

My Favorite Movie *by Nancy Mann*

My favorite movie is *Lawrence of Arabia*, starring Peter O'Toole, and Omar Sharif. It was a blockbuster during the 1960's, and is considered a classic, since that time. It is a classic for many reasons, some reasons being the reasons I love this movie.

The cinematography, that of the desert, and that of the battle scenes, is spectacular. It was wide screen filming, and the enormity of the desert sand scenes fills the senses. The images of blowing and shifting sands are memorable, and the colors of shades of tan and ecru stay in the mind. The battle scenes are especially close-up; thousands of extras and Arabian horses, braying camels and the fighters' hateful expressions are also unforgettable. Many of the extras are of Arab descent, adding to the realism.

Peter O'Toole plays Sir T.E Lawrence, of course, and his complex character and creativity are laid out well in this story. Lawrence, a junior British officer, has studied the Bedu culture, a subculture of the Arab culture, as well as the Koran; he speaks Arabic before he is in that part of the World, during World War I. A portion of his character's complexity is his conflict about war itself. This conflict is the crux of his life, as his fame came from his brilliant military strategies, and success in many battles. It is a conflict that is unresolved during his lifetime, and the movie portrays his struggle with the conflict as a young man. As a brilliant strategist, he must choose battles that are often fought hand-to-hand, using the style of the Bedouins. This style means more extreme violence in battle, hated by Lawrence. When questioned by his superiors, one time, Lawrence states that, in the midst of battle, he enjoys violence, once commenced. The movie demonstrates this anguish, by way of Peter O'Toole's excellent acting. And, his creativity is demonstrated during O'Toole's portrayal of Sir Lawrence's three day meditation on a strategic march to Akaba, to approach the Turks from the rear. For three days, O'Toole portrays Lawrence's mental struggle that is memorable, as Lawrence sweats and agonizes, motionless, sitting alone in the sand, for this long stretch of time, until his answer is born.

Lawrence is complex, also, in that he knows he is absolutely brilliant, yet self-effacing when others admire him; he answers that he is "an ordinary man". This contradiction is also a major facet of Lawrence's character, and it is well acted by O'Toole.

There is much tension between the British and Arab culture, and the movie demonstrates this in many scenes, through the props in addition to the story. Once, Lawrence is given an Arab costume befitting his status, and Lawrence spins around in his newly-given robe, admiring it at length. He shows off the beauty of the robe, to both cultures, and has graciously accepted the gift (from the Bedu) according to the Arab custom. This movie shows Lawrence eating, sleeping with his head upon his camel's saddle, drinking from a goat-skin bag, and other scenes demonstrate Lawrence's versatility in the Arab culture, beyond speech, but in his actions.

Lawrence shows his daring and courage in the movie when he re-enters the Nefud Desert to search for and bring back a lost companion. He relies on pure will and his tremendous endurance, when all forces are against him, including the near-impossibility of the task, and the 130 degree, broiling and baking sun. This filming of his endurance is dramatic and indeed, bordering on magnificent. I have always liked movies of hardship and struggle.

The movie explains the importance of defeating the Turks in this part of the world, in order for the English to hold onto the strategic Suez Canal. The movie teaches history, and reveals the intent goals of the British army leaders, which I like.

Lastly, if these reasons do not pique your interest to watch, *Lawrence of Arabia*, there are the handsome, masculine faces of O'Toole, (also Anthony Quinn and Alec Guinness) and the dark, flashing eyes of that Egyptian-born god, Omar Sharif, to gaze upon. It has a diverse cast of international actors who possess the world's best virile and strong faces, and this is most amazing!