

Early Voices

September 1885–October 1908

(i) Eastwood

D. H. Lawrence was born on Friday 11 September 1885 in Eastwood, an expanding mining village eight miles north-west of Nottingham. He was the fourth child, and the third son, of Arthur John Lawrence, a butty at the nearby Brinsley Colliery, and Lydia Lawrence (*née* Beardsall), the daughter of an engine fitter, who was born in Manchester and lived in Sheerness in Kent before moving with her family to Sneinton, a notoriously rough suburb of Nottingham, to live as cheaply as possible close to her father's relatives. Although accounts of Lawrence's background often refer to his father as a coalminer and his mother as middle class, the reality was far more complex. As a butty, Arthur was a skilled workman who effectively employed his own team of daymen at the pit and could earn good money, while Lydia, who had aspired at one time to be a teacher,¹ had been reduced by a catastrophic accident suffered by her father in Sheerness in 1870 to working as a lace drawer in the Nottingham lace industry.

Lawrence's parents met through family connections, since Lydia's maternal uncle, John Newton, was married to Arthur's maternal aunt, Alvina Parsons. Lydia and Arthur attended a Christmas party thrown by John and Alvina at their home in New Basford (a northern suburb of Nottingham) in 1874, and experienced a deep mutual attraction to each other. They married a year later, on 27 December 1875. She was 24; he was 27. They initially lived in Brinsley (a village neighbouring Eastwood), in a house which Arthur rented from his mother, but thereafter they

were forced to move where the work was, so they stayed for short periods in New Cross, South Normanton and Old Radford before settling in Eastwood in 1883.²

The life and culture of Eastwood at this period are in many ways profoundly alien to us. The census records the population as 4363 in 1891 (it had been 2540 in 1871); there were ten pits within walking distance of the village, and 98% of people relied upon coal mining as their primary source of income. The local mining company, Barber Walker & Co., owned six mines in the area. It is difficult to imagine the living conditions which resulted from the extent of the local industry. Dust in the air created a host of respiratory and pulmonary problems for residents; tuberculosis and bronchitis caused the largest percentage of fatalities in the district, but there were also regular epidemics of measles, diphtheria, diarrhoea, scarlet fever and whooping cough. Lawrence was a delicate and sickly baby; problems with his lungs would haunt him throughout his life (he suffered two near-fatal bouts of pneumonia, in 1901–1902 and 1910–1911, and he may have fallen ill earlier than this, too, around autumn 1889, when there was a serious outbreak of whooping cough in Eastwood).³ The life of his father and fellow workmen down the pit was very demanding. Arthur recalled having started work at the pit at the age of seven; he had his first proper job underground when he was ten.⁴ In 1892 there were up to 288 persons employed underground at Brinsley Colliery at any one time.⁵ Working from six in the morning until four in the afternoon in dark and often dangerous conditions, there was always the risk of an accident which could reduce a family to poverty by crippling or killing the principal wage-earner (one of Lawrence's paternal uncles, James Lawrence, died in a mining accident at Brinsley in 1880).

Lydia Lawrence never felt herself to be part of this tight-knit community, and to a certain degree she held herself aloof from it. Although she had endured straitened circumstances with her parents and siblings from 1870 (the family having lived beyond its means before this time), the Nottingham Beardsalls on her father's side were said to have once been important landowners in the area; her mother's family (the Newtons) could boast of having a composer in its lineage.⁶ It is significant that, in spite of their financial plight, Lydia's five sisters all married respectably into the upper-working or middle class. Lydia spoke with a Kentish intonation which struck her neighbours as well-to-do, and in some senses pretentious. One family living three doors away from her and Arthur during Lawrence's childhood felt that 'Mrs Lawrence, having chosen to marry a collier might have tried harder to make a collier's wife';⁷ Lydia's sense of identity was invested in a determined resistance to the outlook and values of her working-class neighbours.

Arthur, on the other hand, was surrounded by family members in Eastwood. At the time of their move to 8a Victoria Street in 1883, his brother Walter was living just a short walk away in Princes Street; his parents (John and Louisa), his brother George, and his two married sisters (Emma and Sarah) were all nearby in Brinsley. Arthur was thoroughly at home in the colliery village, and he seems to have been

popular with his workmates and respected for his skills as a miner. His own line of descent is more obscure than his wife's, so that even establishing his date of birth has proved problematic.⁸ He repeated to his family a romantic story about his paternal grandfather being a refugee from the French Revolution, 'a Frenchman' who had 'fought in the battle of Waterloo' and married an English barmaid.⁹ He loved dancing and was remembered in the area as 'an attractive character, lively and gay, with an infectious laugh and a good singing voice' and 'a genial old chap who loved his children.'¹⁰

The attraction which had drawn him and Lydia together gave way to disillusionment and resentment once his wife came to appreciate the realities of life as the wife of a butty. Lydia, with her proud Wesleyan Methodist upbringing and interest in religious and intellectual matters, insisted on looking above and beyond Eastwood for her fulfilment, fully intending to lift her children out of their present circumstances. She was an active member of the Eastwood Branch of the Women's Co-Operative Guild, and she was known to entertain the local minister (the Reverend Robert Reid) in discussing religious and philosophical issues; she was also a staunch teetotaller, strongly opposed to the drinking habits of the miners and what she considered their deleterious consequences. Lydia made sure that all of her children signed up to the Band of Hope, a Christian temperance association which urged young and old alike to renounce alcohol.¹¹ Through stringent habits of domestic economy she sought to save money to draw upon in times of need, and to maintain some small, but significant, degree of distinction for her family.¹² Before Lawrence's birth she had begun to supplement the family's income by selling lace and linen from the front room of their house in Victoria Street; to be a shopkeeper or merchant was important because these were 'respectable' professions.¹³

(ii) 'In-between's'

Lawrence grew up, then, in a family riven by profound divisions; he was caught between his father's sense of joy and belonging to the community and the dissatisfaction of his mother, with her aspiring religious and intellectual values. According to his mood, he could find inspiration in the idea of both a hymn-writing relation and a revolutionary Francophile ancestry, but the home conflict between spirituality and passion, morality and carelessness, intellect and the non-intellectual was also confusing and unsettling for a young mind. Accounts of uncontrollable childhood tempers and bouts of unmotivated crying suggest that he experienced a strong feeling of insecurity during his earliest years, responding to the upset of his parents before he could fully comprehend its cause.¹⁴ The tension at home is explored in a late poem entitled 'Red-herring', in which Lawrence describes himself and his siblings as 'in-between's' and 'little non-descript's' (*Poems* 425),

speaking received pronunciation inside the house and the less respectable dialect outside it. The breach between the two forms of speech was stark and polarising; Lawrence's awareness of it would have been formative. Although he retained an ability to speak the dialect into adulthood, and an extraordinary facility to convey a version of it in his writing, there was little doubt where his early allegiance lay as Lydia Lawrence's youngest son, particularly after his mother's affections transferred to him following the death of his brother Ernest from erysipelas on 11 October 1901. He felt that he had to hate his father 'for Mother's sake.'¹⁵



Figure 1 The Lawrence family, c.1895. Back row: Emily, George, Ernest. Front row: Ada, Lydia, Bert (D. H. Lawrence), Arthur. (Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham, La R 8.)

His brothers, George and Ernest, had responded very differently to the challenging atmosphere of home. It was Ernest who carried forward Lydia's hopes up to the time of his death. His progress in employment had demonstrated the energy and aspiration that his mother instilled in him: he left school at the age of 14 and toiled his way up from a job at the Co-op at Langley Mill and a position in the offices of the Shipley Colliery Company to work for John Griffiths Cycle Corporation Ltd in Coventry, finally securing a lucrative job as a clerk in a solicitors' office in London. George's early life, meanwhile, seemed to be shaped by a dogged refusal to 'get on': he greatly admired his father and shared some of his spirit and recklessness. After leaving school, he worked for a brief period at High Park Colliery before being apprenticed to a picture framer. Shortly before his nineteenth birthday, during a trip to Ilkeston, he impulsively signed on to serve for seven years with the King's Own Scottish Borderers; his mother was forced to buy him out of the army at great expense around 15 months later.¹⁶ In May 1897, not long after his release, George married a girl whom the family considered unsuitable (she was three months pregnant at the time). He then got a job as a turner, and subsequently went to live in Nottingham, where he worked for an engineering firm. Only later did he settle down and attain the respectability his mother so valued, becoming a pious, committed and hard-working lay preacher.

In discovering his own place in the world the young Lawrence had to negotiate the paths of conformity and rebellion trodden by his brothers. Ernest had been a great success at school and a keen sportsman. Lawrence was told by his headmaster at Beauvale Board School that that he would 'never be fit to tie his brother's boot-laces'.¹⁷ He was a sickly child – 'a snotty-nosed little collier's lad' (*LEA* 18) – who was withdrawn from the school for three years shortly after he started attending the Infants' Section in 1889, probably on account of ill health; he was tormented by his peers because of his preference for playing with the girls.¹⁸ However, in spite of his shrinking sensitivity and an instinctive aversion to new environments which caused him to hate his early experiences at Beauvale, he was studious and gifted in his own way, achieving some considerable success in his formal education. In July 1898 he won a prestigious Nottinghamshire County Council scholarship to Nottingham High School, which he attended between September 1898 and July 1901.

This was an extraordinary achievement for the son of an Eastwood miner. His friend George Neville, who was a year behind him at Beauvale, was one of very few Eastwood contacts to achieve the same success; Neville followed Lawrence to the High School in 1899. Although Lawrence's early results there were very good (he came second in his form group at Christmas 1898, after his first term, and won the form prize in the Upper Modern IVth at Easter 1900), he struggled to adapt to life as a scholarship boy among children from solid middle-class homes. His long journey to the School each day on foot and by train from Kimberley Station made for an exhausting week, and in his final year the realisation that he would be forced to take up a clerking job on leaving while some of his peers would have the chance to

go on to University would doubtless have removed some of his motivation to do well. Having started out with good reports, which especially commended his work in Mathematics, he finished fifteenth out of 19 students in the Modern VIth during his final year.¹⁹ In September 1901 he applied for a position with J. H. Haywood Ltd, a firm based in Castle Gate in Nottingham which manufactured surgical, athletic, veterinary and magnetic appliances. He began work as a junior clerk later the same month. He was in the first weeks of his new position when Ernest died in his mother's arms on 11 October, at the lodgings he had taken in Catford, south London.

The upward mobility of Lydia's two younger sons is striking. The success of her desire to secure respectability for the family members can be judged by considering the progress of their fortunes through the four houses they inhabited in Eastwood between 1883 and 1910 (when she died of abdominal cancer): they moved from Victoria Street to 57 The Breach (in late 1887) to 3 Walker Street (in 1891) and finally to 97 Lynn Croft (in early 1905). This meant moving from a small terraced house with a large shop window to a much larger end terrace with an extra plot of garden at the side, to the beloved Walker Street house with its wide front view over to Brinsley and Underwood, and finally to the distinction of the Lynn Croft house at the top of a hill, with a big bay window and back garden looking onto the spire of the Congregational Chapel at the confluence of Albert Street and Nottingham Road.

The Chapel was a bastion of culture for Lydia, and one of the central influences on the development of Lawrence's early intellectual life. As a child he naturally attended services, and morning Sunday school in the Albert Street schoolroom next door. The hymns and Bible stories he learnt here, and the broader habits of mind of Congregationalism, stayed with him for the rest of his life: they went on informing the religious seriousness with which he understood the life of the body long after he had broken with institutional religion around the age of 22. Chapel also contributed in other ways to the widening of his intellectual and social circles in Eastwood. He became a member of the Congregational Literary Society, founded in 1899: its meetings took place on Monday evenings from October to March and included a range of topics (religious, scientific and geographical as well as literary). One of the Society's key figures was Willie Hopkin, a socialist intellectual who kept a shoe shop and post office on the Nottingham Road. Hopkin wrote a weekly column for the local newspaper, the *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser*; he and his wife Sallie would become two of Lawrence's closest Eastwood friends.

(iii) Hags Farm and Jessie Chambers

It was also through the Chapel that the Lawrences first established contact with members of the Chambers family, who moved from Greenhills Road to become tenants of Hags Farm in 1898. Edmund Chambers, the father, had a milk round in

Eastwood; his wife, Ann, felt just as displaced in the village as Lydia Lawrence. David Chambers, the youngest of their seven children (three daughters and four sons), described both women as ‘strangers to the colliery community’: he felt that the Chapel was ‘the only place in which they felt really at home in an otherwise alien world.’²⁰ Lydia and Ann naturally confided in one another.²¹

Jessie Chambers, the middle daughter, remembered first seeing Lawrence in 1896, when he was 11 years old, but they did not become properly acquainted until five years later. In the early summer of 1901, during Lawrence’s final term at the



Figure 2 The Chambers family outside Hags Farm, c.1899: May, Bernard, Mollie, Edmund, Ann, David, Jessie, Hubert, Alan. (Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham, La Ch 60.)

High School, he and his mother took up an offer to visit the Chambers family, and so began one of the most important relationships of Lawrence's youth. The visit to Hags Farm would mark a watershed in Lawrence's early life; he loved to escape from the ugliness of Eastwood, and the tensions of home, to the startling beauty of the surrounding countryside and the attentions of a family who grew to love him and to appreciate his accomplishments. In *Sons and Lovers*, he would describe Paul Morel walking over the fields to 'Willey Farm' and experiencing the landscape as being 'just like Canada' (SL 153); the phrase captures the young Lawrence's own sense of having discovered a new world just two miles from industrial Eastwood. The farm was situated on the edge of Sherwood Forest, a mile from the village of Underwood: 'The woods came almost up to the garden fence on one side; on another side they were a couple of fields away, and behind, in the distance, rose the tree-lined ridge of the Annesley Hills'.²²

During his early visits to the Hags, Lawrence spent most of his time talking intently with Edmund Chambers.²³ He was rather shy in approaching the children, and they were initially wary of this 'vivacious' scholarship boy, with his 'Eton clothes' and 'impetuous manners', and afraid to speak with him, 'lest he should give himself airs'.²⁴ However, gradually he became close to them, too, starting with the eldest daughter, May, and the younger sons Bernard and Hubert, and then including the eldest and youngest sons, Alan and David. It was Jessie, though, the brooding and intense sibling with a love of romantic poetry, who would become the person with whom he shared his passion for reading.²⁵ As a young man he had always felt more comfortable in the company of the opposite sex, so he was well placed to sympathise with Jessie's simmering frustration at her lot in life, and at the attitudes of her brothers.²⁶

The event which really brought them closer together was the death of Ernest in October 1901. This had a devastating impact on Lydia Lawrence; its effect on the entire family was great. In Lawrence's case, it contributed to a deterioration in his health brought on by over-work. In late December he came down with pneumonia and was forced to leave his employment at Haywood's factory just three months after starting there. His extended period of convalescence from March to October 1902 brought some much-needed freedom. Sometime around early April he went away to Skegness, staying for a month at a boarding-house run by his maternal aunt Ellen Staynes. As he grew stronger back in Eastwood, regular walks out to Hags Farm aided his recovery and reinforced his strong emotional bond with the Chambers family, and with Jessie. Lawrence began to immerse himself in their daily life, helping out with cooking and cleaning, going for walks in the surrounding woods, and overseeing dancing, singing, play-acting, card games and charades. His ability to immerse himself in games amazed the children: his skills as a mimic gave rise to what he described as 'Homeric' fits of laughter.²⁷ He had a natural capacity for fun, and during these days of escape from the 'tightness' of home he became 'an

electric presence, raising the potential of everyone around him.²⁸ The family could not help but recognise something of his father in his ‘vitality and charm’, and his seemingly ‘inexhaustible zest for life.’²⁹ He was aware that the ‘Haggites’ saw the best of him at such times; his mother told him, with no small amount of resentment, that his heart was more in the Chambers’ home than in his own.³⁰

(iv) Books

Lawrence’s developing intimacy with Jessie would have intensified his mother’s resentment. Lawrence and Jessie bonded through their imaginative engagement with literature. Together they would visit the Mechanics’ Institute Library in Eastwood; it was open on Thursday evenings between seven and nine o’clock, and it provided vital stimulation for bright teenage minds.³¹ At home, Lawrence could consult his brother Ernest’s green cloth-bound set of 20 volumes: *The International Library of Famous Literature*, edited by Dr Richard Garnett (1899). Jessie, who was once afforded the honour of borrowing a volume from the set, noted how, in the Lawrence household, these books ‘were regarded with a reverence amounting to awe.’³² The feeling would doubtless have been generated in part by their tangible connection with the memory of Ernest, who had paid the princely sum of £8 18s 6d to acquire them in August 1900;³³ they would also, however, have symbolised the upward mobility and intellectual advance which Ernest had achieved, and which Lydia Lawrence wanted for all her children. Arthur Lawrence’s indifference and even open hostility towards books only underlined their value.³⁴

Books and literature were valued just as highly at Hags Farm, but in the Chambers household they were treated with a less inhibiting sense of awe. Jessie described this period in their lives as an ‘orgy of reading.’ Importantly, she noted that their discussion of books was ‘not exactly criticism, indeed it was not criticism at all, but a vivid recreation of the substance of our reading’; it became ‘a kind of personal experience.’³⁵ Among the volumes which Jessie remembers them reading were Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868–9) and Theodore Watts-Dunton’s *Aylwin* (1898). They also eagerly discussed Anthony Hope’s *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) and *Rupert of Hentzau* (1898), Frederic William Farrar’s *Darkness and Dawn: Or, Scenes in the Days of Nero* (1893) and Charles Reade’s *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), in addition to novels by Walter Scott and writing by Fenimore Cooper and R. L. Stevenson. Lawrence spoke about Blake’s poetry with Jessie during 1904; he enjoyed the poetry of Longfellow, Tennyson and Swinburne, and had read works by George Eliot, Dickens and Swift before the end of 1904.³⁶

Historical romance and adventure feature strongly in Lawrence’s reading; it was only later, between 1906 and 1908, that his interest in realist writing replaced his affection for romantic works. Jessie describes how she and Lawrence acted out scenes

from R. D. Blackmore's bestselling romance *Lorna Doone* (1869) on the Annesley hills.³⁷ From one perspective, it is perhaps inevitable that Lawrence's romance reading created in him a strong vicarious immersion in adventure and heightened emotion; these were, after all, the qualities which assured its popularity. However, in Lawrence's case the desire to take possession of the fiction and enact it for himself reveals a writerly imagination in the making. It should alert us to the powerful, but often overlooked, romance elements in his early poetry and prose fiction.

One of the earliest anecdotes we have describing Lawrence's literary aspirations dates from his final years at Beauvale Board School; he would have been around 11 years old at the time. His friend Mabel Thurlby describes how 'One day he looked across the field and said, "'Everywhere is blue and gold.' Now you say a line."³⁸ The incident suggests that he was initially drawn to poetry rather than prose. Mabel notes that he wrote her a short poem around this time (probably in spring 1897): 'We sit in a lovely meadow / My sweetheart and me / And we are oh so happy / Mid the flowers, birds, and the bees.'³⁹ The young Lawrence's attraction to poetry may seem surprising, given his sense that of all literary forms poetry would be the one most likely to set him apart from the other children in Eastwood and bring ridicule on him. As he put it himself: 'A Collier's son a poet!'⁴⁰ But a crucial aspect of the attraction to writing and literature in the Lawrence household lay precisely in the opportunity it offered for an assertion of difference from one's neighbours and friends. Lydia Lawrence occasionally turned her hand to composing verses:⁴¹ it was a mark of distinction, and for her son it became a means of transforming the grim surroundings of the mining village into something altogether more magical, seeing the beauty in the burning pit-head or looking beyond the terraced houses to the surrounding countryside.

If writing could work to shape one's surroundings, it also served as a very tangible means of fashioning an identity. Lawrence was christened David Herbert Richards Lawrence, but he used the name 'Richards' just once (in 1907)⁴² and he intensely disliked the name 'David'. He was known to his family and friends as 'Bert', and seems to have styled himself 'H. Lawrence' at the High School. In a letter of May 1908 he listed his names: 'Bertie, Bert, David, Herbert, Billy, William and Dick' (1L 52). Surviving letters from Ernest in London back to his mother and younger siblings reveal the creative games the Lawrence children played with naming. In an example from October 1897, Lawrence is 'My dear William Whytteoun' (in recognition of his fair hair and paleness);⁴³ in another from April 1899 he is 'Billy Whitenob.'⁴⁴ His younger sister (and closest sibling) Ada was 'Corkscrews', because of her curls; his other sister, Emily, was 'Injun Top-knot', because of the dark colour of her hair.⁴⁵ Emily's lasting nickname, given to her by Lawrence, was 'Pamela, or *Virtue Rewarded*' (3L 328), after the heroine of Samuel Richardson's novel and in reference to her prim and proper nature. Such playfulness with roles and characteristics is a natural feature of growing up and laying claim to

one's place in a family, but in a household so divided along class lines the games conceal a more serious negotiation of identity. From a very young age Lawrence signed himself off in correspondence as 'D.H.L.' or 'D. H. Lawrence.' For instance, he writes 'D.H.L.' on his earliest surviving postcard of August 1903, written to Lettice Anna Berry, the stepdaughter of one of his maternal aunts (he was 17 years old at the time); he makes the same gesture in a postcard to his mother of 12 June 1905.⁴⁶ It strongly suggests a desire for distinction in Lawrence as the youngest son: it is an implicit statement of his difference from his father ('Art') and even from his distinguished and much-loved elder brother ('Ern' or 'Ernie').

(v) Pupil-teacher

In October 1902, possibly with the help of the Reverend Robert Reid, Lawrence found work as a pupil-teacher at the British School in Eastwood under George Holderness, headmaster of the Boys' section of Albert Street Schools. Teaching led to a widening of Lawrence's circle of friends, and provided new opportunities, though his low pay, amounting to one shilling per week with a yearly increase to cover the purchase of books, required him to take on extra jobs which he hated (including keeping accounts for the local pork butcher).⁴⁷ He took instruction from the headmaster towards the examination for his teacher's certificate and passed his first year with flying colours, doing good work with his class of nine year-olds (Standard III). He continued to work with the same class the following year, again under Holderness' instruction, but in March 1904 he was finally granted permission to attend the Pupil-Teacher Centre in Ilkeston on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, Wednesday and Friday afternoons, and Saturday mornings. Lawrence started there in July under the guidance of Thomas Beacroft, a very strict but engaging man to whom he soon warmed.

Lawrence greatly enjoyed his year of studies at the Centre; he was joined there by Richard ('Dicky') Pogmore (his fellow pupil-teacher in Albert Street), and by Jessie Chambers and her sister May (his half-holiday from school on Wednesday afternoons allowed him to visit Hags Farm on a regular basis). It was here, too, that he met Louie Burrows, his future fiancée (one of his tutors at the Centre was Constance Burrows, Louie's cousin). At this time he was particularly intimate with Jessie's elder brother, Alan Chambers, and with his Eastwood friends George Neville and the Cooper sisters (Mabel, Frances and Gertrude). It was now that he first began watercolour painting, producing still life studies of flowers and rural landscapes or copying paintings for friends' autograph albums and to give as gifts to family and friends. Painting and drawing were communal activities that he could share with Jessie and his sister Ada. Copying was again a central feature of Lawrence's early engagement with art, but it was never a simple matter of imitation: in

reproducing a painting he could enter into the world of the painter as a form of imaginative escape from, or transformation of, his own life in Eastwood.

The Pupil-Teacher Centre provided a context in which Lawrence could develop his artistic interests; it also gave him some much-needed space to read and to reflect on his developing attitudes to school and education away from the classroom. A surviving essay of 15 November 1904 on 'Nature Study' shows Lawrence asserting the value of a flexible approach to education outside the confines of the classroom. In it, he argues that this 'new science' should not be taught in 'the dusty gloom of a school': one should not 'pass round the cones and broken needles of the pine,' but 'sit on the needle-strewn ground and see the cones hang darkly against the blue of the sky. Out in the free air of heaven, out among wild things free, not passing round dusty specimens, should these wonderful lessons be learnt.'⁴⁸ Although this is the earliest essay we have by Lawrence on the topic of education, it is wholly characteristic of his later writing in its critique of school learning that omits a sense of wonder at the universe. We can perceive in it his disgruntlement at having to teach colliers' children who would rather have been outside in the fresh air; it also reveals his disillusionment with formal schooling and the pressure to conform to institutional regulation.

Lawrence was training during these months for the examinations preparing him for the teacher's certificate; in December 1904, with some anxiety and trepidation,



Figure 3 D. H. Lawrence, March 1905. Photograph by George Holderness. (Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham, La R 8.)

he sat the King's Scholarship Exam, and he again passed with great credit, hearing in February 1905 that he had come in the first division of the first class. His photograph (proudly taken by George Holderness) appeared in both the *Schoolmaster* and the *Teacher*.⁴⁹ Beacroft then prepared his talented pupil for the London matriculation exam, with a view to getting him a place at Nottingham University College to follow a course leading to the certificate. He passed the exam in June 1905, but stayed on for a year in Albert Street as an uncertified assistant teacher in order to save money towards the £20 College entrance fee. His class was now Standard V and the teaching was considerably more demanding: he struggled on through this further year of teaching plus eight weeks of the following autumn term in order to scrape together what money he could. His mother and the family made great sacrifices in order to find the remainder of the fee. He finally left Albert Street behind and started at College in September 1906.

(vi) Writing

Two particularly significant events in Lawrence's life took place during these months of study and teaching in 1905–1906. Firstly, it was in this period that Lawrence seriously turned his hand to writing. His discussion of poetry with Jessie was channelled through their recent discovery of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, which Jessie described as a 'kind of Bible' to them.⁵⁰ According to her account Lawrence particularly enjoyed Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'The Blessed Damozel', the poems of William Cowper and Robert Burns, and a range of Romantic verse by (among others) Blake, Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley. He declared to Jessie that he would start by writing poetry.⁵¹

His first poems, 'Champions' and 'Guelder Roses', were composed in spring 1905; 'The Wild Common' may also have been written around the same time. It is impossible to say how many more poems he produced in this period because none of them have survived in manuscript; for evidence we must turn instead to the texts of 24 poems copied into one of his College notebooks in 1908. Lawrence later referred dismissively to his first two poems as 'effusions' which 'most young ladies would have done better: at least I hope so,' but he also noted that he and Jessie thought them 'very nice' (*Poems* 651). The ironic epithet is telling, since the poems are intensely and self-consciously 'literary'. The second stanza of 'Guelder Roses' in the notebook gives an idea of his early poetic style:

Chaplets of cream and distant green
That impress me like the thought-drenched eyes
Of some Pre-Raphaelite mystic queen
Who haunts me – with her lies.⁵²

The writing is very carefully and deliberately constructed, with the internal rhyme in the first line set off against the mannered pause in the last. The atmosphere of religious sensuality and the painterly allusion (revealing the influence of Rossetti) suggest just how much the young Lawrence used his writing to escape into the rarefied world of art and literature.

In the spring of 1906 Lawrence extended his reading with Jessie to cover works of history, philosophy and art criticism by Charles Lamb, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Thomas Carlyle. He also taught Jessie algebra and French, in preparation for her own attempt at the King's Scholarship exam. At the same time, at Easter 1906, he began work on his first novel, which he initially entitled 'Laetitia'. Only one 48-page fragment of the first version survives, but this is enough for us to gauge its difference from the novel published in January 1911 as *The White Peacock*. In the first version, the narrator, Cyril Beardsall, recounts the story of his sister (the eponymous Lettie) falling pregnant outside of marriage by Leslie Tempest, the son of a local colliery owner; in disgrace she marries a local farmer's son, George Worthington, who agrees to raise the child (a daughter) as his own. They emigrate to Canada to start a new life together. The surviving fragment describes Lettie's state of mental upset during her lying-in period and the psychological consequences of her abandonment by Leslie once the child is born. In one strikingly melodramatic set-piece she wanders out onto a frozen pond and leaves the baby prone on the ice and in need of rescue; on another occasion she sleepwalks during the night and offers up her baby to a startled Leslie, who is walking the streets with another woman.⁵³

The writing is remarkable for its incorporation of different aspects of Lawrence's reading; if, as Jessie Chambers indicates, the plan for the novel was inspired by the structure of George Eliot's novels (taking two couples and contrasting their relationships), it also clearly drew heavily on his early love of romance writing. Its focus on maternal feeling, heightened emotion and adventure shows him possessing for himself the emotional intensity of those works which he had discussed and re-enacted with Jessie in the fields outside Eastwood. Lawrence had grown accustomed to taking local settings and transforming them into something far more romantic through his poetry and his painting; it must have seemed natural now to transmute his surroundings in his imaginative writing and to share the created world with Jessie.

Lawrence's family members would not value such writing in the way – and to the extent – that he and Jessie had learnt to do. Lydia Lawrence wanted her son to take up a respectable career as a teacher or academic; when Lawrence showed her the first draft of 'Laetitia' in early summer 1907, its central preoccupation with illegitimacy caused her to ask herself why 'my son should have written such a story.'⁵⁴ She wished that he had 'written on another line' (1L 49). Her attitude to his writing clearly links with her concern for the direction his life might take. She was not

alone in sensing the dangers for her son in attempting to pursue a literary career; his friends and siblings were also by turns discouraging and alarmist.⁵⁵

This leads us to the second important event, which took place at Easter 1906: it concerned Lawrence's relationship with Jessie Chambers, with whom he continued to be very close (and to whom he brought all his writing for comment). Lawrence's family, and especially his mother and sister Emily, had become suspicious of all the time Lawrence was spending with Jessie. In spring 1906 they gave him an ultimatum: he should either get engaged to her, or allow her to find a more committed suitor. Lydia Lawrence may have recalled her feelings at seeing Ernest become engaged shortly before his death to a woman – Louisa Lily Western (or 'Gipsy') Dennis – who seemed intent on spending his money;⁵⁶ she thought of Jessie as a similar burden on her youngest son (a woman who 'will not let him slip if she can help it').⁵⁷ On Easter Monday Lawrence told Jessie that they should spend less time alone together from that point on. This did not prevent him, however, from asking her opinion on 'Laetitia' as he wrote it; she continued to be a sounding-board for his writing up to 1911. In August 1906, when Jessie joined his family for a holiday in Mablethorpe, he finally expressed to her in a confused (and confusing) outburst the tension that had been building in him during these months: 'his words were wild, and he appeared to be in great distress of mind, and possibly also of body.' To Jessie it was as if 'something seemed to explode inside him.'⁵⁸ It is easier for us to see in his 'strange' and 'wild' behaviour an underlying frustration directed outwards at Jessie but originating in a reaction both with and against the conventional and repressive attitudes of his family. The scene was repeated on two further occasions: at Robin Hood's Bay a year later, and at Flamborough in August 1908.

It was in his writing that Lawrence sought to control and transform the conflicted feelings which were surfacing in him. A two-page diary fragment survives from the holiday in Mablethorpe which shows him coolly documenting his walk along the coast to Theddlethorpe. One passage dwells on the launching of a life-boat:

A rocket went up – boat struggled up pull and over and dashed down sands at last. (Cork-jackets scrambled in & began raising masts, etc). The horses plunge and swing boat round before men get in. Speeches from two men while sails are being pulled up, and one merry-faced old fellow says last word. The tide drives us back, and the horses kick up the water. Ready after some time waiting, whipping of horses by the brown faced countryman on backs and by the strong big phlegmatic farmer looking man at head.⁵⁹

Visible in this description is an aspiring young writer deliberately training himself to record impressions which he might later draw upon. His detachment and objectivity seem inversely proportional to the more tumultuous aspects of his emotional life at the time.

(vii) College

It was in the midst of such tumult, and with the impetus of his recent experiments with writing, that Lawrence entered Nottingham University College in September 1906. Jessie describes the ‘mood of wistful anticipation’ with which he started his Normal course of studies towards the teacher’s certificate.⁶⁰ His core subjects were English, Mathematics, History with Geography, Music and Education, plus two options (French and Botany), and he was required to undertake several weeks of teaching practice and to take exams at the end of the two years. Soon after starting, the Head of Department in Education, Professor Amos Henderson, suggested that he should change to the full degree course in the Arts, which would allow him to teach at secondary school (not just at elementary level). His mother would have encouraged him to pursue this option. It meant, however, that he needed to learn Latin, so he wrote to the Reverend Robert Reid to secure private tuition. After four months under Reid’s tutelage he was taken on by Henderson himself, though the lessons with him were soon dropped because of the demands on his tutor’s time.

With the demise of the lessons went any idea of pursuing the Arts course. Lawrence was already deeply disillusioned with the College. His early experience of being made to rewrite an English essay because it did not meet the rules of composition had confirmed his feeling that they treated training teachers like wayward children.⁶¹ The extensive course of reading he had undertaken with Jessie in the year before College had led him to hope that the professors might help him to explore the relationship between religion and science, faith and knowledge, that they had discussed together. Instead, the only two he admired were Ernest Weekley, his Professor of Modern Languages, and Ernest Alfred Smith, a lecturer in Botany. ‘Botany’ Smith became his favourite teacher, but he was the exception rather than the rule. At the age of 21, Lawrence faced a personal crisis of religious faith by himself, in a system quite as repressive in its own way as those other institutions he was now driven to interrogate, criticise and cast off: in particular, Chapel religion and middle-class respectability.

As usual, his rebellion was fuelled by his reading. At either Christmas 1904 or 1905 Lawrence had given Jessie a copy of Fitzgerald’s *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859), a notoriously nihilistic poem which caused her mother to express concern for the faith of the younger Chambers children.⁶² He was soon made aware that what he wryly termed his ‘spiritual dyspepsia’ might upset the views of those who had come to idolise and admire him.⁶³ Early in 1906 he presented Jessie with a copy of Maupassant’s *Tales*, and subsequently sent her a note expressing concern at its effect on her mood: ‘You mustn’t allow yourself to be hurt by Maupassant or by me’ (1L 29). Around the same time he was also introducing her to Balzac and Flaubert.⁶⁴

Scientific and philosophical writing allowed him to explore the amoral approaches to life which he found liberating and compelling in these literary works.

During the first year at College he read work by Darwin and Schopenhauer. Darwin does not seem to have had a strong impact on him, but Schopenhauer certainly did. He read a selection of the writing in translation,⁶⁵ and one essay in particular, on the ‘Metaphysics of Love’, interested him greatly. Schopenhauer’s account of sexual desire as determined by a Will in Nature blindly driving individuals to mate, in spite of their best interests, for the good of the species and the next generation, offered a challenge to the conventional idea of benevolent design in nature which Lawrence had unquestioningly reproduced in his 1904 essay on ‘Nature Study’.⁶⁶ Jessie’s account of Lawrence’s response to the essay indicates his characteristic way of inhabiting ideas and making them his own: he is said to have read it aloud, annotating the Latin quotations in pencil, following ‘the reasoning closely, as always applying it to himself, and his own case.’⁶⁷ He seems initially to have quarrelled with Schopenhauer’s point that we are drawn to desire that which is beautiful; he would have had in mind his keen appreciation of Jessie’s beauty and his struggle to align this with his more confusing sexual feelings for her. Schopenhauer’s description of desire as an overpowering impulse which draws us to members of the opposite sex in detrimental and destructive ways, with no consideration for our personal happiness, would resonate for Lawrence years later when he set about transforming his first novel into a tragedy.

His College education continued on top of such reading. One of Lawrence’s extant college notebooks shows that from February 1907 he was studying a range of Elizabethan writing. There are notes on Lyly, Marlowe, Richard Greene, Spenser and Bacon, plus essays on *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and extensive observations on the classification of Shakespeare’s plays, his sonnets, his inner life, and his attitudes to tragedy, comedy, heroism, suicide and madness.⁶⁸ In a letter of May 1908 he remembered how the professors ‘quibbled forever over the woman and the friend in Shak’s Sonnets, reading lectures written twenty years before (that is true), droning out nonsense about Langland for long, dreary hours’ (1L 49). A certain offhand quality, and occasional looseness, in his formal essays may indicate a degree of impatience and irritation at the topics and exercises he was set: marginal notes by the marker upbraid him for shifting carelessly between tenses, and for embellishing his sources when transcribing illustrative quotations from *Macbeth*. A comically dismissive comment on Lyly in his notes reveals his disdain for the set reading: ‘Lyly wrote rubbish for the aristocrats, but for the populace different men were writing.’ Yet there are also flashes of precociousness and originality in the notebook, as when he alludes to George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859) in an essay of 5 May 1907 on ‘The Fairies of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”’: ‘A pretty thing was not made to hate and to suffer—it kills them, as it did Hetty Sorrel, who was as near a fairy as a human girl could go, and George Eliot have sympathy to portray’. Lawrence’s marks suggest that the casual quality of his writing was felt by his teachers to reveal a comfortable mastery of the subject, in spite of any objections

they may have had to his informality: he was awarded 8+ out of 10 for his two essays on *Macbeth*, and 17 out of 20, 9– out of 10, and 9 out of 10 for other pieces of work.

(viii) ‘Ruby-Glass’

One of Lawrence’s earliest short stories drew directly on his study of English literature. ‘Ruby-Glass’ was evidently inspired by his reading of Chaucer and *Piers Plowman*, and by a volume he consulted on the medieval history of Greasley (a village and parish neighbouring Eastwood).⁶⁹ Like ‘A Prelude’ and ‘The White Stocking’, it was written in autumn 1907 at the behest of Jessie and Alan Chambers for submission to the annual Christmas Story competition organised by the *Nottinghamshire Guardian*.⁷⁰ The stories were submitted in three categories under different names, to avoid breaking the rules: ‘A Prelude’ was entered in Jessie’s name (under the pseudonym ‘Rosalind’) for ‘the best story of the most enjoyable Christmas’; ‘The White Stocking’ was submitted in Louie Burrows’ name for ‘the most amusing Christmas story’; and ‘Ruby-Glass’ was submitted by Lawrence himself under the name ‘Herbert Richards’ for ‘the best Legend of Some Historic Building within the four counties of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire or Leicestershire’.⁷¹

The plots of all three stories unfold on Christmas Eve. ‘Ruby-Glass’, and its earliest version ‘A Page from the Annals of Gresleia’, is a Medieval romance which opens with a section of text purporting to come from an entry in a fifteenth-century document associated with Beauvale Priory. It offers a vivid account in period English of how the Devil visited the Priory one Christmas night, shattering the stained glass of the East window (depicting the crucifixion), before being fought off and defeated by St Botolph. This is followed by a more mundane imaginative reconstruction of the actual events leading up to the incident in question. An out-cast serf named Scarlatte runs away with a buxom red-haired maid named Matty, who asks him to fetch her some of the red glass from the Priory window. Scarlatte scales the buttress and clings to the window frame, prising the glass out with a knife, but he falls and cuts himself in the process when the stone carving of the Saint he stands upon gives way. The bathos of the ending undermines the monks’ account of the Christmas visitation: a dirty serf is mistaken for the Devil, and his very human blood is confused with the blood of Christ in the window. The miraculous power of ‘the broken Seynt steyned with the yBlessed Bloud ... for to hele and to blesse’ (*VicG* 33) is shown to be fallacious. Lawrence’s sceptical mood is clear to see in the way he contrasts legend and reality.

The complex ironic effect achieved in ‘Ruby-Glass’, through the shift in tone and atmosphere from the religious awe of the opening section to the quotidian and graphic realism of the main narrative, is also evident in the other stories, which

subtly modulate between different tones and registers. In ‘The White Stocking’, another historical romance, Priscilla Gant’s coquettish behaviour with her employer, the lace factory owner Sam Osborne, at his Christmas Eve party suddenly changes from light social comedy into something far darker when she pulls a white stocking from her pocket instead of a handkerchief and finds her flirtatiousness mocked by the other guests. In ignoring the upset of her sweetheart, George Whiston, and encouraging Osborne’s amorous attentions (accepting his gift of £5 to buy a silk dress for the occasion), she has crossed an important line between vivacious petulance and sexual impropriety.⁷² In ‘A Prelude’, a more light-hearted and comic transition is enacted in the central characters from brooding resentment and hurt pride to joyful self-expression. Fred’s gesture in casting off his costume at Ramsley Mill after visiting Ellen Wycherley for the festive ‘guysering’ is reciprocated when the proud and aloof ‘Nellie’ lets down her own guard, realising the true nature of her feelings for him and going to find him at his parents’ farm. Ellen’s class elevation in acquiring the Mill on the death of her father, and her ensuing self-assurance, masks but cannot entirely erase the nature of her feelings for the lowly Fred (a penniless farm labourer).⁷³

In each of the stories we are shown how appearances belie or distort a troubling and ambivalent subterranean world of physical and emotional feelings. We are made to see how the monks’ Christian beliefs and religious symbolism in ‘Ruby-Glass’ are built upon a falsifying spiritual comprehension of Scarlatte’s very physical world of flesh and blood. In ‘The White Stocking’, Prissy’s simple mistake in pulling out the stocking exposes connections between the naivety she projects and a more sinister feigned innocence. The other story which Lawrence wrote around this time, ‘The Vicar’s Garden’, relies in a still more obvious way on exposing the gap between appearance and reality: in this whimsical tale the male narrator and his female companion enjoy looking around the beautiful grounds of a vicarage during a holiday in Robin Hood’s Bay, only for their landlady to inform them rather ominously that it is home to a ‘mad’ son who lost his mind after contracting a brain fever while fighting in the Boer War. The other son went to Australia, ‘a wild country,’ and got lost in ‘the bushes’ (*VicG* 8), dying of thirst.

The darker implications remain implicit in these early short stories: they are not really developed and explored. ‘The Vicar’s Garden’ and ‘Ruby-Glass’ were later rewritten and revised as ‘The Shadow in the Rose Garden’ and ‘A Fragment of Stained Glass’, and the potential of ‘The White Stocking’ was fully realised in its extensive revision for the *Prussian Officer* collection, where all three new stories were published in November 1914. The tendency of the writing to expose a disturbing reality is offset in 1907 by Lawrence’s conscious desire to write fiction for a middle-class readership. His use of cod Middle English, and the knowing allusions to Milton, Keats, Arthurian legend and Greek mythology, give us some insight into his sense of what such a readership might expect from him.

Working-class life is firmly pushed to the margins: Scarlatte in 'Ruby-Glass' is a stereotypical rebellious serf; the street urchins in 'The White Stocking' are merely picturesque and used for scene setting; 'A Prelude', which won the competition as the best story of an enjoyable Christmas and was published under Jessie's name in the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* on 7 December 1907, is a rural tale which seems thoroughly Victorian in its atmosphere (Fred's brothers, Henry and Arthur, work as miners, but we are given no sense of their working lives down pit). The interest of the stories resides in their engagement with literary genres (historical romance and social realism) and in the hint of what remains unsaid.

(ix) Modified beliefs

Lawrence's interest in Schopenhauer's philosophy and its materialistic account of sexuality and desire formed a prelude to his more systematic reading during 1907 of works questioning biblical teachings. Jessie notes that Lawrence read Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1863) at this time, but the 'materialist philosophy came in full blast with T. H. Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature*, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*.⁷⁴ He also read works by Herbert Spencer, J. M. Robertson, Robert Blatchford and Philip Vivian; he read R. J. Campbell's *New Theology* in 1907 (the year of its publication); and it is likely that he read William James' *Pragmatism* shortly after its publication in June 1907. It is possible to perceive in Lawrence's reading a progression from materialism to monism to pragmatism,⁷⁵ but it is questionable whether the arguments he encountered helped to arrest his scepticism or adequately define the terms of his own belief system. In the circumstances it is understandable that he sought an exchange of views with somebody whom he knew to have a firm faith, and whom he trusted to respond honestly and intelligently.

At the instigation of Jessie and Alan he wrote to the Reverend Robert Reid on 15 October 1907 explaining how his reading had 'seriously modified' his religious beliefs. He asked Reid to describe the attitude of the 'Churches' to 'the Miracles, Virgin Birth, The Atonement, and finally, the Divinity of Jesus' and to comment on the 'orthodox' attitude to 'such questions as Evolution, with that the Origin of Sin, and as Heaven and Hell' (1L 37). It was a courageous act on Lawrence's part, since he risked bringing the extent of his religious scepticism to the attention of his mother, from whom he attempted to hide such things as best he could. However, he knew that Reid was not averse to directly addressing scientific writing and biblical criticism in his sermons. Although Reid's reply to Lawrence has not survived it is clear that he took the letter seriously, since six weeks later (perhaps in response to the challenge set by his young correspondent) he began delivering a series of four sermons on religion and evolution;⁷⁶ on 3 December

Lawrence again wrote frankly to Reid, thanking him for passing on books which Ada called ‘Antidotes’.

The second letter to Reid is particularly fascinating for the light it sheds on Lawrence’s desire to retain some conception of religion in spite of his loss of faith. He blames his failure to experience revelation on his self-consciousness and inability to give himself up to feeling: ‘in the moments of deepest emotion myself has watched myself and seen that all the tumult has risen like a little storm, to die away again without great result.’ Miraculous conversion was not something that Lawrence could believe in by December 1907, in spite of the evidence for it provided by Reid and the Reverend Alexander Roy Henderson (who had preached on the subject at Castle Gate Congregational Church in Nottingham):⁷⁷ Lawrence held instead that belief is derived from bitter experience, and that individuals must struggle to discover their own religion. The second half of the letter strikes a new and startling note by focusing on social inequality as inconsistent with the idea of an ‘omnipotent Christ’. Lawrence could not understand ‘how is it possible that a God who speaks to all hearts can let Belgravia go laughing to a vicious luxury, and Whitechapel cursing to a filthy debauchery’ (1L 39–40). Although he states that he does not hate Christianity, his own religion rested on a desire to redress such discrepancies.

(x) ‘Art and the Individual’

The new emphasis here on Socialism as Lawrence’s personal belief system was influenced by his growing friendship with Willie Hopkin, whose own socialist beliefs were underpinned by a firm agnosticism. At a time when Lawrence felt quite alienated from home and many of his old Eastwood friends, Hopkin’s house on Devonshire Drive was welcoming: its liberal atmosphere must have formed a stark contrast to his own home on Lynn Croft. It was here that Lawrence delivered a paper entitled ‘Art and the Individual’ to the Eastwood Debating Society on 19 March 1908, sprawled at full length on the hearthrug.⁷⁸ It gave him an opportunity publicly to question the authority of what he ironically termed the ‘great experts’ on education, exploring the ‘vague and unsatisfactory’ account of aesthetic appreciation offered by the influential German philosopher and educationalist Johann Friedrich Herbart, whose book *Science and Education* (translated by Henry and Emmie Felkin) he was using at College. He attacked Herbart’s account of aesthetic interest as deriving from a sense of harmony by invoking the examples of Poe, Zola, Maupassant and Maxim Gorky, who give little sense of obvious pleasure but attain the status of ‘Art’ because they ‘express their deep, real feelings’ (STH 226). The gulf that had been developing between his recent reading and his experience at College is abundantly evident in the very content and structure of his argument.

Hopkin had founded the Debating Society, with its Thursday night meetings, in part to challenge the dominance of the Congregational Literary Society, which relied heavily for its speakers on local clergymen. Papers delivered at meetings of the Debating Society were followed by a session in which ideas were discussed and dissected. Among those present at Lawrence's paper were Alice Dax and her husband Harry, a dispensing chemist and optician who kept a shop in Eastwood. Alice had moved to the village from Liverpool following her marriage to Harry in 1905, at the age of 27; she soon gained a reputation for her forthright socialist and suffragette views, and for her strong community work (spearheading local initiatives around health and education). Hopkin's daughter, Enid, later recalled Alice's plain dress, and her scrupulous opposition to clutter and decoration in her home: her outspokenness (especially in the face of male opposition) was challenging even for Willie Hopkin, and her loud laugh was 'particularly offensive to the local people.'⁷⁹ Lawrence was fascinated by Alice and cultivated her friendship; he passed on a volume of Ibsen's plays to her, and he noted that she seemed 'deeply impressed' by *Manon Lescaut* (1731), 'a very early novel of passion' (1L 55) which he could not have hoped to share with Jessie. Through Alice he was introduced, in early 1908, to Blanche Jennings, her friend from Liverpool, who went on to become a significant early correspondent.

Lawrence was now moving in socialist circles, and he looked to extend his interest in the ideas he encountered at Devonshire Drive through other outlets: at college he became a member of the 'Society for the Study of Social Questions',⁸⁰ and he began reading the *New Age*, a notorious socialist weekly exploring (among other things) the philosophy of Nietzsche. Although he continued to attend Chapel for the sake of his mother, his new intellectual pursuits naturally created rifts: in spring 1908, for instance, Jessie's brother David remembered him launching into a particularly savage attack on Reid, mimicking his delivery of sermons and his ideas in a manner that would have been especially shocking for his mother (who was unaware of the shifting contexts of his intellectual life).⁸¹ He recognised that his own set in Eastwood was 'a bit astonishing' (1L 69). The movement outside the known world of his upbringing in this period entailed both antagonistic resentment of his mother's values and a corresponding nostalgia for lost roots and certainties. A mood of sadness and regret is uppermost in his elegiac poem 'Eastwood – Evening', in which the speaker describes the roofs of his home village creeping to rest beneath the 'watchful head of the church' (St Mary's, at the top of Church Street, where Lawrence was christened), while 'the wings of Eastwood are closed against me who beneath them was born.'⁸²

Lawrence's studiously informal delivery of his paper at Hopkin's house and the peculiar tenor of its argument (by turns self-consciously vivacious and dryly didactic) reveal his struggle to find the right tone for the occasion. Discovering a suitable form of address to an audience or readership was understandably difficult for a

young writer whose views, reading and contacts had changed and widened dramatically since 1906. Mimicry and sarcasm helped him to put a distance between the old world and the new, but discovering a new voice in his writing was more challenging. He suffered setbacks in his early attempts to publish his work. The college magazine, *The Gong*, rejected a cloyingly earnest poem he submitted entitled 'Study', in which the hardships of revision in the library for a science exam are set against the passion of life outside, in the country.⁸³ Around March 1908 he sent some of his work to G. K. Chesterton, whose weekly article in the *Daily News* he and Jessie often read together; it was returned by Chesterton's wife, with a note apologising that her husband could not offer an opinion because of the pressure of work.⁸⁴ It was a blow, but in spite of protestations to the contrary Lawrence did not give up on the idea of becoming a professional author; he continued to write, and to explore the possibility of journalism as an alternative career path to teaching.⁸⁵

(xi) 'Laetitia'

Between July 1907 and April 1908 Lawrence had been working away at 'Laetitia', rewriting it in the light of his reading and the changes in his outlook. In this draft he introduced the gamekeeper Annable: Jessie thought the character 'cynically brutal,' but Lawrence defended the importance of the contrast with the effete narrator, Cyril ('He makes a sort of balance. Otherwise it's too much one thing, too much *me*').⁸⁶ The truth was that Cyril's spirituality had come to seem uninteresting, and even distasteful, to Lawrence; Annable's physicality and cynicism represented another side of his nature. Once the new version was finished, he was able to declare: 'Everything that I am now, all of me, so far, is in that.'⁸⁷ Yet the seismic shifts in his outlook that had taken place since he first started work on the novel now made it seem incoherent. For sincere criticism he turned, with some anxiety, to Alice Dax and Blanche Jennings. He was concerned that Alice would attack its sentimentalism. In a letter to Blanche he pre-empted such a response, describing it as 'all about love – and rhapsodies on spring scattered here and there – heroines galore – no plot – nine-tenths adjectives – every colour in the spectrum descanted upon – a poem or two – scraps of Latin and French – altogether a sloppy, spicy mess' (1L 44). A surviving 10-page fragment dealing with the scene after Annable's funeral confirms the rhapsodic quality of the nature writing.⁸⁸

Alice held onto the manuscript until mid-June: she began reading it in bed during the later stages of her first pregnancy and finished it after the birth of her son. Her 'half-dozen laughing lines of amused scoffing' (1L 55) were predictably blunt and discouraging; she thought Annable 'really coarse' (1L 69) and annoyed Lawrence by criticising the novel's lack of realism ('she only cares about whether such people could really exist ... whereas I don't care a damn whether they live or whether they

don't' [1L 55]). Earlier she had irritated him by drawing attention to his 'flawed English ... like a mother who reads her son's school essay'; he had been struggling since autumn 1906 to wean himself from parental and institutional authority, so his spirited response was to insist that he must 'flaw his English' in order to be something other than a 'stilted, starched parson' (1L 53). His formal education was coming to an end: the examinations for the Teacher's Certificate began at the end of June and ran until 4 July. He approached them with little enthusiasm, telling Blanche that he was 'scandalously unprepared; I cannot rouse myself to study things I am not interested in' (1L 58). Her criticisms of 'Laetitia', sent in late July, were more constructive than Lawrence anticipated: he declared them 'exceedingly just.' She confirmed his conviction that he must check Cyril's effusiveness as narrator. He sought to draw out further criticism from her, especially about Annable (whom she did not even mention), and he took issue with some of her observations (defending, for example, his inclusion of an early version of the deathbed scene with Cyril's father).⁸⁹ He decided that he would need to 'write the thing again' (1L 69).

(xii) *'La dernière fois'*

A very positive confidential report on Lawrence's academic ability and teaching work written during his time at College stressed his refinement and sophistication; it also – less helpfully – stated that he was 'emphatically a teacher of upper classes' and 'would be quite unsuitable for a large class of boys in a rough district; he would not have sufficient persistence & enthusiasm but would become disgusted.'⁹⁰ Finding a job after he had finished his exams proved troublesome. He applied for numerous positions during the ensuing three months (even writing to Egypt), copying out his testimonials from Professor Henderson and George Holderness until he could recite them by heart.⁹¹ His third referee was the Reverend Robert Reid.

The summer initially provided a welcome break from studying. From mid-July he helped out the Chambers family with haymaking at Hags Farm; he shared with his friends a recent passion for the poetry of Verlaine and Walt Whitman, and together they learned and recited songs by 'Schumann, Giordani, Schubert' (1L 68). He enjoyed day trips to Beauvale Priory and Codnor Castle, and from 8 to 22 August he went away to Flamborough in the East Riding of Yorkshire for a family holiday which Blanche Jennings had helped to organise.

On his return, however, the need for work began to seem more pressing: he told Blanche that he was 'a poor unemployed wretch' (1L 71). Finally, in mid-September he received two positive responses to his applications. On 25 September he interviewed unsuccessfully at a school in Stockport. The next day he travelled to London for an interview in Croydon; he stayed with his cousin Alfred Inwood (the eldest of the five children of his maternal aunt Emma Inwood) in Barnet,⁹² and on this

occasion he secured a position as Assistant Master at the recently opened Davidson Road School. His salary would be £95 per year.⁹³ Another success swiftly followed. In early October he received his examination results: he had obtained a First Class Teacher's Certificate, gaining the highest marks of any man in his year, with distinctions in French, Botany, Mathematics, and History with Geography (though not, to his chagrin, in either Education or English). He turned down an offer from the Director of Education at the Nottinghamshire County Council to find him a local job:⁹⁴ he was now set on starting a new chapter of his life away from Eastwood. It was the end of an era for Lawrence, as his final words to Jessie made clear: “*La dernière fois*,” he said, inclining his head towards the farm and the wood.⁹⁵ It had been over seven years since he first visited Hags Farm with his mother; his gesture now indicated that it was the last time he would see it from the intimate perspective of home and his youth. He left Eastwood for Croydon on Sunday 11 October and began teaching the following day.

Notes

1. In her early teens, Lydia worked as a pupil-teacher in Sheerness; afterwards she seems to have given private lessons to girls. See Spencer 74 and 79.
2. See Ada 9.
3. See A. R. and C. P. Griffin, ‘A Social and Economic History of Eastwood and the Nottinghamshire Mining Country,’ in *A D. H. Lawrence Handbook*, ed. Keith Sagar (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 127–63; 139–40.
4. See Ada 24.
5. Information taken from a log-book detailing the numbers of persons in the mine each day between 25 April and 10 November 1892. Uncatalogued material, Acc 2476 (University of Nottingham).
6. See 3L 282 (11 September 1918). Lawrence refers to the Beardsalls as an ‘old, well-to-do, puritan family.’ Lydia Lawrence’s maternal grandfather, John Newton (1802–1886), was a lace-worker and composer. The family also maintained that they were related to an earlier John Newton (1725–1807), a hymn writer and friend of William Cowper, though recent research has proven that there was no connection. See *Outsider* 437 fn. 43.
7. See J. Clement Phillips Taylor, ‘Boys of the Beauvale Breed,’ *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser* (30 December 1960–17 August 1962), 3 February 1961.
8. It was originally believed that Arthur was born on 18 June 1846. Subsequent research has suggested that the most likely date is actually 26 February 1848. See John Worthen, ‘The Date of Birth of D. H. Lawrence’s Father,’ *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (September 2003), 327–8.
9. E.T. 106. See also 3L 282 (11 September 1918) and Worthen 7–8.
10. J. D. Chambers, ‘Memories of D. H. Lawrence’, *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, Vol. XVI (1972), 5–17; 7; J. Clement Phillips Taylor, ‘Boys of the Beauvale Breed’, *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser*, 14 April 1961.

11. See Worthen 66–7.
12. For example, in August 1899 she purchased a second-hand pianette for the family. The receipt for £6 is extant. See La Ac 2/7/9 (University of Nottingham).
13. See *LEA* 27–8.
14. Lawrence's Beauvale schoolfriend 'Clem' Taylor recalls his tendency to become 'suddenly contumacious and refractory' in 'Boys of the Beauvale Breed,' *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser*, 10 February 1961. For references to the unmotivated crying, see *1L* 531 (22 March 1913); *PM* 14; *SL* 64.
15. Nehls, Vol. III, 578.
16. See Spencer 19–20.
17. E. T. 77.
18. Lawrence was withdrawn from the school between October 1889 and September 1892. See Worthen 75–6. For an account of Lawrence being taunted by boys from the Breach, see Nehls, Vol. I, 23.
19. See Worthen 87.
20. J. D. Chambers, 'Memories of D. H. Lawrence,' 6.
21. See E. T. 16.
22. J. D. Chambers, 'Memories of D. H. Lawrence,' 9.
23. See E. T. 25.
24. J. D. Chambers, 'Memories of D. H. Lawrence,' 10; E. T. 25.
25. Jessie's brother David would recall how she recited the poetry of Walter Scott and Wordsworth in the house. See J. D. Chambers, 'Memories of D. H. Lawrence,' 14.
26. May Chambers noted how, as a lad, 'other boys laughed at him for associating with girls.' Nehls, Vol. III, 580.
27. E. T. 30.
28. E. T. 35; J. D. Chambers, 'Memories of D. H. Lawrence,' 10.
29. E. T. 31; J. D. Chambers, 'Memories of D. H. Lawrence,' 7.
30. See E. T. 134 and Nehls, Vol. III, 575.
31. The 1895 catalogue of the 'The Library of the Eastwood and Greasley Mechanics' and Artizans' Institute' is extant (Nottingham County Libraries).
32. E. T. 92.
33. See Worthen 111.
34. See *SCAL* 83: 'My father hated books, hated the sight of anyone reading or writing.'
35. E. T. 92–6.
36. Rose Marie Burwell's 'A Checklist of Lawrence's Reading,' in *A D. H. Lawrence Handbook*, 59–125, provides a helpful listing of Lawrence's known reading by month and year. The entries for the early reading are relatively full, but her findings for later years need to be supplemented by the evidence provided in the six volumes of Lawrence's letters published after 1982.
37. See E. T. 96.
38. Nehls, Vol. I, 29.
39. See Nehls, Vol. I, 32. For the speculative dating of the poem, see Worthen 479.
40. E. T. 57.
41. See Nehls, Vol. III, 560. The one extant poem by Lydia Lawrence, entitled 'My Mother's Hands', is reproduced in Worthen 128–9.

42. Lawrence submitted the short story 'A Prelude' to the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* under the pseudonym 'Herbert Richards.'
43. William Ernest Lawrence to D. H. Lawrence, 7 October 1897. La Ac 2/8/1 (University of Nottingham).
44. William Ernest Lawrence to Lydia Lawrence, c.19 April 1899. La Ac 1/1/2 (University of Nottingham).
45. See Ada 29.
46. John Worthen and Andrew Harrison, 'Further Letters of D. H. Lawrence,' *JDHLS*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2011), 7; *1L* 27.
47. See Nehls, Vol. III, 587–8.
48. La B 220 (University of Nottingham). 'Nature Study' was one of the subjects Lawrence was responsible for teaching in his first post at Davidson Road School in 1908. See E. T. 89.
49. See *Outsider* 37.
50. E. T. 99.
51. E. T. 57.
52. Roberts E317 (University of Nottingham).
53. See *WP* 329–47.
54. E. T. 117.
55. See Neville 188 fn. 28.
56. Cf. Gertrude Morel's feelings about William's engagement to 'Gyp' in *Sons and Lovers*. *SL* 161–2.
57. Lydia Lawrence to Lettice Ada Berry, 11 July 1910. La Ac 2/8/8/1 (University of Nottingham).
58. E. T. 127–8.
59. La Ac 2/11 (University of Nottingham).
60. E. T. 76.
61. See *1L* 31 (c.29 October 1906).
62. See Nehls, Vol. III, 593.
63. Nehls, Vol. III, 609.
64. See E. T. 106–7.
65. *Essays of Schopenhauer*, trans. Mrs Rudolf Dircks (London: Walter Scott, 1903).
66. La B 220 (University of Nottingham): 'after inspecting several times the wondrous adaptability of everything to carry out the work allotted to it, a fresh young mind cannot fail to be struck with awe at the wisdom and majesty of the Creator.'
67. E. T. 111.
68. La L 1 (University of Nottingham).
69. The book was Rodolph Baron von Hube, *Griseleia in Snotinghsire* (Nottingham: Murray's Nottingham Book Co., 1901).
70. See *1L* 38 (20 October 1907).
71. See *LAH* xlvii and fn. 110.
72. See *VicG* 43–51.
73. See *LAH* 5–15.
74. E. T. 112.
75. See Worthen 179–84.
76. See Worthen 171–2.

77. See *1L* 40 fn. 3.
78. See Zytaruk 82.
79. See Nehls, Vol. I, 134–6, and Hil 2/12/1–8 (University of Nottingham).
80. See John Worthen, 'D. H. Lawrence and the Society for the Study of Social Questions', *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (September 1994), 364–6. It was originally called the Society for the Study of Social Reform. Minute book, La Z 7/1 (University of Nottingham).
81. J. D. Chambers, 'Memories of D. H. Lawrence,' 15.
82. Roberts E317 (University of Nottingham).
83. See *Poems* 653: 'I had offered the little poem "Study" to the Nottingham University Magazine, but they returned it.'
84. E. T. 155.
85. See *1L* 52 (13 May 1908).
86. E. T. 117.
87. E. T. 82.
88. See *WP* 348–51.
89. See *1L* 72 (1 September 1908).
90. University College Students' Register 1906–1908.
91. See *1L* 69 (30 July [–3 August] 1908) and 73 (2 September 1908). The copied testimonials are La Pc 1/1/1 (University of Nottingham).
92. See 'The Day D. H. Lawrence Came for Advice,' *The Times*, 22 March 1963, 14. The article was published anonymously, but internal evidence suggests that the author was Alfred Inwood's youngest son, Ewart George Inwood.
93. See *1L* 79 (7 October 1908).
94. See *1L* 78 (6 October 1908).
95. E. T. 150.