

RHYS DAVIES
D. H. LAWRENCE
IN BANDOL

THE winter of 1928 I was living in the South of France. A letter arrived one morning: '... would you care to come and be my guest in this small and inexpensive hotel for a few days? My wife and I would both be pleased if you came—D. H. Lawrence.' Some friends of his in London had sent him my first novel and told him I was in Nice.

I had always imagined him as a remote inaccessible person, brooding and alone in his later esoteric rages and fumings, impatient of the ordinary European world, flying from it to places like Mexico and Australia. Inaccessible even while in Europe. In London I had learned very little about him as a person; the younger set in which I moved had never seen him; he was becoming a legendary figure, mystic, and with more than a touch of the hieratic about him. But I had always wanted to meet him. So I was surprised and thrilled when out of Bandol, along the coast, came the note. How nice of him, I thought in excitement and a little fear, to invite me, a stranger, to stay with him.

I went in trepidation. The visit was so important to me. Just as his books had meant as much to me as all my own experiences of life, becoming mixed with those experiences, I thought this meeting would intensify what he had already given me. For the younger generation of writers in England then, in that strange confused directionless decade after the war, he alone seemed to be carrying a torch. True, a smoky, wild torch. But nevertheless a light, though exactly on what path it was shedding illumination was often a matter for dispute, quarrel and even derision. I think we admired him because he was not sitting down inertly during those slack years. He was crying aloud, if sometimes incoherently, of the deceit, falseness and dangers of those apparently victorious after-war years. Not that he was political, or even social, minded. His message was directed into the heart, the loins and what he would call 'the bowels of mankind'. Meaning instinct as opposed to the mechanization of the individual. His work was a fresh

announcement of life. Furthermore, he used language as no one had used it before.

In the train I asked myself what I thought he'd be like as a person—he had written to say he would meet me at the station, and I had seen only one photograph of him, a youthful one. I found I thought of him as a big sombre man with a vehement beard, traces of his mining *milieu* in him, rugged, savage and a little rude. Yet though he was not big, sombre or unkempt, as I descended from the train I instantly recognized him in the crowd on the platform—and he me—and there he was smiling, even gay, his high voice rippling and easy as he asked me about the journey. Standing on a rock at the gateway of the station, Mrs. Lawrence, aloft, handsome and bright-plumaged, was searching over the heads of the people for us. She, too, was gay and cheerful. It seemed something happy, even a joke, that I had come safely the short distance from Nice. In the car we chattered like magpies. My nervous excitement and twinges of fear fled. I was very glad I had come. Lawrence looked at me keenly with his bright, perhaps too bright, eyes and smiled; Frieda laughed, and I felt livelier than I had done for a long time. Just then I did not feel that I had approached the wilderness habitation of one who, feeding on locusts and wild honey, was lifting his terrible voice against the world.

This first note of frivolous gaiety, alas, was not always to be maintained. I, like everybody who came into contact with him, got my share of St. John the Baptist denunciation. But for that first hour or two all was charm and ease. We entered the drowsy, placidly-run hotel purring at each other: it was the hotel to which Katherine Mansfield used to bring her nervous exhaustion and her lady-Hamlet diary. There was an air of tranquil indolence. The milky blue sea was lazy under the hotel windows.

Lawrence was a small thin man with a most fascinating head. Finely shaped, his head had both delicacy and rude strength. His beard and hair, of a ruddy brown, shone richly and, with his dark eyes, were keen with vitality. His hands were sensitively fine, and beautiful in movement. These features suggested a delicacy that at last had been finely tempered from ages of male and plebeian strength: a flower had arrived from good coarse earth. His thinness was neat, lively, and vibrant with awareness of others. To be with him was to feel a different and swifter beat within oneself.

The stupid little behaviour of ordinary life, the little falsehoods, the little attitudes, rituals and poses, dropped away and one sat with him clear and truthful.

That first evening I spoke, when alone with Mrs. Lawrence, of the admiration and respect of the *young* people in London, how eagerly we looked to Lawrence, how mocking we were of the officious pomposities of the enthroned gods. 'You must tell him that,' she said quickly, 'it will please him so much. Because he feels they *all* hate him.' I told Lawrence, as sincerely as I could. But he was doubtful. I insisted. He shook his head unbelievably. I became perplexed: didn't the man *want* admiration and disciples, I asked myself a little angrily and unable to see, just then, that he had been so wounded by English attacks that his old cry of anguish, 'They are all against me', had become at last a blindly violent mania.

Thereupon Lawrence broke into such abuse of the young that I was discomfited. Ah, why didn't they stand up, he fumed, and fight to make the world theirs, why didn't they smash, smash, smash? Why did they tolerate the impositions of the old world, the old taboos and the mongrel trashy contacts of the civilization they were forced into? The men did not know even how to handle a woman: they wanted to be treated as women themselves: and the women were lost, senseless, vicious—but because their men had failed them.

Yet his arraignment of the young was not so wholehearted as his fierce raging hatred of the generation that sat in tight yet flabby ruling of the world, the moneyed and the governing classes particularly. It was they who were rotting the world, it was they who closed themselves to the voice of the spirit and lived only in the vulgar transaction of being worldlyly successful, of attaining at all costs the power to grind down someone else. The young he blamed for allowing them to do it without protest.

'Kick,' he said, 'kick all the time, make them feel you know what they are. Because you *do* know, you're intelligent enough. The young know, they *know*, and yet they let be. Oh dear, it drives me to despair when I see them holding back, letting be. Because your chance is now; the world is all wobbling and wants a new direction.'

And his voice, become shrill as he was roused—and how easily he was roused to an extreme pitch of intensity!—would finish in

a heave of sighing despair. Later he spoke of the way those elders had tried to curb him, how, indeed, they *had* curbed him. 'I know I'm in a cage,' he rapped out, 'I know I'm like a monkey in a cage. But if anyone puts a finger in my cage, I bite—and bite hard.'

Uneasy though such tirades as these made me, I saw then that he was certainly caged. He was caged by censorship and persecution chiefly, but there was also his consumption and the exile this meant; and he was caged by the contempt, the laughter, the cheap sneers and the suggestive and cunning propaganda of his enemies who spoke and wrote of him at this time (*Lady Chatterley's Lover* had not long been published) as a frustrated sexual maniac, pornographic and indecent. Caged, which was the same thing as a retreat to the desert, he had arrived at that prophetic stage (and these were the last two years of his life) when the civilized human race appears one day as effete idiots, another as a pack of hyenas and wolves. But, though he writhed away, he could not turn his back on people, he could not rid himself of his vehement awareness of people: this was the motive power of his tremendous nervous vitality—and this it was that was treacherously exhausting his body. His condition at this period might have been called tragic. Yet, because of that passionate awareness still burning in him, one could not think of him as anything but a great dynamo of life, still generating with a wealthy fertility the magic of existence. Those pungent, energetic and fecund recent books of his!

At this time in Bandol he was writing the satirical poems to be called *Pansies* and also painting one or two pictures. He told me he would write no more novels; *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was to be his last long work of fiction, the last large attempt to tell men and women how to live. For all his fury and rages, he got immense fun out of writing *Pansies*. He would write them in bed in the mornings, cheerful and chirpy, the meek sea air blowing in from the enchanting little bay outside his window. He sat up in bed, a little African straw cap on the back of his head—'It keeps my brain warm,' he said, afterwards presenting me with another of these little native caps. There was something perky and bird-like about him thus, and he was intensely happy and proud of the *Pansies*; he would read out the newest ones with delight, accentuating the wicked sharp little pecks in them. He little thought of the ridiculous heavy-handed official interference these vivid little

lizards of poems were about to endure. Yet in the end they emerged triumphant, with their tails gaily up.

But it was out of his painting he seemed to get the most joy, turning to it with relief and a sense of escape that perhaps in words was denied him—for in all Lawrence's later books, luxuriant though they are with vivid life, there is an unhappy sense of recoil, as if the full blaze of his soul could not be got entirely on the pages and the writer had retired baffled into himself again, to brood and gather strength for another terrific outrush. But on a canvas he could paint those rich sensuous shades he loved so much, paint them in their own colours, not in black words; he could give a goat or a swan actual shape, a tree, a flower, a nude, in their own colours. Yet, being Lawrence and not a novelist playing about with paint, it was not enough to give them pictorial representation; there must be that exuberant surge of passion, so that every line and every shade of those nudes, flowers and animals must blaze with it. At their London exhibition (which was raided by the police) the pictures embarrassed people, the Lawrence vehemence was too naked on canvas, it confronted one too suddenly. A book is more secretive, its appeal slower: particularly the Lawrence books have to be read several times before they yield their full meaning. It was said the paintings were faulty in drawing and construction, bad *pictures*—as undoubtedly they were. But because of that Lawrence intensity in them the technical errors seemed not to matter; almost because of the errors they achieved a barbaric aliveness. And to their painter they gave intense joy, they were so actual before his eyes, giving visual representation to a sensuousness he tried to get into his words. He was almost pathetic in his absorption in these paintings; he said that words bored him now.

‘ . . . my soul is burning
as it feels the slimy taint
of all those nasty police-eyes like snail tracks smearing
the gentle souls that figure in the paint . . . ’

he wrote after the police-raid in London. The opinion, sometimes expressed even now, that Lawrence sought deliberately to incur official censorship, is completely false. I was with him often during the police and newspaper activities over *Lady Chatterley* and *Pansies*. Their effect on him was either like a spiritual vomiting

or a fury that made his very appearance that of a demon. And he had not the kind of calculation to scheme all this out. Of the many accusations made against him nothing could be more fantastically untrue than that he was a humbug.

Once he rapped out at me: 'All you young writers have me to thank for what freedom you enjoy, even as things are, for being able to say much that you couldn't even hint at before I appeared. It was I who set about smashing down the barriers.'

The afternoons and evenings were given over to idleness. Walking tired him, so we would dawdle at the edge of the sea in the sun. These afternoons in the sun with him seemed to have a living peace that was strangely refreshing; he seemed to spread around him, his rages quietened for a while, a conciliatory atmosphere of awareness, so that the lazy roll of the sea, that ancient and ever-young blue sea, and the voices of the naked boys at play on the plage (it was his picture of these boys that was the chief cause of the London raid), became a harmony that gave, to me at least, a fresh and satisfying ease. He would ask me about my childhood in Wales, my home life, my reactions to the constrictions and religious bigotry of a nonconformist period. He said:

'What the Celts have to learn and cherish in themselves is that sense of mysterious magic that is born with them, the sense of mystery, the dark magic that comes with the night especially, when the moon is due, so that they start and quiver, seeing her rise over their hills, and get her magic into their blood. They want to keep that sense of the magic mystery of the world, a moony magic. That will shove all their nonconformity out of them.'

Another time he broke into a lamentation for the old pre-war England, shaking his bearded head, his voice becoming hollow with the realization that that England was dead: 'Ah, you young don't know what England could mean. It's all been broken up for you, disrupted. I'm glad I was born at my time. It's the sense of adventure that's gone, and there wasn't all this ashy taste in the mouth. The fun is gone. That's what you haven't got.'

And though he would speak with contempt and anger of the economic poverty of his childhood and the horrible dreariness that trails behind mining-village life, his days in those districts of his youth seemed, as he talked, to have given him intense glee and satisfaction. He would tell of some of the characters of

Derbyshire, so that bits of old England stood out before me with Shakespearean gusto.

'But nowadays,' he lamented, 'all pleasure takes place in people's heads. They don't *do* and *live* funny things any more, they've become much too mental and smart. The old England is gone and you've let her slip away.' Again and again he harped on the inertia of the young in not springing to save the real, beautiful England. And, because of his tuberculosis, one couldn't taunt him with his own long exile from the damp soggy land. Besides, was he not protesting enough in his books?

An interesting admission he made to me was that he had come to respect his father much more than when he wrote *Sons and Lovers*. He grieved having painted him in such a bitterly hostile way in that book. He could see now that his father had possessed a great deal of the old gay male spirit of England, pre-puritan, he was natural and unruined deep in himself. And Lawrence, by implication, criticized his mother who had so savagely absorbed him, the son. Frieda told me, in answer to my opinion that *Sons and Lovers* was Lawrence's finest book, 'No, it's an evil book, because of that woman in it, his mother.' I was, of course, judging the book as a literary creation.

Lawrence was exceedingly puritan himself in many things, and very chapel-English. He was even an old-maidish prude. One evening I repeated a coarsely funny story that was going the rounds of the Riviera just then. It was received in blank silence. No, not blank; a silence full of freezing reproach. Stories that pulled a face at sex and teased it he abhorred. On the other hand, one was allowed to use in ordinary conversation all the 'indecent' words, all those expressive words used by sailors, navvies and undergraduates which can so neatly abridge and clarify one's sentences. Which was a kind concession.

Crotchety though he was at times, he seldom irritated me. He was so entirely without reserve, he was so aware of one, his personality came forth with such a full glow, sometimes in a martial march, true, but most often in a bright recognition that had a sturdy, ardent eagerness. To argue with him was difficult. In spite of one's frequent mental doubt, elsewhere in one's being there was the feeling that, in some burning world beyond logic, he was supremely right. If one could cut away all the weeds of principles and behaviour that had got into one since self-consciousness began,

one felt that there, in the natural, instinctive self, was the truth that lived in him so undiminished. He wrote in one of his studies: 'The soul has many motions, many gods come and go. Try and find your deepest issue, in every confusion, and abide by that. Obey the man in whom you recognize the Holy Ghost; command when your honour comes to command.' And I remember his saying to me: 'When you have come to a decision, whatever your mental calculations tell you, go by what you feel here'—and with his quick intent gesture he placed his hands over and around his belly—'go by that, what you feel deep in you, not by what your head tells you'.

He was obsessed by the mischief done by 'mentality' when it usurped the emotions or feeling or, perhaps, that Holy Ghost of which he wrote, the uncontaminated texture in a man which must be preserved if he is to live truly. Modern literature suffered from mentality almost completely, he complained. Cerebral poems, creations of witch-novelists, with characters 'like those wooden figures in a child's Noah's Ark'. Cerebral fornications made modern novels indecent. And he would give a broadly amusing burlesque of some of his very famous literary contemporaries, all 'gorping and puffing away importantly for success'.

He had a magical talent for burlesque, and his performance of a certain novelist as a pompous whale churning the literary seas and spouting up water was so realistic that both the great industrious novelist and the stupid mass of whale were present in the room, but miraculously united. In the same way he could evoke flowers, animals and reptiles out of the air with a wonderful cunning. Once he described the lively adventures of his Italian terrier with such marvellous absorption into the canine world that D. H. Lawrence disappeared and I, too, felt myself turning into a dog: I remember especially his acting of the dog's writhing agony after it had been run over, its will to live, its pleased sniffing at life as it recovered, and its sudden bouncing forward into a fresh world of smells. He was that dog. This power of entering the soul of non-human things is the characteristic I remember most clearly. In the same way, it is for his vital descriptions of landscape and 'spirit of place', and of flowers, beasts and trees, that his books yield one most *pleasure* now.

At the hotel was a young negro waiter. Lawrence took, in his usual energetic way, a deep dislike to the youth. The dislike was

so intense and its object so innocently unaware of it that I was vastly amused. To see Lawrence's eyes gleam with watchful revulsion as the waiter laid a dish on the table seemed utterly grotesque to me: why be so stirred over the young man? It was his hands Lawrence watched: thin dusky nervous hands laying very, very carefully a plate of *vol-au-vent* on the table. I watched too, as I had been bade.

'You saw his hands, how uncertain they were, no feeling in them! No feeling. It's quite sickening, he can't even place a plate down properly, he fumbles, hesitates, it's like a dead hand moving, every moment I expect to see the dish go to the floor.' And the denunciation came, as I expected. 'All his movements are so *mental*, he doesn't trust to his blood, he's afraid. Look at him walking down the room now, look at his legs, look how they hang together and cower, pushed forward only by his mind. Ugh!' And he ended with a sharp hiss of absolute revulsion. It was true, as I looked carefully at the young man's legs, that they were rather soft and dejected-looking, clinging together as though for company as he took his short, gliding kind of step down the room. Yes, his gait was vaguely unpleasant, I decided, that hesitating glide, as though practised, and the legs with their subjected look. There was little that was spontaneous, certainly, about the youth. But this fierce antipathy!

Of course, out of such vehemence and such antipathy came *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Women in Love*, and the others.

Then there was the English maiden lady in the hotel, one of those respectable spinsters who were scattered all over the South of France and Italy. This lady, he swore, would have liked to kill him. Her social advances had been ignored. And one evening he wouldn't deliver up to her the hotel *Daily Mail* as she hovered and twittered about for it; he had whisked round to her demanding: 'Do you *want* this paper? I'm reading it.' The lady had shrunk back, mumbling that, no, she did not want the paper. But he had seen murder in her. In a shrill way he declared to me: 'She would have had me taken out and killed then and there.' The following morning—her bedroom was next to his—he insisted that through the dividing wall waves of hate and murder had been arriving from her. I think he saw her as some sort of witch. However, I was glad to see, on my next visit to Bandol, that he had made his peace with the lady. They now met on the common ground of

painting. She made little water-colours of local scenes; Lawrence did his strident nudes. They almost flirted together with their brandished paint-brushes. Frieda was malicious. 'One of Lorenzo's old maids,' she said, telling me he had a weakness for these English spinsters.

Observing him strolling about in the sunshine of the plage below the hotel terrace, I mused over his extraordinary attraction as a person. In a faded old blue jacket, wispy trousers and a black flapping hat, he moved about with a springy awareness. There was something of both a bird and a lizard about him, light and winging, no flesh. Perky, bird or lizard like. Yet the thundering torrents, black hatreds and teeming awareness in that frail figure! Just then I felt, rather than was mentally aware of, the struggle against death-processes that was taking place in him. (I remembered he had just written a poem about a November sun—'my sun' sinking 'wintry but dauntless' into the west: was it prophetic?). The curiously fiery little figure winging about the plage was somehow electrically dangerous; it bore a high voltage of life. No, it could not die, with that bright eagerness in its wings.

His irascibility and irritation had the sharp, crackling, devouring temper of a fire. There was nothing small and fussy in his outbursts. They came in an avalanche, a torrent, a flood. Even over such a trivial incident as being half-an-hour late for the hotel lunch. I had met Frieda on the plage and we dawdled in a café over our apéritifs—time fled; it was enchanting to sit before that unspoilt (as it was then) native little plage of Bandol in the morning sun, while the villagers flopped about lazily in their carpet slippers. Unconscious that we were late we ambled back to the hotel. Suddenly I saw, watching our strolling approach from the top of the flight of steps leading to the hotel terrace, a dark sinister figure poised as if to swoop down on us, a malign vulture.

As we mounted the steps he was literally dancing with rage. What he said actually I don't remember, but as he hopped about, gesticulating in his Italian way, he poured out a flood of words that seemed to reduce the universe to nothing. He was the serpent come out of the heart of chaos to hiss forth death and desolation. I was interested, objectively, but decided that before such passion a polite apology for being late would be fatuous. And quite soon the tornado subsided into a vexed silence out of which came, presently, a charming offer. In the dining-room was a tray of

newly-caught lobsters. These were a supplement on the table d'hôte price. Lawrence, the host, pointed them out and, coaxingly, was sure that I would like a lobster. I shook my head. He insisted. Then I became cantankerous. I refused to be wooed with lobsters. Frieda was not so silly. She enjoyed the fish with an unruffled air of 'however extraordinary my husband, one does not have lobsters every day.'

There were times when I could not bear to have him near me, and I would leave the hotel and go for long walks. It was the only way to keep one's will intact in this over-potent intimacy. He was too much of a magician, too much of an enchanter. There were times, indeed, when in everything he was too much. This, of course, was because I was still in a world which he had long ago left in disgust. I was even glad when it was time for me to leave Bandol, though for the next few months I returned again and again, glad to go to him, as I was glad to leave him. But such a dominant force as his was not for continual companionship. I do not wonder that his old cherished scheme for founding a community of fellow spirits came to nothing. For all his charm, aliveness and interest, men, unless they were completely negative, could never live for long in peace with Lawrence. And he had no use for negative people.

His marriage seemed to me a prosperous one. Frieda had a lioness quality that could meet his outbursts with a fine swing and dash: when really stung, she would shake her mane and grunt and growl; sometimes she charged. Their life together was an opulent one; her spirit was direct and generous, and his was laughing, malicious and subtle. Their notorious brawls were grand. She would lash out, and, gathering his forces with confident ease, he met her like a warrior. He would attack her for smoking too many cigarettes, having her hair cropped, taking a wrong line of thought, eating too many cakes in a café at Toulon, or for trying to be intellectual or aristocratic. He kept her simmering, subtly; for a natural inclination to a stout German placidity threatened to swamp her fine lioness quality.

On one occasion I remember her suffering a little from one of those odd bouts that visit women now and again—sometimes governing their lives—when they become the dupe of some shoddy mystical crank who hypnotizes them into rapt ecstatic states in which they imagine themselves angels, spirits or astral

beings—anything that has no vulgar *body*. A German book on Rasputin has been sent her and she read it with fascinated avidity. This incensed Lawrence to a vituperation that again, to me, seemed out of all proportion unjustified by the offence. He drew a mocking picture of women prostrate and fawning round the Russian monk, their faces gaping up for sensual religious sustenance. In Frieda's case the rapt interest in the mystic monk was only tentative. But even the gleam of interest was enough for Lawrence, who had detected it at once, and until he had swept the contamination away, his voice like a vigorously-handled broom, he could not rest. He bridled to me: 'When she came down to dinner full of that Rasputin, I could have smacked her face across the soup.'

To see, after their disputes, the puling, pattering little escapades of some marriages! This one had abandon. And Frieda did not impose on her husband, ill though he was, that female bossiness, that stealthy overpowering need to subjugate, which women, crying to themselves that they are doing a man good, can wind round him in oppressive folds. She could leave him alone and was cheerfully alive in her own sunny activity, or she would deftly touch him, flashing out some vain feminine illogicality that stirred him to comic denunciation. They had not *settled down* into what is known as peace but is really something else.

Pansies was finished and typed in Bandol; an incomplete set was despatched to England from that village post-office of tolerant France. We dawdled through the mild days, sometimes taking long drives into the country in the village droshky: Lawrence disliked motor-cars. Out in the country, while the ancient nag munched the herbage and Frieda and I strolled about, he would squat on his heels collier-fashion and remain thus for an hour, unmoving, hunched up like a very old and meditating bird, his shut eyelids lifted to the sun. There was something eternal and primitive about him thus; and a delicate, untrammelled peace. Sometimes he would open one eye like an owl, keep it briefly on me and Frieda, and lapse back into his meditation.

There was nothing of the cathedral air of the great writer about him; no pomp, no boomings, no expectation of a respectful hush from apprentice hands such as myself. One warm afternoon he announced, after a hint from me, that he would read a selection of *Pansies* to me and Frieda. After a rather heavy lunch

we went to my bedroom, where there was a sofa, on which I foolishly lay. And Lawrence had not a good reading voice; it was apt to become stringy and hollow. Very soon, to the sound of verses about the harsh flight of swans clonking their way over a ruined world, I went off into deep slumber. When I woke he and Frieda had stolen away. But when we met at tea-time he twinkled with amusement. Only Frieda's face contained a surprised rebuke.

In a few days news came of the fussy official interference with *Pansies*, the opening and seizing of the packet of incomplete MSS. in the post by the English authorities. It afterwards appeared that anything posted from Bandol to England just then was subject to scrutiny; it was known that the author of *Lady Chatterley* was living in the village. What a surprise the authorities must have had, really, for there was nothing in even the complete *Pansies* which could be described as indecent by a normal person. A few quips and bits of plain-speaking, in good household English; that was all. Still, they kept this incomplete collection. Afterwards I despatched from Nice another incomplete set, which arrived intact, and later I took to England a complete set, which was duly printed—though privately—and sold unexpurgated. Though I had no hand in the printing of this private edition, it was whispered to me one day on good authority that the flat in which I was staying had become of interest to the police: it was believed to be a distributing centre for the banned works of D. H. Lawrence. The fussiness!

Lawrence, sick in the face, crying out in his bedroom of the seizing of his darling, innocent poems, or raging on the beach as he talked of it, was depressing. He could *not* understand this new mealy-mouthed England. Ah, how the old robust England of strong guts and tongues had died! Why, why couldn't they let him have his say! The charge of indecency had an effect on him like vomiting. It was almost painful to look at him. It was in such moments as these that I felt that, more than his consumption, an evil destructive force was attacking him successfully.

He and I went together to Paris later; Frieda left for Germany to see her mother. Pirated editions of *Lady Chatterley* were appearing and Lawrence wanted to arrange for a cheap edition in Paris so that the expensive pirated editions might not command such a ready sale. In addition, he badly wanted the book to reach the masses—of England particularly. Like Tolstoy he was

indifferent to any royalty there might be from such an edition. For the pirates he had utter contempt, but was angry to think of the money they were making. One of them in Paris, hearing of the contemplated cheap edition, got into communication with him and offered royalties on all the copies already sold, on condition that no cheap edition was issued. The sum due was substantial. Lawrence wrinkled his nose in disgust, and yet, as was only to be expected, was half attracted. He twittered and was unusually indecisive: finally he went off late in the afternoon to the pirate's office, and found the place shut up: it was after office hours. 'I knew then,' he sighed, when he arrived back at our hotel, 'I didn't want to see the man. I stood there on the pavement with relief and was utterly glad the office was closed.' I think he had consulted his midriff on the pavement. He refused to meet or correspond with the pirate after that.

In Paris I witnessed another of his strange rages. We took a taxi to Sylvia Beach's book-shop in a little street near the Odeon; he wanted to ask Miss Beach if she would publish *Lady Chatterley*; she had already dared Joyce's *Ulysses* (a book Lawrence had not much respect for: too *cerebral*). The taxi-driver, a big bull-necked creature, couldn't find the little street. As we cruised for the second time round the Odeon, Lawrence began to start and writhe. The powerful, unmoving back of the driver roused him to a yell. 'The fat fool!' he screeched—in English—'A taxi-driver! Fool, fool, fool,' he stamped and writhed. 'Or else he's doing it purposely, knowing we are foreigners.' In the tiny enclosed space it was like having a shrill demented monkey beside me. After dipping into another street, again the cab cruised round the Odeon. To Lawrence's yells and bangs on the glass screen the driver's steady bull neck remained unperturbed. Ruddy beard stuck out, Lawrence's pale face was lifted in agony. The immovable neck in front was bringing on a psychic crisis.

At last the shop was discovered, and the taxi skipped up to the kerb softly as a purring cat. Lawrence's thin body exploded out of the door; I followed in readiness for a brawl on the pavement. But I was disappointed. The two men faced each other. The driver's big moony face was shining with a most childlike grin; it was all a friendly joke to him. And in heavy French he told us that he was a Russian, an exile, and had only recently begun his job as taxi-driver. He beamed with good humour; Russian-like, he

accepted Lawrence's fury with benign understanding. Lawrence had started back from that broad Slav fleshy face. I could almost see the steam of his rage evaporating. His prancings became stilled. As we entered Miss Beach's shop he said to me, 'I couldn't be angry with him, I couldn't. Did you see his face! Beautiful and human. He lives in his blood, that man, he is solidly in his blood—not like these slippery French who are all mind. I saw it at once and I respected him.' Miss Beach was not interested in an edition of *Lady Chatterley*.

Though the weather was warm and sunny, and Paris at its best, he hated it, like all cities. He couldn't bear people close-packed about him, the grey slick city faces, and he would scuttle back to our hotel in Montparnasse after meals. We stayed there a month, and all the time he fumed to get away, a city darkened his spirit and humanity became almost completely hopeless. Knowledge of his presence got about, and he was offered a banquet by a literary organization: to his horror. His chest became ominously troublesome. But such was the vitality he spread about him, even in Paris, that alarm and suspicion of his physical state would vanish.

It was in Paris that he dauntlessly refused to keep an appointment, made by a friend, with a first-class specialist in bronchial diseases. Half an hour before the time fixed, and ready dressed to go to the specialist, he suddenly refused to leave the hotel. It seemed to me that he believed a submission to medical art was an act of treachery to the power within him, his gods.

But his nights became restless; often I woke to his coughing and writhing in the next room. One night, instinctively, but half asleep, I hurried through the communicating door and found him as though in mortal combat with some terrible invisible opponent who had arrived in those mysterious dead hours that follow midnight. The dark tormented face and haggard body was like some stormy El Greco figure writhing on the bed. Was this the perky bird or lizard figure of Bandol! He seemed to be violently repudiating some evil force, a wretched man nearly overcome by a sinister power of superhuman advantages. Alarmed, I suggested a doctor and went towards the telephone. But at once he flew into anger. No, he would *not* have a doctor. But if I would sit quietly by the bed for a while. . . . I think he needed the aid of some human presence. Soon he was calmer, lay back exhausted, unspeaking but triumphant. The opponent had gone.

A month passed before a publisher for *Lady Chatterley* was found. Frieda returned from Germany; I left for England. My regret at leaving him was mingled with a strange willingness to go. He seemed to have given me as much as I wanted, and for me he would always be near. I have spoken to many people who did not know Lawrence personally but who read his books sympathetically, and to each of them he has been alive and of the same significance as though they sat with him and were warmed by that rich personal glow of his: and they too, like myself, when he died felt for a time as though there was no sun in the world. There must have been few men who inspired such personal—but I cannot find the word: not *affection*, not *homage*, *love* is too specialized a word, and I must say, almost meaninglessly—reactions, as Lawrence. Almost that emotion he inspired has been lost: to-day particularly we are consumed with distrust of the world and therefore men. Perhaps if that emotion had been garnered and understood and cherished, the life of man would have taken a more fruitful direction—for has the world ever been more sterile than it is now, except of wars? He was a Christ of an earthly estate, and those about him knew the Godhead he had found in himself, and were warmed by it. His humanity was so purely aristocratic and undefiled. Here was the complete flowering of the spirit in flesh. Let me be not misunderstood: Lawrence was a man and no Jesus in rapt love with the Heaven that is to come; but a Christ of himself as every man can become who has once found the pure centre of his being and keeps it uncontaminated. This is what he had done. He had not submitted to the contamination that seems inevitable. Civilization had not dirtied him, in himself, though enough mud was thrown at him, and some clung for a space. It was the mud that caused those rages which seemed to be so insane.

He wrote to me now and again: gay, amusing letters, gay even in his furies against certain actions and persons in London. He wanted to start a little magazine, to be called *The Squib*, which was to consist of lampoons, leg-pulls and satiric pieces; he sent some verses for it and asked if I would be editor, with himself as guarantor of half the expenses. If he had lived it would have been a lively magazine, though I had a taste of how difficult it would have been to obtain suitable contributions; people jeered and lampooned amusingly enough in their conversation, but to get

them to set their antipathies and violences on paper!—no, they became self-conscious and wary, the labour was impossible. The idea of *The Squib*, with Lawrence adopting the pseudonym of John Doolittle, came to nothing in the end.

After brief wanderings in Spain and Germany he settled in Bandol again, and again I was eager to see him. A melancholy note had crept into his letters: '—there was a great storm yesterday—huge seas—to-day is quiet, but grey and chill and forlorn: imagine me the same.'

But he was moved from Bandol to the sanatorium at Vence. I did not believe he was dying: it could not be. Notes arrived from him; he was making arrangements for the publication in England of one of his very finest stories, *The Man who had Died*; a story of Christ's escape from death, a story rich with newly discovered splendours on earth. The newspapers published their contradictory reports; he was dying and he was very much better. They had announced his approaching death often before. And still one persisted in believing him very much alive. To read one day in the cold print of the afternoon London papers that he was dead was a strange experience. One's soul stood still and denied that death. Curious how it could not be accepted, as it had been accepted so often before in others. He who had been working in the full fructifying shine of the sun, while others produced from tombs.

But of course he was dead; at forty-five; and if we desired further proof, rude and raw proof, what more could we want than the obituary notices? Nearly all of them. But one could only read them in astonishment and horror, and avert one's head in shame as from an indecency.

Most of them did not lack length, it was true; surely this was an important writer, to demand such space! Double columns. But filled with such repetitions of revilings that one had the impression of a pack of evilly surly convicts released at last. The bad-tempered squealing, the patronising superiority, the wearisome insistence on his faults—especially this last, as though by continued repetition these particular critics were trying to convince themselves that this meanness in obituary notices was just and proper.

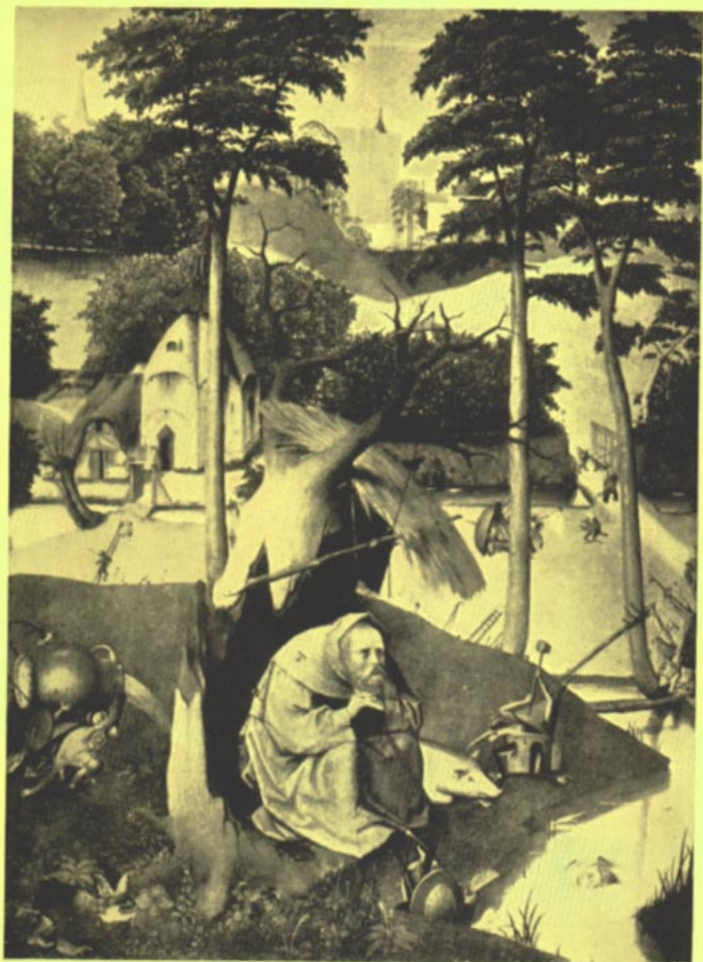
There were two exceptions to this deluge of hostility in England: the notices in *The Times Literary Supplement* and *The Manchester Guardian* were warm and truthful in their tributes to

Lawrence both as a writer and a person. From the others one gathered that he was nothing but a frustrated maniac with small occasional flashes of talent. One is not entirely at a loss to explain this insensibility to him. There are people who hate to admit the insufficiency of the existence we are forced to live. Lawrence cried this insufficiency aloud, brought out all the stale old corruptions from our being and told us what they were and what they were doing to us, particularly the corruptions of sexual life. Far better to shut them up, let them be, and go on living the pretty little make-up-a-tale of modern life. But he went into the root of life in its pristine strength. He believed that the instinctive purity and the original fertile innocence in man could still be found; he refused to accept the cynical distortions of a mechanized life, he refused to have the holiness of life blasphemed, he saw only too clearly that man was in danger of becoming barrenly closed in on himself and that soon the imprisoned spirit, lacking the radiance of true primal exchange, would turn into dark ways of destruction. His was a hateful creed, unscientific ('All scientists are liars!' cried this lover of the magic of night, when the instincts reign over their empire), illogical and retrogressive: it was maddening to be reminded of it. And of one's interior barrenness and fear.

As the days went on I began to think that his physical martyrdom and its so brutally celebrated end was inevitable. And it did not really matter now. There was the victorious magnificence of his work and of his example. But there was, too, the personal loss, the loss of a friend who had inspired that strange (alas that it should be strange!), living emotion of which I have spoken. I had written to Frieda Lawrence before he died, asking for the truth, since the papers were so contradictory; I had written that it must not be that he was very ill, that he must greet the Spring triumphantly as before. She replied:

'... No, you won't make him a chaplet of anemones any more, but anemones crown his grave now. His death was so simple and somehow great, his courage in facing death and fighting inch by inch and then at the end asking for morphia. He looked so proud, so beyond all these silly ugly dogs barking, so unconquered when he was dead.—I know you grieve too.'

Yes, his death did not matter. Still he was unconquered, standing richly in life, the warmth of the sun in his hands.



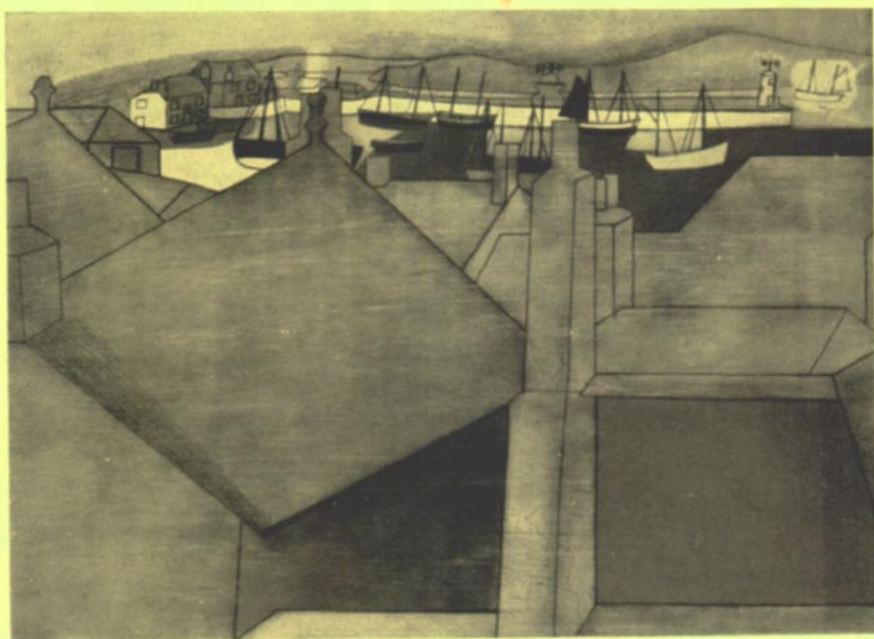
'Temptation of Saint Anthony'
Prado, Madrid



'Temptation of Saint Anthony' Detail
Museum of Fine Arts, Lisbon



Illustration to Children's Book 'George & Rufus'.
Ben Nicholson 1938.



'St. Ives', Ben Nicholson 1940

In the Summer Issue of
THE KENYON REVIEW

On the Semantics of Poetry, by Philip Wheelwright;
The Ball (Story), by Eleanor Clark; *Recent Mexican Painting*, by Nicolas Dorantes; *Bert Brecht*, by Lawrence Thompson; *On Rereading Balzac*, by William Troy; *The World of Henry Miller*, by H. J. Muller; Verse by Marianne Moore, Frederic Prokosch and Rayner Heppenstall; Reviews by Edgar Johnson, R. P. Blackmur, Lawrence Leighton, C. A. Millspaugh, Lionel Trilling, Morgan Blum, Robert Jay Wolff and Francis Fergusson; Music Chronicle, by Paul Rosenfeld; Editorial Notes.

Other recent features include: *The Legacy of Sigmund Freud*: (i) *Therapeutic*, by A. R. Martin; (ii) *Literary and Aesthetic*, by Lionel Trilling; (iii) *Philosophical*, by Eliseo Vivas; *Picasso*, by Wyndham Lewis; *For Sigmund Freud (Poem)*, by W. H. Auden; *André Malraux*, by Haakon M. Chevalier; *The Present State of Poetry: A Symposium*, by Herbert Read, Justin O'Brien and R. P. Warren; *Frederico Garcia Lorca*, by William Carlos Williams; and *Franz Kafka*, by Philip Rahv.

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MARCH

W. H. Auden on Freud; R. F. Harrod, 'Peace Aims and Economics'; Howard Evans, 'Communist Policy and the Intellectuals'; William Plomer, 'Kilvert's Country'; George Orwell, 'Boys' Weeklies'; John Betjeman, Norman Cameron, and L. S. Little; Philip Toynbee, 'The First Day of Term'; and Stephen Spender's 'September Journal' (2).

APRIL

Poems by Frederic Prokosch, William R. Rodgers, Laurie Lee, G. M. Brady, Adam Drinan, F. Buchanan, L. S. Little, and Terence Heywood; 'A Letter to a Nephew' by J. A. Spender; 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' by Clement Greenberg; 'The Saint', a Story by V. S. Pritchett; Montgomery Bellon, 'French Chronicle'; and Stephen Spender on 'The Essential Housman'.

MAY

Poems by William Empson, Brian Howard, Anne Ridler, Dylan Thomas, Francis Scarfe, Ruthven Todd, Laurie Lee, and W. J. Turner; 'Freedom and the Will to Power' by R. H. S. Crossman; 'The Romantic Catastrophe' by Peter Quennell; Frank Richards (Editor of *The Magnet*) replies to George Orwell; Stephen Spender, 'September Journal' (3); and 'The Works of Graham Greene' by A. Calder-Marshall.

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'Labour Leaders at the Ivy' by J. B. Priestley; 'Burne-Jones and Gustave Moreau' by R. Igonide; 'Passing Through U.S.A.' by William Empson; Poems by C. Day Lewis, W. R. Rodgers, and T. Driberg; 'A Bit of a Smash', a Story by J. Maclaryn-Ross.

JULY

American Letter from Louis MacNeice; 'Letter from a Soldier' by Goronwy Rees; 'Reflections on Writing' by Henry Miller; 'A Love Story' by Elizabeth Bowen; 'A Despised Liberal' by F. McEachron; 'I Live on my Wits', a Story by Alfred Perles; 'The Novels of B. Traven' by A. Calder-Marshall; Poems by W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Laurie Lee.

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