

**"NO FORM OR APPROPRIATE CEREMONY":
AN ACCOUNT OF D.H. LAWRENCE'S FUNERAL**

Christopher Pollnitz

In the main, biographers have based their reconstructions of Lawrence's funeral on three accounts: Frieda Lawrence's, in *Not I, But the Wind*; her daughter Barbara Weekley's, in the memoir published seriatim in Edward Nehls's *Composite Biography*; and Robert Nichols's, in the long letter to Dr and Mrs Henry Head which Sybille Bedford used in her biography of Aldous Huxley. Frieda is brief and resolutely poetic: 'Then we buried him, very simply, like a bird we put him away, a few of us who loved him. We put flowers into his grave and all I said was: "Good-bye, Lorenzo," as his friends and I put lots and lots of mimosa on his coffin'(265). Barbara Weekley explains the absence of ceremony - an offer from the English chaplain at Vence to say one or two prayers at the graveside had been refused - and makes the number of mourners, six, seem selective indeed (*Nehls* III, 448). Writing only four days after the funeral, which was held on 4 March 1930, Nichols records more circumstantial detail. Although he names no more than six in the cortège and confesses some disquiet about the lack of an oration - 'I said "Goodbye, dear Lawrence," because I couldn't bear to let him go absolutely without a word' - Nichols gives approval to the decision to dispense with obsequies: 'By God, my dears, it was grand. Why make speeches in the face of death? We don't know enough to say anything' (Bedford, 20-31). Another memoir collected by Nehls, Achsah Brewster's increases the attendance to ten (*Nehls*

III, 449), while Harry T. Moore, in one of his reconstructions, rounds the number up to twelve.

Despite discrepancies, for instance about the number making up the funeral party, previously published memoirs have shared two characteristics: they describe the funeral as moving and dignified; and they are the accounts of those who, as members of the party, were moved by the occasion. The funeral would seem to have unfolded as an impromptu, perhaps unconscious tribute to Lawrence's ideas about the importance of naïveté and spontaneity in art and ritual. Occasionally, noticing the disquiet betrayed by Nichols about the all-but-wordless internment, an inquisitive reader might pause to wonder whether an outsider would have been stirred or appalled by these proceedings. With the controlling intelligence removed, did the enactment of a would-be Lawrencian ceremony deteriorate, so soon after his death, into the pantomime and farce of such later rites as the exhumation and cremation, the transportation to Taos of the ashes and their re-internment⁴⁶? Until now, to re-assess the funeral would have seemed merely to pit a reader's subjectivity against a first-hand witness's.

A hitherto unknown description of the funeral, sent by Frank Budgen to Percy Reginald Stephensen only two days after the event, on 6 March 1930, is located in the Mitchell Library, the State Library of New South Wales.⁴⁷ Budgen is known to literary historians for his friendship with James Joyce,

⁴⁶ For a detailed but tendentious theory on what might have happened to Lawrence's remains, see Emile Delavenay, 'A Shrine Without Relics?', *D.H. Lawrence Review*, 16 (Summer 1983): 111-31

⁴⁷ The letter is in a folder headed 'Papers 1927-32, re Fanfrolico Press and Mandrake Press', in Box 25 of the P.R. Stephensen Papers, ref. ML MSS 1284/25. In 1929-30 Stephensen was an active publisher of Lawrence's work through the Mandrake Press, which had been set up to issue the *de luxe* edition of Lawrence's *Paintings*.

whom he first met in Zurich in 1918. Richard Ellman writes of Joyce as being 'more intimate' with Budgen 'than with any friend in life' except John Francis Byrne, the 'Cranly' of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Ellman, 442). In Budgen's *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'*, a pioneering work of Joyce criticism, intimations can also be found about the relationship between Joyce the writer and Budgen the painter - the 'boozier, bard, and canvas dauber' as Joyce acclaimed him (Ellman, 446). Son of a Surrey rural labourer, Budgen escaped from a life of occasionally colourful drudgery, as a merchant seaman, then as a London postal sorter, to become an artist's model and finally a painter in his own right, working in Paris, Mannheim and Zurich.⁴⁸ In his later childhood, Frank was taken to London by his stepmother and his father, who was in search of work. There, Frank was dragged through a succession of dingy lodgings, in one of which, in Highbury, he met up with Louis Sargent. Louis was the youngest son of a wood engraver - an applied art as obsolete, by the 1890s, as that of farm-labourer (Budgen, *Myself When Young*, 27). The two boys became life-long friends; from Louis, Frank learned to reverence the vocation of artist; and it was on account of Louis's ill-health - a chronic 'nervous' or psychological complaint (*Myself When Young*, 97, 195, 197) - that Frank had come to Venice, in March 1930.

Frank Budgen was in Venice with his wife, Francine. Louis Sargent was accompanied by his wife, Katherine.⁴⁹ Sargent was being treated by Dr Maestracci, the Corsican physician to whom Lawrence turned, after escaping

from the unsympathetic régime of the Ad Astra Sanatorium to the Villa Robermond (Lucas, 250). It was because of Maestracci's unavailability on the night of Lawrence's death, Sunday, 2 March, that Aldous Huxley and Barbara Weekley had to search out and plead with the senior doctor from the Sanatorium; in severe pain, Lawrence had at last asked for a morphia injection. Because Louis Sargent and Lawrence shared the same physician, the little party of painters heard of Lawrence's death when Maestracci returned on Monday, the day preceding the funeral. Without intruding on the grief of friends and family, the Budgens and Sargents hastened to send a tribute. Their gift was the 'huge wreath of dark crimson carnations' which Robert Nichols misremembers as having been sent by 'two or three American painters who did not know Lawrence personally but much admired his work' (Bedford, 228).

While working in the London post office, Budgen had come into contact with Marxist-sympathising unionists, and he subsequently gained much of his writing experience editorialising for communist periodicals.⁵⁰ His activist faith had been shaken off by the 1920s, but his radical training can still be heard in his complaint about other writers not serving as pall-bearers at Lawrence's funeral - 'people of his own tribe and trade union'. It is not known how Budgen and 'Inky' Stephensen formed their acquaintance, but at this stage of their lives the painter and the small-press publisher shared similar political inclinations. Although winning his way to Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, the Queensland-born Stephensen was almost sent down for distributing Bolshevik tracts to Indian students at the university (Munro, 37-41). In 1928-29, Stephensen teamed up

⁴⁸ Joan Budgen recalls that her father, who exhibited in all these cities, had a particularly well-reviewed exhibition in 1930, at the Salon d'Automne in Paris.

⁴⁹ Dutch-born and raised in Belgium, Francine Budgen came to England as a girl in 1914. Katherine Sargent, who painted under her maiden name of Clayton, was a still-life specialist.

⁵⁰ Budgen was a considerable prose stylist. Ellman relates how Joyce, helping his friend correct the proofs of *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'*, commented: 'I never knew you could write so well. It must be due to your association with me' (Ellman, 677).

with another Australian expatriate, Jack Lindsay, to publish the *London Aphrodite*, an iconoclastic periodical which printed the work of a younger, undiscovered generation of modernist and anti-modernist writers as well as reproducing paintings and illustrations. It was perhaps through these circles, through the artistic London bohemia captured by Aldous Huxley in *Point Counter Point*, that Stephensen and Budgen met. Stephensen had met Lawrence and Frieda in Bandol, in December 1928, travelling there in the company of Rhys Davies to discuss the publication of Lawrence's *Paintings*.

A further influence from Frank Budgen's past colours his verbal sketch of the funeral. As a child he had been exposed to one of the millennial Christian cults which flourished among disaffected working-class communities in the late nineteenth century. As an agnostic adult, he retained a respect, evidenced in the autobiography of his early years, *Myself When Young*,⁵¹ for those motivated by sincere religious principle. In his letter to Stephensen, Budgen speaks with regret about the failure to find an 'appropriate ceremony' to commemorate Lawrence's passing. Budgen's is the letter of an outsider, one who witnessed but did not participate in the procession and burial. It is an objective letter, reporting Francine Budgen's count of those present at the cemetery on the evening of 4 March 1930 - eighteen, when the number of the Budgens' own party is deducted.⁵² It is the letter of a candid admirer of what

had been achieved by the great modernist writers, a contemporary who does not wish to see their achievements inappropriately commemorated and finds it mortifying one of them can be so marginalized at his death. His letter pictures Lawrence passing out of the life of Western civilisation as inauspiciously, as fastidiously ignored by his countrymen and the European establishment, as, forty-four years before, he had entered it.

Frank Budgen's daughter and literary executor, Joan Budgen, has been able to locate one of the photographs mentioned her father's letter to Stephensen, and this is reproduced as Illust. 1. In the attempted diplomatic rendition of the letter, punctuation, capitalisation and some idiosyncratic spellings have been retained. I wish to express my thanks to: Joan Budgen, for permission to publish the letter and for much fresh information, about her parents and the Sargents; to Clive Hart and Wayne McKenna, for hints about historical background; and to the staff of the Mitchell Library, for their help and guidance. Any errors in this introduction and the letter are my own.

Villa Saint Marie, Route St Jeannet

Vence, AM, France

March 6, 1930

Dear Inky, Perhaps the following few details about the funeral of D.H. Lawrence will interest you. I remember when last we met you

⁵¹ Born 2 February 1882, Budgen was forty-eight on 4 March 1930. *Myself When Young* covers his life up to circa 1920.

⁵² Some discrepancies in counting the mourners can be resolved. Harry T. Moore once suggests there were twelve present (*Life and Work*, 242), elsewhere giving nine names: 'Frieda and her daughter Barbara ... the Huxleys, the di Chiaras, Ida Rauh, Achsah Brewster, Robert Nichols' (*Intelligent Heart*, 437; *Priest of Love* 507). To make up the number recalled by Achsah Brewster (Nehls III. 449), ten, one must turn to Sybille Bedford. She quotes Nichols on the subject of a certain 'Thys, the Paris publisher of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*', being present on the day of the funeral (228).

Presumably, Bedford misread Edward W. Titus' name from Nichols's autograph letter, in which it might be misspelt, perhaps as 'Titys'. The remaining eight in the funeral party might have been servants or recent Vence acquaintance, for instance the redoubtable nurse Evelyn Thorogood who stole Lawrence's last doodle (Nehls III, 435, 440, 730, n. 421). These were people Francine would count, but Achsah Brewster might overlook.

were publishing reproductions of his pictures and I believe other work of his. Last Saturday we heard that Lawrence was dangerously ill in a Vence Sanatorium. The following Monday at Dr Maestracci's where my friend Louis Sargent is receiving treatment we learned that he had died the previous evening at 10 o'clock - Maestracci was called in for a consultation but Lawrence was dead before he could get there. L.S. and myself decided we would send some flowers along and go to the funeral - which was fixed for Tuesday at 4 p.m. I went alone to the Villa Robremont at that time (L.S. being momentarily on the sick list) and expected to find a crowd waiting. There was nobody outside so, fearing to have the air of butting in if I hung about I walked back to the cemetery where I was joined by Francine and by L.S. and his wife. The coffin was carried from the hearse to the grave by four undertakers employés. Very few people were there. Francine counted them. There were twenty two not including the municipal undertaker and his four aides. One or two french people were there - one hardly knew why. Apart from our four selves and one grey headed aimiable looking Englishman staying in Vence there were none of Lawrence's countrymen present except bien entendu the one or two intimate friends or relatives near Mrs Lawrence. This I quite understand in the case of the elderly spinsters and retired army men who live in the pensions down this way, but what about the writers and painters, English and American, who live here and at St Paul and Cagnes and all around this part of the world? These surely dont take their marching orders from the local Anglican parsons like the pension cats and their male folk. The only religious gesture was supplied by a frenchwoman trapped by our

twenty two while tending a near by grave. She made the sign of the cross as the coffin was being lowered into the grave and looked shocked at the impiety of the whole proceeding.

I felt a little distressed also I must admit that no form or appropriate ceremony was found for such an occasion. St. Paul's prose poems are quite out of the question no doubt but one of his near friends might have extolled his virtues and celebrated his achievements and the tempo of the proceedings might have been slowed down with advantage. Also I think that the task of transporting his coffin from the hearse to the grave should not have been entrusted to four casual employés when people of his own tribe and trade union were available. However if one turns down the current forms it's no easy job I know to invent new ones. I enclose one or two photos of the grave and cemetery taken by Francine and Mrs Sargent.

We have been down here about two months and expect to stay until the end of April. The country is lovely. Unfortunately the weather awful. An English winter might be colder. It couldn't be grey-er or rainier. After we leave here, we are going to try to settle down in Paris. We figure it out that it ought to be possible. If they allow us to work it will be.

I shall be in London at the beginning of May-

Greetings from Francine and myself. yours sincerely,

F.Budgen

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Illustr.1. Lawrence's grave, circa 5 March 1930, against the wall of Vence Cemetery. It is covered with flowers and foliage, the withered carnation wreath being propped up in place of a headstone. According to Joan Budgen, her mother Francine recalled her embarrassment, when she and her party returned to the Cemetery to take photographs, at finding their tribute had been given such prominence.

**D.H.Lawrence: *The Woman Who Rode Away and other stories*,
edited by Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn, C.U.P, 1995.**

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Rosemary Howard

This volume contains the eleven stories published by Lawrence in May 1928 under the title *The Woman Who Rode Away* (though *The Man Who Loved Islands* appeared only in the American Edition). Two additional stories which appeared in the posthumous collection "The Lovely Lady" are included, together with a fragment entitled "A Pure Witch". In a short review it is impossible to do full justice to the detailed and meticulous editing by Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn of a work of such biographical, bibliographical and compositional complexity. By cutting a clear path through this multiplicity of detail, the Editors have thrown valuable light on this period of Lawrence's great maturity as a writer.

In this collection the stories are printed in the order originally suggested by Lawrence whose advice was, "Let us start with a lighter story" - "Two Blue Birds", in fact. But the main theme of this volume is an analysis of the background of these stories which were all - including, "The Lovely Lady" and "The Rocking Horse Winner" - written between 1924 and 1928. So that in the Introduction the stories are discussed chronologically in groups which reflect the experiences of Lawrence's various sojourns in England, France, Germany, New Mexico and finally Italy. Thus we find "The Borderline" reflecting, the Germany of 1924 when Lawrence and Frieda were travelling to Baden Baden via Strasbourg, "Sun" reproducing the Italian scene, and "The Two Blue Birds"