

## Rananim Glimpsed: Lawrence in Taos

Amitav Banerjee

After the nightmare war years from 1914 to 1918, during which Lawrence was both prosecuted for his writings and persecuted for his 'Hunwife', he felt like leaving England for good. He wanted to go far away from England and the European Continent. Soon after the Armistice, he wrote to Amy Lowell that he wanted to go to 'a new country', to America:

England is wintry and uncongenial. Towards summer time, I want to be in a new country. I expect we shall go to Switzerland or Germany when Peace is signed. Frieda wants to see her people ... But I want to come to America. I don't know why. The land itself draws me (iii. 314).<sup>1</sup>

Amy, however, felt that America was not ready to receive him. She indirectly told him that 'New England will not receive him cordially. Even Boston's renowned Athenaeum Library found it necessary to conceal the "superb" *Sons and Lovers* in its "scruple" room'.<sup>2</sup> So the Lawrences travelled to the European Continent instead. Frieda went to her family in Germany, and Lawrence to Italy where Frieda joined him before long. After a two-year stay in Italy, Lawrence again became restless. This time he felt that Italy had 'gone a little rancid' (iv. 105). He wanted, he told Earl Brewster, 'ultimately, to get a little farm somewhere by myself, in Mexico, New Mexico, Rocky Mountain or British Columbia' (iv. 95).

By a brilliant coincidence, within a month of his writing this, Lawrence received a letter from Mable Dodge Sterne inviting him to visit Taos, New Mexico. She had read his *Sea and Sardinia* and wanted him to write similarly about

Taos and the Red Indian culture which was still vibrant in that part of America. He wrote back to her on the same day telling her that he and Frieda 'would like to come to Taos ... I want to leave Europe. I want to take the next step. Shall it be Taos? - I like the word' (iv. 111). He had already seen pictures and photographs of Taos at Gertrude's brother Leo Stein's home in Florence, and had also heard of Maurice Sterne's Taos-related paintings, though he did not know, at this stage, that he had been Mabel's husband. He became quite enthusiastic about his plans for going to America, but then suddenly decided to abandon the idea, partly because he felt uneasy about Mabel's 'wilful' personality which he saw filtering through her letters, and partly because he felt that he was not yet ready to go there: he told Catherine Carswell, 'I shrink as yet from the States. Ultimately, I'll go there, no doubt. But I want to go east before I go west: go west via the east' (iv. 175). It was only after his visits to Ceylon and Australia that he landed in San Francisco on 4 September 1922. He arrived in Taos on 11 September 1922, and finally left it three years later on 10 September 1925. During this period, he made one short trip to Europe and several to Mexico. All in all he spent about twenty months in the Taos region but this proved to be perhaps the most remarkable period in his career. For this, Mabel, with all the defects of her personality, deserves much praise because it was she who was instrumental in Lawrence's decision to go there in the first place.

Katherine Mansfield is reported to have said that there were three Lawrences: the black devil whom she hated, the prophet whom she did not believe, and the man and the artist whom she loved and valued.<sup>3</sup> It was in Taos that the third Lawrence emerged most notably. Here he could live a simple, unmechanised life that he had always longed for, and he wrote, and wrote profusely. His writings of this time, more than those of any other period of his life, can be directly

related to his life as he lived it then. Fortunately, we have authentic biographical accounts of his life in Taos, provided by Lawrence himself in his letters, and those who knew him then, which show how some of his actual experiences filtered into his art.

Several of Lawrence's Taos contemporaries wrote accounts of him which give one an interesting insight into Lawrence as a man and artist. Amongst these was Knud Merrild, a Danish painter. He and his friend Kai Gotsche first met the Lawrences at a dinner party in the house of Walter Ufer who was the President of the Taos Artists Group. Ufer told the Danes, 'I think you ought to meet a modern Englishman who is in Taos now. He is a writer and world famous too'.<sup>4</sup> By the time Lawrence arrived in America he was indeed quite famous, and that was one reason why Mabel had invited him. The Danish painters, however, knew almost nothing about the English writer or his works, and they remained mainly silent listeners during the conversation. But they happened to meet him later on and they soon got to know him well. When Mabel's interfering 'wilfulness' and emotional gestures made it impossible for the Lawrences to continue to live in Taos, they moved to the Hawks' ranch in Del Monte for the winter of 1922-23, and took the Danes with them. One of them, Knud Merrild, wrote a book, *A Poet and Two Painters* (1938), which presents a remarkable portrait of Lawrence, a portrait which, in Aldous Huxley's words, is 'perhaps the most vivid, the most objective and, one might say, the most disinterested yet produced'.<sup>5</sup>

What makes Merrild's account unique is that this 'famous English writer' appears in Merrild's book as a rancher and a countryman. He tells us a lot about Lawrence enjoying living in farm-like conditions, in log cabins, without even the basic amenities of modern life like running water, heating or cooking gas. In many ways, Lawrence's life there was very much like the one that he had envisaged in his ideal Rananim.

He had written of this, his 'pet scheme', to William Hopkin in January 1915:

I want to gather together about twenty souls and sail away from this world of war and squalor and found a little colony where there shall be no money but a sort of communism as far as necessities of life go, and some real decency. It is to be a colony built up on the real decency which is in each member of the Community - a community which is established upon the assumption of goodness in the members, instead of the assumption of ... badness. (ii. 259).

He, of course, failed to persuade his friends to join him in this, but the ideal remained with him. When he came to Taos he felt he had realised it. Soon after arriving there he told Maurice Lesemann (a business executive who had published poems in *Poetry* and other periodicals) in October 1922:

I should like to see the young people gather somewhere away from the city, somewhere where living is cheap - in a place like this, for instance; let them have a farm or a ranch, with horses and a cow, and *not* try to make it pay. Don't let them try to make it pay - like Brook Farm. That was the trouble with Brook Farm. But let them support themselves by their writing, or their painting, or whatever it is.<sup>6</sup>

This was precisely what Lawrence himself seems to have done: as his Taos contemporaries have testified, Lawrence lived there the kind of farm-life that he had thus described.

To start with, he did a considerable amount of horse-riding, out of necessity as well as pleasure. Though Mabel has claimed that it was she and her companion Tony who taught the Lawrences how 'to ride horseback',<sup>7</sup> Frieda has said that 'a long thin Don Quixote of a Mexican taught us how to ride across the open desert'.<sup>8</sup> Anyway, they soon became adept at

riding, though Lawrence sometimes looked rather awkward on horseback, particularly when the horse became unruly. Mabel noted that on one occasion when Lawrence got on, 'the horse ran right off down the field, with him bobbing up and down, light as a feather, and humped over the animal's neck the way monkeys ride, in the circus'.<sup>9</sup> Joseph Foster also felt Lawrence 'did not look very well on a horse'.<sup>10</sup> But they (as well as many others) have testified that Lawrence, though a novice as a rider, was fearless and that he never fell off a horse. He said that he liked to 'gallop across these spaces. I like that so much. And the big open place has a fascination' (iv. 316). He liked to get toggled up too in his riding gear. Merrild has described how, when they all set out for a ride to the hot springs, Lawrence was appropriately attired, looking like a 'real general': 'He had a huge, grey, five-gallon hat, a leather jacket and chequered trousers tucked into a pair of long, high-heeled boots'.<sup>11</sup> And 'like a real general', Lawrence insisted on being ahead of his troops! Mabel thought that Lawrence 'couldn't stand the idea of woman in the lead'<sup>12</sup> but the truth seems to have been that he could not stand anyone ahead of him. Merrild tells us of Lawrence's reaction when Gotzsche passed him. He asked the Dane to stop, and told him, 'This horse is very shy and nervous, it cannot have any other in the lead. It becomes restless and unruly. You must stay behind'.<sup>13</sup> Provided his rules were observed, Lawrence was a jolly and cheerful companion in excursions. He often felt so happy that he sang. For instance, on their way to Manby Springs, Lawrence began to sing. Frieda - 'who had a better voice' - soon joined him. On noticing that the Danes were silent, he asked them to sing too. When they told him that they did not know his English songs, he said, 'Oh sing anything, just sing!'<sup>14</sup>

One may broaden this picture of a cheerful Lawrence amidst congenial surroundings with the anecdotes of his Taos contemporaries, recounting how he was fond of entertaining

the company with funny stories, mimics and charades. Mabel has said:

He loved charades - and he was so gay and witty when he was playing! He could imitate anything or anybody. His ability to identify himself intuitively with things outside himself was wonderful. We had some boisterous evenings ... that left us hot and happy and full of ease.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Maurice Lesemann recorded a 'Lawrence Performance':

The eagerness and exultation were consistent in him. One night by the fire he told stories about English people he had known, imitating with absurd nicety their voice and manner, their entire conversation. He described their way of walking, and must needs jump from his chair and pace up and down the floor ... until finally they rose up before us - heroic, monumental in caricature. And then Lawrence would remember one thing more, and it [was] so ridiculous that he would have to sit down: and his voice would break and go careering away into a chuckling laugh before he could tell what had overpowered him.<sup>16</sup>

No wonder that these people felt that Lawrence was a very jovial and friendly person. The Danes said that 'Lawrence was a true friend'.<sup>17</sup>

Lawrence himself and his Taos contemporaries have also revealed the extent to which he became a domestic handyman. Lawrence's ability as a cook is well known. But he seems to have sharpened his skills during his Taos days. He told Frieda's mother that he could 'bake twenty loaves of bread in half an hour in the oven' (v. 62). Merrild has confirmed this, with the slight reservation that 'except for the first few loaves which were vile, he did it very well, very well indeed'.

Merrild also awards Lawrence high grades for his typical English cooking: 'I have not tasted a better roast with mint sauce, Yorkshire pudding or mince meat [*sic*] anywhere in England'.<sup>18</sup>

Lawrence was good at doing other domestic chores too. When Kyle Crichton, a journalist, visited Lawrence for an interview, he noticed, among other things, that the house in which the Lawrences lived in Del Monte was 'immaculate, so scrubbed and shining'. Frieda told him that it was all Lawrence's work:

'You'd never think it of him' said Frieda, proudly, when Lawrence went out to get things ready for tea, 'but he's the most practical man I've ever known. He made the bread this morning in the Indian oven just outside the door there, milked Susan and looked after the chickens. I cook when he'll let me, but he does it much better himself. When you get a chance, look at the new cowshed and say a word about it. He's very proud of that: he did it all with his own hands'.<sup>19</sup>

Lawrence also did the outdoor work that a ranch-dweller had to do. When the Lawrences and the Danes first moved to their Del Monte ranch, they had to get and store wood for the winter. They found a huge pine tree. After felling it they set to the long and laborious task of cutting it for firewood. Merrild recounts how Lawrence insisted on doing 'his share' of the plain hard labour it involved. Even though he had neither the physical strength nor the skill to chop wood, he insisted on doing his bit. The Danes realised his limitations and willingness, and gave him the kind of work he *could* do easily:

We had to let him chop the smaller pieces for kindling wood. He wanted to do his share. He really was a good sport. And so it was, and we were glad too.

It had hurt us to see him strain himself. He did not have the strength to be efficient with heavy tools, he looked awkward and clumsy, and so was the work he did which required strength in execution. What he could handle with ease he did skilfully and well, and he enjoyed doing.<sup>20</sup>

Lawrence's life as a rancher proved to be conducive not only to his personal well-being but also to his creative self, which proved to be financially rewarding. Warren Roberts noted that 'Lawrence reported a fairly substantial income for 1922, \$5439.67 for the United States alone, which was approximately \$34,000 in 1980's purchasing power' (iv. 14), and would be much more now. During his time on the American continent he produced an impressive range of books and essays. Soon after arriving in America from Australia he finished the typescript of *Kangaroo*. He wrote several works, including *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *England, My England*, both of which were published in October 1922; *Studies in Classic American Literature* (after substantial rewriting) in August 1923; *The Boy in the Bush* in August 1924; and *St Mawr* in 1925. In May 1923 he had started *The Plumed Serpent*, first as 'Quetzalcoatli'. This went through various versions and revisions but he was able to send the final typescript to Secker before he left America for good in September 1925. Lawrence also wrote a number of poems at this time, and these went into his *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* which was published in October 1923. In addition, he wrote at least one play, *David*, several short stories and many articles, long and short, including 'Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine', 'Art and Morality', 'Morality and the Novel', 'The Novel' and 'Why the Novel Matters'.

Perhaps, like most artists, Lawrence did not always discuss his works with others. So his Taos contemporaries do not have much to say about what he was writing. But, significantly, many of them do comment on his writing habits,

his reading, his opinions on various subjects and his artistic personality. Merrild confessed that when he met Lawrence, he had not read his works. But when he came to write his book of reminiscences, he discovered that Lawrence 'wrote as he spoke ... I read the books that Lawrence had written at that time, and I found his daily talk and experiences clearly recognisable in those books'.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, Merrild went on to quote extensively from Lawrence's writings about the incidents and experiences that he, Merrild, witnessed in real life. When he juxtaposes his own description of an event and Lawrence's rendering of it in his writings, we get a startling insight into the latter's artistic strategies and modes. We see him transforming his own experiences into a work of art as he analyses his inner feelings and motivations which were not open to outsiders at the time.

For instance, Merrild describes the occasion when they all decided to go to the hot springs, about twenty miles away, for a bath. They rented horses from the rancher and set off. While the rest of the party got cow ponies, Lawrence 'was given the only real horse, a beautiful sorrel. Very shy and very quick'. But before they had gone far, the 'shy sorrel got frightened':

She reared on her hind legs, made a leap to one side, and in a wild panic went off with Lawrence, who instantly and completely lost control of her. He bobbed up and down, and every second we feared he would be thrown but he hung on. Lagging behind, we followed on the ponies. The sorrel, in its wild dash, came to the edge of a ravine, did not stop nor alter its course, but plunged down the side, barely missing the trees on its way. Lawrence ducked his head to avoid being brushed off by the dangerous, low-hanging branches. One scratched him and tore off his hat. We were almost afraid to look, but we followed as best as we could. Then the sorrel stumbled as he reached the bot-

tom of the ravine. Lawrence immediately seized the opportunity, reined it and got control just as Gotsche and I rode up to his side. The presence of the other horses soon quieted the shy sorrel and we went up the ravine and joined Frieda who had been a frightened spectator.

Naturally, Lawrence talked to his companions about this experience, but Merrild did not remember 'word for word' what Lawrence had said. Instead, he lets the artist 'talk' himself, through the passage from *The Boy in the Bush* which Merrild goes on to quote:

[Jack's] bones rattled, his hat flew off, his heart beat high. But unless the horse came down backwards on top of him, he could stay on. And he was not really afraid. He thought: 'If he does not go backwards on top of me, I shall be all right'. He tried to quiet the horse. 'Steady now, steady!' And all the time he held on with his thighs and knees, like iron. He did not believe in the innate viciousness of the horse. He did not believe in the innate viciousness of anything, except man ... The horse bolted like the wind, and Jack held on with his knees and by balance. He was thrilled really: frightened externally, but internally keyed up; never for a moment did he relax his mind's attention, nor the attention of his tossed up body. Up he went, off the saddle, and down he came again with a shattering jerk, down on the front of the saddle. The balance he kept was a mystery even to himself, his body was so flung about by the volcano of furious life beneath him.<sup>22</sup>

A comparison between the two passages shows how Lawrence transformed an actual experience into art. While Merrild saw only the fright and the panic in the scene, Lawrence, in his

writing, is able to describe in vivid details the complex emotions on the part of the rider, his fright and exhilaration – ‘he was thrilled really: frightened externally’ – and his awareness (even more characteristic) of the ‘otherness’ of the horse, ‘the volcano of furious life beneath him’ and its ‘innate lack of viciousness’, a quality that afflicts only man. When the two passages are compared, the second one is clearly revealed as the work of the man who was writing some of the ‘beast’ poems of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*.

The famous (or notorious) episode that Merrild has recorded about Lawrence’s cruel treatment of his dog, which was the subject of his poem ‘Bibbles’, is equally illuminating. Mabel had given the Lawrences the offspring of her bull-terrier Lorraine. They variously called it ‘Pips’, ‘Pipsey’ and ‘Bibbles’. They grew extremely fond of it and even wanted to take it with them to Mexico. Lawrence demanded complete fidelity from the dog which he loved very much. However, he became angry with it when he began to notice its ‘promiscuous’ nature. It would often go away and stay with the Danes, so one day he gave it to them. But it came back to him. He was pleased, but what annoyed him was that it continued to love people and animals indiscriminately. When he discovered that Bibbles had gone off with another dog of the ranch on a rendezvous he got furiously enraged. When it returned, he spanked and kicked it viciously and flung it out in the snow. Both the Danes, who saw the incident, felt outraged at the time but saw it only as a part of the contradictory nature of the person they loved. In the poem based on this incident, Lawrence reveals not only a possible explanation for his extraordinary behaviour but also the working of the artistic intelligence with which he examined and explored his own ideas and attitudes through the behaviour of the dog. The much-loved dog is after all guilty of the commonly practised ‘universal love’ for which Lawrence had castigated Walt Whitman elsewhere:

Oh, Bibbles, oh Pips, oh Pipsey  
You little black love-bird!  
*Don't* you love *everybody*!!!  
Just everybody.  
You love 'em all.  
Believe in the One Identity, don't you,  
You little Walt-Whitmanesque bitch?

The dog returned to Lawrence the next morning, full of contrition. Lawrence did not speak to the dog but it ‘jumped on the bed as of old, in her curious manner, rejoiced in the reunion and reconciliation. Lawrence, sick in bed, seemed greatly pleased and he gave in to Pips with little reserve’:

So now, with what Airedale dogs,  
And a kick or two,  
And a few vomiting bouts,  
And a juniper switch,  
You look at me for discrimination, don't you?  
Look at me with misgiving in your bulging eyes,  
And fear in your smoky white of eyes, you nigger;  
And you are puzzled,  
You think you'd better mind your Ps and Qs for a bit,  
Your sensitive love-pride being all hurt.

All right, my little bitch.  
You learn loyalty rather than loving,  
And I'll protect you.

Merrild left ‘Pips on the bed with Lawrence. From now on Pips stayed at Lawrence’s cabin. The reunion seemed a happy one’.<sup>23</sup>

Another striking example of Lawrence’s turning his own experiences, which are documented both by himself and those who knew him then, into works of art is his novella, *St Mawr*.

Ever since he arrived in America, he wanted to write a novel in America, 'a Taos novel' (iv. 431). This turned out to be *St Maur* which he wrote during his second sojourn in the Taos region in the spring-summer of 1924. He was very glad to be back at his ranch after a disastrous visit to England when he was filled with gloom: 'Here I am—gloom—yellow air—bad cold—bed—old house—Morris wall-paper—visitors—English voices—tea in old cups—poor D.H.L. perfectly miserable, as if he was in his tomb' (iv. 546). No wonder, back in America, he felt that 'Taos [is] very pleasant again – very beautiful – and the raging spirit somewhat soothed' (v. 28). His 'raging spirit', a consequence of the English visit, was 'soothed' also by simple physical labour. He started to build the cabin in the ranch which Mabel had given to Frieda as a gift, and derived 'a good deal of satisfaction' from this work:

I myself find a good deal of satisfaction living like this alone in this unbroken country, which still retains aboriginal quality—and in doing for myself all I need—women doing women's part—That is, Frieda does it. But I make shelves and cupboards, and mend fences, bake bread in the Indian oven outside, and catch the horses. (v. 75)

Like Merrill on the previous occasion, this time Brett has recorded how Lawrence set himself up as a rancher in Kiowa, with herself as his assistant. For instance, this is how she describes their visit in search of wood (she refers to Lawrence in the second person):

... we go down into the woods with axes. We need some more trees. A couple of straight pines, not too big, catch our eyes. 'These will do, I think.' And you begin to chop. 'Look out, Brett!' you call. The tree creaks, sways, and falls over with a crash. You look at it proudly ... 'I'll chop this one down, while you trim

the branches of the other; only mind and get out of the way when this one falls.' I take up the smaller axe and begin to hack off the branches. A sudden call from you and I run as the second tree comes crashing down. You join me in cutting off the branches, then we rest a bit and you say: 'Let's see if we can lift this one.' You take the thick end and I take the other. We lift it with great effort; slowly we stagger up the wood with it, pausing to rest at intervals. Frieda, from the washtub, hails us with cries of wonder at our cleverness.

Lawrence found this kind of work rewarding both in practical and personal terms. When Brett reminded him that all this was 'hard work':

'Yes it is,' you agree, 'but you have no idea how soothing it is to the nerves. When I am in a temper, I like to run out into these quiet woods and chop down a tree: it quiets the nerves. Even chopping wood helps: you've no idea, Brett, how much it helps. That's why I like doing it. The irrigating is good, too: the water is soothing.'<sup>24</sup>

After completing most of the building work, Lawrence turned to writing. According to Brett, 'when there is less work, you have begun to write. In the quiet still morning, with your copy-book under your arm and your fountain-pen you go off away into the woods; sometimes one can glimpse you through the trees, sitting leaning up against the trunk of the pine tree in your blue shirt, white corduroy pants and big, pointed straw hat'.<sup>25</sup>

One of the works that she specifically mentions is *St Maur*, of which she typed the pages as he wrote them. On one occasion, when he returned home from writing, he gave a reading from his work-in-progress:

You are full of your new story, of Mrs Witt. You sit down in your place [for lunch], and between bites you

read out to us the pages you have written. You are still twinkling with amusement, and you are still living more with them than with us. You read out the scene of the tea-party, of the tart Mrs Witt, the scandalised Dean and his wife, and the determined Lou. You laugh so much over it that you have to stop—and we are laughing too. Then you read out Mrs Witt's defence of the horse when Rico pulls him over and the horse kicks Rico in the face. You read it with such keen joy and pleasure in the final downfall of Rico and the terrible revenge of the horse, that Frieda is horrified; she says you are cruel and that you frighten her.

Brett adds: 'You hate Rico so that for the moment you are the horse'.<sup>26</sup> It is interesting that she has also recorded Lawrence praising, during this time, the 'horsiness' of the horse, which became a major symbol in the novella:

'If people were like horses or cats or any wild animal, you continue, 'if they were as natural. A horse is never anything but itself; it is true to form always. It never swerves from its pattern, its horsiness. That is the difference. Human beings are always untrue to their pattern; they ceased to have a pattern. A man is no longer MAN'.<sup>27</sup>

Lawrence himself has given accounts of the process of the writing of *St Mawr* in his letters. On 12 June 1924 he tells Mabel that he has begun 'to write a story' (v. 57), and on 30 July he informs Nancy Pearn, his agent, that he is 'just winding up "St Mawr", a story which has turned into a novelette' (v. 86). He wrote the book quite rapidly, and it is clear that some of his deepest feelings about the ranch, to which he had returned with great joy, are reflected in it. Like Lou in the finished story, Lawrence derived great delight from living there: he told Mabel that if his gift of the MS of

*Sons and Lovers* gave her 'a 100<sup>th</sup> part of the joy I get out of the ranch [she] will get quite a lot' (v. 65). Again, just as Lou was to repudiate the 'civilized' America and Americans in favour of the America represented by the ranch, Lawrence told Frieda's mother:

But life in America is empty and stupid, emptier and stupider than with us. I mean city-life and village-life. Here, where one is alone with the trees and mountains and chipmunks and desert, one gets something out of the air: something wild and untamed, cruel and proud, beautiful and sometimes evil, that really is America. But not the America of the whites. (v. 63)

In addition, Lawrence's description of his Kiowa ranch to his sister (v. 110–12) is clearly the basis for the magnificent rendering of the landscape<sup>28</sup> in the novella, which Richard Aldington thought was 'unmatched in modern English for poetic power'.<sup>29</sup> There are also minutiae in the letter which have gone straight into fictional works, e.g. the price of the ranch, details about its previous occupants and their failed attempts to tame nature.

Above all, *St Mawr* brilliantly dramatises Lawrence's idea of the 'spirit of place' which he probably fully grasped in Taos. In response to E.M. Forster's enquiry on the subject, he wrote:

You asked me if I found 'individuals' out of England, since I don't find 'em in. No, I don't. But one does find a great strange spirit of place, and different race-impulse out here. It seems much bigger, with open gaps that go away into the unknown. England's tight to me like a box. (v. 116)

This is precisely the feeling of his heroine Lou Witt who, after many disappointments and frustrations during her stay

in Europe, finds something positive in the ranch, which she has recently bought:

Now I am where I want to be: with the spirit that wants me. –And that's how it is. And neither Rico nor Phoenix nor anybody else really matters to me. They are in the world's back-yard. And I am here, right deep in America, where there's a wild spirit wants me, wild spirit more than men. And it does not want to save me either. It needs me. It craves for me.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, these writings, growing out of his Taos sojourn, confirm Lawrence's belief that a writer should write from his first-hand experiences:

'*The Golden Bough*', you say suddenly, 'how I hate these people who write books from their arm-chairs; men who never go out and experience anything for themselves. They just sit at home and write about everything second-hand, never having seen an Indian or a tiger or known anything. What's the good of that? They are afraid to meet life, to experience it for themselves'.<sup>31</sup>

The records of his life in Taos reinforce the claim that the man and the artist in Lawrence were inextricable. He did not retreat into an ivory tower when writing. Writing became a part of living for him. Witter Bynner was amazed to find that Lawrence was capable of 'writing and talking at the same moment':

We would have coffee, cordials, and conversation in their room while Lawrence, reclining on the bed with notebook and pencil, would be busy at essays, sketches, reviews, random writings, which went off in the mails.<sup>32</sup>

Amazingly, as Bynner hints here, what Lawrence thus wrote was often the final copy. According to Brett, Lawrence would 'tear a few pages at a time out of [his] copy-book'<sup>33</sup> for her to type straight away. All this was in keeping with his creative personality and his artistic intentions. He told Brett that he wrote when he felt he had to:

I never know when I sit down, just what I am going to write. I make no plans; it just comes, and I really don't know where it comes from. Of course I have a general sort of outline of what I want to write. It just comes, and I really don't know where from.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, he felt a deep sense of moral responsibility, that he must share his talents. He told Crichton:

You don't write for anybody: you rather write from a deep moral sense – for the race as it were ... A writer writes because he can't help writing, and because he has something in him that he feels he can say better than it has been said before, and because it would be wrong, entirely wrong, to possess a talent and have thoughts without sharing them with the world.<sup>35</sup>

One can say, therefore, that in New Mexico, when he was able to live away from civilization, Lawrence flourished both as a man and a writer. The whole experience of living in those natural surroundings had a profound effect on him – so much so that he was moved to express the effect in these eloquent words:

I think New Mexico was the greatest experience from the outside world that I have ever had. It certainly changed me for ever. Curious as it may sound, it was New Mexico that liberated me from the present era of civilization, the great era of mechanical development ... the moment I saw the brilliant proud morning shine

high up over the deserts of Santa Fe, something stood still in my soul, and I started to attend.<sup>36</sup>

It is not surprising that in his last years he longed to go back to his ranch. As late as a few weeks before his death, he wrote to Mabel expressing such a wish, and also his desire to found Rananim, this time 'for a few young people', leaving himself out of active participation because of his dire illness:

We talk of and make plans: plans of coming back to the ranch and having places near one another—perhaps having an old school, like the Greek philosophers, talks in a garden—that is, under pine-trees. I feel I might perhaps get going with a few young people, building up a new unit of life out there, making a new concept of life. Who knows! we have talked of it. My being ill so long has made me realise perhaps I had better talk to the young people and try to make a bit of a new thing with them, and not bother much more about my personal life. Perhaps now I should submit, and be a teacher. I have fought so against it (vii. 616).

It was therefore entirely appropriate that Frieda, after his death, should have decided to take Lawrence's ashes to the ranch and bury them in a chapel that she built higher up in the hill. She followed him after her own death, and now lies buried outside the chapel.

## Endnotes

1. *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* vol. ii, ed. James T. Boulton, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; vol. iii, eds. James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson, 1984; vol. iv, eds. Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton and Elizabeth Mansfield, 1987; vol. v, eds. James T. Boulton and Lindeth Vasey, 1989. All quotations from the letters are followed by volume and page number(s).

2. Harry T. Moore, *The Priest of Love*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, p. 383.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 449.
4. Knud Merrild, *A Poet and Two Painters*, London: Routledge, 1938, p. 9.
5. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.
6. Edward Nehls, *D.H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, vol. ii, Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1958, p. 195.
7. Mabel Dodge Luhan, *Lorenzo in Taos*, New York: Knopf, 1932, pp. 75–6.
8. Frieda Lawrence, *Not I But the Wind* (1935), London: Granada, 1983, p. 121.
9. Mabel Dodge Luhan, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
10. Joseph Foster, *D.H. Lawrence in Taos*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972, p. 156.
11. Knud Merrild, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
12. Mabel Dodge Luhan, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
13. Knud Merrild, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
15. Mabel Dodge Luhan, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
16. Edward Nehls, *op. cit.*, p. 195.
17. Knud Merrild, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
18. Knud Merrild, *ibid.*, p. 82.
19. Edward Nehls, *op. cit.*, p. 416.
20. Knud Merrild, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–77.
21. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 77–79.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
24. Dorothy Brett, *Lawrence and Brett*, London: Martin Secker, 1933, pp. 111–12.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 132–3.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
28. See D.H. Lawrence, *St Maur and Other Stories*, ed. Brian Finney, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 144–8.
29. Richard Aldington, 'Introduction', *St Maur and The Virgin and the Gipsy*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950, p. 9.
30. D.H. Lawrence, *St Maur*, p. 155.
31. Dorothy Brett, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
32. Witter Bynner, *Journey With Genius*, New York: Octagon Books, 1974, pp. 24–5.
33. Dorothy Brett, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–4.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
35. Edward Nehls, *op. cit.*, pp. 414–5.

36. D.H. Lawrence, *Phoenix*, ed., Edward D. McDonald, London: Heinemann, 1936, p. 142.

D.H. Lawrence and Norman Douglas: The Enthralling Attraction of Southern Italy

Nick Ceramella

My spirit always wants to go south. (D.H. Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent*)

In the spring of 1995, I retraced with my wife, or rather, my 'q-b', as I called her then (borrowing Lawrence's idea from his *Sea and Sardinia*), every step he and Frieda (his 'q-b') took on their trip through this wonderful Italian island.<sup>1</sup> We visited the same places, but, unlike them, using as a guide-book a copy of *Sea and Sardinia*, we had a ready-made and very unusual itinerary, which we followed by car, stopping over in comfortable hotels. Of course, this was a major difference from their travelling third class on old, rusty trains and buses, not really even knowing where they were going through the cold, wild mountains, putting up for the nights in dirty rooms, often eating awful food, and with little money ready at hand.

Last summer, I eventually managed to carry out a project which had been spinning round my mind for some years: we followed Norman Douglas' tracks through his travel book, *Old Calabria*, and, again, the trip resulted in an off-the-tourist-circuit experience. Allow me to say that seeing Calabria, (the region of Italy where I originally come from), has been quite an involving and instructive 'adventure'. It is in the toe of the Italian peninsula in such an enthralling environment, offering a true flavour of 'Mediterraneaness', that I decided to write this essay. Indeed, I could not have been in a more inspiring place than in my summer-house, facing the Strait of Messina: a stretch of sea Douglas and Lawrence knew very well and enjoyed looking at.