and could not allow himself to show. Aloofness was the barrier he created against the outside world, a means of preventing anyone from coming too close. He was able to relax his guard only with those who were younger or socially inferior, and though, in later life, he formed relationships with the great and famous, he confessed to John Bruce—a poorly educated man from a working-class background—that most of these high and mighty folk ‘could not be trusted’. It was an aspect of his masochistic nature that he felt himself undeserving of love, and it was terror of failure which prevented him from opening himself. He found another way to attract people, using his aloofness as a tool for drawing attention by offering tantalizing glimpses and wrapping himself in an intriguing cloak of mystery. In short, as Sir Harold Nicholson coldly, but correctly, declared, ‘he discovered early that mystery was news’. At school and college he was regarded by his peers as a pronounced eccentric, and would intrigue others by such idiosyncrasies as riding his bicycle uphill and walking down, by sitting through prescribed dinners in hall without eating, by adopting odd diets, by going

out at night and sleeping during the day, by refusing to play organized games, or by fasting on Christmas Day when everyone else was feasting. This exaggerated form of attention-seeking was the shadow-side of Lawrence's aloofness, and the social aspect of his masochism.... Basil Liddell Hart, one of his most ardent admirers, summed up the quality most succinctly when he likened Lawrence to 'a woman who wears the veil while exposing the bosom'. Though Liddell Hart put Lawrence's exhibitionism down to vanity, in fact it was 'reverse exhibitionism': his wish was less to display his beauty and cleverness to the world than to demonstrate his ugliness, suffering and humiliation. Far from being 'in love with himself', Lawrence would write that he despised the 'self' he could hear and see.

Lawrence spent ten years at Boys' High School, and while a student there dreamed of freeing the Arabs from the shackles of the Ottoman Turks: 'I fancied to sum up in my own life,' he wrote, 'that new Asia which inexorable time was slowly bringing upon us. The Arabs made a chivalrous appeal to my young instinct and while still at the High School in Oxford, already I thought to make them into a nation'. This might seem an extraordinary premonition for a schoolboy who had never set foot in the East, yet Lawrence was acquainted with the geography, history and ethnology of the Arab lands long before he arrived there. Daily study of the Bible had made the deserts and mountains of Midian, Moab, Edom, Judah and other places almost as familiar to him as the streets of Oxford, and a remarkable little volume entitled *Helps to the Study of the Bible* provided him with up-to-date details.... As a youth he chose as school prizes two books on the history of Egypt, and later obtained Henry Layard's works on the excavation of ancient Nineveh. These were no stilted academic reports, but thrilling adventures which epitomized the Victorian view of the East as a place of mystery and exoticism, where fabulous cities lay buried under desert sands prowled by wandering Bedu tribes.

[Lawrence's] attitude to fact would be well demonstrated years later, when he advised Robert Graves that the best way of hiding the truth was by making mystifying, contradictory or misleading statements. Working with the Arabs during the war, he would admit that he did not tell the whole truth either to them or to his British masters, but designed a version of reality which suited himself. He would write that he himself often could not tell where his 'leg-pulling' began or ended, confess to having lied even in his official dispatches and reports, and would add: 'I must have had some tendency, some aptitude, for deceit, or I would not have deceived men so well.'

George Bernard Shaw would later conclude that Lawrence was 'one of the greatest descriptive writers in English literature'.

It is another of the great paradoxes of Lawrence's life that as a thinking man *par excellence* he was able to see that faith was everything, but was too rational to believe in anything himself. His condemnation of himself as 'insanely rational' was the perfect expression of this paradox. He would come to envy the Arabs, who humbled him by their simple faith. They were, he saw, a people who still inhabited the spiritual certainties of the Middle Ages: 'a people of primary colours', as he put it, 'or rather of black and white, who saw the world always in contour'.

'Lawrence was a friend of the Jews,' [a Jewish man] told me. 'He believed in Israel as a National



McBey's portrait

LAWRENCE ON ARRIVAL AT DAMASCUS

Homeland for us. We will never forget him for that!' This was essentially true, I thought [Michael Asher, Lawrence's biographer]. Like many Britons of his day, Lawrence had been excited by the idea of restoring the Jews to their ancestral homeland after 2,000 years: the British had seen themselves as secret guardians of time,

capable of using their vast wealth and power to replay history.

Lawrence wanted freedom for the Arabs, but for the Egyptians ‘freedom’ meant liberation not from Turkey, but from Britain, which had annexed their country in 1882.

Two of Lawrence’s younger brothers were killed in the war and Lawrence wrote ‘they were both younger than I am and it doesn’t seem right, somehow, that I should go on living peacefully in Cairo.’

For the British establishment, the leader of the Arab Revolt must appear heroic, and Lawrence resolved to ‘make the best of him’, even if this meant portraying his character falsely in his dispatches. He was no novice in manipulating the facts and the media to get his way, and he was as passionate about the Arab Revolt as Feisal was: ‘I had been a mover in its beginning,’ he wrote, ‘my hopes lay in it’. This was not pure altruism. Lawrence had been romantically attached to the Arabs since his experiences at Carchemish....The problem of the Arab Revolt was lack of leadership, he concluded, and he, Lawrence, would provide that leadership through his proxy, the malleable Feisal.

The capture of Aqaba, 6 July 1917, was photographed by Lawrence himself. The culmination of a brilliant two-month turning movement through some of the harshest desert in Arabia, Aqaba became the model for all the deep penetration commando raids of the twentieth century.

The picture of Lawrence as a bloodthirsty sadist whose inherent cruelty was finally brought into play by the torture he suffered at Dara‘a was much encouraged by David Lean’s film *Lawrence of Arabia*, in which Lawrence is seen dripping with blood after the battle at Tafas. How much truth is there in such an image? A close reading of *Seven Pillars* reveals an obsession with cruelty which some have taken to indicate that Lawrence had a sadistic nature....While a masochistic tendency is clearly observable throughout his life, a sadistic stratum is not. Lawrence was by nature gentle, highly sensitive and compassionate.

Fred Peake, who arrived there soon after Lawrence, and who saw the atrocities for himself, wrote to Arnie Lawrence years later that his brother had actually tried to halt the killing of the wounded Turks. The Arabs had gone berserk, Peake said, and when he turned up with his Camel Corps detachment, Lawrence had asked him to restore order. Peake had dismounted 100 troopers and marched them into Tafas with fixed bayonets. The Arabs had given way, stopped killing the wounded, and had ridden after the retreating column, finishing off a few strays but withdrawing quickly when they saw that the Turks meant to fight.

The Major [from the Medical Corps, seeing the terrible aftereffects of the massacre and wretched hospital conditions] muttered, ‘Bloody brute,’ smacked Lawrence across the face, and stalked off. All the fear, loathing and hypocrisy that Lawrence had borne for two years seemed to be expressed in those words ‘Bloody brute’—‘in my heart I felt he was right,’ he wrote, ‘and that everyone who pushed through to success a rebellion of the weak against their masters must come out of it so stained in estimation that afterward nothing in the world could make him feel clean.’

Lawrence arrived back in England a full colonel with a DSO, a CB, and a recommendation from Allenby himself that he be granted a knighthood. Only a few days after his arrival he was invited to Buckingham



Palace for a private investiture by King George V, but to the consternation of everyone present politely refused both his knighthood and his medals to the King personally. He told His Majesty that the British government were about to let the Arabs down over the Sykes-Picot treaty: that he had pledged his word to Feisal that he would support him come what may, and that he might be obliged to fight Britain’s French allies for the Hashemite cause in Syria. Curiously, though, the man who refused to become a British knight also told the King that he was an ‘Emir’ (Prince) among the Arabs—a title which he is nowhere recorded as having been granted officially. And while he refused his British

medals, he accepted the Croix de Guerre from the French: the very nation whom he told George V he regarded as being his enemies. These inconsistencies suggest that there was, as usual, a darker level to Lawrence's actions....Even his admirer Liddell Hart was shrewd enough to observe that for Lawrence 'self-deprecation, like his rejection of distinction, was a kind of vanity—his wisdom led him to see the absurdity of acclamation, then found himself liking it, then despised himself for liking it'. The rejection of honours by the war's most famous hero, the man whom, by 1919, the press were already calling 'the most interesting Briton alive', of course, immediately devalued such distinctions. Not surprisingly, many who had fought four hard years, some of them in conditions far more appalling than those Lawrence had seen, who had survived terrible hardships, perhaps performed great feats of personal bravery, and justifiably felt themselves deserving of recognition, were incensed by his apparent mockery.

Lawrence's commitment to the Hashemites was, however, also very real. He was determined to vindicate the promises he had made to Feisal during the war, and to rescue his own sense of honour. Within days of arriving back he was bombarding the War Office and Foreign Office officials with his views, and on 29 October—the day on which he met the King—he also appeared in front of the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet. The meeting opened with a eulogy by Lord Curzon, acting Foreign Secretary, on Lawrence's achievements, upon which Lawrence ungraciously blurted out: 'Let's get to business. You people don't understand the hole you've put us all into!'—causing the volatile Curzon to burst into tears. Lawrence's views were uncompromising, but they did not encompass the single Arab state Hussain had demanded from McMahon in 1916. Mesopotamia, he said, should be divided into two, with Sharif Zahd in Baghdad, presiding over the northern part, and Sharif 'Abdallah, in Basra, supervising the southern. Feisal, in Damascus, should rule the whole of Syria, with the exception of the Lebanon, which should go to the French, and the Alexandretta district, which should be jointly run by the Allies. In Palestine, the Arabs would accept Jewish immigration as outlined in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, but would resist any attempt to establish a Jewish state there. A single British authority, based in Egypt, should watch over the fledgling Arab states, which would effectively cut out Anglo-Indian interference. Lawrence already knew that British hands were tied by Sykes-Picot: Mosul, in Mesopotamia, had been allocated to the French, while Palestine had been assigned to international administration. If Britain opposed French aspirations both in Palestine and Mesopotamia, which

she coveted for her own sphere of influence, she would find it most difficult to oppose French claims in Syria too.

The armistice was signed on 11 November 1918 and the Peace Conference began at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris in January the following year.

The Arabs saw, finally, that they had been abused and cheated by Britain and France, and from that moment lost faith in the European powers. The upshot was inevitable: using the excuse of attacks on French personnel and property, French forces moved into Syria in July 1920, swatted aside a force of 2,000 regulars and irregulars which prepared to defend Damascus, and drove Feisal into exile. The Nationalists were suppressed as fiercely as they had been under the Turks; the press was muzzled; French was substituted for Arabic in law courts and schools. The situation which both Lawrence and Feisal had most dreaded during the hard years of fighting had ultimately come to pass.

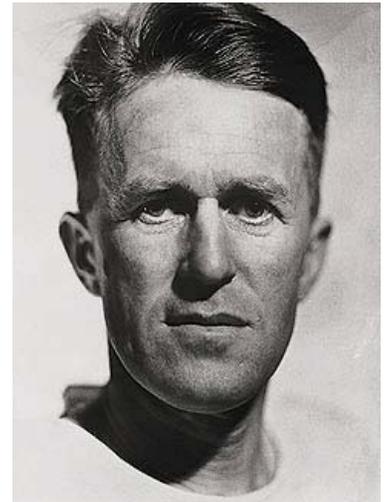
Lawrence never fulfilled his threats to fight against the French. By 1919 other developments were taking place in his life. First, he had long wished to turn his experiences into a book, and had begun to draft out *Seven Pillars* during the Peace Conference....Lawrence's documents were extraordinarily well written, but once they had been strung together, he realized, they did not make a book—at least not the work of art he had craved to write. The book had no personality, no dramatic structure of its own, and—more important—no great emotional climax of a personal nature: a story must have a clearly identifiable hero who was seen to overcome great obstacles and to evolve spiritually in response to his experience. This was to be his *magnum opus*, his definitive statement of himself to the world. He had performed heroic deeds, certainly: he had saved the life of Gasim, had made a reckless ride of 560 miles through enemy-held territory alone, had devised a brilliant guerilla strategy, had fought scores of actions against the Turks. These incidents were admirable, but they were not sufficient to lend the book the dramatic edge Lawrence required. He solved the problem by inventing a series of personal incidents which would give fire to the story—none of these can have been taken from his dispatches or diaries, because none of them is mentioned therein. He had not been sent to Arabia on an intelligence-gathering mission by the Arab Bureau, he wrote, but had gone there of his own initiative because his inspiration told him that the Revolt lacked leadership—a leadership which he alone could provide. He had adopted Arab ways as if born to them, as if he were fulfilling some messianic prophecy. On his first journey in the Hejaz, he had witnessed a charade by two Arab Sharifs which defined the cruelty and inter-tribal hatred inherent there: the petty hatreds which could only

be overridden by his own advocacy of a romantic and abstract idea. He had been obliged on his first major operation to shoot a man in cold blood; he had performed camel-journeys impossible for normal human beings, and, like Jesus Christ, he had been betrayed, horribly tortured and humiliated, but had risen again to bring his struggles to full fruition, now so brutalized that he had ordered the massacre of helpless prisoners. The addition of these nuances and others, a careful 'elaboration' on the mundane details, pushed what might have been no more than a well-written memoir into the realms of Malory and Homer, full of larger-than-life incidents, and larger-than-life characters: the noble Prince Feisal, the brave veteran warrior Auda, the despicable traitor 'Abd al-Qadir, the heroic knights Sharif 'Ali, Sharif Shakir, Za'al Abu Tayyyi and Talal al-Haraydhin, the indolent Sharif Abdallah, the 'rat' Nasib al-Bakri, the 'clowns' 'Farraj and Da'ud', the paternal Allenby, the gallant but rigidly hidebound British regulars Young, Joyce, Dawnay, Newcombe, Garland (all of whom are sniped at surreptitiously under the cloak of high praise), and above all the elvish Bedu against the goblin Turks, the Lawrence, the 'Prince of Mecca', the Merlin-King Arthur figure rolled into one, with his 'Round Table Knights'—ninety hardened Bedu warriors sworn to protect him unto death. Under Lawrence's fluent pen, *Seven Pillars* grew from a series of dispatches into an epic of the calibre of *Lord of the Rings*: in 1928 he wrote Jim Ede: '[in my book] I was trying very hard to do a thing for which I am totally unfitted by nature:—to produce a work of creative imagination...'

The text also had an ideological purpose, however. Almost simultaneously, Lawrence was fighting a campaign in the press in support of the Hashemites, and the secondary objective of *Seven Pillars* was to provide a glowing encomium on Feisal and his Arabs by painting the story of their heroic struggle in the Pre-Raphaelite hues of Burne-Jones. Many Arabs resented this view. As historian George Antonius wrote, it was not that Lawrence lacked perception or intelligence, but simply that, like everyone else, his intellect was subordinate to a set of schemata which were defined by his culture. He could not help seeing the Arabs through the romantic images he had learned as a youth: the Bedu, the Ashraf, the self-sufficient peasants of the Euphrates—these were 'noble' Arabs. The townsmen, the 'craven' villagers of the town, were not. The paradox was, of course, that it was within the ranks of precisely these townsmen and villagers that the spirit of Arab Nationalism burned most fiercely. Paradoxically, and unintentionally, Lawrence's pro-Bedu, pro-Ashraf stance amounted to an anti-Arab policy in many people's eyes. Lawrence's official

biographer Jeremy Wilson writes: '*Seven Pillars* often tells less than the whole truth, concealing politically damaging matters...Lawrence also plays down the enormous contributions to the Revolt made by non-Arab personnel...This emphasis cannot be excused by the claim that [he] was writing about only his experience of the war.'

Winston Churchill wrote that *Seven Pillars* ranked with the greatest books ever written in the English language and called it 'an epic, a prodigy, a tale of torment.' The book also received high praise from distinguished figures such as George Bernard Shaw, Siegfried Sassoon, Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells and many others. Lawrence wrote Vyvyan Richards in 1923 that he was aware that it was 'a good book' but added that it 'was not as good as it should have been'—that is, it was not as good, he felt, as *Moby Dick* or *War and Peace*. It was an aspect of Lawrence's competitive nature that he should aspire to equal the works of Tolstoy, Melville, and others, and it was also typical that he



should feel he had fallen short. ...If he had not been 'Lawrence of Arabia', *Seven Pillars* would have remained a remarkable book, but it certainly would not have had the same impact on the world....He himself suspected this: when he tried to submit articles to various newspapers and magazines later under an assumed name, they were rejected. Lawrence was a famous man who had one magnificent story to tell, who told it magnificently. He found himself a niche among the great artists and writers of the age, but was never quite certain he belonged there.

Other than stars of the screen, Lawrence was perhaps the first international megastar of the century, and 'Lawrence of Arabia' was created by its first major publicity campaign....

At almost the moment when 'Colonel Lawrence' was being born, however, Lawrence discovered that he was not 'T.E. Lawrence' at all. In April 1919 his father died of influenza, and he flew back from the Peace Conference for the funeral to discover his true identity. Thomas had inherited the Chapman baronetcy from his uncle in 1914, although, of course, he had never used the title. Lawrence now discovered that he was the son of Sir Thomas Chapman, who was the heir to vast estates

in Ireland. His reaction to this revelation is difficult to gauge. From an early age, he had sensed that there was something strange about his parents' relationship. It cannot have escaped his notice, for instance, that while other children had cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles, he seemed to have no relatives at all. He claimed to have known that he was illegitimate before he was ten, but according to notes taken down by Charles Bell of the Ashmolean from David Hogarth, he knew only a garbled version of the story. He believed that Thomas was not his real father, but had married his mother—a servant in another man's house—after she had acquired some or all of her sons. Lawrence maintained that he had not 'given a straw' about his illegitimacy: it had not affected his childhood, and it certainly had not affected his success.

The Allied victory over the Turks, whose prospects had appeared so rosy in October 1918, indeed, had very quickly dissolved into chaos. Anti-British uprisings under Zhaghul Pasha and his Wafd party in Egypt had been suppressed with great violence in 1919, when British troops had opened fire on rioting crowds, RAF had bombed and strafed civilians, ring-leaders had been arrested and tortured. In Kurdistan, a nationalist movement had been nipped in the bud by a British column. In Mesopotamia, there was a savage rebellion against the British Mandate, only stamped out by 40,000 troops at a cost of £40 million—three times the amount spent during the Arab Revolt. There were as many as 10,000 casualties, including 400 British soldiers. In Palestine there was growing tension between Arabs and Jews, and in Syria Feisal's displaced tribesmen were eyeing their French conquerors malevolently from the wings. In short, as Winston Churchill put it: 'the whole of the Middle East presented a most melancholy and alarming picture'.

In February 1921, Churchill took over as Colonial Secretary and decided that the situation must be redressed. He gathered around him a team of experts, including Lawrence, who agreed, less reluctantly than many had expected, to become his adviser on Arab Affairs....The decision, which had been made previously in consultation with Feisal in London, was to revoke the British Mandate in Iraq and hand the administration over to an Arab government, with the recommendation that Feisal should be king subject to a general plebiscite. Britain would then enter an alliance with Feisal ...In April Lawrence and Churchill travelled to Jerusalem to confer with Sharif 'Abdallah, who the previous year had arrived at Ma'an with a force of tribesmen ready to attack the French in Syria. 'Abdallah proposed that he should govern a single state consisting of Trans-Jordan and Palestine, but this plan was rejected due to Britain's promises to the Jews. Instead, 'Abdallah was confirmed

as provisional governor of Trans-Jordan, and Lawrence remained in the country as British representative until December, when he returned to Britain, satisfied that he had done his best to fulfill his wartime pledges to the Hashemites: '[Churchill] made straight all the tangle,' Lawrence wrote, 'finding solutions fulfilling (I think) our promises in letter and spirit (where humanly possible) without sacrificing any interest of our Empire or any interest of the people concerned. So we were quit of our war-time Eastern adventure, with clean hands, but three years too late to earn the gratitude which peoples, if not states, can pay.'

It was, said Arab historian George Antonius, a statement 'so palpably untenable as to cast serious doubts on Lawrence's understanding of the issues involved'. In fact, the Cairo Conference heralded a period of unrest in the Middle East which had scarcely been surpassed even under Ottoman rule.. Iraq failed to enjoy a single years of peace until the end of the Second World War, and remains in dire straits today. The same can obviously be said for Palestine. In Syria, the French met with severe opposition until they finally accepted an Arab administration in 1936. Only in Trans-Jordan, a relatively poor country, mostly desert, was some semblance of balance maintained by the Arab Legion under the gifted administrator John Bagot Glubb. King Hussain, the fox who had conspired from his youth to create an independent Hadjis, was driven from his own country in 1924 by 'Abdal Azziz ibn Sa'ud, the desert puritan who was the real victor of the Arab Revolt. The 'war-time Eastern adventure' is still with us, and we are not quit of it with clean hands yet.

Lawrence was never to return to Arabia, however. He had done what he could for the Arabs, had, rightly or wrongly, emerged as the greatest hero of history's most devastating war, and was obliged to carry the fantastic 'Lawrence of Arabia' with him for the rest of his life. He might have named his job—it was even rumoured (by Lawrence himself) that Churchill had offered him the post of High Commissioner in Egypt, in the footsteps of Kitchener, McMahon and Allenby. But Lawrence had no taste for high office, The reward he chose for his wartime service was the most curious one imaginable: he chose to join the armed services as a private soldier, thus bringing to full circle the ambition he had nurtured when, at the age of seventeen, he had run away from home.

On 30 August 1922, a small, ragged-looking man named John Hume Ross hovered shakily outside the RAF recruiting office in Henrietta Street, central London...[Ross' references were obviously forged and the Sergeant Major showed him out. He came back with an order and was then declared medically unfit by two doctors] The two RAF doctors found that Ross not only

bore signs of voluntarily inflicted beating, and was also severely malnourished. The doctors rejected him as unfit. [They contacted the Air Ministry.] When he had finished, he put the phone down and said: 'Watch your step. This man is Lawrence of Arabia. Get him in, or you'll get your bowler hat.' Johns returned to the doctors with this sensational news, but they adamantly refused to sign. Johns was obliged to bring in a civilian doctor to get Lawrence of Arabia enlisted as a private in the RAF.

Anonymity was not really his objective: his purpose in joining up was to abase himself: to suffer and be seen to suffer....[His pseudonym was revealed and he was obliged to leave the RAF in January 1923. But he pulled strings and refused a commission and enlisted again as a private in the Royal Tank Corps. Under another pseudonym—T.E. Shaw.]

He had been the perfect man in the right place at the right time, had won the war in the desert, had restored a kind of freedom to the Arabs after 500 years, had written a wonderful book about that experience which nobody would ever forget, and had become the most famous man of his era. He was a phenomenon, but unlike the artists, writers and poets he envied so much, his was a one-time accomplishment which could never

be repeated or improved: 'You have a lifetime of achievement,' he wrote to Sir Edward Elgar, sadly, in 1932, 'but I was a flash in the pan.'

Lawrence left the RAF on 25 February 1935.

On 11 May 1935, Lawrence was thrown over the handlebars of his motorcycle and pitched head first on to the road. He suffered severe brain damage and never recovered consciousness.

He wrote a friend some years before his death: 'I am human, There ain't no such supercreatures as you fain would see. Or if there are I haven't met one [yet].'

In St Martin's Church at Wareham—the medieval hall which

Lawrence had always dreamed of acquiring, one of the oldest Anglo-Saxon churches in Dorset a crusader's effigy of Lawrence in Arab dress was carved by his friend Eric Kennington.



### **Books and writers**

*The Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* was first published in a limited edition, with illustrations by Eric Kennington. A shortened, popular version, *Revolt in the Desert*, appeared in 1927. The work has been praised as a literary masterpiece and condemned as an example of monstrous self-aggrandizement. Lawrence's other works include autobiographical account of his time in the Royal Air Force, titled *The Mint* (1936), which have been compared to the work of Ernest Hemingway. *The Letters of T.E. Lawrence* appeared in 1938 and was edited by David Garnett. There are dozens of books about Lawrence—hagiographic, debunking and everything inbetween. One of the most interesting is a book in which he figures only marginally but which puts not only everything he did in rational historical perspective but also our current political mess in the Middle East: David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (1989)

### **COMING UP IN THE SPRING 2007 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS (REDUX) XIV:**

March 27 Jean-Luc Godard, *Contempt/Le Mépris* 1963

April 3 Stanley Kubrick, *Dr. Strangelove* 1964

April 10 Sergio Leone, *The Good the Bad and the Ugly/Il Buono, il brutto, il cattivo* 1966

April 17 Robert Altman, *Nashville* 1975

April 24 Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, *Singin' in the Rain* 1952

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