THE WHITE PEACOCK

D. H. LAWRENCE

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INTRODUCTION

'Laetitia' (the first version of *The White Peacock*)

Lawrence's first novel was begun at Easter 1906 while he was still living at home and teaching in Eastwood. Writing on 4 May 1908, he recalled his boredom in 1906 when he began to attend University College, Nottingham, and explained: 'It was imperative that I should do something, so I began to write a novel – or rather, I resumed a work I had begun some months before – two years last Easter.'[1] The first pages were shown at Whitsun to Jessie Chambers, the childhood friend then unofficially engaged to Lawrence.[2] Lawrence was dissatisfied with his writing: 'I'm afraid it will be a mosaic. My time's so broken up...I don't see how there can be any continuity about it. It will have to be a mosaic, a mosaic of moods.'[3] Throughout the next year, he continued to take bits of the manuscript to Jessie Chambers, who was not impressed:

> I had not a high opinion of the first version of *The White Peacock*, in which George married Letty...The novel, apart from its setting, seemed to me story-bookish and unreal. The upright young farmer, hopelessly in love with the superior young lady (very conscious of her social superiority) who had been served shabbily by a still more socially superior young man, married her after a puritanical exposition of the circumstances by her mother, and a highly dubious conjugal life began in the melancholy farmhouse, with, one imagined, Letty always in the parlour and George in the kitchen. Yet in spite of its sentimentality, a thread of genuine romance ran through the story; something in the atmosphere was alive. The poem *Love on the Farm* is a sort of epitome of this early version of the novel...I think Lawrence despised the story from the bottom of his heart, for he immediately started to rewrite it.[4]

Lawrence was no happier with the result: 'I wrote with crude sentimentality, being sick, having lost the health of my laddishness, all the humour that was

[1] *Letters*, i. 49. Cf. 'Autobiography' in Nehls, iii. 233, where, in 1928, DHL recalled: 'Wrote *The White Peacock* in bits and snatches, between age of 19 [1904–5] and 24. Most of it written six or seven times.' This starting-date appears to be inaccurate, though Jessie Chambers was reported in 1930 as saying: 'when he began to write *The White Peacock*, he read it over to me as he worked on it. I was twenty and he was nineteen' (Nehls, iii. 468). Cf. DHL's more contemporary account in 1911, soon after the novel's publication: 'I was very young when I wrote the *Peacock* – I began it at twenty' (*Letters*, i. 233). 1906 was thus surely the year he began. (Subsequent references to *Letters*, i. are given in the text by page number.)

[2] The 'engagement' lasted from 1904 to 1910.

[3] E.T. 104.

[4] Ibid. 116–17.

the body of my mind's health dead. I finished the first writing last June – since then I have written the whole thing again' (p. 50). Of this first version finished in June 1907, one autograph fragment of forty-eight pages survives: it portrays with sentimental melodrama the strained relationship between a hysterical young wife Lettie and her passive husband George, and the lurking threat and attraction of her ex-lover Leslie who has made her pregnant and then jilted her. The story reeks of impending danger, but then subsides into pathos and sentimentality.[5]

'Laetitia' (the second version)

Jessie Chambers described this version, written between July 1907 and April 1908:

In the second writing the story was radically altered and the characters became more like flesh and blood, except Cyril, who remained as he began, old-maidish. Lawrence concentrated upon George, and the figure of Annable emerged, at first only cynically brutal, but later developing into symbolic stature. I was horrified at Annable's first appearance and remonstrated with Lawrence, but he shook his head decisively, and said:

'He *has* to be there. Don't you see why? He makes a sort of balance. Otherwise it's too much one thing, too much *me*,' and grinned.[6]

A ten-page autograph fragment survives of the scene after Annable's funeral; three pages closely parallel the revised description in the next version.[7] The second version did not satisfy Lawrence either: 'much of Laetitia is poor stuff, I fear, and I shall have it all to do over again' (p. 50). But nine days later, on 13 May 1908, Lawrence wrote: 'In Laetitia there is, I would declare it in the teeth of all the jabbering critics in the world, some beautiful writing – there are some exquisite passages, such as I shall not write again' (p. 53). His judgment was not yet clear nor consistent: he needed 'the ointment of somebody's sincere criticism' (p. 50), and it was to Blanche Jennings that he turned for it, not to Jessie Chambers, in whom he had first confided about his writing, but who had already outgrown her immediate usefulness: '[She] cares deeply for my writing; but she is valueless because she approves too much: – valueless as a critic, I mean' (p. 50). (The qualification is important: he wrote to her when the novel was published:

[5] The fragment, located at the University of California at Berkeley, is printed in full in the Appendix below. A partial outline (chs. XIV–XXI) of an early version survives in one of DHL's college notebooks, now belonging to W. E. Clarke.

[6] E.T. 117.

[7] The fragment, located at the University of California at Berkeley, is printed in full in the Appendix below.

'I its creator, you its nurse'.[8]) Lawrence's revered older friend William Hopkin, a local journalist and politician, and Jessie Chambers both claimed that Lawrence's mother read and criticised the novel with him, but his 1928 autobiographical sketch discounts this: 'his own family strictly "natural" looked on such performance as writing as "affectation." Therefore wrote in secret at home. Mother came upon a chapter of *White Peacock* – read it quizzically, and was amused.'[9]

Lawrence had met Blanche Jennings through Alice Dax. The two women had been post office workers together in Liverpool before Alice Dax's marriage and move to Nottinghamshire: they were keen suffragists and socialists. Though Lawrence scarcely knew Blanche Jennings, her detachment from the local scene and from personal loyalty to him made her an invaluable correspondent.[10] On 15 April 1908, in the earliest surviving letter that refers to the novel, she was invited

> to read and criticise some writing of mine that purports to be a novel...a novel of sentiment – may the devil fly away with it – what the critics would call, I believe, an 'erotic novel' – the devil damn the whole race black –, all about love – and rhapsodies on spring scattered here and there – heroines galore – no plot – nine-tenths adjectives – every colour in the spectrum descanted upon – a poem or two – scraps of Latin and French – altogether a sloppy, spicy mess. (pp. 43–4)

Despite this unflattering description, Lawrence qualified 'sentiment' as something which 'should be examined, analysed, known just as judgments – facts, if you like – are analysed' (p. 45).

However, Lawrence passed the manuscript to Alice Dax; she said the first two chapters were 'good enough', but the third and fourth were 'very bad', so Lawrence proposed to 'read the damned stuff, and once more write out afresh great pieces of it' (pp. 48, 49). Lawrence was impatient with the time it took Mrs Dax to read 'Laetitia'[11] and sensitive to her criticism as he wrote to Blanche Jennings on 15 June:

> [Since Alice Dax] expressed her opinion in some half-dozen laughing lines of amused scoffing, I am inclined to repent having asked you to inflict yourself with the mass...I am inclined to blush for myself – I know there is such a lot of crude sentimentality in it, and youthful gusty sighing, bungling insupportable. Nevertheless, there is some real good stuff – a good deal that Mrs Dax never sees,...there are some rather fine scenes and effects. (p. 55)

Lawrence retreated defensively before criticism; he wished to withdraw from the sting, maintaining a stubborn insistence on the merits of his work: 'I

[8] E.T. 189.
[9] Nehls, iii. 232–3; cf. Nehls, i. 72, E.T. 117 and *Letters*, i. 49.
[10] See *Letters*, i. 49.
[11] See *Letters*, i. 52.

must not be a laughingstock – I must hide the stuff – ' (p. 55). By 25 June he had become preoccupied with the exams for his Teacher's Certificate, even though he pretended indifference.

By the time Alice Dax gave the manuscript to Blanche Jennings, Lawrence was keenly sensitive and restless, and edgily anticipated her comments (p. 61). Her few remarks disappointed him, yet he agreed with her judgment. On 3 August he replied: 'Your remarks on Laetitia are exceedingly just. If you think it worth the trouble, I will write the thing again, and stop up the mouth of Cyril – I will kick him out – I hate the fellow. I will give Lettie a few rough shakings; I will keep Alice all the way through – .'[12] And he asked for more advice: 'Have you anything to say on the Annable part? Is it really coarse (Mrs Dax says it is)? Shall I introduce more characters? Shall I leave out lots of incidents? I *will* leave out Cyril, the fool' (p. 69). An unidentified girl friend of Blanche Jennings also read the manuscript, and Lawrence remarked: 'I simply roll at the opinions of your friend. You have made me acquainted with her in them, and I love her' (pp. 71–2).

More importantly, Lawrence's comment about his novel's 'circle of female acquaintances' (p. 61) must have prompted Blanche Jennings to remark upon Lawrence's imbalance of relationships. He replied

> You tell me I have no male friends. The man I have been working with in the hay [Alan Chambers] is the original of my George, – lacking, alas, the other's subtlety of sympathetic discrimination which lent him his nobility. But I am very fond of my friend, and he of me. Sometimes, often, he is as gentle as a woman towards me.[13]

Lawrence then compared at length the value of male and female relationships, in the course of which he wrote: 'You are right, I value the friendship of men more than that of women' (p. 65). He valued a man's sympathetic understanding for its depth, but insisted that it was usually narrow; whereas a woman's response was broader, but more shallow. Turning back to the novel, Lawrence diagnosed the flaw in the loves of his characters:

> Laetitia [i.e. Lettie], you see, responded, and that very weakly, to Leslie, only in the sex melody. It needed that the other chords of her nature, the finer, should be jangled in an agony of discord before she realised how much she was sacrificing. Most women realise it too late, don't they? Of course I give Lettie credit for a far finer soul than the majority of women; and George, for his part, than men. I am not sure whether the chords of sex, and the fine chords of noble feeling do not inevitably produce a discord; in other words, whether one could possibly marry and hold as a wife a woman before whom one's soul sounded its deepest notes. (pp. 66–7)

[12] *Letters*, i. 68–9. Cyril's comments were cut down in the next version and Alice plays an important role in part III, so DHL did take Blanche Jennings' advice.

[13] Ibid. 65. See part II, chap. VIII below.

This is the central theme of the novel: the failure of love and marriage to coincide, from the stifling discord of Mrs Beardsall's marriage, through the ennui that Lettie tolerates with Leslie, to the disintegrating hatred and loathing between George and Meg that is presented against the rare happiness, albeit limited, achieved by Emily and Tom. It also mirrors the conflict within Lawrence's personal life. His search for a satisfactory relationship with a woman in whom desire and intellect would be equally conjoined was frustrated by his mother's possession of his love. Simultaneously, his reverential infatuation with his mother turned him against his father, and left him self-righteously puritanical about dissolute male behaviour: this hostility is strongly evident in Cyril's insensitive condemnation of his father and of George's decline, and in Emily's overbearing morality.

Lawrence's distrust of men caused him deliberately to avoid involving them in important personal matters: 'Give a man that damned rot "Laetitia"? I'm not such a fool. I told you most men had only about four strings to their souls; my friends are such. I talk to them about intellectual things, sex matters, and frivolities, never about anything I care deeply for' (p. 71). The scornful tone belies the yearning Lawrence had for deep male friendships, but it does clarify his disillusionment with the incompleteness of male relationships. So he instinctively opened his soul to women, in the hope of drawing out an immediate response, such as he must have received from Blanche Jennings:

> I did Laetitia about a year ago. The Father incident is not unnecessary – there is a point; there are heaps of points; I told you there would be, but you have not bothered to find them; quite rightly, too. I will re-write some time, and your suggestions will be valuable. Do you feel me bowing to you? One little thing I will say seriously. Laetitia was written during the year that I changed from boyhood to manhood, my first year in college. It is a frightful experience to grow up, I think, it hurts horribly; but when you have got over it, it is delightful...I doubted [my professors], I began to despise and distrust things; I lost my rather deep religious faith; I lost my idealism and my wistfulness, and I wrote Laetitia in that year... (p. 72)

The next rewriting would change the novel radically.

'Nethermere' (the third version)

With his departure in October 1908 for a teaching post at Croydon, Lawrence left his family and friends for the first time in his life. He was twenty-three years old and had rarely travelled beyond the Midlands. The first few months of his new life disturbed him greatly; the urban environment exiled him from

the country he loved, making him lonely and homesick: 'Here am I a stranger in a strange land' (p. 82). Teaching required a sternness which was unnatural to Lawrence: 'the fight of school...is bitter enough at the best; it is the cruellest and most humiliating sport, this of teaching...I had rather endure anything than this continual, petty, debasing struggle' (p. 93). But by the end of February, the tone of his letters to Louie Burrows, his most intimate female friend at college and now also a teacher, was completely altered: 'School is really very pleasant here. I have tamed my wild beasts – I have conquered my turbulent subjects, and can teach in ease and comfort' (p. 117).

During this period of adjustment, Lawrence took a fresh look at his novel. Late in October 1908, he asked Blanche Jennings to return the manuscript: 'I have pretty well decided to give up study; and to comfort my poor soap-bubble of a soul with writing...I want to have another whack at Laetitia, to take the sentimentality out of her. I long to be a dear little God, and evolve her soul, or metempsychose it' (p. 85).

It was at this critical period, when Lawrence felt disillusioned with teaching, alienated from everything around him and dissatisfied with his writing, that he read *Eugénie Grandet* and became intoxicated by Balzac (p. 89).

I consider the book as perfect a novel as I have ever read. It is wonderfully concentrated; there is nothing superfluous, nothing out of place...It is rather astonishing that we, the cold English, should have to go to the flashy French for level-headed, fair, unrelenting realism. Can you find a grain of sentimentality in *Eugénie*? Can you find a touch of melodrama, or caricature, or flippancy? It is all in tremendous earnestness...It makes me drop my head and sit silent. Balzac can lay bare the living body of the great Life better than anybody in the world. (p. 91)

This critical sensitivity to Balzac enabled Lawrence to recognise his own faults:

I have nearly read Laetitia. It bores me mightily in parts. You can none of you find one essence of its failure: it is that I have dragged in conversations to explain matters that two lines of ordinary prose would have accomplished far better; I must cut out many pages of talk, and replace them with a few paragraphs of plain description or narrative; secondly, one is cloyed with metaphoric fancy; thirdly, folk talk about themes too much; – slight incidents – such as the sugar in *Eugénie*[14] – should display character, not fine speeches; fourthly, I don't believe Lettie ever did break her engagement with Leslie – she married him. The construction – changeable and erratic as it is – is defensible; there are some fine, swift bits, e.g. the latter half of the party; there are some strong scenes, e.g. – the churchyard scene with Annable, the motor accident, and, for a moment, Leslie's appeal to Lettie when he comes to her sick; and also the death of the father; there is some rare suggestiveness – the burial

[14] See Honoré de Balzac, *Eugénie Grandet* (1833), chap. III.

of the keeper, the idiot girl 'Christmas'.[15] The 'father' scene is *not* ugly and superfluous. I will defend my construction throughout.

The characters are often weak – the men – George and Leslie especially. Lettie herself is not bad. The rest are undeveloped. What the whole thing needs is that the essential should be differentiated from the non-essential. I will have another go at it this winter. The theme is abominable – I blush for myself. (p. 92)

During the next year, there are only three references to the novel in the surviving letters. Lawrence wrote to Blanche Jennings on 20 January 1909: 'I am astonished to find how maudlin is ["Laetitia"]. It needed to come out here to toughen me off a bit; I am a fearful, sickly sentimentalist' (p. 106). At the end of February, Lawrence replied unconvincingly to Louie Burrows's enquiries about his writing: 'I continue that old work of mine. Sometime, I hope, it will be finished. I have to do it over and over again, to make it decent. Some time, surely, it will be of some value – and then you shall read it too' (p. 118). (Lawrence never told her much about his actual writing of the novel.) And in May he asked Jessie Chambers, who was in most respects the model for Emily: 'Do you mind if, *in the novel*, I make Emily marry Tom?'[16]

These few casual mentions reflect the decline in influence of Lawrence's old advisers. All kinds of new experiences attracted him: he had formed a strong attachment to the children of the Jones family with whom he was to live for more than three years; he now wrote of his long trips into Surrey and Kent and Sussex, country which he found more beautiful than the best his homeland had to offer (pp. 90–1); London itself fascinated him, not the least for its contrasting grandeur and poverty (pp. 115–16); he was soon busy, going to concerts and theatres, attending a variety of public lectures in Croydon, visiting the Royal Academy, the Tate, Dulwich and National Galleries; and he was making new friends in Croydon, fellow-teachers (mostly women) who were sympathetic to his literary aspirations.

During the first weeks of 1909, Lawrence began to feel at home in Croydon, even enthusiastic. He had not only found a new confidence in his teaching, but he was developing a more purposeful attitude towards his writing, since writing rather than teaching had become his goal. Lawrence recalled in 1929:

I had been tussling away for four years getting out ['Laetitia'] in inchoate bits, from the underground of my consciousness. I must have written most of it five or six times, but only in intervals, never as a task or a divine labour, or in the groans of parturition.

I would dash at it, do a bit, show it to the girl [Jessie Chambers]; she always

[15] This incident is not included in the final manuscript.

[16] E.T. 119.

admired it; then realise afterwards it wasn't what I wanted, and have another dash. But at Croydon I had worked at it fairly steadily, in the evenings after school.[17]

The next stage in the development of the novel, the writing of 'Nethermere' in 1909, is confirmed by Arthur McLeod, the only man on the staff of Davidson Road School with whom Lawrence had a real affinity. McLeod was a close confidant on literary matters, and recalled:

I found out [Lawrence] was at work on a novel when he asked me, if I was going into Croydon, to get him a lot of sermon paper at Boots'. Sermon paper was a new term to me and I asked whether he was writing theology. Then I heard about *The White Peacock* and one day got that sermon paper back, no longer blank, with the anxious demand to let him know if it was good.[18]

McLeod must have read the 'Nethermere' manuscript: the one complete manuscript of 798 pages to have survived, bearing the crossed-out title 'Nethermere' on the first page, is written on Boots's exercise paper.[19]

In writing 'Nethermere', Lawrence tried to be more conscious of the qualities he admired in Balzac: to make his language less rhapsodic, and his style less flowery; and the entirely new part III revealed the characters by descriptive narrative instead of relying upon dialogue. Cyril was made into a more distanced narrator, but he remains opinionated and moralistic. George and Lettie, each having married 'safely' in keeping with their social rank rather than their instincts, find life hollow. The novel shifts from romantic illusion to startling disillusionment.

Jessie Chambers's receipt of the manuscript was recalled by her brother, J. D. Chambers: 'He insisted on submitting his work to her unerring judgment of what was best in him, even though for her it was a process of laceration.'[20] Her distress may account for some of the deletions Lawrence later made to parts of 'Nethermere', where Emily is severely criticised. Despite Lawrence's brusque remark about her partiality, she proved a critical reader, even if she may not have spoken her mind fully to Lawrence at this time. She described the 'Nethermere' rewriting:

[17] 'Autobiographical Sketch' in Nehls, i. 102–3. Cf. 'Autobiography', '[I] used to write bits of poems and patches of *The White Peacock* during lectures [at University College, Nottingham]' (Nehls, iii. 232).

[18] Harry T. Moore, *The Priest of Love: A Life of D. H. Lawrence* (New York, 1974) (revised edition, original title *The Intelligent Heart*, New York, 1954), pp. 90–1.

[19] The manuscript lacks four pages, but is otherwise complete. It was originally in gatherings of six pages folded once, but these have been cut at the fold; the resulting sections of twelve written pages ($8 \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ inches) are numbered consecutively by DHL in roman numerals. It was deposited with Helen Corke (see 'Final revision' below) when DHL left Croydon in 1912; since 1934 it has been in the collection of Mr George Lazarus.

[20] Nehls, i. 51. (DHL also sent her the manuscript for *Sons and Lovers*.)

The story developed into a subtle study in self-portraiture. Cyril and Letty are each aspects of Lawrence, with Emily as a foil to both. George developed from the simple, God-fearing yeoman into the man whose inner growth has been arrested, with the consequent proliferation into decay. It was an immense stride forward from the first conception, and he struck me as a figure of sinister prophecy. It seems to me not without significance that in this first novel Lawrence should portray no fewer than three men whose lives come to complete frustration, while Cyril is a purely negative figure.[21]

Jessie Chambers's admiration for Lawrence's work had led her in June 1909 to send some of his poems to the *English Review*. Lawrence was invited to visit the editor in London, and he wrote excitedly to Louie Burrows on 11 September:

But you see [the poems] are all in the rough, and want revising, so this week and so on I am very hard at work, slogging verse into form. I shall be glad when I have finished: then I may get on with the prose work. The editor, Ford Madox Hueffer, says he will be glad to read any of the work I like to send him –.[22]

Hueffer had launched the *English Review* in 1908 as a radical, avant-garde journal publishing the work of an extraordinary galaxy of new and established writers: it was indisputably the most important literary and social review in the early years of this century. Hueffer's encouragement boosted Lawrence immensely, and by 1 November, he wrote for the first time in six months to his old confidante Blanche Jennings: 'I have just sent up to Mr Hueffer my novel, which I have re-written, and which is much altered. I have added a third part, have married Lettie and Leslie and George and Meg, and Emily to a stranger and myself to nobody. Oh Lord – what a farce' (p. 141). By 20 November, Lawrence could report to Louie Burrows that 'Hueffer is reading my novel. He says it's good, and is going to get it published for me' (p. 144). Later, Lawrence described Hueffer's reaction:

Hueffer asked at once to see the manuscript. He read it immediately, with the greatest cheery sort of kindness and bluff. And in his queer voice, when we were in an omnibus in London, he shouted in my ear: 'It's got every fault that the English novel can have.'

Just then the English novel was supposed to have so many faults, in comparison with the French, that it was hardly allowed to exist at all. 'But,' shouted Hueffer in the 'bus, 'you've got GENIUS.'[23]

Hueffer also introduced Lawrence to the literary world; through him Lawrence met H. G. Wells, Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats.

[21] E.T. 118–19.

[22] *Letters*, i. 137–8. Five poems ('Dreams Old and Nascent' I and II; 'Baby Movements' I and II; and 'Discipline'), under the general title 'A Still Afternoon', appeared in the November issue (vol. iii, pp. 561–5).

[23] Nehls, i. 103.

Hueffer remembered 'the young author' insisting on lengthy and detailed discussions: 'And when I suggested breathing spaces for walks in the Park he would say that that wasn't what he had sacrificed his Croydon Saturday or Sunday for. And he held my nose down over this passage or that passage and ordered me to say *why* I suggested this emendation or that.'[24] It is not clear how long they worked together over the 'Nethermere' manuscript. Certainly, Hueffer had approved of the novel almost a month earlier than Lawrence suggested in his rather ingenuous letter to William Heinemann of 15 December 1909:

> I have just received the accompanying letter from Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer. I hasten to forward it to you, and in doing so to offer you the novel of which he speaks.
>
> It is my first. I have as yet published nothing but a scrap of verse. At the moment I feel a trifle startled and somewhat elated by Mr. Hueffer's letter, but already a grain of doubt is germinating in me.
>
> I hope you will allow me to send you the MSS. Of course I am willing to fulfil all Mr. Hueffer's injunctions. I know nothing of the publishing of books. (pp. 148–9)

The manuscript was delivered personally by Violet Hunt, novelist and story writer, who lived with Ford Madox Hueffer.[25] Heinemann's partner Sydney Pawling accepted the novel eagerly within a few days of receiving it, according to Violet Hunt.[26]

Final revision of 'Nethermere' manuscript

But before 'Nethermere' could be published, Lawrence had to make some revisions. He wrote to Louie Burrows on 23 January 1910: 'My novel is practically accepted. I went up to Wm Heinemann on Friday: he read me his readers crits: mostly good. I am to alter a bit in parts, then the thing will come out, and I shall have royalties' (p. 152). The nature of the alteration required by Heinemann, referred to in a letter from Lawrence to the firm, was to satisfy the possible objections of 'the old ladies of Croydon'.[27] In February, Lawrence showed the manuscript to Helen Corke, a fellow schoolteacher and Lawrence's most intimate friend in Croydon; she recalled: 'He says it is his first novel and has been accepted by the firm of Heinemann, who return it for a final revision. Will I "read the manuscript and make suggestions, especially marking passages showing prolixity".'[28]

[24] Ibid., i. 120–1. [25] Ibid., i. 127. [26] Ibid., i. 128.

[27] This letter, now missing, was recalled by a member of Heinemann's staff, in correspondence with the editor.

[28] Helen Corke, 'Portrait of D. H. Lawrence, 1909–10', *Texas Quarterly*, v (Spring 1962), 171. Cf. her more fictionalised – and thus less reliable – account in 'Concerning *The White Peacock*', *Texas Quarterly*, ii (Winter 1959); 186–7: 'Will I look through it with an eye for split infinitives and obscurities of phrase...?' See also *D. H. Lawrence's 'Princess': A Memory of Jessie Chambers* (Thames Ditton, Surrey, 1951), p. 9.

As a result, the manuscript (hereafter MS) was considerably revised, and Lawrence asked friends in Croydon to help by copying parts of it out. Helen Corke declared in 1934:

Four of the writer's friends, Miss Agnes Mason, Miss Agnes Holt, Miss Jessie Chambers and myself, assisted him, the first named three by making fair copies of those pages of his manuscript which were so heavily revised as not to be easily legible, I by certain general minor corrections to the whole. The original pages were destroyed, and the fair copies were incorporated in the manuscript, which then received the author's final personal revision.[29]

This is the only record of the recopying and is inaccurate in a number of details. With 629 pages wholly in Lawrence's hand, the remaining 169 pages are in four hands, but none of the writing is by Jessie Chambers. Helen Corke contributed not only by correcting grammatical slips and by supplying additional punctuation to both Lawrence's work and that of other scribes, but she also copied out five pages of MS.[30] She had been introduced to Lawrence by Agnes Mason, the only woman on the teaching staff at Davidson Road School. Agnes Mason had been kind and understanding to Lawrence, and they were good friends: she copied out seventy-six pages.[31] The third scribe was Agnes Holt, another local schoolteacher, whom Lawrence briefly contemplated marrying (p. 143). A comparison of letters in her hand with the MS shows that she was responsible for copying out the first seventy-six pages, though she later denied having any involvement.[32] Because their relationship had ended by Christmas 1909, it is likely that these pages were copied out immediately after Lawrence's consultations with Hueffer in November, and were thus incorporated in the manuscript submitted to Heinemann in December. The fourth hand has not been identified: this scribe copied out one twelve-page section.[33] The presence of these other hands affects the authority of some scribal punctuation and spelling, which clash with Lawrence's usual forms: although the MS was revised again by Lawrence, and the majority of the scribal pages contain his own corrections and further revisions, he did not systematically correct these

[29] This document, which established the provenance of the manuscript when it was sold in 1934, is in the possession of Mr George Lazarus.

[30] Helen Corke transcribed MS pp. 89, 554, 565, 567 and 569. See the introductory note to the textual apparatus for the corresponding passages in this edition for this and the other scribal pages.

[31] MS pages 77–82, 90–1, 117–19, 124, 126, 134–5, 160, 164, 167, 171, 202, 272–326 and 330. Agnes Mason inscribed a copy of Maurice Hewlett's *The Forest Lovers* to Helen Corke in 1905; this hand matches the above pages.

[32] Letter to Professor James T. Boulton, 31 May 1970.

[33] MS pp. 738–49; the hand is not that of any of the most likely candidates: Ada Lawrence (DHL's sister), Louie Burrows or Mrs Jones, his Croydon landlady.

minor variations. This is the first case of a general phenomenon in Lawrence's writing-life. He invited this kind of help, or suffered interference, at various stages of many pieces of writing. There is no evidence, however, that he compared any stage with a previous one to see if error had been introduced. If it seemed satisfactory when he read it, he let it stand, often overlooking plausible mistranscriptions or minor inconsistencies. His interest was always in further revision, towards the next stage in what seems an endless process of creation.

On 9 March, Lawrence wrote to Louie Burrows that he had 'nearly finished the novel' (p. 156), but it was another month before the revision was completed. On 11 April he sent the MS to Pawling. His accompanying letter clearly indicated the pressure exerted on him by the publishers to purify and prune the novel to their taste:

> I send you herewith the MS. of my novel 'Nethermere'. It has been a new labour of Hercules. A good deal of it, including the whole of the third part, I have re-written. To be sure, it needed it. I think I have removed all the offensive morsels, all the damns, the devils and the sweat. I hope nothing of the kind remains. My own skin is not super-sensitive, so I can hardly judge what will make delicate people dither. But to my fancy, it is now all quite suitable even for the proverbial jeune fille – a kind of exquisite scented soap, in fact.
>
> I am sorry the manuscript is in such scandalous disarray, but I have done my best to keep it tidy. I am sorry, also, that I could not compress it any further. It is a pity, but I could not cut my man to fit your cloth. I have snipped him where I could, and have tried to make him solid. If there is anything further I can do, I shall be very glad. I am the most docile, the most amenable of pens. I sincerely hope you will like the novel now. (p. 158)

Here we find the first instance of another phenomenon which plagued Lawrence throughout his writing career. 'The old ladies of Croydon' were taken to be very refined indeed, and shocked by anything physical or by the mildest of expletives. It was his first censorship – and it was to complicate the last stages of publication as well as this stage of revision. Pawling acknowledged receipt of the MS on 25 April, and must have asked for further revision, or rather excision, because Lawrence wrote straight back on 27 April and stated emphatically:

> I think the novel is complete and final in its form as I have sent it you; also I think you will not find it actually so lengthy as the weight of the manuscript might lead one to suppose...I will delete as much as I can in phrases and perhaps here and there a paragraph from the proofs, but there are now no passages of any length that I could take out. (p. 159)

By this time Lawrence was immersed in the first writing of *The Trespasser*,

which he had already half finished.[34] Meanwhile, arrangements for the publication of 'Nethermere' went satisfactorily. On 1 June, Lawrence wrote to Helen Corke: 'Heinemann was very nice: doesn't want me to alter anything: will publish in Sept. or October, the best season: we have signed agreements concerning royalties, and I have agreed to give him the next novel' (p. 161). The contract for the novel is formally dated 2 June 1910, and provided Lawrence with a royalty of 15 per cent of the published price.[35] He must have felt relieved by Heinemann's final acceptance of the novel, as he explained in a letter of 24 June to Frederick Atkinson, Heinemann's reader: 'When I have *finished* a writing, I hate it. In it, I am vulnerable, naked in a thickly clothed crowd. Dont send me that M.S.S. to revise again. Let the proofs be the next thing, please' (p. 167).

Before the proofs came, however, Lawrence had to find another title, as Heinemann was evidently unhappy about 'Nethermere'; on 1 June, after telling Helen Corke about his meeting with the publisher, Lawrence added casually: 'By the way, I have got to find a new title.'[36] He suggested various possibilities in a letter to Atkinson written on 14 June:

I have not yet thought of a title for that thing of mine: that is to say, I have thought of hundreds of titles, and rejected them all. They go in groups. I will tell you, then perhaps you will mark out which you think is the right tack.

Group I – which is designed to give a truly rural odour and at the same time a touching picture of the futility of agitated humanity:

'Lapwings' (sad, lamentable birds – recall my effusions) – 'Pee wits' (the same) – 'The Cry of the Peacock' (a discordant row of selfishness triumphant – please refer to the keeper-graveyard-Lady An[nabel scene?]) – 'The White Peacock' (to wit [...]

Group II – take a parable to explain a parable – brilliant philosophical method. – :

'The Talent in the Napkin' (a lovely title – Lettie folds her talent in the napkin of Leslie) – 'The Talent, the Beggar, and the Box' (quite Oliver Hobbesy). But I weary myself and you. (p. 163)

Annoyingly the letter is torn immediately following the reference to the title 'The White Peacock', so one cannot say what meaning Lawrence attached to it in 1910. However, his symbol of the peacock as 'selfishness triumphant' closely resembles an earlier observation; in October 1908, when the peacock scene first made its appearance, Lawrence had demanded: 'What devil was

[34] *Letters*, i. 159. In his preoccupation with his second novel, DHL accidentally included the hero's name 'Siegmund' in the 'Nethermere' MS; see note on 255:16.

[35] The contract, in a private collection, also allowed a 10 per cent royalty on cheaper editions; 3d. per copy for sales of Heinemann's Colonial Library edition; and 50 per cent of all profits from publication in the USA.

[36] *Letters*, i. 162. Heinemann inserted into the contract 'provisionally entitled: Nethermere'.

it that decreed that above all things men (and women supremely) must to themselves seem superbly virtuous? The deep damnation of self-righteousness sticks tight to every creed, to every 'ism' and every 'ite'; but it lies thick all over the Ruskinite, like painted feathers on a skinny peacock' (pp. 80–1).

But only ten days after suggesting the title, Lawrence wrote to Atkinson:

> That 'White Peacock' must be shot: it is a bird from the pen of Wilkie Collins or of Ibsen.
>
> 'Now droops the milk-white peacock like a ghost.'
>
> Nay, I would not for worlds capture *that* poor creature and haul it round in a 'one-object show'.[37]

Instead, he preferred 'Tendrils': '"Tendrils" is what "George" is always putting forth. He's like white bryony, that flourishes tendrils hysterically for things that are out of reach' (p. 167). Lawrence soon despaired of finding a suitable title, and by 24 July, had become impatient at the insistence of the publisher (pp. 169, 172). Lawrence had suggested then withdrawn the final title, but the publisher must have decided to retain it.

Galley proofs

Lawrence was both annoyed and puzzled at the publisher's delays, not knowing that the process of publication in England was being complicated and extended by the arrangements for publication in the USA. His letters of 15 July and 4 August 1910 show that he was eager to have the proofs which had been promised for the second date (pp. 169–70, 175). His mother fell ill towards the end of August, increasing his anxiety and the financial pressure on him.

Proofs reached him from the end of August (p. 177). He was sent two sets of galleys, which he corrected, sending on one set to Louie Burrows,[38] with some but not all of his corrections written on them, and returning the other set to Heinemann. It would appear that these proofs were sent by Heinemann to the USA to be used as copy by an American printer who set the whole book again in a different type, thus complicating the textual history. It seems an extraordinary thing to do, since it would have meant writing off the original cost of setting in England. But printing in 1910 was cheap, and the commercial advantage must have weighed in favour of the more complicated course of resetting. The most likely reason is that

[37] *Letters*, i. 166–7. The quotation is from Tennyson's *The Princess* (1847), vii. 181.

[38] *Letters*, i. 178. The proofs must have been returned at some time to DHL because they were given to the University of California at Los Angeles in 1955 by William Hougland, who was a close friend of Frieda Lawrence, according to Mr Brooke Whiting, Curator of Rare Books.

Heinemann had concluded an arrangement with the American publishers, Duffield – perhaps at a fairly late stage. To secure an American copyright, Duffield had to manufacture the book in the USA and publish before Heinemann. Duffield presumably offered to supply Heinemann with a set of stereotype moulds taken from the American resetting, so that Heinemann could cast plates from these and print copies in England. This arrangement explains both the time taken to publish the book, which baffled Lawrence, and the bibliographical evidence obtained by comparing the American and English editions. There is no record of the financial arrangement, but Duffield presumably paid Heinemann a royalty on American sales, or an outright sum for the whole edition, and could have offered the moulds or plates at the small cost of making them, so that Heinemann would lose little if anything by scrapping his own typesetting.

The surviving galley proofs are the duplicate set which Lawrence sent on to Louie Burrows. The proofs carry dates and the names of five compositors, and record the progress of setting: the first is dated 13 August and the last 26 August. The set is not quite complete: the galleys are numbered 1–124, but number 59 is missing and the tops of three galleys are torn off, losing the first few lines of text.[39] The set contains extensive corrections and revisions by Lawrence.

These galleys and Lawrence's letters give the dates for composition (13–26 August) and correction (*c.* 30 August–18 September). The closeness of the dates confirms that the printing, so far, had been carried out in England, just as the otherwise inexplicable delay thereafter points to the complication introduced by the American resetting.

On 2 September Lawrence wrote to Louie Burrows: 'I understand mother is worse...I sent mother some of the first batch of proofs of the novel. She will not be able to read them. Ask Auntie [Ada Krenkow] to let you have them when you go again, and you shall have the rest' (p. 177). Lawrence had probably written to the publishers telling them of his mother's illness and reminding them of his wish to read the proofs. On 8 September, Sydney Pawling wrote to Lawrence apologising for the delay and sending a cheque for £15 as an advance on royalties – which may have been used to help with the cost of treating his mother (p. 177n). Lawrence replied the same day, busy at work on the second batch of proofs, but suffering from 'a neuralgia in my eyes' (p. 177). On 9 September he sent Louie Burrows the spare set of the second batch of proofs after he had corrected them. He recorded on this set most but not all of the corrections he had made on the master set

[39] For the three torn sheets, see notes on 263:28–35, 266:7–15 and 269:3–7 below.