

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**TCLC 202**

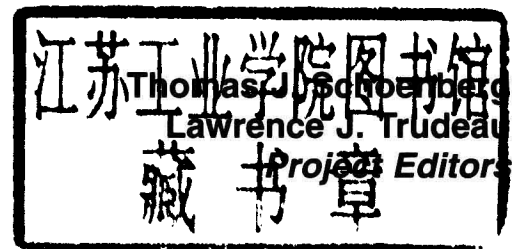
TOPICS VOLUME



Volume 202

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Commentary on Various Topics  
in Twentieth-Century Literature, including Literary  
and Critical Movements, Prominent Themes and  
Genres, Anniversary Celebrations, and Surveys  
of National Literatures**



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# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Topics Volume



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Native North American writers and orators of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries	<i>NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN LITERATURE (NNAL)</i>
Major authors from the Renaissance to the present	<i>WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM, 1500 TO THE PRESENT (WLC)</i> <i>WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (WLCS)</i>

## Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

### Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author’s works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose



works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it originally appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

## Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *TCLC* as well as other Literature Criticism series.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the numbers of the *TCLC* volumes in which their entries appear.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a bibliography set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, (2003); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

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Brossard, Nicole. "Poetic Politics." In *The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy*, edited by Charles Bernstein, 73-82. New York: Roof Books, 1990. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 127, edited by Janet Witlec, 3-8. Detroit: Gale, 2003.

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# Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xi

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board xiii

## **Adventure Literature**

<i>Introduction</i> .....	1
<i>Representative Works</i> .....	1
<i>Overviews and General Studies</i> .....	2
<i>Juvenile Adventure Narratives</i> .....	32
<i>Adventure Literature and Imperialism</i> .....	38
<i>War and Adventure</i> .....	57
<i>Further Reading</i> .....	88

## **Gothic Literature**

<i>Introduction</i> .....	90
<i>Representative Works</i> .....	90
<i>Overviews and General Studies</i> .....	91
<i>The Evolution of Gothic Style</i> .....	111
<i>Gender and the Gothic Imagination</i> .....	133
<i>Literary and Thematic Connections</i> .....	174
<i>Race, Society, and Politics</i> .....	195
<i>Further Reading</i> .....	219

## **Science Fiction Film Adaptations**

<i>Introduction</i> .....	221
<i>Representative Works</i> .....	221
<i>Overviews and General Studies</i> .....	223
<i>Major Science Fiction Films</i> .....	281
<i>Text and Representation</i> .....	315
<i>Further Reading</i> .....	338

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 343

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Topic Index 455

TCLC Cumulative Nationality Index 471

# Adventure Literature

The following entry presents critical discussion of adventure literature in the twentieth century.

## INTRODUCTION

Adventure narratives have been a mainstay of literature from ancient times, and epics such as the *Odyssey* and *Gilgamesh* have inspired many generations of writers with their grand themes, which often include pitting humankind against supernatural forces, or against natural elements and human enemies. Scholars of the adventure genre have pointed out readers' enduring fascination with this kind of writing, but have also charted changes in attitudes toward adventure literature over time. Whereas the genre flourished in the late-nineteenth century, with such novels as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) and H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) enjoying enormous popularity and brisk sales, many writers adopted a more ironic stance toward adventure fiction in the years following World War I.

Adventure texts generally exhibit several common characteristics. They tend to be escapist, in the sense of offering the reader the opportunity to be transported to a "world elsewhere," distant either in terms of geography, like E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), or in terms of its personages and events, like Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* (1917). Critics agree that adventure fiction must in some way encompass action—for example, exploration of unknown territory, as in T. H. Huxley's works; military action, as in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895); or fantastic tales such as J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912). The adventurer hero is almost always male, whether a soldier, a scientific pioneer, or a memoirist, and tends to be an eccentric or social misfit who questions existing social values and norms. The main personage in adventure narratives often professes to be on a quest or mission. Critic Ihab Hassan has added that the hero is very often marked by a physical or psychic "wound" that motivates him to pursue his goal relentlessly. That drive to transcend personal, natural, and social limitations contributes to the reading public's fascination with adventure fiction, since, as Paul Zweig has written, "a man's essential moment comes in the midst of danger, when all of his life must be translated into action."

Following the enormous loss of human life, the failures of diplomacy, and the waning of British imperialism in

the period after World War I, the adventure genre came to be regarded in a negative light because of its links with violence, nationalism, and expansionism. Successful novels such as Ernest Hemingway's *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935), André Malraux's *La Voie royale* (1930; *The Royal Way*), and George Orwell's *Burma Days* (1934) portrayed colonial adventure ironically, while straightforward adventure fiction began to be censured for its fostering of escapism as a means of avoiding dealing with political, social, and gender issues, for its outmoded sensationalistic style, and even for its vast popularity, the result of the mass marketing of cheap editions.

Modern scholars continue to find much of interest in adventure fiction. Recently critics have explored juvenile fiction as the typical and customary introduction to adventure literature, and have sought to analyze how the genre shapes Western culture's notions about masculinity and gender roles. The interplay between adventure fiction and colonialism has provided a focus for numerous contemporary studies as well, with special emphasis placed on its slightly different development in Britain and in the United States. Whereas reviewers were proclaiming the death of the adventure novel in England in the mid-twentieth century, it continued to flourish in the United States in, among other forms, the western story. The relationship between adventure fiction and the realist novel, too, has received much critical attention, with scholars examining adventure texts' seemingly contradictory claims to hyper-realism and anti-realism.

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## REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

Pierre Benoit

*L'Atlantide* [*Atlantida*] (novel) 1919

Edgar Rice Burroughs

*Tarzan of the Apes* (novel) 1917

Ralph Connor

*The Doctor: A Tale of the Rockies* (novel) 1906

Joseph Conrad

*Heart of Darkness* (novella) 1899



Stephen Crane  
*The Red Badge of Courage* (novel) 1895

James Dickey  
*Deliverance* (novel) 1970

Isak Dinesen  
*Den afrikanske Farm* [*Out of Africa*] (novel) 1937  
*Skygger på Graesset* [*Shadows in the Grass*] (novel) 1960

Arthur Conan Doyle  
*The Lost World* (novel) 1912

Richard Ford  
*Rock Springs* (novel) 1987

C. S. Forster  
*The Happy Return* (novel) 1951

E. M. Forster  
*A Passage to India* (novel) 1924

Wilfred Grenfell  
*Down to the Sea: Yarns from Labrador* (short stories) 1910

H. Rider Haggard  
*King Solomon's Mines* (novel) 1885

Ernest Hemingway  
*The Green Hills of Africa* (novel) 1935  
*The Old Man and the Sea* (novel) 1952

Michael Joseph  
*A Ship of the Line* (novel) 1938

T. E. Lawrence  
*The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (nonfiction) 1922

Norman Mailer  
*The Naked and the Dead* (novel) 1948  
*Why Are We in Vietnam?* (nonfiction) 1967

André Malraux  
*Le Voie royale* [*The Royal Way*] (novel) 1930

Peter Matthiessen  
*The Snow Leopard* (nonfiction) 1978

Cormac McCarthy  
*Blood Meridian* (novel) 1985

John McPhee  
*Coming into the Country* (novel) 1978

V. S. Naipul  
*A House for Mr. Biswas* (novel) 1961

George Orwell  
*Burma Days* (novel) 1934

Paul Scott  
*A Division of the Spoils* (novel) 1975

J. R. R. Tolkien  
*The Hobbit* (novel) 1937

Percy F. Westerman  
*Winning His Wings: A Story of the R.A.F.* (novel) 1919

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## OVERVIEWS AND GENERAL STUDIES

### Paul Zweig (essay date 1974)

SOURCE: Zweig, Paul. "Conclusion." In *The Adventurer*, pp. 223-52. New York: Basic Books, 1974.

[In the following excerpt, Zweig presents his conclusions about common traits of adventure writing from Homer to Norman Mailer, noting that in all of them "the adventurer's quest must be its own goal."]

[Elsewhere] I have defined adventure simply as a physical challenge, a confrontation with bodily risk. The adventurer has chosen to meet death as an enemy. With his action, the adventurer says: "Death, thou shalt die." He will have won, finally, more often than he has lost. In the fullness of his act, he will have proved that death is fallible; that a man, crippled by mortality, can nonetheless win out against the limits of his nature. In the *Iliad*, an Achaean warrior asks his companion why they are risking their lives in battle. The companion answers: we risk our lives because we are mortal; we choose combat because it is the fate of man to die. Because death's ambush incites him to caution and fearfulness, the warrior chooses to stalk the stalker. That is why his acts do not need to be explained or justified. On the contrary, in mythologies, epic, and folklore, they are the source of meanings. The warrior's duel with death provides culture with its essential tools, its founding myths, its knowledge of the world.

It is in these terms that we have approached the great works of adventure literature, and the act of storytelling itself. But the questions we ask of past traditions are different from those we ask ourselves. Because our lives have not yet arranged themselves into history, we feel a

deep connection to whatever is unfinished, groped toward. The clumsy novel, the bad movie, the flawed poem, if they are contemporary, struggle with the same bulky meanings that we struggle with. Listening to them, we hear our own voice speaking, full of stumbles and rough tones, and we are caught up in its struggle. Now, when the storyteller sets up in the marketplace, we are the ones who squat around him in a circle, dragging our past and dragged by our future. Historically speaking, literature has been the unique footprint of adventure, its definitive trace, like Friday's footprint on the sand. But here suddenly is Friday, his body oiled and naked, and here are we, clothed in caution, obsessively social. We cultivate simulacrum of danger in the interstices of our lives. We remark the self-serving energies of certain men who provoke actions we admire but also resent, wondering what it would be like to experience our own lives under the aspect of adventure. It is true that we have our small dramas of escape: our love affairs, our exotic vacations. But we also have a sense that alternatives have gradually been sealed shut as years pass; that every commitment we make has bricked us into a familiar, often comfortable identity, but one we can no longer choose to leave. Our uneasy fascination with adventure grows as the domestic walls become smoothed by use, until finally they resemble a mirror. Beyond the mirror, as beyond the hillcrest of primitive legend, exists a world of encounters, a magic world we imagine but never reach. Yet we glimpse it now and then. It erupts without warning and recedes in a blend of excitement and terror: a near accident in a car; a chance meeting with an old lover; a robbery. The world beyond the mirror breaks in upon us, wounding our methodical but fragile surfaces; and before the wound can heal, we glimpse an abyss of possibilities, a pit of otherness which is dizzying or frightening, but unforgettable.

Sometimes we feel that we have paid too high a price for our comfort; that the network of relationships and names which we have become does not leave us room to breathe. The limits which define us for others then seem like prisons. And we suspect, momentarily, that we live in exile from the best part of ourselves.

It is to this suspicion that adventures appeal. We day-dream them, watch them in movies, follow them in newspapers, hear about them from friends, and tell our own modest stories under the guise of adventures. We allow ourselves this small measure of "irresponsibility," because we know that we have no choice. We need to find a defense against continuity. Adventure, we suspect, is our secret failing, as it was for Robinson Crusoe and Candide; it represents our inability simply to be ourselves; our "childish," illicit, but definite need also to be someone else, at least in our dreams. This is not simply a "literary" matter. Indeed, "serious" literature, as we have seen, does not encourage this vein of fan-

tasy. Instead we must rely on our "bad taste" to let in pulp magazine stories, second-rate movies, sports events; or else, in another register, fast cars, gambling casinos, hikes in the wilderness: small vertebal escapes from the chain gang of our days; parentheses of unreal intensity, which later seem dreamlike. Yet these side ventures have a reality of their own, an aura of released energy which is joyful even if it can be terrifying. These are our adventures: our "frivolous," necessary moments, like brief myths, which descend upon us, transposing us into their wholeness and vanishing.

Yet the scope of these daily adventures often seems fleeting and private; our bubbles of grandeur form and burst without applause, in a thin medium scarcely able to sustain our tall tales and our gossip. They are not adventures to sing about or live by, but to entertain in a minor key. Like Defoe, we have domesticated adventure. It has become a fillip for our identities; a wash of exotic color in our lives. Where in the modern world must we look, then, to witness the Nietzschean confrontation which Conan Doyle's romantic hero mused about in *The Lost World*:

. . . it is only when a man goes out into the world with the thought that there are heroisms all round him, and with the desire all alive in his heart to follow any which may come within sight of him, that he breaks away as I did from the life he knows, and ventures forth into the wonderful mystic twilight land where lie great adventures and great rewards.<sup>1</sup>

What answer do we have for Conan Doyle's earthy newspaper editor, who objects: "I'm afraid the day for this sort of thing is rather past. . . . The big blank spaces in the map are all being filled in, and there's no room for romance anywhere."<sup>2</sup>

A few years before, Marlow, in *Heart of Darkness*, had told of his childhood fascination for those "white spaces" on the map. There were not many of them left by the end of the nineteenth century, but those that remained evoked a sense of mystery and confrontation with the unknown which Conrad conveyed with passionate skill. When another English writer, Charles M. Doughty, made his way into the Arabian desert, in the 1880s, it was, he said, to revive the splendor of the English language, by discovering a subject matter worthy of the high style. The result, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, is a classic of adventure literature. Doughty devised a baroque style which transformed the desert into a world of heightened perceptions, like the magic countries of the *Odyssey*, or Gilgamesh's land of Faraway. For Doughty as for Conrad, the power of imagination and the resources of style were able to transform distance once more into an ontological fact.

Conan Doyle's hero in *The Lost World* sets out for the Amazon jungle, but, in fact, he travels further, into a fantastic valley inhabited by Stone Age tribes and pre-

historic monsters. In Conan Doyle's popular idiom, the "blank spaces" were not merely undiscovered portions of the earth; they were gateways into another order of experience. The same was true for the French novelist, Pierre Benoit in his famous romance, *L'Atlantide*. For Benoit, the unexplored Hoggar mountains in the southern Sahara became a slate wiped clean of geographical perceptions, in which his vision of lost Atlantis could arise, as if by the natural motion of reality itself. The unknown still flourishes in the interstices of the known. Even in the twentieth century, distance can acquire a supernatural dimension and become a proper scope for adventure.

But as the mysteries of geographical distance have been solved by camera safaris, tourist cruises to the Antarctic, and the grim banalities of jungle warfare, the measure of distance has changed. Its horizon has come increasingly to exist in the emotional style of the adventurer, not in the "white spaces" which the map no longer contains. Already in *Heart of Darkness*, it is Marlow's narration which turns the Congolese jungle into a mythic wilderness. He sees it as a place of demonic confrontations, and he conveys his vision with dense language which describes not so much a place as a way of experiencing. The substance of adventure has been displaced inward, so that *Heart of Darkness* must also be read as a precursor of modernism, and Marlow's voyage up the Congo River as a voyage into the depths of the psyche. As Robinson Crusoe discovered that shipwreck and a desert island could not remove him from his mind, which held to the "middle station of low life," so our modern sense of adventure has discovered that an exploit's interior face contains its true potency.

This discovery prepared the way for several possibilities. The adventure story, which Mérimée, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Kipling had trimmed to a swift, bouyant genre, became slow and atmospheric; action swam in an elaboration of imagery and extreme emotions which became the architecture of a highly literary genre. The complex resources of style were devoted to myth-building of a new sort. Now, the magnifications of myth lay not in the framework of great exploits, but in the interior rhythm which the adventurer imposed upon the world of his experience. Instead of epic clarity, we had baroque developments of language. Instead of narrative swiftness, we had Gothic amplifications of atmosphere, a mythicization not of events but of sensibility. The classic adventure stories of this new genre present an unexpected anomaly: they tell tales of splendid courage and exotic actions in a style which secretes complexity and slowness, until the actions recede and become a background for the elaborate frescos of style. The greatest example of this new epic stylization is, of course, *Moby Dick*, in which the grandeur of the action is conveyed through an elaborate ground-swell of digressions

and stylistic asides. Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, Conrad's early novels and stories, T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, much of Malraux's work, especially *The Royal Way*, Genet's prose in *Thief's Journal*, are other examples of the genre.

The case of T. E. Lawrence is especially interesting to consider, from this point of view, because we have what amounts to two separate portraits of his career: one a product of the popular imagination, transmitted by newspapers, heightened by eyewitness accounts of famous people who knew him well; the other buried in the involute prose of his masterpiece, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

The outward facts of his career are as simple as they are fascinating. Lawrence played a crucial role in a minor episode of World War I. While historic massacres were taking place in the trenches at Verdun and elsewhere, the British Arab Office in Cairo organized a campaign of harassment against Germany's Middle Eastern ally, Turkey. The idea was to encourage a nationalist uprising in the Arab territories of the old Ottoman Empire. The enterprise might well have gone unnoticed, if an American journalist, Lowell Thomas, had not come across the Arab campaign and written a series of dispatches about a small, blue-eyed Englishman, who wore an Arab bridal costume, and out-bedouined the Bedouins on excruciating raids across the desert to blow up Turkish railway stations and destroy bridges. Suddenly this unimportant backwater of the Great War was news, and "Lawrence of Arabia" became a hero larger than any created by Kipling or Conrad.

It is hard now for us to imagine the enthralled atmosphere in which Lawrence's legend thrived. Crowds came regularly to hear Lowell Thomas lecture in London. For years after the war, newspapers were filled with rumors of new exploits and dark manipulations. Indeed, every colonial disturbance in the world during the 1920s seems to have been connected to Lawrence, who had conveniently disappeared from view. During the time of his legend, Lawrence enlisted as a recruit in the air force, under the assumed name Shaw, and he spent the rest of his life in a provocative sort of half-concealment, as an enlisted man in the armed forces. This private, almost invisible quality of Lawrence's post-Arabian years left the public free to create a troubling fantasy, which was never trimmed to size by real acts committed by the real man. The legend billowed in public, while Private Shaw kept half in and half out of his anonymous shelter in the armed service, like a secular monk, at least partly guilty of the Augustinian sin of pride at his excessive humility.

The popular craving for adventure reached an extraordinary peak during the 1920s and 1930s, in pulp magazines like the Doc Savage series, in Westerns, in the



soaring cult of movie stars, in the creation of instant legends around figures like Rupert Brooke and Lawrence in England, and Lindbergh in the United States. Perhaps the catastrophic scope of World War I had something to do with it. The course of the war had been so vast and machinelike, and its results so paltry, that a certain conception of national life became suspect. One was eager to admire the heightened figure of heroes, but war, the traditional field for heroic endeavor, inspired horror. One wanted destiny scaled to the will of individuals, not cataclysms which made a joke of individuality, however brave or reckless. Also, one wanted to reaffirm an ancient sense of the unmediated struggle with fate, the primitive face-to-face between the Homeric hero and the god, between Beowulf and the monster: the demonic short circuit by which the heightened man swept aside religion, language, and morality, stepping beyond them into a sphere of solitary challenges. In this sense, adventure represents a sort of "Protestantism" of action, as opposed to the mediated, institutionalized bravery of heroes. But World War I had tarnished the mediating ideals; it had wounded the very notion of bravery. Death in such vast, faceless numbers could no longer be an adversary; it became a plague, a dissemination of poisons. Lawrence himself understood the problem, when he called the strategies of the European theater "murder war" and defined his own aims in terms which we have since come to identify as guerrilla warfare: an extended, minimally organized version of individual combat, on the model of medieval romance. By his own account, Lawrence stood in the shadow of Saladin, not Napoleon; his measure was legendary, not military. Even his military strategy, which the British military historian B. H. Liddell Hart particularly admired, presented a chivalric model: "Every enrolled man should serve in the line of battle and be self-contained there. The efficiency of our forces was the personal efficiency of the single man. . . . Our ideal should be to make our battle a series of single combats, our ranks a huge alliance of agile commanders-in-chief."<sup>3</sup> Against the backdrop of trench warfare, Lawrence's desert tactics, as he describes them in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, represent a sort of adventure war. We will never know how much of Lawrence's theorizing was done in the midst of the action, as he claims it was, and how much during the early 1920s, when he wrote three versions of his book, against the never-mentioned background of his immense fame. In any case, Lawrence identified unerringly the quality of solitary conflict, of "antinomian"<sup>4</sup> fluidity, which made his venture so appealing to the British public.

Lawrence's antinomian aura was not limited to his conception of military tactics. It was essential to the legend which magnified his obsessive personal qualities into a demonic portrait, owing as much to Gothic fantasy as to actual fact. Lawrence was perceived not only as a hero and a patriot, but as something of a monster: a ho-

mosexual, an uncontrolled killer, a masochist, a sadist, a cool manipulator. There is a certain comic-book exaggeration in the fascinated distrust, as well as the worship he inspired. Indeed, one genuine mystery is the extraordinary variety of opinions he fostered around him: Intellectuals like Robert Graves and George Bernard Shaw thought he was an excellent writer; Winston Churchill thought he was a great diplomat; Liddell Hart believed him to be one of the great military innovators of all time; the Arab warrior, Auda Abu Tayi, called him "the world's imp"; Allenby, the British commander-in-chief in the Middle East, suspected he was a "charlatan"; the French military attaché in Arabia, Colonel Bremond, thought he was a psychiatric case; many Arabs thought an "aurens" (their pronunciation of Lawrence) was a tool for blowing up trains. Perhaps the most troubling impression is one he relates in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. An old Bedouin woman, staring at him for a long time, marveled at his "white skin and the horrible blue eyes which looked, she said, like the sky shining through the eye-sockets of an empty skull."<sup>5</sup>

There is a question, itself part of the Lawrence legend, as to how much Lawrence was an accomplice in fostering these variously skewed impressions. He tells, in the *Seven Pillars*, of his genius for manipulation. Sitting one night around a tribal fire, he and his men preach the ideology of revolt:

After dark we gathered around Auda's hearth, and for hours I was reaching out to this circle of fire-lit faces, playing on them with all the tortuous arts I knew.<sup>6</sup>

Our conversation was cunningly directed to light trains of their buried thoughts; that the excitement might be their own and the conclusions native, not inserted by us. Soon we felt them kindle: we leaned back, watching them move and speak, and vivify each other with mutual heat. . . . They turned to hurry us, themselves the begetters, and we laggard strangers: strove to make us comprehend the full intensity of their belief; forgot us; flashed out the means and end of our desire. A new tribe was added to our comity.<sup>7</sup>

What he practiced with the Arabs, he seems to have practiced compulsively, perhaps even consciously, with everyone, always interposing a willed impression between himself and his interlocutors. As he writes: "I must have had some tendency, some aptitude, for deceit, or I would not have deceived men so well."<sup>8</sup> After Lawrence's initial notoriety was established, it is surely this element of refracted vision, as if the man had too many faces, too many shapes, for one to be sure he had any of them, that kept him in the public eye. He seems to be a man with too many biographies for us to believe he had any biography at all.

It is perhaps at this point that popular legend and Lawrence's involute self-portraiture intersect: The demonic voluptuary of pain, capable of extraordinary suf-