

## EXPOSITION AND PHILOSOPHY IN LAWRENCE'S *TWILIGHT IN ITALY*

Patricia Tyrer

*Twilight in Italy*, published in 1916, is a collection of ten essays, written from 1912 to 1913, while Lawrence was living at Gargnano, Italy. It is a record of Lawrence's journey from Germany across the mountains into Italy, and, as Bridget Pugh suggests, "records with pleasing freshness the impact of Bavaria and Italy on the hitherto untravelled Lawrence" (243). As well as describing specific locales, customs and crafts, Lawrence examines what Pugh refers to as "archetypal figures" (243) he encounters, for instance, an old woman and two monks. The essays are, for the most part, written in first-person narrative, which provides a fresh quality to the work, even though several sections were revised prior to publication. According to Harry Moore, Lawrence and Frieda left Icking, Germany (near Munich), for Lago di Garda "like two *Wandervögel*" (157). Having little money, Lawrence and Frieda walked a great deal of the way, taking shelter where they could find it - at one point, spending the night in a hay hut. These experiences would also later be recalled in *Love Among the Haystacks*. In fact, Lawrence began *Twilight in Italy* by describing the journey he and Frieda had taken over "the imperial road to Italy ... from Munich across the Tyrol, through Innsbruck and Bozen to Verona, over the Mountains" (7). Perhaps, as Meyer suggests, Lawrence's journey was "a search for a better place where the traveller [could] peel away the layers of his own civilization and see mankind in a purer state" (48). More likely, it was Lawrence's need to respond to his changing world that prompted his wanderings. During his editing of the proofs of *Twilight in Italy*, Lawrence wrote that he "[had] nearly done the first, the destructive, half of my philosophy" (Sagar, 69). And indeed, many critics have suggested that the essay "The Lemon Gardens" was little more than a "pretext for two instalments of philosophy followed by an attack on English industrialism" (Pinion, 258). But again, Lawrence's own comments draw nearer to his reasoning:

I am writing a book of sketches, or preparing a book of sketches, about the nations, Italian, German and English, full of philosophizing and struggling to show things real. (Clark, 113)

These separate essays do, in fact, show the "real" themes that Lawrence would later work out in fiction: the problems of industrialized society, the nature of marriage, the position of religion and the church, the relationship of the sense to the intellect, and the true nature of the relationship between man and woman.

Structurally, the essays are written in a linear fashion, even though the last essay is entitled "The Return Journey," which would seem to indicate a circular composition. Although Lawrence states that "when one walks, one must travel west or south" (191), topographically, according to Pugh, it is very difficult to figure out where Lawrence is on his journey without consulting outside letters (244).

The essays begin with "The Crucifix Across the Mountains," originally published as "Christ's in the Tyrol" in the *English Review*. Lawrence's impressions of these wayside crucifixes, which appear intermittently along the old imperial route across the Alps, are an amalgam of oppositions: light and dark, flesh and spirit, sensuality and death (Clark, 114-115). Lawrence discusses the variations of the crucifixes, paying special attention to only a few. The crucifix north of the Alps, Lawrence wrote, is nothing more than "a factory-made piece of sentimentalism" (8) which he declares "the soul ignores" (8). Moving further along the trail to the south, Lawrence compares the plain, wooden crucifixes to the Bavarian peasants of the area, with their faces "handsome, but motionless as pure form" (12). These crucifixes have more variety, but are still unfulfilling. In lower Austria, the crucifixes seem "self conscious in their introspection" (Clark, 116), or as Lawrence describes them, "crude and sinister" (11). "Only high up, where the crucifix becomes smaller and smaller, is there left any of the old beauty and religion" (Lawrence, 21-22). Symbolically, of course, this movement from lower to higher, darkness to light, is repeatedly played out in later works of fiction. As Moore points out, "Lawrence subsequently made a fictional use of the Tyrolian crucifixes, at the end of *Women in Love*, where they provide a forceful symbol" (112) for Gerald, who in his last mad moments had associated his sufferings with those of Christ (Hamalian, 8). The recurrent themes addressed in "The Crucifix Across the Mountains" also appear in *The Rainbow*.

The second essay, "On The Lago Di Garda" is composed of seven chapters; "The Spinner and the Monks," "The Lemon Garden," and "The Theatre" make up chapters I, II and III, and take place in Gargnano. In "The Spinner and the Monks," Lawrence continues his symbolic look at light/dark, lower/higher, as he examines the two types of churches in the Christian world which he describes as "Churches of the Dove and the Churches of the Eagle" (25). As Clark implies in his examination of *Twilight in Italy*, Lawrence is suggesting that "the Church of the Eagle, San Tommaso, is the Old testament church of pride and imperiousness" (117), while the Church of San Francisco is the "New Testament Church of the Dove" (117). As the traveller, Lawrence proceeds up the hill into the light to examine the terrace of San Tommaso where he discovers an old woman spinning. After deciding that the old woman is in her own world, separate from Lawrence's, he declares that "she was not self-conscious, because she was not aware that there was anything in the universe except her universe" (32). Then, leaving

the terrace, Lawrence notices two monks walking below in the church garden; he writes that "neither the flare of day nor the completeness of night reached them ... neither the blood nor the spirit spoke in them" (40) and thus they were neutral. Carol Dix notes that for Lawrence "blood knowledge" was instinctual and intuitive, and therefore, natural and desirable (57). As he previously aligned the old spinner with the church of the eagle, he now aligns the monks with the church of the dove. This philosophizing incorporated the "new ideas or symbols [which] Lawrence was trying to grasp through his writing" (Moore, 172), particularly the idea of darkness and blood. "Lawrence sought an ideal in equilibrium" (Moore, 172) that becomes apparent in "The Lemon Garden" and in "The Theatre" where Lawrence quite accurately depicts scenes he has observed at Gargnano.

In "The Lemon Garden," he describes the people he encounters and philosophizes that Pope was right in his observation that "the proper study of mankind is Man" (53), thus interpreting Pope to mean that "a man is right, he is consummated, when he is seeking to know Man, the great abstract" (53). The ending of this essay, however, serves to illuminate Lawrence's criticism of industrialization. Wagner suggests in her critical essay, that "Lawrence believes [that what] the future holds for both England and Italy" (265) is little more than rampant industrialization, eventually affecting even the relationships between men and women. Lawrence suggests that the future Italian is sure to "embrace his mistress, the machine" (72) just as Englishmen have already done (Wagner, 265).

Likewise in "the Theatre," an essay that describes the various performances of a local theatre troupe during Carnival, Lawrence probes the relationship between men and women. Wagner suggests that his assessment is "reminiscent of The Rainbow's similar probings" (266) in that Lawrence believes that "women are possessors of great power ... [and] that the men are dominated by passion" (266). Lawrence writes that for the Italian male, the "phallus is still divine. But the spirit, the mind of man, this has become nothing" (79). Unsurprisingly, this passage has become one which is most often criticized by contemporary feminists. Laura Fasick writes that for Lawrence,

women are the great materialists, and men are the thinkers, the dreamers, the planners, the doers. But men in Italy have betrayed their natural role by choosing to exalt the realm of physical creativity. (26)

Thus, because Italy is a "phallocentric country, it is a matriarchy" (Fasick, 26), and in Lawrentian philosophy, this male "abdication of the proper masculine role has significant social consequences" (Fasick, 26). This theme of unnaturalness is carried through to the end of the essays, interspersed with other more pedantic social commentary. Particularly appealing, in this chapter, however, is Lawrence's description of the troupe of players who performs plays from Shakespeare to Ibsen.

Lawrence focuses on the production of "Hamlet" starring Signor Enrico Persevalli, whose "Evening of Honour would be a bitter occasion to him if the English were not there to see his performance" (90). Lawrence's self-proclaimed "aversion from Hamlet: a creeping, unclean thing", leads to an extensive discussion of human achievement and a "historico-philosophical interpretation of the play in a context extending back to Orestes" (Pinion, 258). It is this section that Wagner claims as being Lawrence's best, for "he [Lawrence] maintains [a] humorous tone [and] in so doing also reveals one of his most endearing traits - his ability to laugh at himself, to include himself with the general run of humanity" (268). This humorous tone is a welcome break between the more preachy, didactic passages of *Twilight in Italy*.

Similarly in "San Gaudenzio", Lawrence looks at the people of the community, this time focusing on the family, particularly the marital relationship between old Paolo and wife Maria, pictured as a mercilessly greedy woman who drives her husband and son off to America in search of riches. Lawrence writes of the marriage of Paolo and Maria, that "their souls were silent and detached, completely apart, and silent, quite silent" (84). Again, Lawrence reiterates his theory that modern needs and modern solutions serve to spoil the intimate relationship between man and woman. "The Dance" further deals with Maria's actions as well as additionally highlighting Lawrence's view of the disparity between the south and the north.

Again in "Il Duro", Lawrence presents the story of a man who has been to America and has returned unchanged, but wealthy. Il Duro's passion lies in his ability to graft vines, at which he is an artist. The relationship between Lawrence and Il Duro is unique, according to Clark, in that Lawrence uses this story to "devise a set of relationships between himself and Il Duro of the kind he has previously only experimented with" (130). Yet, the distinction between the two is in Il Duro's rejection of marriage. And so, Lawrence announces that "he [Il Duro] belonged to the god Pan, to the absolute of the sense" and "Pan and the ministers of Pan do not marry the sylvan gods. They are single and isolated in their being" (149). Here again are the beginnings of Lawrence's philosophy of personal fulfillment through marriage, which will be worked out in greater detail in his longer works. Faustino, Il Duro, has none of this "spirit" that Lawrence claims comes from the marriage of two souls.

In "John", Lawrence likewise examines the human character. L.D. Clark, in discussing this essay, suggests that "Lawrence's perception of John's motives is full of implied comparison-contrast with his own" (132). Although John is married, and has a child, he longs to return to America where he had learned English and become involved in American life. Lawrence again contrasts his view of the spiritually fulfilling nature of marriage against the rise of industrialism and its negative impact on the family.

For Lawrence, John's flight to America is, in actuality, a "flight from women's oppression" (Clark, 132) and a forecast for the future.

Philosophically, the last two essays of *Twilight in Italy*, "Italians in Exile" and "The Return Journey", are significant in that Lawrence posits his harshest criticism of the "material insentience of the northern countries" (184) and of "the horrible, desolating harshness of the advance of the industrial world upon the world of nature" (203) which he found so painful. However deep the philosophical convictions run in these two segments, they are lightened by the fact that both are based on Lawrence's actual walk through the Alps in 1913. Thus, the essays have the tone and wonderment of the actual pilgrimage:

The twilight deepened, though there was still the strange, glassy translucency of the snow-lit air. A fragment of moon was in the sky. ... There was the loud noise of water, as ever, something eternal and maddening in its sound, like the sound of Time itself, rustling and rushing and wavering, but never for a second ceasing. (205)

George Landow declares that Lawrence "creates [a] kind of word-painting, which produces the effect of moving elements within a scene" (39). And indeed, despite the heavy dose of philosophy, *Twilight in Italy*, is still most effectively a travel narrative.

Interestingly, Clark notes that "a few days after finishing the proofs of *Twilight in Italy*, Lawrence wrote to Cynthia Asquith that the message of his travel books was the same as that of *The Rainbow* in that "the old world was toppling and a new one must be made to rise out of the debris" (143). Indeed, his decision to end his journey in the industrial city of Milan, further reveals his concern that the world was in a "vigorous process of disintegration" (203). The accomplishment of this "rise out of the debris" would be further examined in fiction. Whatever the framework, Lawrence would continue to question man's very nature, much as he did in the closing lines of "The Spinner and the Monk" from which he took the title of the essays:

Where is the supreme ecstasy in mankind, which makes a day a delight and a night a delight. ... Where is the transcendent knowledge in our hearts, uniting sun and darkness, day and night, spirit and senses? (42)

For Lawrence, perhaps, it is at twilight, when light and dark, day and night blend into one, that man is most nearly able to reach a point of "supreme ecstasy."

Finally, there was a great deal of criticism of Lawrence's philosophy, both immediately after the publication of *Twilight in Italy* and much later with the publication of his longer works.

But the question remains whether, in fact, Lawrence did what he set out to do in these essays. His stated task, to write something "real," is unquestionably a noble one, but was he able, over the course of intervening years, to complete the task? Howard Mills in his assessment of *Twilight in Italy* declares that Lawrence "muddied pure experience with later preoccupations and alien theorizing" (43). Thus, Mills' contention is that the time difference between the original composition and the later rewriting greatly affected the composition and "automatically defeat[ed] the struggle 'to show things real'" (43). Nevertheless, Lawrence did succeed in painting a hopeful picture of the future of mankind, even at a time when he was personally desolated by the great machine of war. Lawrence wrote in February 1916, as he was completing the proofs of *Twilight in Italy*:

We shall stay in Cornwall till our money is gone ... then I think we may as well all go and drown ourselves. For I see no prospect of the war's ever ending, and not a ghost of a hope that people will ever want sincere work from any artist. (Sagar, 69)

However, the war did end, and Lawrence did produce works of great artistry - the very beginning of which can be found in his own personal wanderings as fictionalized in *Twilight in Italy*.

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**DISPUTED DREGS: D.H. LAWRENCE AND THE PUBLICATION OF MAURICE MAGNUS' MEMOIRS OF THE FOREIGN LEGION**  
Louise E Wright

In October 1924, nearly four years after Maurice Magnus committed suicide on Malta, his *Memoirs of the Foreign Legion* - which he had entitled *Dregs* - was published in London by Martin Secker. The volume contained an introduction by D.H. Lawrence. At the request of Michael Borg, who had the manuscript of *Dregs* in his possession and who wished to recover the money which Magnus had died owing him, Lawrence had involved himself in the publication of the work. Before the year was out, Norman Douglas had composed "D.H. Lawrence and Maurice Magnus: a Plea for Better Manners". In this pamphlet, he objected to the portrait Lawrence had drawn of Magnus, affirmed his friendship with the dead man, and pointed out that, although Magnus' literary executor and heir, he had received none of the profits from the publication of *Dregs*. Lawrence replied to Douglas in "Accumulated Mail" and later, in the *New Statesman*, effectively silenced him by quoting a letter in which Douglas had given him permission to do as he pleased with the manuscript and to keep all the proceeds.<sup>8</sup>

These are the readily available facts of the celebrated Lawrence-Douglas controversy. By themselves, however, they provide only a very incomplete understanding of it. From the time of Magnus' death until *Dregs* finally appeared in print, various individuals struggled to get the work published. In addition to Lawrence, Douglas and Borg, they included Grant Richards, the English publisher in contact with Douglas; William Harding, Borg's solicitor; Robert Mountsier, Lawrence's American literary agent; and Thomas Seltzer, Lawrence's American publisher. Their correspondence and other papers, generated during four years of complicated and protracted negotiations, make the reconstructing of the history of the manuscript's ownership and publication possible. The history suggests that Borg hoped to realize a profit greater than Magnus' debt and that Seltzer would have published the work had he been convinced of Borg's claim to the rights. Most importantly, it reveals that, although Lawrence asked permission to publish *Dregs*, he did not honour the agreement he reached with Douglas and that, in his letter to the *New Statesman*, he misrepresented his dealings with Magnus' literary executor.

8 "Accumulated Mail", *The Borzoi*: 1925 (New York: Knopf, 1925), reprinted in *Phoenix: the Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence*, ed. Edward D. McDonald (1936; New York: Viking, 1968) p 800; *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, vol. 5, 1924-7, ed. James T. Boulton and Lindeth Vasey (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1989), p 396.  
The latter work is hereafter referred to in the text as L5.