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T. E. Lawrence: The Creation of a Hero

BA Thesis in History
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Introduction

Thomas Edward Lawrence is a name that resonates throughout history. He was a British archaeologist, academic, military strategist and author who during the First World War was a leader of guerilla forces in Arabia; he became a decisive figure as part of the British military presence through his role in the victory over the Ottoman Empire. Lawrence has since been made the focal point of hero worship and a mythical attitude.¹ There is an undeniable point of interest in the way that his heroic image is portrayed in relation to his contemporaries and culture. T. E. Lawrence has been subject to several variations of renditions or portrayals. He has been described as one of the British Empires’ greatest war heroes. Also, he has been characterised as a skilled novelist with a fantastic sense of self-promotion. He has been accused of vastly embellishing the renditions of events and situations in what is arguably, a rather unlikely tale of success in the face of seemingly insurmountable, though often self-inflicted, hardships.

This thesis investigates in what manner T. E. Lawrence has been portrayed by several different authors. The focus will be on several varying renditions that constitute the main body of the thesis, with each containing different portrayals of T. E. Lawrence. The first is a book by Lowell Thomas entitled With Lawrence in Arabia, which was written on the basis of material used on a tour of lectures and shows following the First World War. The analysis and writing style are in the form of hero worship, with the additional American talent for capturing drama and highly staged and beautified rendition of events. The second work is T. E. Lawrence’s own Seven Pillars of Wisdom, which gives an insight into Lawrence’s own thoughts and opinions about his role in Arabia during the Great War. Likewise, his own portrayal shows his opinions about other persons of importance as well as events, providing a peek into the makeup of his character. An attempt will also be made to characterise his own way of presenting events. His previous abridged work Revolt in the Desert will be

considered as well as the collection of his own letters and correspondence in *Lawrence of Arabia: The Selected Letters*, edited by Malcolm Brown.

The third work is the film “Lawrence of Arabia” (1962) by David Lean. In the analysis, a view will be presented on how T. E. Lawrence was portrayed through the medium of the motion picture. The style of storytelling is explored, and the focus will be on determining whether the focus of it lies within the framework of Aristotle’s thoughts on rhetoric in order to determine the image of Lawrence proposed by the director. It should be pointed out that there is a general consensus that the film has a rather relaxed attitude towards historical details of events. But it is equally interesting to observe with what brush the image of the hero is painted in films as well as in the existing literature. Finally, the thesis analyses two biographical works: one by Michael Korda, *Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia*, and second by Scott Anderson, *Lawrence In Arabia: War Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Both offer scholarly treatments of the character and person of T. E. Lawrence.

Additional works on Lawrence will also be used here as part of the engagement with the rhetorical proofs of persuasion as Aristotle defines them in *The ‘Art’ of Rhetoric*. This means that the language applied in the different, main works under scrutiny will be backed up by other works relating to the same event, preferably by the same author. This is done to ensure and test whether a certain continuity is apparent in the works relating to each other by subject and author. The works that originates with the same author will be analysed together, however in the cases where the author does not provide more than one work to be subjected to analysis in this project, I have chosen to stay with the same genre of work. In this case the biography by Michael Korda will be supplemented by another biography (Anderson). Thus, the comparative analysis undertaken on these works here is not only situated in the same genre or based on the same author, but also cuts across these criteria.

The mechanisms of “building a hero” are rooted in very specific processes, and especially the image of the rendition, in which an audience is supposed to view the
subject or hero as interesting in itself. In analysing both the nature of the contradictory depictions and the renditions in agreement, I have chosen to venture back to the roots of scholarship or to one of the most well-known scholars of all time, Aristotle. The Greek philosopher discussed the application of ethos, pathos and logos in his works *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. I will mainly be dealing with the rhetorical tools or “proofs” of these concepts where they are applied in the works considered. These proofs will be identified, their manner of application determined within the chosen excerpts and passages and discussed in relation to the analysis of the works considered within this project.

**Historiography**

History has not spared its words regarding Thomas Edward Lawrence. The scholarly debate has been voluminous, thorough and long. Even immediately after Lawrence’s endeavours on the Arabian Peninsula, his actions were under scrutiny. In this thesis, I have included some of the research of these scholars who have studied Lawrence, who have even founded societies in his name. One such society is the T. E. Lawrence Society. Established in 1985, it centres on the sharing of knowledge and furthering of studies on Lawrence for the benefit of all who might be interested. It is a non-profit organisation that is registered as a charity in the United Kingdom where it also has its base. My reasoning behind drawing such a society into the project is to underline that the study of T. E. Lawrence is no niche occupation by a few lone enthusiasts. It is, indeed, worldwide and popular in nature. Some of the prominent members of the T. E. Lawrence Society are people of rather impressive academic weight and repute. A few of the speakers at these events have been such resounding figures as Malcolm Brown and Jeremy Wilson to name a few.³

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I will address firstly Malcolm Brown as he is a presence in my own work and has contributed immensely to the studies of T. E. Lawrence. Apart from his monograph *Lawrence of Arabia: The Selected Letters*, he has also contributed in 2003 and again in 2005 to the vast amount of biographies of Lawrence, dealing with the Middle Eastern theatre of war. There has, for me, been another and more solid presence in my research on this subject and it has been tangible in the works of another scholar and expert on Lawrence, that is, Jeremy Wilson. Before he passed away in April of 2017, he was a great contributor to the studies of Lawrence. In 1975, he was appointed the authorised biographer of Lawrence and published the authorised biography in 1989, which still stands as a pillar in studies on Lawrence. Along with Malcolm Brown, he was the chief historical advisor on the Imperial War museums latest exhibition on Lawrence. He was arguably the most prominent authority on Lawrence.\(^4\) The works of Wilson includes the founding of a society of gathering the academic works written about and by Lawrence in a portal online called telstudies.org\(^5\) This is an almost inexhaustible source of material, lectures, articles, lists of works and speeches held on Lawrence and posted in the webpage by Wilson himself as chief editor.

The view on Lawrence as a Hero – and even the suggestion promoted here that he possessed the qualities of a militarily masterful strategist bordering on genius, and comparable to some of the mastodons of military heavy weights – is by no means new\(^6\). What is, however, mostly absent in scholarly works is an assessment of the discourse on him and how it has been formed. I have applied the thoughts of Greek philosopher, Aristotle on the art of rhetoric and the modes of persuasion to do so. Thus, I hope that this point of view will encourage others to further delve into this angle on the telling of the story of Lawrence, whether he is named “of Arabia”, Colonel, or simply “T.E.” as he seems to have preferred himself. In this project I will be making use of “T. E. Lawrence” or “Lawrence” as opposed to “Lawrence of Arabia”, to


avoid the mythical outline that one could be tempted to apply, as this would be academically uninteresting.

The scholarly writings on Lawrence have been largely about attempts to identify whether the deeds and exploits as presented by Lawrence himself had any merit in the real world or whether it was merely made up to create a persona around himself. I have chosen to avoid focusing too much on this aspect, as it has been largely covered by others. That is not to say that I would not be thrilled if some new material turns up that puts everything into question once again, which it certainly will, I am sure.

Considerations of methodology and source material

In this section I will begin with a short explanation of a conceptual nature before moving on to describing the methodology applied and later provide an introduction to the source material. The theoretical point of departure, the notion of the “epic”, was inspired by Christopher R. Fee’s Mythology in the Middle Ages: Heroic Tales of Monsters, Magic, and Might. This is done in order to provide a well-founded base of a definition of the term. The concept of the epic tale is described here as possessing a character of heroic war poetry, where both sides of a given conflict are often provided with the character trades that are traditionally connected with the heroes of ancient Greece although Northern European Middle and Dark Ages also produced stories and tales of this particular characteristic. As an example, the Anglo-Saxon tale of Beowulf springs to mind.

The epic tale generally is a recount of the events in the life of a heroic figure who presents him or herself with grandeur and bravado. The hero in the epic tale tends to have a certain relationship with the supernatural or the world of the godly, often taking on semi godly qualities him or herself. Qualities such as inhuman strength or inexplicable foresight in certain situations, giving the reader a space to let the mind run free and take on imagined proficiencies and mirror these qualities onto oneself.
The allure of the epic hero is often in this possibility of an exercise in escapism wildly popular with the upper echelons of the medieval courts of Europe. Especially “Chanson Rolande” in medieval France is credited with starting a certain hype around the idea of the knightly qualities of a warrior gentleman. The journey of the protagonist of the epic is what distinguishes this style of storytelling especially as the hero undertakes a battle ultimately resulting in a final fantastic reward at the completion of the quest. Fee divides the epic tale into two categories: the traditional or primary epic that manifests itself by drawing upon earlier tales of epic nature often containing the same models and materials as its oral forbearer. The second category Fee calls the secondary or literary epic and characterises it as a remake of earlier themes, but with a variation in setting and materials and is often more sophisticated in its expression.

The Epic tale often takes place in a distant past that allows the imagination to flourish around the character as this setting allows for a certain distance from the readers assumed reality.7 The picture is quite similar when we look at the term “tragedy” appearing.8 In a tragedy, the protagonist is typically facing forces that cannot be overcome and no matter the choices and decisions of the protagonist, failure is inevitable. Furthermore, the use of the term of “pathos” will become apparent in relation to literary analysis described in Aristotle’s *The ‘Art’ of Rhetoric,*9 where it is defined as an emotional strategy in describing an argument, person or action. In a depiction that makes use of the concept of pathos, emphasis is put on emotionally laden values, with large and descriptively exaggerated adjectives being underlined. The usage of the pathos carries the risk that the argument put forward will not be taken seriously or seen as the weaker argument when put opposite an argument that utilises logic and reason as its main instrument.

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7 Christopher Fee, “Introduction” in *Mythology in the Middle Ages: Heroic Tales of Monsters, Magic, and Might,* (Gettysburg College: Preager, 2011), xv-xxxii.
**The `Art´ of Rhetoric, Ethos, Pathos and Logos**

The following chapter is meant to clarify the usage of the rhetorical concepts referred to in the treatment of the works dealt with here. As defined by Aristotle, rhetoric is a tool utilised to determine the means of the art of persuasion in an orator´s argumentation for a particular case. Within the sphere of the art of rhetoric are, according to Aristotle three types of proofs. The first proof or method of rhetoric is the ethical one, which means that the speaker or, in this case, the author focuses his or her wording on the character or appearance of him or herself. The author is judged on his or her moral character. This is done for the author to appear credible, and the hallmarks of a credible author are according to Aristotle those of showing competence, appearing with benign intentions and the ability to express empathy with the subject or a case in point. Aristotle expands on this by underlining that there is no inherently good or bad or right or wrong way for the author to practise this, as all storytelling depends on the interpretation of the listener or reader and must be weighed and balanced by the author in accordance with the wants and sphere of reality of the receiver. This is called ethos.

The second proof is the one that focuses on placing the reader, viewer or listener in an author-induced preordained frame of mind. This is a rhetorical technique that emphasises the application of emotionally charged choices of rendering or presenting a certain case. This is with the distinct object of guiding the listener or reader into a certain emotional sphere in order to bolster the credibility of the case that is put forward or the story told. This particular method is utilised regularly in the more elaborate and adventurous presentations of cases or stories. This will be apparent in the texts below. This is called pathos.

The third and final of the proofs of Aristotle´s definition of rhetoric is the implementation of a logical form of presentation. This is contained within the speech or text itself whenever an undeniable or apparently undeniable truth is presented. In other words, the speaker or author relies completely on the quality of his or her
material, thus, granting the author credibility through logically presented truths. This is defined by Aristotle as logos.\textsuperscript{10}

The above-mentioned features of rhetoric entail that the author of a certain text or deliverer of a certain point to a receiving audience must be in possession of certain characteristics. They include according to Aristotle the skill of judge of character, the intricate insight into the inner workings of human emotion or passion. Finally, it is necessary to be capable of applying reason to his or her case in point.\textsuperscript{11} So, it is fair to say that rhetoric serves to define or explore in what manner the author persuades the receiver of his or her message on any subject that one can conjure up. This, according to Aristotle, is unique to the art of rhetoric since rhetoric is applicable to any other field of the arts as opposed to, for instance, medicine which empirically proves its own worth within itself. Rhetoric persuades the receiver across all of the fields of subjects that it is applied to.

When Aristotle speaks of the terms of ethos, pathos and logos as proofs he understands them as constructs as opposed to tangible proofs that are self-evident, such as contracts or torture or witnesses. These can be utilised as proofs whereas the rhetorical proofs must be constructed by a human agent.

In summation: The proofs applied to a certain message or mode of persuasion are threefold. One depends on the presentation of the author both morally, and in this case with regards to credentials within the subject (ethos). Another relates to the express purpose of the author to apply language that places the receiver in a certain emotional position where he or she is vulnerable to the persuasion of the credibility of the given message (pathos). A third is contingent on the quality of proof within the material put forward to the receiver or as a minimum, feigning quality and veracity in a sufficient way. (Logos). Credibility is therefore number one with all rhetoric. It is what


the messenger is attempting to achieve in order to lend this credibility to the subject matter and thus persuade the receiver.

It is human to feel credibility in those that present themselves with superior morals and apparent qualities depending on how they are perceived by the audience. These qualities are, so to speak, the most effective means of proof. The messenger can achieve this persuasion also by merely rendering his audience in a state of emotional arousal. This happens in the opinion of Aristotle due to the blurring of the judgement of human beings, when the basic emotional effects of joy, sorrow, love and hate, to name a few, are brought into play. This emotional manipulation with an audience is utilised in great quantity in just about everything delivered to an audience since the dawn of recorded delivering of messages and up until today's film industry, literature and politics. Aristotle found this particularly important as all storytelling depends on the aspirations, wants and needs of any given audience. Finally, the speaker or author must rely on the quality or veracity, that his or her material consists of. This veracity is dependent on being or at least appearing to be true. In other words; the message must be true, or at least appear to be in a sufficiently convincing manner in order to persuade the receiver. If all these above-mentioned conditions are met, the author, speaker or director may be considered to have mastered the art of rhetoric as seen by Aristotle. This will all be determined in relation to the material considered below.

With Lawrence in Arabia

In the days following the capture of Jerusalem by General Allenby, an American journalist with the express task of locating a hero figure that could persuade his countrymen to invest in the war they had only recently joined, arrived in the Levant. The journalist Lowell Thomas, did not confine himself to writing only a mere book but also produced a lecture tour of almost circus-like character containing first hand material in the form of pictures accompanied with his own narrating of his experiences.

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in Arabia with Lawrence. The tour contained self-narrated footage and was entitled “With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia”.

Immediately upon reading the first chapter of Tomas’s book, there is no doubt as to his talent for furthering an image of precisely the kind of hero figure that President Woodrow Wilson so desperately needed in his war effort. Presented by Thomas both as Thomas Edward Lawrence or Lawrence of Arabia depending on which purpose it suited in the situation, the hero was depicted with all the pathos that Thomas could muster.

The flowery language used by Thomas to describe Lawrence and their first meeting can, and should be, described exactly, in this way. Here imagery and superlatives are thrown about, which are not only descriptive but highly exaggerated. Such a heroic construction was later adapted as the Hollywood industry’s take on historical characters such as Spartacus, Ben Hur and others. Lawrence is not only “Colonel Lawrence” but at the hand and pen of Lowell Thomas he becomes “Terror of the Turks” and “A Modern Arabian Knight” to name a few. Here we have the connection to the epic medieval chevalier. Thomas repeatedly uses the fact that Lawrence carried a short curvy sword, which was allegedly the sign of a prince of Mecca. It was a title that never existed or claimed by Lawrence.

In fact, Thomas himself admits to having a preconceived image of Lawrence before meeting him due to the stories and accounts of Lawrence’s accomplishments at the time. This of course affected Lowell Tomas´s judgment. Lawrence was, according to Thomas, already a figure of repute and legend within the military ranks, but as of yet unknown to the public. Thomas would be the person to alter that fact, and in an American style with acute sense of the sensational, and to the great horror of Lawrence himself, he embarked on a tour of lectures that threw authenticity of and respect for the sources to the wind and completely enthralled the audience that he sought to impress.13

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The same style of exposure is practised when Thomas touches upon the subject of Aqaba. The city is described by Thomas not only as a strategically important port but elevated to a status of “The port City of King Solomon”. For that reason, it is not difficult for Thomas to give the entire credit and honour of this seemingly impossible achievement to Lawrence himself even though he, also in Thomas’s book, denounces that honour (and responsibility?) in favour of the Arab nomad troops whom he praised relentlessly. This campaign against Aqaba, the Turks and the Germans, meant that the top brass in the War Office now finally decided to bestow Lawrence and “his” Arabs with virtually unlimited funds.

Lowell Thomas also writes that Lawrence sought refuge from distinction and recognition from the military and his country that would put him under the magnifying glass as a subject of admiration but also of scrutiny. This supports Michael Korda’s claims in his biography of Lawrence, that the protagonist was a great personality that did not feel the need for recognition from the military, but merely from the people whose recognition he believed was valuable and important. As an example, when abandoning his tent, Thomas had asked Lawrence to send him his equipment in Cairo whereupon he found an old chocolate tin containing the “Croix de Guerre” that had been bestowed upon him from the French for his achievements in the war. He likewise declined a knighthood, as it would “only serve to raise his expenses with his tailor when he found out”.

It was later claimed that Lawrence’s rejection of recognitions was not due to eccentricity but the fact that he predicted that the military leadership would have a very hard time keeping promises not only towards the Arabs but also to the ones made to the other factions within the Hejaz. This theory is strengthened by the fact that he received and accepted a few distinctions before the beginning of the revolt, and accepted a position of Fellowship at the Oxford All Souls College after the war. It was

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14 Lowell Thomas, *With Lawrence in Arabia*, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd, 1926), Chapter VIII.
the only distinction that Lawrence himself did not understand for which he was nominated.

Thomas writes that Lawrence refuses (the book is written while Lawrence was still alive) to let his country make a hero out of him. Yet, the consequences of his deeds in Arabia are clear. His revolt produced three territories in the area: The Kingdom of Hedjaz under the Father of Feisal King Hussein I. of Mecca, the independent state of Trans-Jordan under Sultan Abdullah, Hussein’s second son and the Kingdom of Iraq under the leadership of Hussein’s third son King Feisal. No one at the time could have predicted the conflicts and disputes the creation of these three territories would create later in history.16

Seven Pillars of Wisdom

That T.E. Lawrence was as much an author and a man of literature as he was an archaeologist and a soldier is indisputable upon reading his own rendition of the events during the Arab revolt. It, therefore, seems relevant to attempt to ascertain the angle from which the protagonist himself, sees his own role in relation to the Arab revolt during the First World War. Lawrence often considers his colleagues and his accomplices as the main actors of the events in which they participated. In contrast, he was brutally self-deprecating and does not view his own efforts with much esteem.17 Lawrence was transferred from the military intelligence office to the Arab bureau on his own request. He describes how he “made his presence unbearable”18 to his superiors by flaunting his intellect, literary knowledge and proficiency in the field of military intelligence. After having been rejected for a request for transfer Lawrence then decided to take matters into his own hands and become involved as a liaison officer in the Arab revolt by requesting furlough that conveniently would consist of

accompanying Sir Ronald Storrs, (officer at the Foreign and Colonial Office in Mesopotamia) in the negotiations with the Arab Sheiks in Jedda. He thereby placed himself as an active player in the Arab revolt. Lawrence has no qualms about admitting to complete superiority to his superior officers in the field of intelligence. Thus, he positioned his mode of persuasion within the ethos proof of Aristotle’s art of rhetoric. The image of him as a reluctant hero is contradicted, as he speaks of himself as the organiser of the raiding of Aqaba and the main agent behind the incoherent plans that the Arabs and other British officers had proposed. Simultaneously, he expresses his own scepticism regarding the war effort and the decisions of the war office, choosing to take on the mantle of the “action man”. He campaigned with the few willing Arabs that believed in his theory of the capture of Aqaba from land through a seemingly impenetrable desert. His role as an advisor and diplomat is hereby discarded and, instead, he assumes the role of a military leader. In consequence, Lawrence takes over the identity of the active leader of the war efforts from the perspective of the Arab rebellion, inheriting it from Prince Feisal (one of two sons of the leader of the Arab revolt in Mecca Sherif Hussein Bin Ali).

Lawrence’s understanding of Arab culture is demanded on many occasions to be able to balance on a knives edge the relationships between tribal families participating in the revolt on whom Lawrence depended. References are made in *Seven Pillars* to the notion that the weightiest object of negotiations seemed to be mostly that of gold. The enthusiasm for the Arab cause from “his” Arabs was only so-so when there was a calm period in the fighting. If they experienced such a period, the momentum of the rebellion would be lost, and the forces would dissolve. Even if the rebel army rested for a little too long, Lawrence would risk a too large drop out of

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manpower for the rebellion to continue.\textsuperscript{23} Despite the fact that Lawrence’s sympathies towards the Turks were limited, \textit{Seven Pillars} shows that he retained an almost poetic view of the horrors of war at times. Existential ponderings over life, death and the pointlessness of it all is a recurring theme in his style of writing. Undoubtedly, deep and well thought through works of the mind is the base of these passages in his writings.\textsuperscript{24}

Thoughts on his loyalties are also a recurring theme in his rendition of the revolt. He expresses regret in having to incite a people to revolt under false pretences. He is very well aware that the nation that was promised to the Arabs that fought with him and against the Ottoman Empire, would be extremely difficult, if not completely impossible to achieve. As a British officer, he was, of course, in a relationship of loyalty towards the interests of Great Britain and her allies. This is a trail of thought that seems to come to him in times of especially great physical pain or military misfortune, as well as in times of great depression amongst his troops and, indeed, with himself.\textsuperscript{25}

A highly interesting aspect in the tales of Lawrence about his own doings and experiences in Arabia appears as he is taken prisoner and tortured by Turkish forces. He offers a graphic description of suffering, especially on how physical, sexual and psychological torture affected him. His destructive behaviour following his escape from the claws of his torturers is illuminating, as he loses seemingly all care for himself and others around him. He was determined to destroy himself, and whether it was springing from a feeling of shame or knotted up bitterness motivated by an urge for revenge is a good question. In all circumstances, it is fair to say that all mercy towards his opponents on the battlefield rapidly and more frequently evaporated after his capture as opposed to before it.\textsuperscript{26} The description of his capture and torture definitely

\textsuperscript{24} T. E. Lawrence, \textit{Visdommens Syv Søjler: En Triumf}, (Copenhagen: Gyldendals Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1936), 302.
\textsuperscript{25} T. E. Lawrence, \textit{Visdommens Syv Søjler: En Triumf}, (Copenhagen: Gyldendals Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1936), 371 + 378 + 432.
\textsuperscript{26} T. E. Lawrence, \textit{Visdommens Syv Søjler: En Triumf}, (Copenhagen: Gyldendals Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1936), 442.
does not show him as a defiant war hero, but rather as a cocky soldier that experiences the limits of his own abilities exposed vividly and rather brutally. In this instance, Lawrence is not a hero, but a victim that has to endure the pains of the world and at the same time, in perfect accordance with the spirit of his time, has to bite his lip and not speak of it or make it known to his men upon his return.27

In a chapter entitled “myself” in Seven Pillars, dedicated to a manner of spiritual and self-investigating analysis, Lawrence gives a depiction of his relationship with the people in his life that he was affected by and, indeed, affected himself. At the same time, he was dominated by the thought of being some sort of a responsible father figure. He is extremely suspicious towards his own motives and continuously questions his decisions and actions. Motives and actions that he believes spring from a need to please within him and his determination to achieve other people’s acceptance. Lawrence deals here with an inner conflict in a way that is characteristic for his usual depiction of himself. Often as he achieved something that placed him in the flattering light of the victor, he seems to halt, and, in a very British way, tear down his own achievements again in a most self-deprecating fashion. This is often done by questioning his own sincerity and the honesty in his own conduct and presentation of himself as a person towards others but perhaps even more so towards himself. For example, he attempts to postulate that he possesses no close acquaintances on the grounds of his low self-esteem and physical stature. In other words, he does not feel that he could have any real close bonds with anyone due to his own embarrassment over his own person. He did not love himself sufficiently to love others as well. This is a recurring theme in this chapter as he speaks of his inability to form human meaningful friendships, for he is terrified of rejection. It is not exactly something that was evident during the Arab revolt. “My eagerness to overhear and ignore myself was my form of assault on the unassailable fortress of self”.28

In the same self-deprecating fashion, he emphasises his theoretical education as having an effect on the quality of his military victories believing them to be “overly abstract” and not sufficiently militaristic. He paints a picture of himself in this chapter as a deeply divided person. Riddled with self-doubt and longing for “the directness of women and animals”29 as he puts it.

**Revolt in the Desert**30

In order to pay for the printing of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence agreed to publish a short abridgement consisting of 130000 words. This first peek into his authorship, provided the tone for what was in store for his readers. The style of writing that came to be known as his. He moves in an area where the language is so filled with adjectives and colourful descriptions that the reader, at certain points, invariably has to halt his or her reading to put the validity of his writings into question. There is not a great amount to add with regards to the consideration of the use of rhetorical argumentation and proofs of persuasion in *Revolt in the Desert*. These remain the same as are known from *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* published almost ten years later. There is, however, a sentiment that seems appropriate to refer to from this work, which is the closing line where Lawrence is reminiscing on the endeavours of his revolt and in Damascus hears the call for the last prayers of the day from the minaret. It brings about the same unapologetic feast of adjectives and colourful descriptive language flamboyantly imbued with pathos, paired with a quote from the Qur’an thereby bringing in the religious aspect which very neatly fits the medieval heroic pious warrior image upon himself and his cause: “God alone is great: I testify there are no gods but God: and Mohamed his Prophet. (…) At the close he dropped his voice two tones almost to speaking level and softly added: “And He is very good to us this day, O people of Damascus.” The clamour hushed, as everyone seemed to obey the call to prayer on their first night of perfect freedom.”31

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Revolt in the desert was according to Lawrence himself not intended for publishing initially, but was printed rather crudely as amusing reading mainly intended for the eyes of a select few in the circles that Lawrence moved, that is friends, family and for himself. But the rather great demand from this circle eventually brought about the idea of a proper publication with illustrations by acclaimed artists, and by Lawrence’s own admission, the idea was to make money from this abridgement. This according to him did not materialise, and the book barely paid for itself in the end, and hardly the artists their agreed fees.  

Lawrence of Arabia: The Selected Letters

In 2007 Malcolm Brown, a best-selling military historian with several works on T.E. Lawrence under his belt, decided to republish the collection of letters that had been published before 1988 by J.M. Dent. The Selected Letters are obviously authored by T.E. Lawrence himself, and contains selected correspondence available to researchers dated from the first letter in 1905 and until his death in 1935. The book contains a walkthrough of his life beginning with the rather exceptional tale of his parents’ relationship and the origins of the Lawrence name. The entire work provides an excellent opportunity for the serious scholar, or merely the interested party, to get a real insight into the inner workings of T.E. Lawrence’s person. Although if one expects deep emotional exposure and human insight of the more familiar nature, one should brace oneself for a thorough disappointment. The almost complete lack of pathos in Lawrence’s letter writing is striking as contrasted with everything else in existence within his literary footprint. None of the colourful language or excess of adjectives in describing people and surroundings, or the self-exploratory ponderings in the likes of chapters like “myself” in Seven Pillars of Wisdom are to be expected.

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32 T. E. Lawrence, Revolt in the Desert. (New York: George H Doran Company, 1927), Foreword.
A striking aspect is the surprising absence of human emotion, especially in the letters to his mother, which were often completely factual and non-descriptive. He resorts to describing the people he surrounds himself with and even they are presented rather superficially and uninspiringly. His mother receives thanks for the things that she sends him in one letter. This is, for instance, his bicycle and a selection of books and translations of Greek philosophers sent to him by his mother from England. It is noteworthy that he decides to praise her efficiency in getting his bike there, and comparing her zeal to the lack of efficiency that otherwise would have made that undertaking rather more unsatisfactory had it been dealt with by the War Office.\(^34\)

Even upon corresponding with his parents with regards to the news of his brother’s death on the western front, the steely façade and the famous stiff upper lip is prevalent. That is not to say that he does not mourn his brother or lacks compassion and empathy with his mother, bereft of her child. But after briefly mentioning such empathies, he reverts promptly to advising to not get too depressed by the tragic situation lest her surroundings might get offended. The weaker persons in her circle may well be more damaged by her disposition in comparison to the damage to herself caused by the loss. Subsequently, he begins to report further on his life as a soldier and the movements of troops and the business that is the war in which he is far more engrossed than the emotional life of those one would assume would be closest to him.\(^35\) It is striking that his letters to his family are almost more factual and distant than the correspondence between Lawrence and his professional companions or even his superior officers. It is equally poignant that he hardly ever signed his letters to his mother or brothers with anything other than his name or sometimes even just an initial. In contrast he signs letters to the aforementioned companions and officers, with “Love, T.E.L.” or “Sincerely Yours T.E. Lawrence”.\(^36\)

In summation, the rhetorical proofs of persuasion and writing style in his personal letters are in total contrast to his later writings where adjectives are thrown about and becomes almost a fairy tale for the reader, allowing for his or her imagination to run free. The presence of logos is strong here as the proof of persuasion according to Aristotle is that of almost complete reliance on the quality of the material. The contents of the letters, where the writing resembles a military rapport style of factual literature, is not only reserved for persons related to his work but also for his family. The proof is in the facts in this case. This comes to the surface very clearly in a letter posted in May 1916 where Lawrence describes, in detail, a recent confrontation with the Turks, even relaying the details surrounding the negotiation of the release of hostages by the opposing side. He goes into the number of casualties, wounded and the conditions of the forces with whom he is operating. This letter is, very tellingly, with his mother as the recipient.\(^{37}\) The same is the case in a letter sent to his mother in July 1916 where he immediately states that there is not much to say, referring to a telegram that he had sent to his mother, with the news of Sherif Husseins revolt against the Ottomans, as “….I hoped it would interest you..”\(^{38}\) Somewhat different in nature are the letters written to his peers and superiors in the War Office, his friends, and those in the field. The tone is light-hearted, and banter is even employed with some of his correspondents. His descriptions of people and events in these letters are far more colourful than those to his mother, although they never reach the lyrical heights of his literary works.\(^{39}\)

All of this, paints a picture of a man who was married to his profession and unable, in modern terms, to “switch off” and separate the sphere of war and conflict from that of the family and home. Or perhaps this is what the soldier does when put under enormous amounts of stress by the conditions and horrors of war. He detaches himself from the emotional and deeper level of his personality in a sort of defence mechanism employed in order to protect himself and “soldier on” as it were. In any

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case, it is clear when reading these letters that Lawrence felt utterly at home in the world of physical and emotional extremes, in which he found himself in the Middle East during the years of conflict.

**Lawrence of Arabia**

In 1962, not long after the documents relating to British activity in the Levant and Arabia were released, the image of Lawrence of Arabia that most of us are familiar with today was created. In that year, the grand epic motion picture by David Lean, which was aptly entitled “Lawrence of Arabia” and starred Peter O’Toole as Thomas Edward Lawrence, was released. It is most likely O’Toole that emerges in people’s imaginations when the title Lawrence of Arabia is mentioned, even if he was slender and taller than Lawrence. The title is interesting: “Lawrence of Arabia”, not “T.E. Lawrence” or “Colonel Lawrence” as his official title would be. Clearly there is an agenda here to bring the full epic effect of the version of Lawrence that was intended to be outlined. “Lawrence of Arabia” is a title that is supposed to lead one’s thoughts to the chivalrous deeds of medieval knights and the sense of adventure that exists around these characters. It also leads one’s mind to the foremost occupation of the medieval knight, namely warfare. War is an important part of an epos, and as such, war is often connected with a protagonist who struggles heroically for a cause that is seemingly unattainable but eventually, earning praise in return. In a particular scene in the film where Lawrence extinguishes a match with his fingers, there is an attempt to present a person that is tough and full of willpower. It is underlined by his line: “the trick, Mr. Potter, is to not mind that it hurts”. The main feature of the character of Lawrence is presented during the first scenes of the film, where another example of the character-building is added. In response to the question “do you always have your hat on in the officer’s mass!” he rather arrogantly says: “Yes, always”. This is in

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reference to one of his character traits: in his position as a map surveyor and creator, he was immensely bored and proceeded to do everything he could to be as unbearable as possible to his surroundings, in particular in the presence of officers. Superior officers, who indeed wanted to see his heel as much as he desired to show it, found an opportune moment to get rid of him, when a man was needed in the Arab Bureau to observe the situation in Arabia. Lawrence was, despite initial hesitation, chosen for the task as he was well educated and spoke the local language. Lawrence tackles the task head on and follows his guides’ example regarding the rationing of water in their journey through the desert attempting to reach Feisal and chooses that “I will drink when you drink”. This is an attempt to underline his dedication to the Arab cause; he chooses to live in the same manner as his desert hosts. Throughout the film, there are several examples of Lawrence buying the loyalty and trust of the Bedouins through material generosity. The first example is in the scene where his guide expresses admiration for Lawrence’s revolver, and Lawrence gives it to the man without hesitation. It is another manifestation of the attribute of the chivalrous hero. It shows Lawrence’s social skills and reflects his reputation within the military as a “strange creature”, for he uses this method to gain the trust, loyalty and friendship of the Arabs. His idealistic attitude and belief in the Arab agenda is evident in a scene where he lectures the fictitious character of Ali ibn Karish on the strengths of the Arabs in standing united as opposed to the rather tedious tradition of inter-tribal disputes. This scene neatly characterises the whole dilemma of the Arab rebel army: how to keep the tribes from internal bickering or killings and unite against a common enemy, in this case, in the shape of the Ottoman Empire, the oppressor of the Arab people.

After Lawrence’s initial contact with Prince Feisal, the purpose of his mission is initially vague. The two have a conversation about Lawrence’s loyalties. Does it lie with Great Britain, the Arabs or a third and more undefined party? Feisal questions this loyalty.  

Not long after this, he strikes a blow for both the war effort of the Entente and the Arabs as well, with a plan to take the port city of Aqaba through a seemingly impenetrable desert. Here Prince Feisal poses what seems to be a key question throughout the film: “In whose name DO you ride!?“ And for the moment the answer is left hanging in the air, leaving it to the viewer to speculate on. It is clear that Prince Feisal doubts that Lawrence has any loyalty to anyone but to himself. Nevertheless, he must have seen some potential in Lawrence by allowing him to set off for Aqaba into the desert of Nefud with 50 of Feisal’s own men. Lawrence is given an air of mercy as he adopts the two otherwise ostracised boys Daoud and Farraj as his personal servants and even decides to pay them double the usual fee for their services. In this case, it is quite clear that the intent is to bring forward the chivalrous qualities to Lawrence’s character. He chooses them because they are “not suitable” rather than in spite of this fact. This may serve to mirror a quality of the real Lawrence, who was “not suited” as the illegitimate son of a disenfranchised aristocrat. This image of chivalry is further enhanced as he, after having crossed the deadly desert, decides to return to it to save a missing man. Another classic quality of the medieval knight is diplomacy. This quality is shown time and again through Lawrence’s constant attempts to balance the state of relative peace between tribes that would be fighting each other under normal circumstances to avoid the untimely collapse of the Arab revolt. This thought is worded excellently in a conversation between Lawrence and the Arab chieftain Auda Abu Tayi whom he attempts to coerce into giving his support to the revolt in the desert. Here Lawrence catches Auda in his own arguments and turns them against him.

so that Auda’s refusal to join the revolt will be impossible without losing face among his own people.51

Here Lawrence’s mode of persuasion is what counts. He makes very good use of the pathos when he plays on Auda’s feeling of pride and greed and gives him no real choice. Auda can only lose respect in the eyes of his tribe should he refuse to take part in the revolt after Lawrence’s speech. Lawrence assumes the role of executioner in another example of balancing the uneasy peace between the tribes involved in the revolt and prevents the attack on Aqaba from collapsing even before it has begun. He executes a member of one tribe guilty of murdering a member of another. This episode is described in all the works considered here. In all of the descriptions and depictions of it, the emphasis is placed on the deep rift it causes in Lawrence’s person throughout the duration of the war. This rift is stressed even further in the motion picture as the man he is set to execute is the same man who Lawrence rescued from death in the desert. Thereby Lawrence is put in an almost divine position as the giver and taker of lives. This is further underlined when the character of Sherif Ali says to him: “You gave life and you took it! The writing is still yours!” This is put in the film not only to outline the sympathies that Sherif Ali has with the conflicting feelings of conscience within Lawrence. The purpose is also to make a very Christian connection to the qualities of the almost divine and label him with the qualities of the medieval knight even further, as he is also showing humility and piety. It is a divine quality that is enhanced by his decision to cross the Sinai desert to bring the message of the fall of Aqaba personally to his generals. When asked as to why his answer is: “Why not! Moses did!”52

Throughout several of the works on T.E. Lawrence dealt with in this essay, there seems to be an agreement amongst the different authors that Lawrence’s preferred method of coping with the struggles, failures, defeats and sorrows during the war was to beat himself up. This self-flagellation almost takes on the character of

self-harm. One representation of this is his dealing with the death of his servant Daoud in the desert. He refuses to ride the camel available to him and chooses to walk instead as a means of punishing himself for the events of what he believes is murderous neglect on his part and quite unfairly as well.\textsuperscript{53} His reluctance to accept the honours that naturally followed his achievements in the desert is expressed in several scenes in the film after the taking of Aqaba. He attributed most of the glory of victory to the Arab army, although he acknowledges that he personally and the British army had some influence on the outcome of the campaign. He is confronted with the fact that he acted without the consent of his superiors, British as well as Arab. General Allenby’s character puts the question in this way: “Who told you to take Aqaba!?" and Lawrence answers “Nobody!” Here it is implicit that it was very much his own choice to act as he did. He is praised for it in spite of this, and that is something he is clearly not comfortable with.\textsuperscript{54}

His tactical abilities are underlined in a meeting with Allenby where Lawrence seems to be almost lecturing Allenby in how to best utilise the Arab revolt to the advantage of British interests. He outlines a plan that can help Allenby take Jerusalem and other strategic points of importance in order to chase the Turks out of Arabia. Here he is presented as a tactician but also a visionary who is capable of seeing the strategic game in the war in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{55} Lawrence inquires whether he can freely swear on the name of General Allenby to the Arabs that Great Britain will not entertain any interests in the Middle East after the conclusion of the war in order to give them their own state. This story has already been conveyed by Lawrence to the Arabs, but if he can promise it in the name of Allenby then perhaps Allenby rather than himself will assume the role of scapegoat should this promise not be kept. In all likelihood, Lawrence would have sensed that Allenby had no intention of keeping his word toward the Arabs. But it is a promise completely free of charge and without


consequence as Allenby would have no stock in the fate of the Arabs after the war. In other words, Lawrence is in this case covering his own self.56

The character of the American journalist Mr. Bentley enters the stage in the film when Lawrence and the Arab army have started their guerrilla warfare tactics, involving hit-and-runs and acts of sabotage with explosives on the Hejaz railway. He becomes an eyewitness to some of Lawrence’s actions. Bentley, in a meeting with Prince Feisal, relays that his country is searching for a true adventurous hero to enable the Americans to join a war that they have been so far reluctant to be involved in. To this Feisal replies: “You are looking for a figure to draw your country towards war? Then Orens is your man!” It is remarkable that when Lawrence is spoken of as “Orens” during the film, it refers to the war mongering side of his persona. But when he is called a colonel or major, it is in connection with the British. It is as if the director deliberately created a dualistic quality in the character of Lawrence. This dualism is highlighted by Lawrence himself and mentioned by Michael Korda in his biography as a character trait.57

In one scene, it is implied that Lawrence has become a sort of empty shell. This is emphasised when Auda refuses to have his picture taken by Bentley on the grounds that it steals his virtue. Lawrence however promptly agrees and poses for the shot. Has Lawrence lost his virtue? His soul? His conscience? Has he been completely destroyed by the experiences of war? It is in any case one theory. It must be mentioned that his willingness to pose for the camera also quite easily could be attributed to Lawrence being caught up in the moment of success. As Michael Korda argues, this is a clear case of Lawrence being appreciated and respected by the people that he most wants it from: the Arabs.58 At this point in the film, he is gripped by a sense of megalomania and believes that he is invisible to the Turks and therefore they cannot harm him. This

change is evident after the point where he encounters a Turkish soldier during a raid, who is incapable of killing him even at point blank range (the Turks keeps missing him). This is where the epic hero meets his biggest crisis. It is a crisis that seems inevitable in the storytelling as a representation of the hubris of a man that has become too big for his own shoes. The events take place during his capture by the Turks and torture of a sexual nature is implied in these scenes.

It is interesting that Lawrence’s own version in his Seven Pillars is much more graphically and brutally depicted than is the case in the film. This event brings Lawrence crashing down to earth again, and he assumes a defeatist attitude and returns to a military desk job in Cairo. Here he once again meets up with Feisal in a scene that underlines Lawrence’s duality depending on his situation, when he introduces himself as Major Lawrence. Simultaneously he pleads with Allenby to give him a desk job. But Allenby is successful in talking Lawrence back into the camel’s saddle, but now as a different character with a far more brutal method of operation taking in mercenaries of murderers and criminals rather than the Arab irregular forces. Lawrence seems not interested in the Arab cause and looks like a man who is more preoccupied with taking bloody revenge for the treatment he received during his Turkish captivity. During this second campaign, the Arab army captures its main target, the city of Damascus, before the British arrive, with Lawrence being credited this time with all the honours of the deed. He desperately attempts to keep “his” Arabs united, but the situation ends in the old chaotic bickering between tribes and old family feuds are rekindled. As a consequence, the prize of Damascus slips between the fingers of the Arabs due to a lack of unity and organisation. Lawrence subsequently withdraws from Arab politics. Auda informs a beaten Lawrence that “There is only the desert for you.” It is the very scene where the character, person, and spirit of T.E. Lawrence achieved his largest personal victories, defeats, crises and triumphs.  

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The Making of David Lean’s Lawrence of Arabia

In 1994, Adrian Turner, a self-proclaimed friend of David Lean published the story of the making of the motion picture “Lawrence of Arabia”. In this book, which presents us with still frames from the film and gives anecdotal descriptions of the apparently tumultuous difficulties getting the film made and Turner does not really put anyone in a good light. Lean is presented as having been incredibly difficult to work with and the producer, Sam Spiegel, is portrayed as an unsavoury character, a money-man only on the hunt for a quick profit. He goes on to describe the reasons for the choice of the director. Revealing that it was Lean’s ability to create images on a rather grand and imposing scale as he had done with his previous hit film “Bridge Over River Kwai”. It also starred Alec Guinness who would go on to play the role of Prince Feisal in “Lawrence of Arabia”.  

Turner speculates about the reasons why the presentation of T.E. Lawrence in this film has lasted for so long and hints at the tools used in the process. The grand images, and the larger-than-life attributes put on Peter O’Toole’s rendition of Lawrence, represent the cinematic equivalent of an orators’ generous use of colourful language and flowery adjectives in order to imbue his argument or mode of persuasion with as much pathos as possible. He thereby seeks to convince his impressionable viewer of the veracity of the presentation of the character of Lawrence put before the audience. The initial proof – which is put to the reader at the beginning of the book where Turner introduces himself as having a personal relationship with Lean – is a way of utilising ethos in his persuasion as well. He suggests that his ensuing narrative would have suffered if he had not been such an acquaintance in an attempt to lend credibility to his own person. The proof of logos is also presented when he gives direct renditions from the screenplay of the film. This is indisputable proof of the imagery applied by Lean and his screenwriters in their presentation of Lawrence. This section of the book stands alone as an argument and is as a completely self-reliant proof.

When attempting to assess the means of persuasion in relation to the discourse of any subject, one has to consider the literal imagery and choices of words utilised in the speech or text. I have found that when one deals with the medium of cinema, the human mind seems to be impressionable to a much larger degree as the director employs both the spoken word and the powerful imagery that seems to go rather unfiltered into the mind of the viewer. That is, unless the viewer consciously attains a critical mindset prior to the viewing. It is with this in mind that I have attempted to consider the rhetorical means of persuasion described by Aristotle with the subject of motion picture “Lawrence of Arabia.”

It is not difficult to pinpoint within which of the three mentioned modes of persuasion the film exists. The pathos is lathered on in the dialogue with stout one-liners and emotional moments. There is no shortage of colour in the language and imagery that serve to build the character of T.E. Lawrence. Interestingly, his full name is nowhere to be seen or heard. Only his military rank is mentioned as he progresses swiftly through the ranks. This is, in my opinion, not at all coincidental. His military ranks are employed whenever he is associated with the British army and his superior officers. It serves portray the soldier and the professional. The loyalty of Lawrence in these scenes lies clearly with the British, at least on the surface. One could argue that the fact that his ranks are used in the military context is quite natural and nothing noteworthy. But in these same scenes, the character of Lawrence as portrayed by Peter O’Toole is clearly trying to convey the fact that Lawrence is uncomfortable, a fish out of water. He is squirmy and his posture changes into a slightly more hunched position than when his more unofficial titles are used, and he finds himself in the contexts where their uses are merited. The character building takes on a new life when he goes from “Lawrence” to “Orens” as he is addressed by his Arab collaborators as they increasingly gain admiration and respect for the quirky Brit.

In other words, it is clear that the motive from the director of “Lawrence of Arabia”, was to put the observer or audience into a certain emotional frame of mind when he

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painting the character of Lawrence of Arabia in bright and shiny colours on the silver screen accompanied by one of the most recognisable soundtracks in film history. Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence of His Majesty’s Army is transformed into “Lawrence of Arabia”, a chivalrous knight and uncrowned King of the Desert. His attributes are outlined, presented and amplified as his character is slowly animated and brought into life. That this image of Lawrence does him justice or corresponds to the real person of Lawrence is doubtful, to say the least, although it is certain that he made his mark on the history of the period and the region in which his exploits took place. Today, his legacy is still discussed in the Middle East, and this, in no small degree due to the work of the film. It is a testament to the impact of the cinematic media.

**Hero**

In this project, I have included one of a seemingly endless number of biographies on Lawrence, not least because of its reference to his heroic image. Michael Korda’s, *Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia*, published in 2010, points to the fact that the meaning of a heroic act has changed significantly throughout history. Today, the label of a hero can be applied, for example, as soon as one carries a weapon in the service of one’s nation. According to Korda, Lawrence was a hero in the classical sense, arguing that it was no coincidence that one of Lawrence’s main literary works is a translation of Homer’s *Odyssey*. Referring to *Seven Pillars*, Korda points out that it was Lawrence’s plan since boyhood to achieve the title of general and become knighted before the age of thirty. According to Korda and Lawrence himself, it was a sign of the latter’s ambition, when he decided to take part in the Arab revolt. He succeeded in this, as mentioned earlier, by making himself as intolerable as possible with the officers that he was working with. One of the methods he adopted was to correct grammatical errors in the rapports that he received from his superior officers, to lecture them on literature and never fail to point out their shortcomings when he knew better in the field of Arab intelligence gathering. Lawrence’s mission in Arabia and, in a certain way also in life in general, seems to have been to find a leader. His
role was to become that of a beacon that he could throw his admiration and loyalty onto, a person who would be worthy of his doting and who would be his equal.

Lawrence wished to compete with this person. A person worthy of receiving the same hero worship that Lawrence was later subjected to. Lawrence, unlike many of his countrymen, did not feel superior to his Arab comrades. This can be observed in the fact that he completely submerged himself into the Arab way of life, also in the daily details and trivialities of it.

Lawrence also realised that the optimal utilisation of the Arabs as a fighting force was their abilities in guerrilla warfare. It was an ability that could quickly ruin them as well. They were great fighters man to man, but could not be left idle for too long as the forces of the Arab revolt would then be depleted far too quickly as they did not feel bound to see anything through that they did not wish to. In this, it became evident that Lawrence’s skills in management of the Arabs inherited from his time as overseer in archaeological digs in the area prior to the war, was of much use. He managed to keep the rebellion going and thereby not lose too many of his and Prince Feisal’s forces whose numbers only seemed to be growing. Keeping up morale among his forces was a balancing act that Lawrence mastered to a tee.\(^6^4\) Substantial focus has been put on Lawrence’s tasks in Arabia as a liaison officer and his past as a map drawer and “desk officer”. That shadow of the covert spy (if one may call it so) is one that Lawrence stepped out of when he, in 1917, came up with a strategy to put the Arab forces to maximum use in the joint war-effort on the Arabian Peninsula, which at the same time hinted at the ambitions that he held on behalf of the Arab people. It was symbolized by the final prize of Damascus in modern day Syria and, indeed, the eventual fulfilling of wishes held by the Arab elite to obtain and create a nation of their own in some form. It was made possible by the exploits of the Arab revolt with Lawrence as a pivotal figure. But to achieve this goal, demanded certain strategies. Military historian and officer Liddell Hart has made Lawrence the object of praise in military circles by comparing him as a strategist to military geniuses, such as Napoleon,

Sherman and Stonewall Jackson. Korda describes the moment of Lawrence’s first raid with the Arabs as the moment where he for the first time, steps out from behind the desk into the role of a guerrilla leader and tactician, culminating with the taking of Aqaba in 1917. This description of Lawrence is a far cry from his self-deprecating and conscientious depiction of himself in Seven Pillars. It is not in line with the predominant view of him as being an Achilles or Odysseus-like hero figure. Only one year after the war, he had become, in the Western world, “The Prince of Mecca”, “The Uncrowned King of Arabia” and the more durable “Lawrence of Arabia”. Perhaps it is natural that he is far more self-critical than the image of his deeds and his person cemented by posterity after his time.65 It is interesting that Korda’s introduction of the military figure of Liddell Hart, bolsters the creation of the part of Lawrence’s character that is formed by military rank, underlining his military proficiency and skill. Korda suggests that Lawrence was not just an archaeologist writer and bohemian that had landed in a spot of bother and stumbled out on the other side of the war with no visible damage and the stiff upper lip intact. Lawrence had much military strategic talent, and he is continuously likened to Napoleon, who also operated in the same area some hundred years before.66 This portrayal of Lawrence is in the rhetorical respect utilising the pathos when comparing him to almost mythical historical figures but with the application of a healthy sprinkle of logos added to underline that there is some factual and actual merit to Lawrence’s exploits in the situations in which he found himself.

Following the raid on Aqaba, it became increasingly apparent that Lawrence was a changed person. He was no longer a British intelligence officer but stood as a warrior, and the hero myth surrounding his person was already well established. It is, however, important to keep in mind that Lawrence first and foremost was a practically and tactically gifted soldier in spite of his meagre military training and perhaps enhanced

by his academic background and focus on modern strategy. One could get the impression that Lawrence’s Arab troops were some of the most chaotic and ill-disciplined in the history of the Imperial Army. But Lawrence was successful in leaving very few things up to chance in his military operations, and he was a master of planning supply lines, artillery support and so on. It must be said that he did all this and simultaneously acting as his own adjutant, quartermaster, regimental sergeant and without anyone to advise him on these things. And through this understanding that if he was wounded he would most likely perish and was he captured by the Turks, he would most likely be tortured and executed as a spy.67

Lawrence’s supreme superior officer General Allenby later described “Colonel Lawrence” as a separate entity from the real T.E. Lawrence. He was a figure that continued to grow in repute and marched on towards fame and limelight all the while the real Lawrence desperately tried to hide away from it. His boyhood ambition of being knighted and obtaining the rank of a General, before his thirtieth year was perhaps no longer be within his grasp. Instead, he had become a figure of myth, a hero subject to the adoration and admiration of the general public.68 Authors and biographers have later on attempted to put into question the claims that Lawrence made in Seven Pillars. But when the British government, in the early 1960s, made the war documents of his campaigns in Arabia available to the public through declassification, it turned out that practically everything that Lawrence had claimed to be true and took place in his book, could be traced and tested down to minute detail and its veracity proven. It does not, however, change the fact that Lawrence himself sabotaged his own chances of being taken seriously in some cases by embellishing certain episodes and make them a bit larger and more dashing than they probably were. But this seems to have been depending on his audience and their disposition. If nothing else, Sir Ernest Dawson Director of “The Egyptian Survey” described Lawrence as being so tactless and demonstratively refraining from keeping up appearances that

this sometimes repulsed the people he met. They would have a rather easy time writing him off as a charlatan with more mouth than mettle. Dowson notes, however, that Lawrence often did what he did from a source of ambition rather than the receiving of some honours. “It is thus with all men of great calliper”. 69

The literary abilities of Lawrence are also discussed by Korda. He writes that a raid on a train in Mudawara is described in Seven Pillars with literary skill. The reader is not presented with too much gruesomeness as the event is described rather briefly and with precision. Lawrence attempts to relay the event with as much accuracy as possible. This is in surprisingly sharp contrast to the letters that he sent home to his friends at Oxford. Those letters are full of revulsion and detest for his job as a soldier and murderer. Many have attempted the grail-like quest to locate the authentic Lawrence in these two methods of retelling the realities and the horror during the Arab campaign, but according to Korda, the truth lies in that both are equally valid. These are sides of a facetted and terribly complex individual, who himself had an ongoing inner struggle with his role and purpose in the terror that is the theatre of war. Simultaneously, he had an ability to present himself and his inner emotions in varied ways, always adapted to the recipient. He appears stoic and in possession of the British “stiff upper lip” in his correspondence with General Allenby, as opposed to his letters to Sir Ronald Storrs where he stands out as a much more rounded and philosophical individual. 70

A specific event in 1917 stands out in the respect that it deviates considerably from Lawrence’s manner of relaying such events, usually with an ironic distance to the horrific details of war. Lawrence decided in 1917 to act as an undercover spy himself and go in disguise to the town of Deraa on a reconnaissance mission in connection with the preparation of a possible raid. His identity was revealed; he was called out and, as already noted, taken captive by the Turks and subjected to acts of torture, also of a sexual nature, a well-known method by all the sides of the war. The reason that

this episode has attracted a fair amount of focus and attention, is that Lawrence, if his version is to be taken at face value, in spite of his usual authorial habits, describes the episode in detail and does not leave much to be imagined by the reader.

Korda describes Lawrence’s highly detailed rendition of the whip used during his torture as a possible literary tool to force the reader to understand his powerful emotions that he quite understandably felt during this experience. The graphic description of his torture sometimes bear resemblance to his description of nature and its magnificence. Some scholars, especially Turkish ones, have speculated as to whether Lawrence exaggerated his description of this episode. But there seems to be no grounds for Lawrence to have caught this out of thin air. On the other hand, an incident such as this would be something that his underplayed Britishness would be expected to have toned down and perhaps even kept completely out of his otherwise quite non-personal rendition of events, with a focus on other people and the descriptions of nature and his surroundings. But his ambition to tell things as they were may have overridden this and affected his final rendition of the episode. His letter to a Charlotte Shaw underlines the likelihood of the veracity of the situation as he writes: “You may call this morbid if you like; but think of the offense, and the intensity of my scrutiny over this for three years. It will stay with me for as long as I shall live, and longer if our personalities survive. Consider walking amongst the decent spectres in the afterlife and shout “Impure! Impure!!”.

In Korda’s biography, it is another and rather more sober description of our protagonist, which is presented. Korda still uses a fair amount of the superlatives that seem to stick like a persistent resin to the figure of Lawrence. This may indicate that there is some merit to Lawrence’s mythical status. But Korda does it alongside a more factual, logical and military strategical point of view. It is in this respect quite evident that Korda’s history education and his career in the military shines through. In rhetorical terms, he relies on the quality of his presented material and the reasoning and logic that he brings to the table, when debating the nature of the Hero. He

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depends on the mode of persuasion outlined by Aristotle as the logos, which underlines the undeniable factual nature of his writings. Yet, as noted, he does not entirely refrain from adjectives and superlatives, thus, drawing on the pathos as well as the logos in his mode of persuasion. He is after all, as was Lawrence, a historian, soldier and author. It is something that one can ponder over, should one desire to ascertain the motives for Korda undertaking the task of writing this biography.

**Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial folly and the making of the modern Middle East**

In this work, Scott Anderson an American journalist, specializing in war correspondence in the Middle East, presents the reader with an interpretation of events during the First World War. He does this by outlining the doings of different characters operating in the region at the time. The style of writing is reminiscent of a spy-novel mixed with that of a journalistic correspondence. Lawrence is one of these characters that are, in some way or another, connected with each other. The reader is introduced to the situations they operate in, in a way that is captivating and spurs the reader on. The use of adjectives in a descriptive manner lending strength to the pathos mode of persuasion is prominent. However, the book is so riddled with historical information, numbers and statistics, troop movements and considerations of supply-lines, that it can hardly be called a work of fiction. The purpose of including this work here is to illustrate, if in a small way, the multitude of biographies concerned with the events of the middle eastern theatre of war in this period, with many varying points of view. This serves as a sort of secondary biographical contribution to support that of Michael Korda. The rhetoric and the presentation of Lawrence is subject to an even more intricate mixture of pathos and logos as it plays quite a bit on the emotional state of the reader and attempts to set the mood and imagery up for a certain presentation of our protagonist. At the same time, he introduces the mode of persuasion of relying on the quality and truthfulness of his material, in this case the
historical facts at the base of his writings that stand out quite clearly. Or in other words he utilises logos and relies on that the arguments will stand more or less alone with the facts presented.⁷²

**Conclusion**

Coming to a place of conclusion when discussing anything even in remote relation to T.E. Lawrence seems to be a source of frustration even for the most seasoned of writers on his person. Such a frustration is never foreign, and is not in this case either. Generally, hard to pin down, the person of Lawrence lends those characteristics of being elusive to the topic of the discourse of the varying representations of him as well.

In the thesis, I have adopted a philosophical approach in the guise of a tool or text against which the manner and style of the representations of T. E. Lawrence are held up. Aristotle believed that if an orator possessed all the skills of conveying and utilizing the modes of persuasion that he presents through ethos, pathos and logos, he would be capable of anything in an oral situation of argumentation. I have applied his theory, if it may be labelled as such, to works of a literary and audio-visual nature. This is done in order to have a measuring stick of sorts on which to read the degree of success the author of a given presentation of Lawrence has achieved. Critics of this method could be tempted to argue that the quality of rendition of history cannot – and should not – be measured and weighed in such a fashion. However, there must be something to which an argumentation can hold itself up against and where the discussion can, in some form, be grounded. This is the role of Aristotle’s *The ‘Art’ of Rhetoric* in my discussion here.

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In *With Lawrence of Arabia*, the protagonist is presented in the light of queued up adjectives and all the pathos available in the English language. In the view of Aristotle, Thomas’s rendition would probably be seen to focus on the emotionally charged literary depiction that comes across as sensationalist and clearly lends provenance to the highly popular lecture tours that it springs from. It is clear what the Thomas’s motive were when relaying the events surrounding Lawrence in the days of the First World War, with its rosy backdrop. It is no coincidence that the nature of his work is reminiscent of propaganda. This is, indeed, exactly what it is. As a propagandistic work, it echoes the motives of his travels on the European Continent, where he looked for stories that could wet his countrymen’s appetite for the war that Woodrow Wilson was keen to promote. Lowell Thomas’s image of Lawrence is outlined in this work, and the lasting image of him as Lawrence of Arabia stems in no small degree from Thomas. The weaknesses of his presentation of Lawrence are to be found in his lack of logos. Factual matters, and the trust in the quality of Thomas Edward Lawrence the soldier as a proof of persuasion, are secondary to the motives he set out to achieve.

*Seven Pillars of Wisdom, Revolt in the Desert* and *Lawrence of Arabia: The Selected Letters* are all renditions springing from the hand of the subject himself. The main work published by Lawrence is arguably *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, which contains his own version of events. Its novelistic writing style and its extensive use of the hallmarks of the fictional literary genre give it an air of just that: fiction. This is mainly due to the pathos and rather flamboyant use of adjectives and flowery vocabulary. The book does not become quite as extreme in its presentation of events and persons as with Lowell Thomas’s work. It is partly due to the fact that Lawrence pays an admirable attention to detail and that many of the events described within *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and *Revolt in The Desert* can be compared to actual wartime developments and held up against *Selected Letters*. The result is that both of these books are renditions of a real person. However, the author has not been able to resist embellishing things to a certain extent. Lawrence as an author and agent of the argument of his own person within the framework of these events, relies on both the ethos and the pathos mode of persuasion.
Another rendition of events altogether becomes apparent when considering *The Selected Letters*, which engages his war-time correspondence with various people. A more tangible hand is involved in the authorship in this case. The writer becomes far more factual and that is in part because of the letter form. It deals with the perhaps more mundane aspects of events for Lawrence and the people with whom he communicated. It is here that the logos as a mode of persuasion can be said to have been applied as almost all of his writings here can stand alone as an argument; it does not need to have the argumentative crutches of flowery language or flamboyantly swung imagery.

The odd one out but equally inescapable portrayal of Lawrence is the motion picture, “Lawrence of Arabia”. Thus, I have attempted to force its body into the framework of the modes of persuasion within the art of rhetoric. This image of Lawrence is perhaps the most recognizable to the layman and is what has found most resonance with the public. The character is almost a caricature of the real person that is outlined through the reading of the other works considered here. The emphasis is most decidedly on expressing Lawrence with as much pathos as can be mustered in order to create for the cinemagoers a true hero in the classical sense of the word. Nothing is spared both visually and with regards to the oratory expressions. The successful application of flowery vocabularies by the cast and the powerful imagery in what has become one of the supreme classics of film history, is a testament to the impact that rhetoric can have on the minds of an audience. It is especially underlined by the fact that when the name Lawrence of Arabia is brought up, it is the figure of Peter O’Toole that people envision, whose imposing height represents the anthesis to the rather short and petite figure of the real-life Thomas Edward Lawrence. In his treatment of the film, Adrian Turner, seeks to project a credibility onto himself in having almost first-hand experience with the making of the film as an acquaintance of Lean. I have no reason to doubt the veracity of his friendship with Lean. It is, however, the mere mentioning of this friendship that leads one to think of the application of the ethos mode of persuasion. In his argumentation, this stands out to me as I view this book in the light of the Rhetoric as presented by Aristotle. Turner’s presentation of T. E. Lawrence is sparse as
he deals mainly with the process of making the film. He does not deal directly with the person of Lawrence, but attempts, to a larger extent, to give the reader his impression of Director Lean and Producer Sam Spiegel amongst others. It is filled with material of anecdotal nature and tends to get rather gossipy as it rolls on. Turner does provide some credibility engaging with the script as it was originally written, and this drives the imaginative lay-out of the book into a more serious direction from time to time.

Korda’s *Hero* offers the most multi-faceted representations of Lawrence in the works that I deal with here. He manages to throw some winged adjectives at Lawrence’s character, but balances this rendition out by touching upon the protagonist’s own writing style and by remarking that truth may, at times, be convoluted at best. However, Korda himself contributes to the heroic perception of Lawrence as he with the help of military historian Liddell Hart, compares Lawrence to several of the great strategic minds in history’s great conflicts. The factual nature is more pronounced in Korda’s biography than in the other works and it is also more self-critical and self-revisionary in nature. Korda manages to put a certain emphasis on the elusive nature of Lawrence’s person. He seems to acknowledge that one true characterization is not obtainable, making the point that such a quest is doomed to fail. His portrayal of Lawrence is, thus, much more rounded than the caricature put forward by Lowell Thomas and others. Korda seems to balance the three modes of persuasion promoted by Aristotle in the most complete way of the works treated here.

In *Lawrence in Arabia*, Scott Anderson presents to the reader a far more romantic character than Korda, even though it is a scholarly work. Lawrence and the other contemporary characters are introduced almost as actors in a spy novel with all the exciting narrative it entails. Anderson does not shy away from the use of adjectives, which makes for an enthralling read. More emphasis is on the pathos here than in Korda’s biography. Anderson’s journalistic background is evident, and he is more concerned with readability than Korda.

All in all, the works treated in the thesis present Lawrence in varying lights; each of them has its own merits, whether displaying academic, journalistic, anecdotal or hero
worship characteristics. It seems that the reader or viewer of these works is free to make up his or her own mind about the nature of Lawrence’s person. There can be no doubt that this is also intentional, for none of the works are presented as truth witnesses at any level. Lawrence is a person, character, individual or hero, entirely depending on the eyes that see, interpret or merely observe his doings.

Aristotle would have found all of these presentations interesting, as they all practice classic examples of his thoughts on rhetoric and the art of translating it into a rendition or argument. The value of each presentation can only be assessed by the individual reader, even though as academics, it is our duty to see the scholarly value of these works. In terms of value as a source, it is hard to dismiss Seven Pillars of Wisdom or Thomas’s lecture tours and later literary work on Lawrence. Even though they are both cavalier with the terms of fact and fiction, they still originate from people who were, in fact, present at some of the events (all of them in Lawrence’s case, obviously). However, it is important to remember that the interest in self-promotion and in the creation of a certain impression of events during the Arab Revolt can be assumed to have been present with both of them. The biographical examples are representations of a soberer look on the protagonist and they tend to be more academically interesting than the other renditions. The film “Lawrence of Arabia” is the most successful portrayal of Lawrence in terms of popularity, even if it is perhaps the least reliable. The figure of Thomas Edward Lawrence or Lawrence of Arabia remains elusive in the same way; there is no correct way of portraying a figure that now is so far removed from the actuality in which he operated a hundred years ago. This elusiveness is, in my opinion, the main reason for the continued interest in studying Lawrence as a human being, a soldier and a hero.

Abstract

In the BA thesis, a comparative discourse analysis of the life and deeds of Thomas Edward Lawrence or “Lawrence of Arabia” is undertaken. Methodologically, it is based on the thoughts of Greek philosopher Aristotle in The ‘Art’ of Rhetoric. These thoughts
are then held up against the varying depictions of Lawrence in selected works of differing genres and media. What Aristotle calls proof of persuasion are sought out in these works and identified on the basis of relevance to the subject matter. These proofs are commonly known as Ethos, Pathos and Logos. Works by Lawrence himself are included to provide a first-person point of view. As a starting point, three works are explored: *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, *Revolt in the Desert*, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Selected Letters*. The initial popularity of the character of Lawrence of Arabia stems, in great part, to Lowell Thomas and his lecture tours minting the knightly title given to Lawrence. The book version of these tours is included to provide an example of the more fantastic depiction of events. These are shown to be a far cry from the more sober depictions. The most colorful and, at the same time, problematic source of portrayal of Lawrence is the motion picture *Lawrence of Arabia*, which was released in 1962 and directed by David Lean. In the considerations of this film, the emphasis is put on pathos: All qualities of the subject matter are amplified by cinematic grandeur and a score of epic qualities. This is the image of Lawrence of Arabia that the world of popular culture remembers. The making of the film has likewise been considered by Adrian Turner in his heavily illustrated book *The Making of David Lean’s Lawrence of Arabia*. In it, he discusses the anecdotal content of getting the film underway, supplementing them with original scenes from the screenplay to underline the epic nature of the production. More scholarly biographical descriptions are also engaged here. *Hero: The Life And Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* and *Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial folly and the making of the modern Middle East* take a more academic approach. They provide a more factual background of Lawrence and rely rhetorically on the logos mode of persuasion. Taken together, these works show that the discourse on Lawrence of Arabia is as complex as the man himself, suggesting that research on him is as topical today as it was a century ago.
Bibliography


