



Angelo Ravagli, the soldier an Italian writer claims inspired *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

Italian lover for Lady Chatterley

By Richard Owen

AN AUTHOR claims to have revealed "the true story" of the Italian army officer who was the lover of D. H. Lawrence's wife, Frieda, and model for Oliver Mellors, the hero of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Alberto Bevilacqua said that he had spent "long hours" talking to Angelo Ravagli, a dashing Italian officer who owned the villa on the Italian Riviera where Lawrence and Frieda, a German aristocrat, lodged in the 1920s.

Signor Bevilacqua reveals the affair in his new book, a novel *Through your Body* (*Attraverso il tuo corpo*), which he says is based on truth.

The author said that before Ravagli died in 1976, he and the elderly officer returned to the Villa Bernarda at Spotorino, near Savona on the Italian Riviera, where the Lawrences lived from December 1925 to April 1926, the period when Lawrence was working on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Virgin and the Gypsy*.

"Ravagli told me extraordinary secrets about Lawrence, who, although a great theoretician of sex, was not actually able to have a physical relationship with women, certainly not with his wife," Signor Bevilacqua said.

According to Signor Bevilacqua, Ravagli, a captain in the celebrated Bersagliere Regiment, had taken advantage of Lawrence's impotence



Lawrence: "acquiesced in his wife's affair"

to seduce Frieda, with the writer's acquiescence, and make love to her "in the bushes and undergrowth of the villa, just like Mellors".

By 1925, when Lawrence and Frieda settled in Italy, Lawrence was ill with tuberculosis and afraid that he had become fictionally as well as sexually impotent. Signor Bevilacqua said that Lawrence had "pushed Frieda into the affair with their landlord" and made her "tell him the details".

Signor Bevilacqua said that the three had played a "dangerous game" which brought Frieda to the edge of alcoholism, but "led Lawrence to great literature". He said that Lawrence had sought to "rekindle the fire of his lost youth" through the affair.

□ *Attraverso il tuo corpo*, by Alberto Bevilacqua, Mondadori, €16 (£10).