a baptism in wine, Sanskrit hymn and Navajo war-whoops of the day before Lawrence wrote 'Hymns in a Man's Life').

39. F.R. Leavis, *D.H.Lawrence: Novelist* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p.321.
40. D.H.Lawrence, *The Lost Girl* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1950), p.20.

'Nearly a Stranger' The letters of D.H.Lawrence to Blanche Jennings

Fabienne Blakey

> Because you are nearly a stranger, and one may always scatter the seeds of one's secret soul out to a stranger, hoping to find there fertile soil to replace the exhausted home earth, to which we will not, even cannot, confide what is precious to us; so because you are a cold stranger, and not my mother or my bosom friend, I will come to you for sympathy with that sore, that sickness of mine which is called 'Laetitia'.[1]

Ever since reading the first volume of the Cambridge edition of Lawrence's letters, I have been puzzled by the richness and variety of those addressed to Blanche Jennings. There are altogether twenty published letters, from April 1908 to January 1910. For those who know of the women who were acquainted with Lawrence before he met Frieda, Blanche Jennings precedes Louie Burrows. There were his Eastwood friends, Jessie Chambers, Alice Dax and Louie Burrows, who is mentioned as 'a girl, I am very fond of'(68); then later in Croydon, Agnes Holt whom he considered marrying, but who became detestable to him; and Helen Corke.

Born in 1881, Blanche was twenty-six years of age when she met Lawrence. In late 1907, she came to stay in Eastwood with her friend Alice Dax when she attended a women's rally in Nottingham. It is more than likely that it was Alice, with whom Lawrence later had an affair, who introduced Blanche to him. At that time, Blanche was living and working as a post-office clerk in Liverpool. What seems odd is that Lawrence should have asked Blanche for advice on his work, and maintained throughout 1908 a particularly intense epistolary relationship with her. One assumption, of course, is that Blanche was a sample of the society for whom his work would be written. He certainly did not object to changes in the social welfare of women, yet it was not, despite the fact that Blanche was a suffragette, the main subject of his correspondence. When Lawrence wrote to Blanche that 'women should refuse to be dominated, or even domineered, by the insolent "intellectuals"'(59), and barely five months later, that 'at bottom women love the brute in man best'(88), he seemed to test his intuitive knowledge against reality, and to listen for a woman's inner reactions. Lawrence's comments, and quotations from Blanche's letters indicate that Blanche became rather involved with him. At the height of the summer there must have been at least two letters a month in reply to his, and at Christmas she sent him a reproduction of Maurice Greiffenhagen's *Idyll*. Our impression is that Lawrence never took the point. Yet is was as if his letters and his emotions, confined by space and distance, expanded and worked in favour of an underground communication, which I have attempted to explore.

By the end of 1906, Lawrence had completed the first version of *The White Peacock*. Although the second version was no more satisfactory to him than the

first, he had taken the story which was then named 'Laetitia', and developed it a good deal. Jessie recalls that Lawrence said about this second version: 'Everything that I am now, all of me, so far, is in that. I think a man puts everything he is in a book - a real book'.[2] This is the stage at which it reached Alice, who read it, made some severe comments on it, and passed it on to Blanche . Not only was Lawrence going through a difficult time with the actual writing, he was also anticipating publication with a lot more reservations than when he described 'Laetitia' to Blanche in early 1908 as '"an erotic novel"'(44). It was Jessie Chambers, not Lawrence himself who finally sent his poems to a publisher, despite the fact that two years before he had taken up the challenge of writing a story for a local competition. There had also been some rapid changes in Lawrence's career. After his badly paid and unhappy year as a pupil-teacher in Eastwood, he was now taking a university course that he did not wish to continue. He explained to Blanche , as he was taking the exams, that 'I cannot rouse myself to study things I am not interested in' (58). The renewed prospect, therefore, of turning seriously to writing, the only thing which did interest him, may have accounted for his relief, when he received Blanche's letter in early spring, in answer to his: 'With hot, boyish impatience, I looked for a letter from you. "Well! Well!"' (47).

Lawrence met Miss Jennings at a turning-point in the development of his personality when his ideals and needs were met neither by his social, nor by his creative life. The implications of this are crucial, according to Charles Mauron's views of the writer's development. Either the demands made by society and inner pressures are answered with most of the energy going toward human relationships, and the social self is built; or the self answers these pressures a different way: 'An important part of energy goes toward the creation of beings of language who can also be objects of communion. Quite rapidly after the turning-point, the creative self develops.'[3] Mauron's critical method raises a number of questions and problems which I cannot discuss here; but the letters of Lawrence are especially interesting in relation to this observation. The letters balance the anxieties that Lawrence suffered with enough narcissism: a relationship with another person was possible; but they also represent what Didier Anzieu, speaking of the same transition, calls 'a power of transposition of an inner reality into a materialistic one, which is submitted to the laws of writing.'[4] In other words, letter-writing can place an author in immediate contact with his creation.

The fluctuations of Lawrence's emotional life at home, governed by the underlying fixity of his attachment to his mother, confirm our impression that this epistolary contact outside Eastwood was not only welcome, but urgently needed. Emile Delavenay, in *D.H.Lawrence: The Man and his Work*, was the first to sense that what the young author needed was a kind of privacy:

> The young Lawrence takes full advantage of the chance to 'scatter the secrets of his soul' in his letters to a 'safe wise elder', enjoying feminine companionship without any of the physical risks of an actual female presence.[5]

Had Lawrence not made it obvious to Blanche that when he 'scattered the secrets of his soul' to her, he had Alice Dax in mind for sex rather than Blanche herself, then his colourful accounts of their *scènes de ménage* over his novel do; especially when Lawrence complained that Alice spent the last days of her pregnancy in bed, reading his manuscript. All Lawrence's correspondence with Blanche is so inextricably bound to the psychology of writing and of writing his first novel that it comes as no surprise, however that he should mention this. Lawrence also told Blanche on 15 December 1908 what it would mean to him to be kissed (99).

The role of fantasies in what Didier Anzieu calls 'the creative take-off', the moment when a writer actually starts producing, is not uncommon. Anzieu found that in many cases there is a feminine presence, a sister,a sister-in-law, or a friend, in the life of the author: 'The ban on incest is less strong ... It is strong enough to prevent sex, and procreation; yet is is flexible enough to leave the desire free, which can then be concentrated on intellectual and emotional matters'[6]

At Christmas 1908 when Lawrence received from Blanche a copy of Greiffenhagen's *Idyll*, he said that it moved him almost as if he were fallen in love himself. Eventually, he painted two copies of *Idyll*, while rewriting 'Laetitia' which was renamed 'Nethermere': one copy was for Ada, his sister, the other for Agnes Holt, as a wedding present. Lawrence might have been reticent about giving Blanche his manuscript; but this was because Alice had read it, and criticised it. He wrote to Blanche that he was 'inclined to repent having asked you to inflict yourself with the mass'(55).

On only two occasions, did Lawrence wish he were in Liverpool, or Blanche in Eastwood (25 June 1908 and 4 November 1908; 59 and 89). But this did not happen. His primary concern was his novel, and he thought that Blanche would be just the kind of critic he needed:

> If you would be so good, you would make a really good judge of it on the emotional side, I believe. I would not ask you to criticise it so much as a work of art - by that I mean applying to it the tests of artistic principles .. but I would like you to tell me frankly whether it is bright, entertaining, convincing or the reverse(44).

He did not change his mind when he received her notes and comments on 30 July 1908. He only regretted that there had not been more of them, and he was also afraid that she might weary of the manuscript, if she had to read it again (69). However, on 26 October, he writes: 'Give me some sound advice concerning Laetitia, the joyful one. Shall she spread her soul over the same sort of paper?' (86). On 15 December of that year, he reassures her, having got his work back from her the previous month: 'It doesn't matter much how little you *know*, so long as you are capable of feeling much, and giving discriminate sympathy. That's why I like you so much'(100). Although he respected her sensitivity ('Don't regret

that you cannot "lay bare bits of your soul"') and her awareness that, when it came to appreciating art, she was as simple as creation, he was attracted by her spontaneous reactions(89). In his first letter he recalls a discussion they had had on humour, and he now enjoys holding forth. His argument plunges deeply into his early beliefs:

> It is not I, but *you*, who suffer from rude emotions. You have put aside many popular sentimentalities, and you call that ridding yourself of sentiment. As a matter of fact, it is just on the ground of sentiment you - pardon the pronoun, I mean those practical, warlike, socialistic people of whom I have met few - are weakest(45).

By rude emotions, he does not mean sexual innuendoes, but Blanche's tendency to reduce any particularly fine nuance to a sterotype: her finding Balzac 'rather christian' for example (99). However, Blanche was the type of person to be blunt without being unkind, and he immediately noticed it. In his letter he writes: 'You are delicious; to rip straight off with "Really David, if I went in for dignity - " is nearly as good as if a parson should rise in his pulpit and say right out, with no prayings and slobber "Sit up - put your hearts in your pockets out of the way, and prepare your wits"'(51). Taking his pitch from that, his life at home in Lynn Croft, his relationships with women, his failure at college, and his present training could be rid of desperate feelings. According to Jessie, with whom he was less matter-of-fact about everything, he was very worried about not making a proper living from teaching[7]. In the letter of 13 May 1908, this becomes:

> I could write a good novel, if I thought about it enough, I could do anything in that line. I could write crits - but who wants me to - who would have 'em?(52).

On 25 June, as his exams have just started, he writes: 'I have not got a job - I will not write for any more - I cannot bear to advertise myself. They will give me a place at Nottm. when there is one' (59).

Lawrence's letters point in the direction of at least one underlying pattern which Carl Baron claims exists in relation to Lawrence's different phases: it is related to a form of desire which was totally integrated to the writer's personality, and not growing separately, nor felt by Lawrence to be a danger[8]. Lawrence's sexual consciousness shows, for example, in the pleasant account of his day, 25 June 1908 when he records that he has just picked a bowl of gooseberries for a pudding. He is in the garden with his slippers on, it is hot. 'There is a languorous grey mist ... the church ... seems fast asleep ... the bees are busy.' He is 'lounging in the lozenge-lighted shade of a lilac tree' (57).

The aim of this letter is twofold: to give Blanche a hedonistic, self-indulgent, and voluntarily complacent picture of himself, who is happy, to drive the fact home to her that when she is 'deep in the blues' she lives in self-enclosure. Yet his ego does not look at desires in order to destroy or extinguish them. Rather, by a skilful permutation of roles, Lawrence adopts the attitude of a slightly condescending,

but forgiving authority: 'Pity to hunt out the ugly side of the picture when nature has given you an eye for the pretty, and a soul for flowers'(57). Lawrence's letter on his nakedness of 30 July 1908, invites remarks of the same nature. Lawrence is enthusiastic, because Blanche has written charmingly. The complexities of the ego are summed up in the man looking at himself, under the eye of at least one imaginary observer, his pen-friend, whilst he compares himself to a 'big man', who has been working alongside him in the fields, and to his friend, It is worth noting that in order to convey to Blanche his feelings of greatness, Lawrence gives her a physical description of himself. It is this description which is problematic (65). The later part of the letter reveals that when Lawrence refers to his friends, not only does he use the name of his characters, but also likes to blur the distinction between the two. He insists, for example that 'these are not their proper names, and the people are not like the fiction.' But Alice Gall, whose name is in reality Alice Hall, is 'reproduced *faithfully* from life' (68). This gives the impression of a sudden step into fiction. It is almost as if the persons concerned were living the characters' lives, and being robbed of their own. Besides, none of Lawrence's summer letters actually address Blanche; and on 1 September 1908, Lawrence begins with the fact that he has forgotten all the interesting things he had to tell her, so now he is free to write (71).

This aspect of life in relation to characterisation was first observed by Freud when he defined the novel. Psychological novels, in particular, and novels of adventure, are the products of narcissism; but whereas the latter remain centred on 'his majesty the ego', and do not produce the best kind, the former arise out of a tendency in the 'modern author' to self-observation, which results in the 'dissociation of his ego into part-egos'[9]. Indeed, when Lawrence was about to finish *The White Peacock*, he referred to Cyril quite happily as 'himself'; and at an earlier stage of composition, he both resented Cyril, 'the fool', and identified with George Saxton. However, despite the fact that he had declared to Jessie that Annable created a 'balance', otherwise, the novel would be 'too much him'[10], the split did not entail completely new perceptions. Lawrence's interest in having a prominent masculine figure which was there from the first, betrayed the same narcissistic preoccupation as when he writes:

> I am pretty well developed; I have done a good deal of dumb-bell practice. Indeed, as I was rubbing myself down in the late twilight a few minutes ago, and as I passed my hands over my sides where the muscles lie suave and secret, I did love myself(65).

This letter seems to suggest that George's 'finer soul than the majority of men' is a reflection of Lawrence's own, pure physique. In *The White Peacock* physical greatness is attributed at first to the father figure Annable. Then size becomes a feature of greatness cast aside; and Lawrence, who had no intention of giving Cyril any importance, ends up by making his adaptability and transparency the counterparts of the character's egotistical triumphs. His background remains unchanged and sterile; his relationships barely develop. Thus, a different line of

action is exploited which consists largely in working Cyril's greatness around suffering and redemption. His Nethermere ressembles the chorus of the Greek drama, which holds him back, warns him, sighs for him, till at last Cyril learns to live with those very aspects of his life, which are responsible for his suffering: his attachment to his milieu, his abrupt break from it, and his love for Emily. Similarly, it seems that *The White Peacock* was written out of the difficulties which made it at one time impossible to write.

This paradox may have originated in what Daniel Gunn calls, *à propos* of Proust, 'an apparent pair of alternatives: between the "I" which is telling the story; and the "I" which is told'[11]. Precisely that is, when Lawrence started to write to Blanche of a warfare between Cyril the narrator of his story and himself who could not write. Apparently, however, the main problem in writing a novel, according to Italo Calvino, does not lie in finding the characters; but in ascertaining which one, out of them all, will be he who writes the novel. It seems as if at least, Lawrence's temporary connection with a unknown woman reinforced his intimacy with them.

Notes

1. *The Letters of D.H.Lawrence*, vol 1, 1901-1913 ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.46. All subsequent references in the body of the text are to this volume.
2. 'E.T.' (Jessie Chambers), *D.H.Lawrence: a Personal Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.82.
3. Charles Mauron, *Des Métaphores Obsédants au Mythe Personnel* (Paris: Corti, 1980),p.228.
4. Didier Anzieu, 'Les Antinomies du Narcissisme dans la Création Littéraire' in *Corps Création* (Lyons: Presses Université de Lyon, 1980), p.126.
5. Emile Delavenay, *D.H.Lawrence: the Man and his Work: the Formative Years: 1885-1919* (London: Heinemann, 1972), p.53.
6. Didier Anzieu, *Le Corps de l'Oeuvre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), p. 33
7. Chambers, pp.88-9
8. George H.Neville, *A Memoir of D.H.Lawrence* ed Carl Baron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.2
9. Siegmund Freud, *Art and Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1985), p.356.
10. Chambers, p.138.
11. Daniel Gunn, *Psychoanalysis and Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.5

D.H.Lawrence and 'Real Knowledge': holistic wisdom and is there a future for it

John R.Doheny

> The fragmentation of knowledge is an aspect of the fragmentation of society which, paradoxically, takes place within a process of social integration. In the coming decade one of the most serious challenges may be how to overcome those tendencies, if we want to avoid slipping into chaos. Can Western science, with its stress on rationality and quantifications, fruitfully respond to this challenge without bringing in more humanist, soft, emotional and qualitative aspects? ... [1]

This is a very slippery subject, and there is nothing resembling general agreement. What looks like chaos to a person who is concerned with overall control and social integration, may look like essential human diversity to a philosophical anarchist like me. A friend who is a practical scientist said when he read this statement that while it is unfortunate, perhaps, it is also inevitable that in science at least, knowledge is always partial. There is just too much information to digest, analyze and draw conclusions from for any one person to have any more than partial knowledge, but to share one's knowledge freely is a mitigating factor. In some sense this may always have been true, but we might well ask, as Paul Goodman does, 'can a science with the stress on rationality and quantification'[2] be worthwhile unless it is concerned with humanness? Perhaps this division between rationality and quantification aspects on the one hand and humanist, soft, emotional and qualitative aspects on the other is part of the problem and not just a given, a widespread delusion justifying rockets in space and preparations for war.

What Paul Goodman actually said is that if you can't explain an idea, a concept, a theory concretely and clearly enough for it to be understandable to an unlettered person, then you must ask yourself if you understand the idea or concept or theory clearly enough yourself, and then ask whether or not it is actually an idea, concept, or theory worth holding.

Knowledge is, by its very nature, partial and always in the state of change and conflict, at least on its frontiers. It is essential, then, that ideas, theories, conclusions and opinions be continually voiced, shared, and tested. It is in this area where I believe modern concerns are focused. From at least the Middle Ages on, priests, magicians and medicine men have practiced mystification or demagoguery while engaging in the politics of power, sometimes speaking a language which ordinary people neither used nor understood, and pretending to make miracles. While modern social and literary theorists and politicians don't speak and write in Latin or Greek, many do purposely or inadvertently create languages of their own which are understood only by the initiated either to gain power over others or to preserve the sisterhood and the brotherhood (the guild) from outside threats. But those modern mystifiers are not very important,