

THE LETTERS OF
D. H. LAWRENCE

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INTRODUCTION

This volume differs from its predecessors in several ways. It covers a shorter period of Lawrence's life, a mere fifteen months, and records a greater than usual density of correspondence. The explanation is probably not that Lawrence wrote more letters in this period than in any other; rather that a higher proportion has survived. Whole archives of business letters were kept intact: not only those involving the staff of Curtis Brown Ltd, Lawrence's literary agents, especially Laurence Pollinger and Nancy Pearn; but also those of Giuseppe Orioli, publisher of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Story of Doctor Manente*; Charles Lahr, publisher of *Pansies*; P. R. Stephensen, publisher of *The Paintings of D. H. Lawrence* and *A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover"*; and Edward Titus, publisher of the Paris popular edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Lawrence's private correspondents, aware of his distinction, also felt under some obligation – perhaps prompted by affection, respect, knowledge of his terminal illness or, occasionally, self-interest – to preserve everything he wrote, even the most casual notes. For some of the same reasons the volume contains a higher proportion, a large majority, of unpublished letters. Indeed, perhaps remarkably few of the letters Lawrence wrote in this period are not printed here.

However it must be acknowledged that in terms of expressive and imaginative vigour there is some falling off. Partly because such a large quantity of the letters are of the 'business' kind, though when it is recognised that those people to whom Lawrence wrote most frequently – Orioli, Pollinger and Lahr – became friends as well as publishers or agent, the normal connotations of 'business' are too restrictive; partly because there is no fictional work-in-progress to be discussed; and partly because of Lawrence's loss of energy as he enters the last phase of his illness: for such reasons the letters of these last months are relatively lacking in the vitality which characterises the best of those written earlier, though it sparkles here and there. Lawrence himself was sadly aware of this. In November 1929 he remarked to his sister Emily: 'so many letters to write, I get tired to death of them'; and in the following month to Koteliensky: 'Excuse this poor letter . . .'¹ Yet even the relatively poor, drained letters have their place in tracing the shape of a life. As Aldous Huxley wrote in the Introduction to his volume of Lawrence's *Letters*: 'How tragically the splendid curve of the letters droops, at the end, towards the darkness!'²

¹ Letters 5409, 5461.

² Huxley xxxi–xxxii.

Yet in spite of this, there continue to be numerous examples of Lawrence's characteristic virtues as a letter-writer: spontaneity, freshness, evocative and flexible prose, playful humour, stinging wit ('How are the puny risen!') and, perhaps most important, sensitivity, the delicate adjustment to the occasion and the recipient. This was stressed by Rebecca West in a tribute to Lawrence after his death. She mentioned the splendid letter he wrote to her in April 1929, encouraging her to renew her 'energy like the eagle':

... a few months ago I received a letter from him thanking me for some little tribute I had paid him during the trouble about his pictures in London. This letter showed the utmost humility in him to take notice of such a small courtesy; and it showed more than that. With marvellous sensitiveness he had deduced from a phrase or two in my article that I was troubled by a certain problem, and he said words that in their affectionate encouragement and exquisite appositeness could not have been bettered if we had spent the ten years that had intervened since our meeting in the closest friendship.¹

That is a perceptive summing-up: 'words that in their affectionate encouragement and exquisite appositeness could not have been bettered'. Nowhere do these qualities shine out more than in his letters to people who were, in some sense, vulnerable, such as the young, or the socially or economically deprived or the bereaved. There is the tender regard in letters to the Pini family, the peasants who had been turned off from the Miranda estate; or the concern he reveals for the expatriate American teenager, Harwood Brewster, in an English boarding-school, growing in independence from her parents; or the compassionate advice in his letter to Caresse Crosby (written only a week before Lawrence entered the Ad Astra sanatorium), whose husband had committed suicide after killing his mistress:

Oh yes, don't you try to recover yourself too soon – it is much better to be a little blind and stunned for a time longer, and not make efforts to see or to feel. Work is the best, and a certain numbness, a merciful numbness. It was too dreadful a blow – and it was wrong.²

Lawrence himself was vulnerable in many respects, not least in his sensitivity to public hostility in the shape of prosecution, vilification and censorship of various kinds. One consequence was his increasing reliance on private publication and limited editions though he strongly objected to this type of publishing. But one principle had to give way to another: 'when a thing *can't* appear publicly, it shall appear privately, and that's all'.³ This defiance was directly responsible for the relationships he developed with several private publishers.

¹ Letters 5477, 5046; Nehls, ii. 65–6.

² Letter 5501.

³ Letter 5354.

The most significant among these new correspondents was the left-wing, eccentric London bookseller, Charles Lahr. The two men never met. Had Lawrence visited the 'Progressive Bookshop' in Red Lion Street (hence Lahr's nickname, 'the Lion'), he might have encountered such figures as the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid; the young Welsh novelist and short-story writer Rhys Davies (who was later introduced to Lawrence through Lahr); the antipodeans Eric Partridge and Jack Lindsay; or the poet Anna Wickham (whom he had previously known through the Garnetts). Kenneth Hopkins recalled that 'more or less ankle deep all over the floor, were the letters Charles had received from D. H. Lawrence, and T. F. Powys, and Liam O'Flaherty and Norman Douglas, and practically every other prominent writer of the 'twenties'.¹ Lahr had already unhesitatingly distributed copies of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and was prepared to handle the 200 copies of the cheap paper issue; Lawrence thought him 'very good, and . . . absolutely honest', a man who would sympathise with his idea 'to publish two or three poems on a sheet of paper and sell them for 2d or 3d'. Lahr was, then, just the right publisher for the unexpurgated *Pansies*, in a limited edition, though, when it came in August 1929, Lawrence was bitterly disappointed by the book's appearance: 'it looks as if the one idea had been to economise paper . . . all so crowded, some pages look like a Hansard's report'. Yet, in spite of that, and though Lahr was 'a wee bit of a muddler, and careless in details . . . he is a man in ten thousand'. Lawrence was 'very grateful to him for his pluck and energy'.²

These were the qualities Lawrence looked for in his publishers and because they were so often lacking – Martin Secker, his main English publisher, for example, would publish only an expurgated *Pansies* – he had increasingly to act as his own agent and salesman. (Much of the voluminous correspondence with his agents, Curtis Brown, is concerned with urging Pollinger to stir Secker and Lawrence's main American publisher, Alfred Knopf, into energetic action.) Most of his principal works from the last years were handled by Lawrence himself; no general publisher would dare to be associated with them. The private edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is the chief example; it earned Lawrence more than any other of his books. To

¹ Kenneth Hopkins, *The Corruption of a Poet* (1954), p. 128.

² Letters 4788, 4869, 5246, 5315. In his unpublished history of the *Pansies* typescript (Roberts E302g), John Taylor Caldwell claims that – before Lahr agreed to publish the volume – DHL had viewed Guy Alfred Aldred (1886–1963), the voluminous, Communist author, as a possibility. The champion of a free press, Aldred had been prosecuted for publishing seditious works, but private publishing for gain would not have appealed to him. (No mention is made of any correspondence with DHL in Aldred's autobiography, *No Traitor's Gait*, Glasgow, 1955–63.)

circumvent the efforts of ‘censor-morons’ he took great pains (including a health-sapping visit to Paris) to find a publisher for a cheap ‘popular’ edition of the same work. The Crosbys published *The Escaped Cock* on their Black Sun Press in Paris, with the author’s water-colour decorations (perhaps the most beautiful edition of any Lawrence book). Stephensen took on Lawrence’s paintings as the first publication by his Mandrake Press, and another handsome volume resulted.

In his personal dealings with these private publishers Lawrence demanded fair terms and scrupulous accounting, reflected, for example in his letter to Caresse Crosby, 12 August 1929, or the opening paragraph of his last letter to Titus:¹ he had been taken in too often in the past. The deceit and dilatoriness of commercial publishers, especially in the USA, incensed him. It was doubtless his bitterness as well as Frieda’s which burst out in her letter to Titus, 5 February 1930: ‘It does’nt seem to matter, *who* has the books, but that this priceless & unique property should bring us not 200 dollars a year in America & Lawr having sweatted his guts out for this filthy humanity, that does’nt even pay him back in money *not to speak of life*, there he gets *nothing* – It makes me quite furious’.²

As Lawrence grew physically ever weaker and devoted so much of his limited energy to ‘business’, he had little left for creative work. He had hoped to finish *Sketches of Etruscan Places* but never did; he declined Mollie Skinner’s request for a new collaboration on another novel; his imagination was fired by his own proposal to start (with Lahr) a magazine, ‘The Squib’, intended to satirise pretentiousness and hypocrisy, but it came to nothing; he tried to interest other writers in Orioli’s Lungarno Renaissance series, but his own *Story of Doctor Manente* remained its sole publication. Lawrence wrote no fiction in his last fifteen months. Apart from *Apocalypse* and four important essays – *A Propos of “Lady Chatterley’s Lover”*, *Pornography and Obscenity*, ‘New Mexico’ and ‘Nottingham and the Mining Countryside’ – he wrote only poems and short articles. Some of the latter were intended for *Vanity Fair* whose managing editor, Donald Freeman, was hoping – as late as January 1930 – to persuade Lawrence to accept a year’s contract as a regular contributor to his magazine. The *Architectural Review*, the Freedom Association and the *Star Review* were other competitors for his attention. He was unenthusiastic about what became the posthumous volume, *Assorted Articles* – ‘if it was left to me, I should say don’t do it’ – but he acquiesced, submitted the material in late December 1929 and corrected proof. ‘As for work, I haven’t felt like doing anything at all, and I am still that way. I neither write

¹ Letters 5257, 5524.

² MS SIU (‘Wednesday’).

nor paint':¹ the dejection and weariness in that remark, made in November 1929, find recurring echoes in this volume.

* * *

When, in mid-November 1928, the Lawrences left 'that poky island', the Ile de Port-Cros, they had little idea where they wanted to go. As Lawrence had told the Brewsters, 'I think we shall only just go over to Bandol, on the coast between Toulon and Marseilles, for a little while, just to gather our wits and decide where to go.'² Frieda wanted a house – she became bored in the hotel – but could not decide whether it should be on Lake Garda, at Taormina or the ranch which she owned near Taos, New Mexico; Lawrence preferred to return to Italy to do more work on the Etruscans, or to visit Spain – he even fantasised about Zululand as he had done some years earlier.³ In the event, life was so easy and comfortable, though a little dull, at the Hotel Beau Rivage that they stayed there all winter, until March 1929. Frieda recalled:

A sunny hotel by the sea, friendly and easy as only Provence can be . . . Lawrence wrote 'Pansies' in his room in the morning, then we went to have our aperitif before lunch in a cafe on the sea-front . . . We knew all the dogs of the small place, we saw the boats come in, their silvery loads of sardines glittering on the sand of the shores. Lawrence . . . watched the men playing 'boccia' on the shore, after lunch. We seemed to share the life of the little town, running along so easily . . . Yes, easy and sunny was this winter in Bandol.⁴

Lawrence's health improved. He spent not a single day in bed that winter. He wrote some newspaper articles and an introduction to Edward Dahlberg's novel, *Bottom Dogs*; he completed several paintings. And there was a stream of visitors: his sister Ada, Frieda's daughter Barbara, Rhys Davies, Aldous and Maria, Julian and Juliette Huxley, P. R. Stephensen and the young American critic and painter Brewster Ghiselin.

The calm was shattered on 21 January: news arrived from Pollinger that, three days earlier, the police had seized six copies of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* addressed to him. More important, the typescript of *Pansies* was also intercepted in the post and once again, after fourteen years, Lawrence's affairs became matters of political debate. In the Commons on 28 February 1929 Mr Pethick-Lawrence, on behalf of the Labour M.P., Miss Ellen Wilkinson, asked the Home Secretary 'whether he gave instructions for a manuscript of poems sent by Mr. D. H. Lawrence to his literary agent to be seized before any question of publication arose'. Sir W. Joynson Hicks (popularly known as 'Jix') replied that he gave no such instructions. He went on to explain:

¹ Letters 5285, 5362, 5471 and n. 1; 5244 and nn. 1 and 2; 5399; 5468; 5403.

² Letter 4752; *Letters*, vi. 608.

³ Letter 4762; cf. *Letters*, iii. 416–17, 449.

⁴ Frieda Lawrence 211.

Under the Post Office Act of 1908 the duty is laid upon the Postmaster-General to refuse to take part in the conveyance of any indecent matter, and the Postal Union Convention of Stockholm, 1924, also prohibits the transmission through the post of indecent matter. In this case the typescripts were sent through the open book post from abroad and were detected in the course of the examination to which a proportion of such packets are subjected for the purpose of detecting whether letters or other matter not conveyed at that rate are contained in the packet. The typescripts were sent to the Home Office and by my directions were then forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions. I am advised that there is no possible doubt whatever that these contain indecent matter and, as such, are liable to seizure. I have, however, given instructions that they shall be detained for two months to enable the author to establish the contrary if he desires to do so.¹

Joynson Hicks then had the effrontery to assert that 'there is nothing which can properly be described as a literary censorship in this country'. In answer to a further question he admitted that 'nobody, no official of the State, can open a sealed packet without the direct warrant of the Secretary of State': Lawrence's typescript had been mailed by sealed and registered letter post. As Lawrence had told Orioli the week before: 'the blow has fallen!'²

He had been afraid of police intervention for some months and was not therefore taken by surprise. Though he dismissed the notion that the police were reading his mail, in December 1928 he suggested to Lahr that he could 'address the letters to my wife ... there must be thousands of Mrs Lawrences'.³ He was apprehensive that he would face arrest if he returned to England and this made him sensitive to the situation elsewhere: he hesitated about going to Spain, for example, because the country was politically disturbed, the police were on the alert 'everywhere wanting to look at people's papers'. The fear of arrest in England persisted; as a result he took the decision in May 1929 not to attend the Warren Gallery exhibition of his paintings. (In July Nancy Pearn advised Frieda to consult their friend, the barrister St John Hutchinson, 'as to the advisability or otherwise' of Lawrence's coming to England.) Later, in August, when Lahr's unexpurgated *Pansies* was published, Lawrence told Titus: 'I have to keep quiet about it as the police are getting fierce because I defy them.'⁴ Not surprisingly paranoia appears to have exacerbated his physical decline.

Piracies of his work were another source of anxiety. Victor Gollancz, the radical publisher who had recently founded his own firm, agreed to consider issuing a cheap edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to undercut the pirates, but nothing came of it. Eventually Lawrence decided to seek publication of such

¹ Nehls, iii. 311–12. ² Letter 4898. ³ Cf. *Letters*, vi. 12–13; Letter 4783.

⁴ Letters 5000, 4926, 5094; letter from Nancy Pearn to Frieda Lawrence, 2 July 1929, TMSCT; Letter 5268.

an edition in Paris where he arrived, with Rhys Davies, on 11 March. He was obliged to stay a month to complete his business; he quickly succumbed to what he called 'Paris grippe'¹ and his health never recovered. After unsuccessful negotiations with Sylvia Beach, who had published *Ulysses*, he came to terms with another American-expatriate bookseller, Edward Titus, who published and quickly disposed of 3,000 copies of 'Our Lady' as they subsequently called the novel. While in Paris, staying with Aldous and Maria Huxley, his hosts introduced him to a number of the leading literary figures, especially those associated with the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Lawrence was unimpressed. The Lawrences also paid several visits to the rich American playboy and publisher, Harry Crosby and his wife Caresse at their Moulin du Soleil, to discuss the publication of *The Escaped Cock*.

It was on one of these visits that Lawrence came close to meeting James Joyce. On 3 April the Crosbys left Lawrence with Aldous Huxley at their home to rush off to a business meeting with Joyce. They invited him to return with them but 'he didn't want to meet Lawrence – said his eye hurt him – he is very timid'.² He may have had other reasons for not wishing to meet Lawrence of whom he remarked to the Italian writer, Nino Frank: 'Cet homme écrit vraiment très mal.' When Stuart Gilbert later read him some pages from *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Joyce responded with the single word 'Lush!'; he wrote to Harriet Weaver in December 1931: 'I read the first 2 pages of the usual sloppy English, and S.G. read me a lyrical bit about nudism in a wood and the end which is a piece of propaganda in favour of something which, outside of D.H.L.'s country at any rate, makes all the propaganda for itself.'³ Lawrence had an even lower opinion of *Ulysses*: 'The last part of it is the dirtiest, most indecent, obscene thing ever written.' And of *Finnegans Wake* Brewster learned: 'What a stupid *olla podrida* of the Bible and so forth ... just stewed-up fragments of quotation in the sauce of a would-be-dirty mind. Such effort! Such exertion! *sforzato davvero!*'⁴

At last, on 7 April, the Lawrences were able to escape from Paris – 'that city of dreadful night' – to Mallorca – 'a wonderful place for doing nothing'.⁵ They remained there till mid-June when Lawrence joined the Huxleys at Forte dei Marmi, while Frieda was in London to see the exhibition in the Warren Gallery. That opened on 14 June; on 5 July the police removed, of the twenty-five paintings, thirteen which were judged by the police officer,

¹ Letter 5035.

² Harry Crosby, *Shadows of the Sun*, ed. E. Germain (Santa Barbara, 1977), p. 245.

³ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (1982 edn), p. 615 and n. (Joyce to Frank: 'This man really writes very badly.')

⁴ Dorothy Brett, *Lawrence and Brett* (Philadelphia, 1933), p. 81; *Letters*, vi. 507.

⁵ Letters 5041, 5113.

Inspector Hester, to be obscene because they depicted pubic hair. The police also seized copies of the Mandrake edition of the *Paintings* (which included Lawrence's lengthy introduction), together with a copy of George Grosz's *Ecce Homo* portfolio. Blake's *Pencil Drawings* was also impounded but was returned by Hester in response to jibes from the public.¹ On the same day as the raid in London, Lawrence in Forte was taken violently ill with stomach pains. He struggled to Florence the next day and Orioli was so concerned that he took Lawrence to his own flat and telegraphed to Frieda to come at once. After a few days he was well enough to travel with her to Baden-Baden.

The prosecution at Marlborough Street Magistrates' Court, arising from the seizure of the paintings, was directed against the Gallery owners, but a solicitor, Percy Robinson, was engaged to safeguard Lawrence's interests. He proposed that, so long as the paintings were returned by the police unharmed, Dorothy Warren and Philip Trotter should undertake not to exhibit them again; they, however, wanted to fight for the complete vindication of the paintings and their right to display them, even at the risk that the pictures might be destroyed. They enlisted the support of many prominent artists and writers for their cause, including Lytton Strachey, Roger Fry, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Maynard Keynes, Augustus and Gwen John, Jacob Epstein and Vita Sackville-West. Lawrence's position was clear: 'I do not want my pictures to be burned, under any circumstance or for any cause. The law, of course, must be altered – it is blatantly obvious. Why burn my pictures to prove it? There is something sacred to me about my pictures, and I will not have them burnt, for all the liberty of England.' They were returned and have never since been exhibited in England (though they would no longer be in danger of seizure). A few were sold, some given to friends, others disappeared. Newspaper reports on the exhibition left Lawrence disgusted and insulted: 'I shall not forgive it easily, to my white-livered nation . . . Thank God I needn't live amongst them, even to hear their beastly mingy British voices.'²

Lawrence's physical condition had for some time alarmed his friends; his own reluctance to admit it coupled with his seeming ignorance about it both astonished and distressed them. Aldous Huxley provides the clearest evidence of this in a letter to his brother, Julian, on 13 July 1929, shortly after Lawrence's visit to Forte dei Marmi. It is worth quoting at length.

Lawrence was here a few days and is gone again. If you knew the struggles we had had with him about his health – but quite in vain. When he was in Paris, before he went to

¹ See the account by Philip Trotter in Nehls, iii. 342–52.

² Letter 5200; those pictures which remained in Frieda's possession are now housed in La Fonda in Taos, New Mexico, while others are in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin; Letter 5261.

Majorca, we actually got him to agree to undertake a treatment, alone, *minus* Frieda, and we also actually got him to go to a doctor in Paris. He was to go back to the Dr. to be X-rayed. (Meanwhile, however, the Dr. told M that, from just sounding him he could hear that one lung was practically gone and the other affected. He doubted whether very much could be done.) Then Frieda, who had been in London, returned. L. felt himself reinforced. He refused to go back to the Dr., refused to think of the treatment and set off with Frieda (of whom he had bitterly complained when he was alone with us) to Majorca. So that's that. It's no good. He doesn't *want* to know how ill he is: that, I believe, is the fundamental reason why he won't go to Doctors and homes. He only went in Paris because he was feeling iller than usual and was even more frightened of dying at once than of hearing how ill he was. He rationalizes the fear in all kinds of ways which are, of course, quite irrelevant. And meantime he just wanders about, very tired and at bottom wretched, from one place to another, imagining that the next place will make him feel better and, when he gets [to] the next place, regretting the one before and looking back on it as a paradise. But of course no place will make him feel any better than any other now that he's as ill as he is. He's a great deal worse than he was when you saw him at Diablerets – coughs more, breathes very quickly and shallowly, has no energy. (It's pathetic to see the way he just sits and does nothing. He hasn't written a line or painted a stroke for the last 3 months. Just lack of vital strength.) He still talks a good deal and can get amused and excited into the semblance of health for an hour or two at a time. But it is only a semblance, I'm afraid. I think he's even worse than he was in Paris in March (when he had a touch of flu to complicate matters). The Doctor told M that he might drag on for quite a little time like this, unless he got a cold which turned into bronchitis or pneumonia, when he'd simply be asphyxiated. He has gone to Germany now – or is just going: for he has been in Florence these last days – of all places in this weather! We have given up trying to persuade him to be reasonable. He doesn't want to be and no one can persuade him to be – except possibly Frieda. But Frieda is worse than he is. We've told her that she's a fool and a criminal; but it has no more effect than telling an elephant. So it's hopeless. Short of handcuffing him and taking him to a sanatorium by force, there's nothing to be done.¹

Three days after Huxley wrote his letter Lawrence and Frieda set off by train for Germany. Baden's moist heat, however, made him 'limp and raggy' so they, with Frieda's mother, moved up to the Kurhaus Plättig at about 2,600 feet; there it was so cold that Lawrence had to stay in bed under a great feather bolster in order to keep warm. He was irritable, almost truculent with Titus and on the edge of being tetchy with the Crosbys,² but the clearest sign of near-despair over his health was the change in his attitude to Frieda's mother. No longer was she 'Meine liebe Schwiegermutter' who had formerly been addressed with such affection. In November 1928, for example, Lawrence had been sympathetic and tender when he remonstrated with her for being over-active: '... you're not a light young thing any more. Just don't

¹ Smith 313–14.

² Letters 5223, 5227, 5236.

walk so far . . . No no, just be wise and gentle. Exertion is not for you.' Now, ten months later, he found her 'rather awful . . . thinking her time to die may be coming on. So she fights in the ugliest fashion, greedy and horrible, to get everything that will keep her alive'. Orioli was told that 'she would see me or anyone else die ten times over, to give her a bit more strength to drag on a few more meaningless years'.¹ This was the reaction of a man who had secretly acknowledged the terminal nature of his condition and was seeing his own face in the mirror held up to another supposed victim. Confirmation is found in the defiant, superficially jocular remarks to Orioli in August 1929: 'How they do all like to dwell on the thought of my being dead! but everybody alike. They have determined I shall die. So of course I shall live a hundred years, and put wreaths on all their graves.'² As if to prove it, he wrote articles – 'The Risen Lord' for *Everyman*, 'Men and Women' for *Star Review* – and read proof on *The Story of Doctor Manente* and *The Escaped Cock*.

It is noticeable, however, that for the first time Lawrence became seriously concerned for the whereabouts and safety of his manuscripts and sensitive to their monetary value. He had gently enquired of Dorothy Brett in March 1929 about the manuscripts which he believed to be in a cupboard at Frieda's ranch where Brett was living: 'They are getting valuable now, they may come in so handy some rainy day.' Pressure on her intensified in June when Lawrence heard that some manuscripts were being offered for sale by dealers: 'I want you to tell me exactly what manuscripts I gave to you: and which exactly you sold to Mrs Hare: and how much she paid . . . I need to keep track of my manuscripts . . . So please answer me quite plainly and definitely, or I shan't know what to think.' Frieda added her weight with letters of extreme bitterness reflecting years of resentment: 'Do stop your monkey tricks about the ranch, the manuscripts & all the rest – . . . You can live at the ranch for nothing, unless you wont hand over the manuscripts and any other things we want – We can turn you out, you know lock stock & barrel quite ignominiously –'³ It was not until 29 September that Lawrence fully admitted his error: 'Of course I knew quite well you would not sell my MSS, in spite of what anybody said.' He was himself offered \$3,000 for the manuscript of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and refused it; when his sister Ada discovered the *Rainbow* manuscript in her attic, he was clearly delighted and asked for details of its provenance: and it was to her that he declared the reasons, both immediate and long-term, for his keenness to preserve and safeguard his property: 'I want to keep them for the present, because they increase in value and they

¹ *Letters*, vi. 615; Letters 5235, 5237. ² Letter 5256.

³ Letters 4972, 5158; letter, Frieda Lawrence to Dorothy Brett, 20 August 1929, MS UCin: see also p. 385 n. 1.

represent my capital . . . if I died, the MSS and pictures would have to be sold to secure something of an income for Frieda.¹

Meanwhile, in Germany, Lawrence longed for 'the olive trees and the Mediterranean';² he planned to look for a house perhaps on Lake Como. But a few days later he received and promptly accepted an invitation to visit Max Mohr at Rottach in Bavaria. He liked Mohr but at this moment was additionally drawn to him by the fact that Mohr was a doctor as well as a writer. At Rottach Lawrence was so weak that he had to confront the probability that he was dying. Frieda remembered:

My sister Else came to see him, and Alfred Weber. When he was alone with Alfred Weber, he said to him: 'Do you see those leaves falling from the apple tree? When the leaves want to fall you must let them fall.' Max Mohr had brought some doctors from Munich, but medicine did not help Lawrence. His organism was too frail and sensitive. I remember some autumn nights when the end seemed to have come. I listened for his breath through the open door, all night long, an owl hooting ominously from the walnut tree outside. In the dim dawn an enormous bunch of gentians I had put on the floor by his bed seemed the only living thing in the room.³

It was at this time that Lawrence wrote the first drafts of 'Bavarian Gentians' and 'The Ship of Death'. The doctors put him on a diet, of which he approved, but also prescribed arsenic which made him much worse. He must have suspected that his forty-fourth birthday on 11 September (remembered only by the Brewsters, overlooked even by his sisters) would be his last. Temporarily, however, he did recover sufficiently to move on; he decided that he had been so well in Bandol that it would be wise to return there.

Lawrence was delighted to be back on the Mediterranean. On 1 October he and Frieda moved into the Villa Beau Soleil; externally it was rather like a little railway station, he thought, but ideally situated overlooking the sea, and with central-heating. He was much happier now but his health did not improve. On 15 October he felt so ill that, for the first time, he mentioned to two correspondents the possibility that he might enter a sanatorium. The Brewsters arrived in Bandol (Lawrence wanted them as neighbours) and subsequently saw him nearly every day. 'Earl massaged him with coconut oil until Lawrence's blue fingers began to take on a hue of life.'⁴

The letters now become fewer and more subdued, full of complaints about his enforced inactivity. He insisted on having the shutters and curtains open every night so that he could see the sky as he lay awake, coughing. Frieda recalled:

¹ Letters 5355; 5217, 5365; 5300.

² Letter 5226.

³ Frieda Lawrence 213.

⁴ Letters 5379, 5380; Brewster 304.

But then at dawn I believe he felt grateful that another day had been given him. 'Come when the sun rises,' he said, and when I came he was glad, so very glad, as if he would say: 'See, another day is given me.'

The sun rose magnificently opposite his bed in red and gold across the bay and the fishermen standing up in their boats looked like eternal mythological figures dark and alive against the lit-up splendour of the sea and sky . . . And his courage and unflinching spirit doing their level best to live as long as he possibly could in this world he loved so much, gave me courage too.¹

Lawrence's imagination was attracted now to the vast and eternal and mythological. He read avidly all the books he could obtain about Revelation, in preparation for writing an introduction to a book by Frederick Carter; the introduction outgrew its purpose and became his last work, *Apocalypse*.

There was some slight improvement in November. Lawrence began to take short walks. He was cheered by the sales of his pamphlet *Pornography and Obscenity* – 1,200 a week he reported in early December – and by R. A. Barclay's review of it in the *New Statesman*, 'standing up for me boldly'. He talked of a return to the ranch in the spring, but by Christmas he was in bed again. According to Achsah Brewster, New Year's Day was critical: 'Lawrence attended a New Year's luncheon given by the Di Chiaras which he enjoyed with his usual zest, but he lingered overlong, and walked to the village to sit down in a cutting wind. From that time he steadily lost flesh.'²

In November his old friend Koteliensky had told Lawrence that Dr Andrew Morland, resident physician at Mundesley sanatorium (where the painter Mark Gertler had been treated for tuberculosis with some success) would be in the south of France in January 1930 and would be willing to visit him. Lawrence replied guardedly, but Frieda wrote: 'Tell that doctor how glad I would be if he came to see Lawr.' Morland examined Lawrence on 20 January. He told Lawrence that the bronchitis was acute and aggravated by the lung, and that he 'must lie still and see no one and do no work'. He recommended the Ad Astra sanatorium in Vence. To Frieda, Morland was more outspoken, as she told Titus on 5 February: 'The doctor (Moreland) said: If he did'nt go into a sanatorium, he would be dead in 3 months. But 6 years ago they told me he would be dead in a year, or two –'³ Lawrence tried to follow the medical advice; he wrote to Morland on 30 January that whether he entered the sanatorium would depend on his progress; but within three days he had decided to go. He moved in on 6 February. Five days later Morland wrote to Kot:

¹ Frieda Lawrence 302. ² Letters 5442, 5434; Brewster 308.

³ Letter 5428; *Frieda Lawrence: The Memoirs and Correspondence*, ed. E. W. Tedlock (1961), p. 239; Letter 5492; MS SIU.

I am indeed relieved to hear Lawrence has gone to Vence. It is not that his treatment will be so very much different up there but one feels so much happier to think that he will have proper nursing & attention. I am particularly glad he has gone so soon; when I wrote last week I again advised him to go so I hope it is this rather than any relapse on his part that has made him decide. He had almost consented to go previously.

I will certainly give him any help I can in the way of advice – I am afraid a really long period of strict rest is the only possible treatment now & it will not be easy to get him to submit to it.

I have written to the doctor who will be looking after him & hope to get a report from him before long.

The sanatorium was not a success, as Morland later admitted: ‘I wish now that I had never urged him to go to Vence as I am afraid my efforts only made his last weeks more unhappy.’¹ Lawrence became more and more dependent on Frieda. On 15 February she told Titus: ‘Lawr is so sad, cant eat & does’nt gain weight, only 44½ kili he weighs – I try hard to think of things to comfort him, but when I said yesterday, you see we ll have some jolly times yet, he said: that will be in heaven my dear – I dont care about heaven, but perhaps it may be alright –’² After a fortnight at Ad Astra Lawrence wrote to Maria Huxley: ‘I am rather worse here – such bad nights, and cough, and heart, and pain decidedly worse here – and miserable . . . It’s not a good place – shan’t stay long – I’m better in a house – I’m miserable.’ Aldous Huxley was working on Lawrence’s behalf in Paris, exercising all the influence he could muster to head off the possibility of action against *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* by the French police. In this he succeeded. When the Huxleys arrived in Vence on 25 February they were shocked by Lawrence’s appearance: ‘he was such a miserable wreck of himself and suffering so much pain . . . the illness had reduced him to an appalling state of emaciation’.³ Also on the 25th Morland passed on to Gertler the report he had received about Lawrence from Dr Medinier in Vence:

Both lungs appear to be affected with moderate severity but it is his general condition which is causing the greatest amount of anxiety; his appetite is poor & he does not seem to be responding to treatment. It is obvious that his case is not suitable for any special treatment & that reliance will have to be placed on prolonged rest & good food. I feel that for the present he is best in the sanatorium but doubt if he will stay there very long. I do not think much of French sanatoria & think that it would not be wise to urge him to stay on there very much longer. The difficulty will be to know what to do when he leaves. If he would consent to come to Mundesley I think that would be best provided he is not too ill to travel . . . If Mundesley cannot be arranged I suppose he

¹ Letter 5495; Zytaruk 402, 404. ² MS SIU (‘Saturday’).

³ Letter 5530; Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley* (1973), i. 222–3; Smith 330–1.

would take a villa somewhere near Venice. Should he do this I think it important that he should have a good nurse & a good cook. I could probably find the former.

Lawrence had himself already decided to move into a nearby villa. With great difficulty Frieda and her daughter Barbara rented the Villa Robermond 'on the hill just above Venice. It was a comfortable house, with a little cottage where an Italian peasant lived with his wife, who acted as concierge.'¹ They also engaged an English nurse from Nice and a new, Corsican, doctor.

Lawrence had taken no books with him to the sanatorium. Earl Brewster scoured the unpromising Ad Astra library for him and found a 'life of Columbus' (possibly Washington Irving's *Life and Voyages of Columbus*) remembered by Frieda and by Barbara.² Lawrence was still reading this on the day he died. He attempted only one piece of writing there, his unfinished review of Eric Gill's *Art Nonsense*, written a few days before his death.

In his last week at Ad Astra he had several visitors. H. G. Wells came from Grasse on 24 February but Lawrence's dislike of him ('a common temporary soul') was not diminished when Wells said that he thought his illness was mainly hysteria. Another visitor was the American sculptor, Jo Davidson who was then, with his wife Yvonne, in Grasse; Wells had urged Lawrence to sit for him. Thus, on the 26th the Davidsons travelled to Venice; they found Lawrence lunching on a terrace and expecting them. Davidson recalled:

After lunch I started to work, while we talked of mutual friends. I knew Lawrence had painted, and I asked him if he had ever done any modeling. He had – once, in plasteline. But he hated the material, its feel and odor, and never touched it again. I gave him a piece of my clay. He liked the feel of it – because it was clean and cool. I promised to send him the very clay I was using as soon as the bust was completed. He thought he would like to do some little animals in clay.

After I worked for about an hour or so, Lawrence suggested that I had better go down and have some lunch, while he had a nap.

A little later a servant came down and said that Mr. Lawrence was awake and had asked for me. When I went up, I found him in bed. He asked me if I could work if he sat up in bed. I told him it did not matter. If he would rather, I would come back tomorrow or any other time. He stayed in bed and I worked for another hour.

When I told Lawrence I had been experimenting in polychrome sculpture, he asked me to do him in color, and not to forget the blue of his dressing gown, of which he was very fond.

Davidson later told Julian and Juliette Huxley: 'it was not a bad head; but who could ever fix that face . . . Lawrence was waiting for Aldous and Maria – talked only of that, waiting to die when they had come.'³ In addition to the

¹ Zytaruk 403; Nehls, iii. 434–5.

² Brewster 229; Nehls, iii. 435, 442.

³ Letter 5534; Nehls, iii. 433–4; Juliette Huxley, *Leaves of the Tulip Tree* (1986), p. 210.

Huxleys, Frieda's daughter Barbara and a few other close friends, Lawrence had another visitor: the Aga Khan, who came with his wife on the 27th. He wanted to discuss a plan for mounting an exhibition of Lawrence's paintings in Paris; he also showed himself interested in the possibility of buying some of the paintings – but neither project was realised.

On 1 March Lawrence was taken to the Villa Robermond. The new doctor examined him and commented to Frieda and Barby: 'It is very grave. There is not much hope. Do not let him see that you know.' On the 2nd, Aldous and Maria Huxley came again; they returned in the evening. Lawrence was now crying out for morphia and claimed to see his own body on a table across the room. The superintendent of the sanatorium administered morphia at nine.¹ Lawrence slept. At ten o'clock he died.

Frieda, writing on 6 March to Nancy Pearn, described the scene and her own feelings:

His death was so splendid, so bravely he fought right to the last, he knew quite well about himself, & then he asked for morphine I think he knew it was the end, then he lay down & said: 'I am better now' & soon breathed his last, slow breaths – Dead he looked fulfilled and splendid, all the suffering gone – I am so full of admiration for his unconquerable spirit that my grief has no bitterness or misery in it – He has left me all his love & all his love for the world – I see him only now as a whole in his simple greatness.²

¹ Nehls, iii. 435-6. ² MS Lazarus.