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| Lawrence, T. E. (1888-1935) |
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| Thomas Edward Lawrence was an Oxford-trained medieval scholar, guerilla leader, rebel, ascetic and spy. Lawrence was an inveterate self-fashioner, in addition to being compellingly mythologized by a coterie of literary friends and romanticized in Lowell Thomas’s 1919 multi-media show ‘With Allenby in Palestine’. His mythical status was renewed with the popularity of David Lean’s cinematic epic *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). Lawrence’s involvement with Arab revolt against the Turks, his postwar support for the Arab movement and disillusionment at Britain’s exploitation of that movement, and his subsequent flight from rank and title provide the material for his agonistic autobiographical writing. After the war he renounced his fame and position, assuming the names John Hume Ross and T. E. Shaw and became a dedicated serviceman, a ‘mechanical monk’ in the newly created Royal Air Force (Meyers 124). He was also a classic ‘Orientalist’ and ‘imperial agent’, according to Edward Said (240), a ‘mysterious farrago’ and a ‘fraud’, according to Richard Aldington (35) and remains ‘a prince of our disorder’, according to Irving Howe (qtd. in Mack xvi). His place in literary modernism is secured by the autobiographical *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, a modern epic of imperialist adventure and psychological trauma, privately published in 1922 and later printed as a lavish, condensed subscribers’ edition in 1926, released for general circulation posthumously. To recover the excessive costs of this edition, he published a heavily abridged version, *Revolt in the Desert* in 1927. *The Mint,* based on his self-imposed experiences in the ranks after the war, was circulated among his friends in 1928 but not published until 1955, in accordance with Lawrence’s wishes. *The Mint* is a self-denigrating counterpoint to the romantic self-fashioning of *Seven Pillars,* and together the two books offer a fascinating account of a modern autobiographical subject. |
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| Further reading:  (Aldington)  (Dawson)  (Mack)  (Meyers)  (Said) |