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ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF D. H. LAWRENCE

by

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I

INTRODUCTION

As long ago as 1922 Mr. Middleton Murry said of D. H. Lawrence, "No other living writer could drive us to such a frenzy of hostility as he has done; no other fill us with such delight." (1) It is an unfortunate fact that Lawrence, both during his life and after his death, seems to have aroused these extremes of feeling in his acquaintances and readers. I have yet to meet a reader of Lawrence who is noncommittal about him. Mention of his name evokes at once either enthusiasm or condemnation. Though such responses are evidence of Lawrence's stature, it is unfortunate that they should be so violent. A balanced objective criticism of a writer is never attained when the critics are emotionally involved in their subject. And most of the people who have written about Lawrence seem to have been involved in this way.

The reasons for this lack of detachment appear to be two-fold. In the first place by far the greater number of writers on Lawrence knew him personally. "Different and superior in kind. I think almost everyone who knew him well must have felt that Lawrence was this", writes Mr. Aldous Huxley. "A being, somehow, of another order, more sensitive, more highly conscious, more capable of feeling that even the most gifted of common men." (2) Confronted with such a personality it must have been difficult to remain detached. So difficult that even descriptions of his physical appearance differed:

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(1) J. Middleton Murry: Review of Aaron's Rod, Nation and Athenaeum, August 1922; quoted in Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence, p.231.

(2) Aldous Huxley: Introduction to Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, p.26.

> I have read that to Richard Aldington in those days [1914] Lawrence looked like a soldier, and that to David Garnett he suggested a plumber's mate or the kind of workman that makes trouble with the boss. But to me, on that day in June, 1914, when I first set eyes on him the immediately distinguishing thing was his swift and flamelike quality, which was quite unlike anything suggested by even the most fascinating type of British soldier or workman. (3)

Yet Lawrence the man was Lawrence the writer; and the storms occasioned by his direct passionate nature were equally aroused by his work. His subject-matter was controversial - and not of the type which allowed of academic dispute. He wrote primarily about the relationships between men and women; he was the first to write unashamedly of sex. And twenty years after his death it still seems to be true that men and women are highly self-conscious where sex is concerned. Discussion of sexual matters is still not open and free, large numbers of people are still resentful of such discussion, are even ashamed. Thirty years ago, then, it was only to be expected that Lawrence's work should either be violently denounced or a- violently supported. His impact was profound. Those who agreed with his views regarded him as a prophet pointing the way to a new pattern in human relationships. Those who resented his work called him "immoral", "obscene", "licentious". His books were not conducive to quiet untroubled reading. His "subject-matter ..... is agitating - *hot denunciations or advice - so that in the end you cannot* remember whether you ought or ought not to have a body, and are only sure that you are futile". (4)

When Lawrence died in 1930 a number of people who had known him personally, and a few who had not, felt impelled to write about him. The decade before the War saw a steady publication of books about Lawrence. The most notable fact about

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(3) Catherine Carswell: The Savage Pilgrimage, p.17.
(4) E. M. Forster: Aspects of the Novel, p.133.

these books is that most of them are biographical. In the thirties interest seemed to have been centred (or was artificially fixed) more on Lawrence as a man than as a writer.

Perhaps the most innocuous of these books is Young Lorenzo, written by Lawrence's sister Ada in collaboration with G. Stuart Gelder. As the title indicates this book deals for the most part with the early life of Lawrence, before he had left England. Ada tells some interesting anecdotes of Lawrence as a boy (at an early age he used to hold the family and friends enthralled with his powerful telling of ghost-stories) and mentions the originals of some of Lawrence's characters in the early novels.

Other books of this period show a more pronounced tendency to cloud the portraits of Lawrence with the fumes of personal rancour. Of these the most fatuous is Lorenzo in Taos by Mabel Dodge Luhan. Mrs. Luhan's aim seems to be to detail her own supreme importance in the life of her subject and her formative influence upon him. In doing so, the view of Lawrence becomes somewhat obscured. Her book is exasperatingly addressed to a third person, to whom she purports to describe Lawrence during his stay in New Mexico. But her style is so intense and her analysis usually so petty that the book is of little value:

> Can it be possible that it was in that very first instant when we all came together that I sensed Lawrence's plight [i.e. he was tied to Frieda "like a lively lamb tied to a solid stake, frisking and pulling in an agony"] and that the womb in me roused to reach out to take him. (5)

Again she writes:

> His letters grew more disturbed, and he hesitated less to show he needed and must take what he knew I could give him, my strength and my will to create through him some further life and expression of the spirit ..... I sent him a steady, outpouring stream of power along the unseen path between us. (6)

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(5) Mabel Dodge Luhan: Lorenzo in Taos, p.45.
(6) Ibid: p. 125.

The distortion inherent in such a biographical method is revealed in the following passage:

> [Lawrence] rode his horse alongside me until his thin leg and thigh brushed against me. I was satisfied for the moment about Brett. I knew he would never do that with her, that he would never, with sudden forgetfulness, unconscious of himself, need, like Icarus, to reach out and replenish himself from her life.(7)

Lorenzo in Taos met with a reply, and the reply indicates yet another tendency in the writing of books about Lawrence: that of the writer-protagonists to haggle with each other about their relative importance in the life of Lawrence. A Poet and Two Painters by the Danish painter Knud Merrild is confessedly an "answer" to Mrs. Luhan. Mrs. Luhan in her book barely mentions Merrild and his friend Gotsche. Merrild labours to show that, while the Lawrences were in New Mexico, he and his friend were the most intimately associated with them. With obvious relish he quotes Lawrence as saying, "I loathe the sight of [Mabel]. How unspeakably repulsive she is to me! How I despise her!" (8) and later, as saying, "I will kill Mabel first [this in a discussion in which Lawrence announced an urge to kill] .... I will use a knife! ..... I will cut her throat." (9) Apart from such lapses Merrild writes solidly, and his book contains a good description of his stay with the Lawrences at the isolated Taos ranch throughout a lonely winter.

The exchanges between Mrs. Luhan and Knud Merrild appear mild when compared with the virulence of Catherine Carswell and Middleton Murry. Both these writers spoil and distort otherwise good books when they insist on "pelting each other with mud scooped off Lawrence's grave mound". (10)

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(7) Mabel Dodge Luhan: Lorenzo in Taos p.175
(8) Knud Merrild: A Poet and Two Painters, p.65.
(9) Ibid: p.240.
(10) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.71.

Catherine Carswell announced publicly that The Savage Pilgrimage was a reply to Murry's Son of Woman. It was a pity that she conceived her book in that spirit. Where she can restrain herself and write objectively of Lawrence her book is excellent biography. But whenever she touches on the Lawrence-Carswell or Lawrence-Murry relationships, Lawrence himself tends to fade, and Mrs. Carswell and Mr. Murry begin to loom too large in the narrative. Her attitude to Lawrence is often sentimental and petty, as when she describes Lawrence (who had discussed with her, her novel in manuscript form) taking an interest in Mary Cannan's book on pets: Mrs. Carswell remarks, "I found this distressing". (11) Too large a part of her book is devoted to a determined attack on Murry. Though her indignation is genuine enough, the manner in which she attacks Murry is at times almost libellous and a large number of her premises are demonstrably incorrect, as Murry showed in his reply.

More will be said later of Son of Woman, Mr. Murry's first book on Lawrence which so intensely provoked Mrs. Carswell, for in it he poses a view of Lawrence and his work which must be considered. But Murry's reply to Mrs. Carswell, Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence, follows the pattern already indicated. The "reply" and the original reminiscences are printed in one volume but in separate sections, and it is perhaps sufficient to say that the "reply" is of somewhat greater length than the reminiscences. Mr. Murry's formidable documentation is written with vicious dignity but does no real service to Lawrence.

D. H. Lawrence by the late Hugh Kingsmill was the first open attempt to demolish Lawrence, for Murry in his work had at least claimed, in some obscure fashion, that he was demolishing Lawrence to show his true value. As such, Kingsmill's object was different from that of his predecessors but his book is none the more balanced. He had very little to say for Lawrence, and,

(11) Catherine Carswell: The Savage Pilgrimage, p.157.

in fact, very little to say for himself: most of his book consists of judicious quotation from the work of others. Nevertheless he managed to level charges of impotence and homosexuality against Lawrence, as well as to exhibit his own brand of literary criticism:

> No doubt this disgusting scene [i.e. the scene where Mellors jibes at Clifford's paralysis] owed some of its venom to the fact that Clifford had been wounded in the war, and, that Lawrence, unlike Mellors, had not been in the army. (12)

The most astonishing book of this period is that by Lawrence's wife Frieda, Not I, But the Wind; astonishing because it is uncannily the most detached and objective of the books mentioned. It is a straight-forward, rather factual account of her life with Lawrence, but unfortunately it throws little new light on her husband. It is perhaps most interesting for the occasional insights into Frieda's own character which it gives:

> What does it amount to that he hit out at me in a rage, when I exasperated him, or mostly when the life around him drove him to the end of his patience? I didn't care very much. I hit him back or waited till the storm in him subsided. We fought our battles outright to the bitter end. Then there was peace, such peace. I preferred it that way. Battles must be. If he had sulked or borne me a grudge, how tedious! (13)

A non-partisan book of this period was Mr. Stephen Potter's D. H. Lawrence: A First Study. But Mr. Potter, for the most part, deals in an uninspired manner only with such biographical material as can be gleaned, directly or indirectly, from the novels.

These, then, were the sort of books which were written about Lawrence bef[illegible]r, and which had the effect of focusing attention on [illegible]ather than on his work. A lull followed and then, co[illegible]mental with the twentieth anniversary of his death in 1950, interest in Lawrence seemed

(12) Hugh Kingsmill: D. H. Lawrence, p.232
(13) Frieda Lawrence: Not I, But the Wind, p.32

to revive again. * But the passing of the years had brought the realisation that Lawrence's life was mainly of interest in relation to his work, for it was for that that he was remembered. Although the first new book was yet another biography this awareness was apparent throughout the book:

> I want to use Lawrence's books to illustrate and if possible to explain the history of his life and the complexities of his temperament. But then a writer's books are his life-work and without their existence we should not know of him or want to understand him. (14)

Mr. Aldington's book was an attempt at a definitive biography and it is decidedly the best account of Lawrence's life. Yet, for the most part, it goes over well-known ground and it is a pity that Mr. Aldington, whose critical comments are suggestive, did not devote himself to a book of criticism.

Then appeared Mr. Anthony West's D. H. Lawrence and Father William Tiverton's D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence. These books call to mind Mr. Murry's Son of Woman, for it is in these books that an attempt is made to evaluate Lawrence's worth as a writer. Yet, characteristically, the first point at issue was whether Lawrence should be judged as a writer at all. Was he sufficiently the artist to be appraised as such?

Mr. Murry was quite definite on this point. In Son of Woman he states, "Lawrence is not to be judged as a pure artist; if ever a writer had an axe to grind it was he." (15) And again in his Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence, he says, "Lawrence was not, primarily, an 'artist'; he knew it, he declared it, his books reveal it." (16) At the outset it is instructive to note what Lawrence did in fact declare on this subject. In 1912, in a letter to Ernest Collings, he wrote:

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(14) Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But..., p.47
(15) J. Middleton Murry: Son of Woman, p.23
(16) J. Middleton Murry: Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence, p.167
* See Appendix for a discussion of a new American book on Lawrence.

> I always say my motto is "Art for my sake." If I want to write, I write - and if I don't want to, I won't. The difficulty is to find exactly the form one's passion - work is produced by passion in me, like kisses - is it with you? - wants to take. (17)

And in 1913 he again wrote to the same correspondent:

> Isn't it hard, hard work to come to real grips with one's imagination - throw everything overboard. I always feel as if I stood naked for the fire of Almighty God to go through me - and it's rather an awful feeling. One has to be so terribly religious to be an artist. (18)

Having denied us the right to judge Lawrence as an artist, Mr. Murry presents us with a comfortless alternative - that of regarding Lawrence as a psycho-pathological specimen. Lawrence, says Murry, suffered from an Oedipus complex:

> The woman must be his mother, and being made his mother, she cannot do otherwise than regard him as her child. It is not in her power to do otherwise. Neither is it in his power to cease to rebel against this fundamental humiliation of the man in him. (19)

Mr. Murry uses this thesis not only to "account for" Sons and Lovers, but also for the subsequent books in which sexual struggle predominates. Where Lawrence's later work seems to portray sexual harmony Mr. Murry, with tactful meiosis, describes Lawrence as "a sexual weakling" and dismisses the work as an essay in wish-fulfilment. In this way he sniffs through Lawrence's work only to be turned away by the neurotic smell which he detects.

It is unfortunate that this view of Lawrence should be fairly wide-spread fact. Mr. Aldington remarks on Lawrence's "impotence" and contrasts this "fact" unfavourably with the sexual scenes in Lady Chatterley's Lover) (20) for the defects of such an approach seem clear.

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(17) Letters, p.86
(18) Ibid: pp. 108-9
(19) J. Middleton Murry: Son of Woman, p.73
(20) Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But..., p.335

Firstly there seems to be a complete lack of factual basis for Mr. Murry's attack. If Lawrence did suffer from an Oedipus complex, he may well have been sufficiently aware of this conflict to have resolved it within his art. Certainly he was conscious of some such process hi self. In a letter to A. W. McLeod in 1913 he wrote, referring to Sons and Lovers: "But one sheds one's sicknesses in books - repeats and presents again one's emotions, to be master of them." (21) Moreover as Father Tiverton points out (22) there is no real suggestion of the Oedipus situation in the books which followed Sons and Lovers.

It is naturally a difficult matter to discuss the charge against Lawrence of impotence. Suffice it to say that no such suggestion has been made by anyone who knew Lawrence sufficiently well to know. Indeed Mrs. Carswell suggests what seems a more reasonable view:

> ... if Lawrence had not been potent in body as well as in spirit he would never have had Frieda to wife, or having her he would not have kept her. The suggestion has been made, though vaguely, that because the marriage was without issue Lawrence was impotent. To accept that would be to make both Lawrence and Frieda and all the circumstances of their life together a lie. (23)

Mr. Murry's view, therefore, remains largely hypothetical, but there is also inherent in his theory a flaw of which he himself seemed conscious. Discussing The Man Who Died he says:

> To say that Jesus was not physically an entire man, and that if he had been whole, his life would have been different, cannot invalidate his life. His life and teaching and death, whatever their physical "cause", are unique and eternal events that happened once for all. The question is what value they have for the men who follow after.

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(21) Letters, p.150
(22) Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p. 26.
(23) Catherine Carswell: The Savage Pilgrimage, p.75

> Just so, in the case of Lawrence himself, the fact that he was not an entire man, does not invalidate his life and teaching. They likewise are events that happened once for all; and again the question is what value they will have for the men who follow after. (24)

Unfortunately Mr. Murry begs the question. As Mr. Henry Miller says, "He rejects the creation because of its pathological basis." And he erects, instead, an "ethereal scaffold on which he raises the spirit of his dead friend in order to give him the aesthetic guillotine." (25)

Mr. Murry's denial of Lawrence the artist has found its echo in later and more unemotional work, though the basis of the modern view is somewhat different. The chief exponent of this view is Mr. Anthony West whose argument, directed at two aspects of Lawrence's work, needs consideration:

> The dominating factor in any assessment of Lawrence as a writer is that he was a religious leader first, and a writer second. His literary work was, after The White Peacock and The Trespasser, merely a means to an end - the end being the vulgarisation of the message which he felt it was his life's work to spread. An aesthetic approach to his work is therefore something of an absurdity: it should rightly be left to those "fin-de-siècle" critics who used to gabble away about the drama of the mass, and so on. For most of his life Lawrence looked on writing as a method of expressing what are in fact religious intuitions, his novels are intended as moralities showing the consequences of living with or without the light of his beliefs. (26)

> Lawrence's novels ignore the internal logic and order essential in a work of art. But then, of course, they were not supposed to be works of art; they were to stand or fall by their power to make clear the nature of new relationships of man to woman, and man to man, for which he was campaigning. (27)

These two extracts summarise one aspect of Mr. West's argument. * Once again it is stressed that Lawrence never intended his books to be regarded as works of art.

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(24) J. Middleton Murry: Son of Woman, p.375
(25) Henry Miller: Essay entitled Shadowy Monomania from Sunday After The War, p.265
(26) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.83
(27) Ibid. p.119

* It is indicative of Lawrence criticism to mention that Mr. West, despite such assertions, devotes some time to interesting literary criticism of Lawrence. Father Tiverton on the other hand, while declaring Lawrence to be primarily an artist, involves himself (for the most part) in long discussions of Lawrence's ideas and their relation to "Christian-existensialist" philosophy.

Lawrence's own attitude to his art has already been quoted: *it is instructive to note his attitude to the purposive,* philosophical side of his books.

In Fantasia of the Unconscious he writes:

> This pseudo-philosophy of mine ... is deduced from the novels and poems, not the reverse. The novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen. And then the absolute need which one has for some sort of satisfactory mental attitude towards oneself and things in general makes one try to abstract some definite conclusions from one's experiences as a writer and as a man. (28)

But then, quite apart from the question of intention, it seems to me that Mr. West's argument is fallacious. He says in effect that Lawrence has a "philosophy" and that a different standard has to be used in the judgment of the books in which this philosophy is expressed - not that of artistic evaluation, but that of the worth of the philosophy. Such a view strikes one as tending to treat Lawrence's ideas in a vacuum; whereas, in fact, he chose to express them not in philosophical treatises but in novels and poems. Strip the philosophy of the novels and any criterion for judging Lawrence, other than personal and academic preference, *vanishes along with the novels. Treat* the philosophy as an integral part of the novel, assess the novel as a work of art, and valid grounds exist for an evaluation not only of the book but of the philosophy. If the novelist cannot convince us that his view of life is "true" for the characters he creates, then such a view hardly bears further inspection. If he does so convince us, and if his characters impress us as being of universal significance, then it is time for us to consider whether what is true for them is not of importance for us as well.

It is necessary to realise this for attacks on Lawrence are as often based on superficial *extracts of his*

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(28) Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.10

philosophy as on his supposed neurosis. As Mr. Forster says:

> He invites criticism because he is a preacher also - it is this minor aspect of him which makes him so difficult and misleading - an excessively clever preacher who knows how to play on the nerves of his congregation. (29)

It seems to me that an attempt to relate the external Lawrence to his work is long overdue. It is precisely in this respect that critics such as Mr. Murry and Mr. West fail. The biographical method of attack only assumes significant value where knowledge of an author's life is used to expose falsification or distortion in the author's work. Knowledge of Thackeray's tragic marriage, for instance, and of his love for Jane Brookfield is of considerable aid to an understanding of his work; and it is justifiable for critics to point out that his inability to detach himself from personal conflicts and emotions often leads to false touches in the novels - as in the strange and forced marriage of Henry Esmond and Rachel Castlewood, which comes as a shock to the reader after what has gone before. Such relation of an author's life to his work is a valid basis for criticism, for the weaknesses pointed to are not those only apparent in the life but also discernible in the work. Mr. Murry, however, makes no real attempt at such a relation, being content rather to concentrate on Lawrence's life, which, he implies, should by all rules distort his work.

It is justifiable, too, to suggest that an author's preconceived view of life may lead to similar distortion in his work. Hardy's preoccupation with a malignant and dominating fate sometimes leads him to a too obvious manipulation of his plots in order to underline his theory: as in the circumstances of Mrs. Yeobright's visit to Clym; or the manner in which Tess' letter to Clare remains unread. But Mr. West, far from treating

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(29) E. M. Forster: Aspects of the Novel, p.132

Lawrence in this way (and that such treatment is profitable it is hoped to show later in this discussion) refuses to regard him as an artist because of Lawrence's preoccupation with his own special view of life. Whereas, of course, the true criterion is that put so vividly by Virginia Woolf:

> When philosophy is not consumed in a novel, when we can underline this phrase with a pencil, and cut out that exhortation with a pair of scissors and paste the whole into a system, it is safe to say that there is something wrong with the philosophy or with the novel or with both. (30)

Another reason for a feeling of dissatisfaction with Lawrence as an artist, which some critics mention, is the fact that Lawrence was not a "self-conscious" artist. Mr. West says:

> Lawrence was hostile to the whole business of a self-conscious attempt to create a work of art, and so far as style went was content to arrive at the most direct and personal communication he could achieve .... The internal artistic or aesthetic effects were arrived at intuitively, much as a horse or a cat achieves beautiful movement by doing what it wishes to do in what is to it the obvious way. (31)

Virginia Woolf takes a similar view:

> The thought plumps directly into his mind; up spurt the sentences as round, as hard, as direct as water thrown out in all directions by the impact of a stone. One feels that not a single word has been chosen for its beauty, or for its effect upon the architecture of the sentence. (32)

That Lawrence did write in such a manner is clear both from his own pronouncements and those of friends such as Mr. Aldous Huxley - "Art, he thought, should flower from an immediate impulse towards self-expression or communication and should wither with the passing of the impulse." (33) What

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(30) Virginia Woolf: The Common Reader, second series, essay entitled The Novels of George Meredith, p.234; quoted too by Father Tiverton: D.H. Lawrence and Human Existence
(31) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, pp.83-4
(32) Virginia Woolf: The Moment - Essay on D.H. Lawrence p.82
(33) Aldous Huxley: Introduction to Selected Letters, p.13

is not clear is why Virginia Woolf and Mr. West should deprecate this lack of self-consciousness, of the Henry James or Proust touch. It is of little moment whether a beautiful or moving passage is the result of spontaneous expression or of carefully laborious premeditation. What matters is that the passage is beautiful and moving. Lawrence's method of composition is of relevance only when any given passage can be shown to suffer from a lack of polishing (a treatment which Mr. West does extend to Lawrence but, unfortunately, with too great stress on his short stories and too sketchily as far as his major work is concerned). Awareness of it should not predispose critics to "art for art's sake" lamentations.

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In the following d[illegible]n of the novels of D. H. Lawrence it is proposed [illegible]mine Lawrence's treatment of the relationships between men and women, and to study the development of his theory of this relationship in its symbolic representation in the novels. But I believe that Lawrence, as Mr. Huxley says, was "always and unescapably an artist" (34) and that his ideas were but the bony frame of his work. To that frame he added flesh and blood, and it is the living body of his work which is of significance.

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(34) Aldous Huxley: Introduction to Selected Letters, p.5

II

THE WHITE PEACOCK

When one thinks of the impression Lawrence was to make on the literature of our day it is illuminating to note the outward nonchalance with which he set about writing his first novel. He announced to Jessie Chambers that he might "try a novel" and then said, "The usual plan is to take two couples and develop their relatio ships. Most of George Eliot's are on that plan. Anyhow I don't want a plot, I should be bored with it. I shall try two couples for a start." (1) Yet, one should be chary of treating his novel as lightly, for, as Virginia Woolf says, a "first novel is always apt to be an unguarded one, where the author displays his gifts without knowing how to dispose of them to the best advantage." (2) And The White Peacock, if it reveals an uncertainty of touch on the part of the writer, certainly displays the quality of his gifts.

Lawrence's remark immediately invites comparison of his work with that of George Eliot, yet the reader soon becomes aware of an essential difference between the conception of The White Peacock and that of Middlemarch, for example. It is true that Lawrence is similarly concerned with the development of the relationships of two couples, but then in The White Peacock this development does not take place against an elaborate background of interlocking events, nor is it founded on numerous and subtle variations in character. Nor, if one thinks of other great writers who preceded Lawrence, does one sense a similarity with him in their treatment of the relationships between their main male and female characters. Lawrence's treatment is not

(1) Quoted by Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But..., p.95

(2) Virginia Woolf: Essay entitled The Novels of George Meredith in The Common Reader, Second Series, pp.227-28.

dependent on the conception of society as a vital formative influence as in Thackeray; it does not thinly mask the intention of exposing social evils as often in Dickens; nor is it concerned with the conscious effort at realisation of the inner consciousness as in Henry James. Lawrence's approach is fresh and new. He goes straight to the fundamental basis of the relationship between men and women which he finds to lie in an all-powerful yet intangible physical attraction, and he attempts to show that the denial of a fundamental impulse of attraction leads inevitably to tragedy. In this approach he is perhaps near only to Emily Brontë, and yet he is even then as far removed from her as the soft country round Nethermere is from the harsh wild moors round Wuthering Heights.

Such physical attraction exists between Lettie and George, and Lawrence's apprehension of it is at once striking - despite the cliché of the last phrases in the following passage:

> Lettie was still playing the piano [i.e. when George came in]. He asked her why she didn't play something with a tune in it, and this caused her to turn round in her chair to give him a withering answer. His appearance, however, scattered her words like startled birds. He had come straight from washing in the scullery, to the parlour, and he stood behind Lettie's chair unconcernedly wiping the moisture from his arms. His sleeves were rolled up to the shoulder, and his shirt was opened wide at the breast. Lettie was somewhat taken aback by the sight of him standing with legs apart, dressed in dirty leggings and boots, and breeches torn at the knee, naked at the breast and arms.
>
> "Why don't you play something with a tune in it?" he repeated, rubbing the towel over his shoulders beneath the shirt.
>
> "A tune?" she echoed, watching the swelling of his arms as he moved them, and the rise and fall of his breasts, wonderfully solid and white. Then having curiously examined the sudden meeting of the sunshot skin with the white flesh in his throat, her eyes met his, and she turned again to the piano, while the colour grew in her ears, mercifully sheltered by a profusion of bright curls. (3)

(3) The White Peacock, p.29

It is necessary to quote at length to show how Lawrence succeeds in maintaining the physical tension between Lettie and George; necessary not only because this tension is fundamental to their relationship but also because its portrayal evidences the highly distinctive quality of Lawrence's gift:

> She looked up, and found his eyes. They gazed at each other for a moment before they hid their faces again. It was a torture to each of them to look thus nakedly at the other, a dazzled, shrinking pain that they forced themselves to undergo for a moment, that they might the moment after tremble with a fierce sensation that filled their veins with fluid, fiery electricity. She sought almost in panic, for something to say.
>
> " I believe it's in Liverpool, the picture", she contrived to say.
>
> He dared not kill this conversation, he was too self-conscious. He forced himself to reply, "I didn't know there was a gallery in Liverpool".
>
> "Oh, yes, a very good one", she said.
>
> Their eyes met in the briefest flash of a glance, then both turned their faces aside. Thus averted, one from the other, they made talk. At last she rose, gathered the books together, and carried them off. At the door she turned. She must steal another keen moment: "Are you admiring my strength?" she asked. Her pose was fine. With her head thrown back, the roundness of her throat ran finely down to the bosom which swelled above the pile of books, held by her straight arms. He looked at her. Their lips smiled curiously. She put back her throat as if she were drinking. They felt the blood beating madly in their necks. Then, suddenly breaking into a slight trembling, she turned round and left the room. (4)
>
> But they whirled on in the dance, on and on till I was giddy, till the father, laughing, cried that they should stop. But George continued the dance; her hair was shaken loose, and fell in a great coil down her back, her feet began to drag; you could hear a light slur on the floor; she was panting - I could see her lips murmur to him, begging him to stop; he was laughing with open mouth, holding her tight; at last her feet trailed; he lifted her, clasping her tightly, and danced twice round the room with her thus. Then he fell with a crash on the sofa, pulling her beside him. His eyes glowed like coals; he was panting in sobs, and his hair was wet and glistening. She lay back on the sofa, with his arm still around her, not moving; she was quite overcome. Her hair was wild about her face. Emily was anxious; the father said, with a shade of inquistude:
>
> "You've overdone it - it is very foolish!"

(4) The White Peacock, p.48

> When at last she recovered her breath and her life, she got up, and laughing in a queer way, began to put up her hair. She went into the scullery where were the brush and combs, and Emily followed with a candle. When she returned, ordered once more, with a little pallor succeeding the flush, and with a great black stain of sweat on her leathern belt where his hand had held her, he looked up at her from his position on the sofa, with a peculiar glance of triumph, smiling. (5)

An interesting aspect of the attraction between Lettie and George is that it is almost part of something beyond themselves, bound up with external forces. The moon, that mysterious symbol which recurs repeatedly in Lawrence's work, is felt as a vast, potent influence linking the lovers together. At the same time Lawrence contrasts the effect which the moon has on Leslie, George's rival. And the contrast is so pointed that one is made to feel that Leslie is somehow fundamentally excluded from participation in a relationship of the same quality:

> Where the sky was pale in the east over the rim of wood came the forehead of the yellow moon. We stood and watched in silence. Then, as the great disc, nearly full, lifted and looked straight upon us, we were washed off our feet in a vague sea of moonlight. We stood with the light like water on our faces. Lettie was glad, a little bit exalted; Emily was passionately troubled; her lips were parted, almost beseeching; Leslie was frowning, oblivious, and George was thinking, and the terrible, immense moonbeams braided through his feeling. At length Leslie said softly, mistakenly:
>
> "Come along, dear," and he took her arm. (6)

In this way Lawrence carefully suggests the special nature of the relationship between Lettie and George, and indicates that marriage between them should follow as naturally as the moon should rise in the east. Yet Lettie, despite continued flirtation with George finally marries Leslie, and George, in pique, marries Meg. At this stage in the narrative Lawrence asserts his own characteristic viewpoint. Neither Lettie nor George have been true to something basic in their natures. Both have tolerated the

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(5) The White Peacock, p.XI
(6) Ibid. p.78

suppression of a fundamental urge by superficial considerations - and the result, says Lawrence, must inevitably be tragic.

It should not for a moment be thought that Lawrence presents his view in anything like the manner of a geometrical theorem. At no point in the book is there any explicit moralising; cause and effect flow smoothly from the interplay of character and situation. The barriers between Lettie and George are skilfully constructed. For Lettie the superior social attainments, social standing and wealth of Leslie appeal to the snobbish streak in her and turn her away from George; while George, slow, hesitant, self-mistrustful, has so strong a dread of being rejected by Lettie and of being humiliated that he fails to take the initiative at crucial points. I find both the sequence of events and the characterisation of George and Lettie (which remains to be discussed in greater detail) thoroughly convincing, and yet despite this success in the delineation of the crucial relationship of the novel, the book as a whole is not as impressive as one feels it might have been. The flaw seems to lie in the section of the novel which deals with the consequences that flow from Lettie's decision to marry Leslie. Though he has so successfully prepared th way for a powerful and moving dénouement, Lawrence seems unable to maintain his imaginative grip.

George, after his marriage to Meg, slowly takes to drink (an eventuality well prepared for) and finally becomes an habitual drunkard suffering from "delirium tremens". A totally degraded man he is left, under the patronage of his sister Emily, wishing for death as a release. The change in him is startling enough, but somehow we are not actively moved by any feeling of horror at the contemplation of this change - and an effect which we feel is desired by Lawrence is not achieved. The main cause of this failure can, I think, be ascribed to the first person method of narration which Lawrence

adopted in this book. It is necessary for us ourselves to fall to the full George's degradation, and yet, since Cyril is away from Nethermere, we are forced for the most part to hear only second-hand reports of George's decline. Hence the incident with the most dramatic potentiality in the book is spoilt for us. Just as the effect on us of an account of an accident can never be as great as it would be were we to witness the event ourselves, so in the novel, where our willing suspension of disbelief leads us to believe ourselves actually present during the narration of any given incident, the substitution of another pair of eyes for our own can only change and lessen the effect. And in this particular instance what should be the full realisation of George in his most despicable moment is not only partial, but is also hindered by the over-hearty eloquence of Alice, which Lawrence is at pains to sustain - for it is in a letter from Alice to Cyril that we hear of the following incident:

> Oh, lum! There came raking up the croft that long, wire-springy racehorse of his, ears flat, and, clinging to its neck, that pale-faced lad, Wilfred. The kid was white as death, and squealing "Mam! mam!" I thought it was a bit rotten of George trying to teach the kid to jockey. The racehorse, Bonny-Boy - Boney Boy I call him - came bouncing round like a spiral egg-whisk. Then I saw our Georgie rush up screaming, nearly spitting the moustache off his face, and fetch the horse a cut with the whip. It went off like a flame along hot paraffin. The kid shrieked and clung. Georgie went rushing after him, running staggery, and swearing, fairly screaming - awful - "a lily-livered little swine!" The high lanky racehorse went larroping round as if it was going mad. I was dazed. Then Meg came rushing and the other two lads, all screaming. She went for George, but he lifted his whip like the devil. She daren't go near him - she rushed at him, and stopped, rushed at him, and stopped, striking at him with her two fists. He waved his whip and kept her off, and the racehorse kept tearing along. Meg flew to stop it, he ran with his drunken totter-step, brandishing his whip. I flew as well. I hit him with my basket. The kid fell off, and Meg rushed to him. Some men came running. George stood fairly shuddering. You would never have known his face, Cyril. He was mad, demoniacal. I fe ` sometimes as if I should burst and shatter to bits lik a sky-rocket when I think of it. I've got such a weal on my arm.

> I lost Percival Charles' ninepence, and my nice white cloth out of the basket, and everything, besides having black looks on Thursday because it was mutton chops, which he hates ..... (7)

The jocular tone of this description, noticeable particularly in ph es such as "Oh hum", "spitting the moustache off his f. ." and in the references to "the kid", together with the inexpressive slanginess of phrases such as "a bit rotten of George", "fairly screaming", "fairly shuddering" and "white as death", tends to diminish the seriousness of the incident and to keep the reader at too great a distance. Though phrases such as these are to a certain extent offset by a more vivid colloquialism - "The racehorse .... came bouncing round like a spiral egg-whisk", and "It went off like a flame along hot paraffin" - the final allusion to "Percival Charles' ninepence" is jarringly bathetic and distracting. The reader is all too conscious of Alice and too little aware of George.

When Cyril himself, therefore, does finally go to see George we note, not with sympathy and horror, but with interest only, that George, whose bodily beauty was once his greatest attraction, has now "bluish feeble hands" and "dull eyes of shame"; that he is thin and "has bellied" and is "bowed and unsightly". When the book closes and George sits "apart and obscure.... like a condemned man", he is pathetic - not tragic.

As far as Lettie is concerned Lawrence seems uncertain about the retribution which is to overtake her as a result of her mistaken marriage. This is partly due to the uncertain expression of his attitude towards Leslie. Although it is clear throughout that the physical attraction between Leslie and Lettie is of a different nature from that between Lettie and George, the manner in which Lawrence would have us regard Leslie (from a physical point of view) is not so clear -

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(7) The White Peacock, p.406

though a clear impression is necessary for full understanding of the difficulties which subsequently arise between Lettie and Leslie. At times Leslie is contrasted unfavourably with Lettie - he is never induced to take part in any of the impromptu dances of the young people, for instance, and after one such dance Lettie remarks, "Why, your hands are quite cold, and mine so hot! I feel so impish". (8) Yet at other times Lawrence describes him differently: "He had that fine, lithe physique, suggestive of much animal vigour; his person was exceedingly attractive; one watched him move about, and felt pleasure". (9) As a result the reader is left in some doubt as to whether Lettie, despite the denial of what we know to be her natural inclination, might not make a reasonable enough success of marriage with Leslie. And although Lawrence indicates that Lettie does not find fulfilment in her marriage, he does not make the point sufficiently powerfully and is far less successful with this part of Lettie's story than he is with the corresponding portrayal of George's life.

Considering the uproar which Lawrence was later to cause by his outspokenness, it is strange to think that his handling of Lettie at this time is unsatisfactory simply because he is not sufficiently outspoken. His indication that the marriage is not a success is either oblique - we are left to infer, for instance, that Lettie does not really respect the husband who meekly obeys her injunctions to tie her shoe-laces or to take off her shoes and warm her feet (10) - or baldly explicit: "As Lettie was always a very good wife, Leslie adored her when he had the time, and when he had not, forgot her comfortably." (11) And yet all the time we are conscious that the cause of unhappiness is a basic sexual incompatibility between them: conscious, because Lawrence hints at this, and yet not convinced because his reticence gives rise to uncertainty.

(8) The White Peacock, p.81
(9) Ib.d. p.67
(10) Ibid. pp. 230-31
(11) Ibid. p.379

Two of the four references in the novel to their sexual [illegible]ons refer to a time before their marriage. One night [illegible]e sleeps over at Lettie's house, he leaves early in the [illegible], then returns suddenly and the following scene takes place between them:

> "You - are you - are you angry with me?" he inquired.
>
> Tears suddenly came to her eyes.
>
> "What did you come back for?" she said, averting her face from him. He looked at her.
>
> "I knew you were angry - and -" he hesitated.
>
> "Why won't you go away?" she said impulsively. He hung his head and was silent.
>
> "I didn't see why - why it should make trouble between us, Lettie", he faltered. She made a swift gesture of repulsion, whereupon, catching sight of her hand, he held it swiftly against her skirt again.
>
> "Let me go my hands - my very hands disclaim me", she struggled to say.
>
> He looked at her clenched fist pressed against the folds of her dress.
>
> "But - no need, much trouble.
>
> "I will go, I can't bear the sight of my own hands", she said, in low, passionate tones.
>
> "But surely, Lettie, there's no need - if you love me -". (12)

Some time later Lettie tells Leslie that she does not want to marry him and he says:

> "You mean you don't love me?"
>
> "I - love - I don't know anything about it. But I can't - we can't be - don't you see - oh, what do they say - flesh of one flesh."
>
> "Why!" he whispered, like a child that is told some tale of mystery. (13)

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(12) The White Peacock, pp.238-33
(13) Ibid., p. 242

These two passages, without any further commentary upon them, are somewhat bewildering. That the couple had slept together that night seems clear but, while the first passage seems to reflect a feeling of revulsion on Lettie's part, the second seems to suggest a certain incompatibility between them. Taken together they might suggest any number of things.

It is with this uncertainty, therefore, that we are left to view Lettie's marriage. Nor does Lawrence throw much further light on their sexual relations. He lets us know that Lettie and Leslie have separate rooms, and once Lettie writes to Cyril saying: "I hope I shall have another child next spring, there is only that to take away the misery of this torpor. I seem full of passion and energy, and it all frizzles out in day to day domestics -" (14)

And so Lawrence leaves us to guess that the tragedy of Lettie's life is that she, wild and passionate spirit that she is, is doomed not only to a circumscribed and narrow social life but also to sexual unfulfilment. She is left to make the best of things, and to find some measure of compensation in her children: a situation which Lawrence again deals with in Sons and Lovers. At this stage of his development it seems that Lawrence was incapable of being more explicit about Lettie's plight and hence of conveying with power and conviction how she felt. The success with which he was later able to treat an analogous situation is borne out by the fine achievement of Lady Chatterley's Lover.

If Lawrence fails to reveal to us fully the tragedy in the lives of George and Lettie, his characterisation of both is subtle and true throughout. When Lawrence was trying to do something different in his later books he was often accused of not being able to create character. Recognition

(14) The White Peacock, p.374

of the full-length portrayal in his first book of a character such as George should have been sufficient to dispel such criticism.

The incidents in The White Peacock give one the sense of being artificially contrived - they reflect naturally the day to day events of a farming-village community - but the way in which he handles them is a testimony to Lawrence's powers of skilful and economic selection. In the very opening pages George, finely-built, slow and good-natured, is also revealed as possessing a wantonly cruel streak. How naturally Lawrence shows him callously and indolently breaking the wings of some young bees, or moving with alacrity to kill a cat which has been caught in a trap - "The quickest way", said George, "is to swing her round and knock her head against the wall". (15) Yet how thoroughly has Lawrence prepared the way for George's later bestiality. And the fear of being humiliated, so fundamental to George's character and so crucial in his relationship with Lettie, is underlined long before it is of importance where Lettie is concerned by his earnest entreaty of Cyril not to tell anyone that he, George, had been ignominiously knocked down by Annable. Thereafter George's fatal hesitancy in his relationship with Lettie is dwelt on time and again; while his sudden decisions to face her (too late to be of any effect) are paralleled by his attitudes towards his everyday work on the farm - long stretches of indifference and apathy followed by bursts of energy and a tardy determination, for instance, to do something about the rabbit menace, once his father has taken the initial step.

George's deterioration, following Lettie's marriage, is psychologically convincing and the first stages in this process are skilfully indicated. An awareness of his own hesitancy leads him to a forced recklessness, a determination

(15) The White Peacock, p.37

to "play with life", as Cyril puts it. Rapidly he becomes pathetic as we see him forcing himself to face the ordeal of an hotel dinner in Nottingham on his wedding day, or making a fool of himself with the hired harvest labourers in his eagerness to come to grips with life. And slowly the necessity to nerve himself with drink becomes compelling. It is interesting to note that following his final rejection by Lettie and on his first visit to Meg (who, significantly, is a bar-maid in the village pub) George gets thoroughly drunk. After his marriage George takes over the pub himself, keeps low company and his final disintegration is gradual but inevitable.

Lettie is a more complex character than George and is vividly conceived by Lawrence until, as has been indicated, his imagination falters and she tends to fade at the end of the book. How well he describes the conflicting streaks in her nature: her passionate wildness as opposed to her vanity, her snobbery, her desire to do "the right thing". And so, while we see her attracted by George and flirting dangerously with him and declaring her own wildness: "Don't you wish we were wild - hark, like wood-pigeons - or larks - or, look, like peewits? Shouldn't you love flying and wheeling and sparkling and courting in the wind?" (16) - Lawrence carefully reveals the other side of her nature. Her first question, on hearing of her father's miserable life and death, is "Who knows?" and once satisfied that the news is secret she dismisses it from her mind. When she returns home from town after being snubbed by Leslie she proceeds to order Rebecca around in a manner unknown to her household, thus satisfying not only her desire to assert herself after her humiliation, but also bolstering up her conception of her own social position in relation to Leslie. Lettie's impulses are constantly in conflict with her will to do what is right according to the social code.

(16) The White Peacock, p.273

Though she is revolted by her first sexual experience with Leslie and toys with the idea of breaking off their engagement, she relents when he is ill and marries him - "You're bound to do what people expect you to do - you can't help it", she says to George. She duly satisfies both her own vanity and public expectations by appearing radiantly in love with Leslie at the ball at Highclose, yet Lawrence carefully indicates that on the next day, the day of her twenty-first birthday party, she is extremely anxious lest Leslie alone should arrive (because of bad weather) and she be deprived of a proper party. It is with deft touches such as these that Lawrence handles Lettie, and his treatment of her up to the time of her marriage is so sure that, while we are at a loss to predict her differing whims, we are never in doubt as to the ultimate outcome of her relationships with Leslie and George.

Lawrence's handling of the Cyril-Emily relationship is not so satisfactory. The primary cause of his failure in this respect seems to be his inability to make either of these characters live. Lawrence had obviously not mastered the difficult technique of making of the narrator of the story a convincing character (as Dickens, for instance, was able to do with Pip in Great Expectations) and it is instructive that he did not return to the autobiographical method of narration in any of his subsequent novels. As it is, Cyril remains a shadowy, insubstantial character throughout the book. Without any noticeable occupation (so that mention of his being "on vacation" comes as a complete surprise) and without any apparent feelings of his own (the dismal end to his intense friendship with George seems to leave him for the most part unmoved) Lawrence attempts to transfer some of his own characteristics to Cyril, but without success. We are told by Emily that Cyril is "as restless and as urgent as the wind", and he says

of himself "it seemed as if I were always wandering, looking for something", but there is little in the book which allows us to modify our impression of the impassive observer. In the same way we do not really get to know Emily, and we mark her moods of alternating irritation and soulfulness from a distance.

It is difficult to understand what Lawrence was trying to do in his portrayal of the "second couple". The reason for the indeterminate nature of the relationship between Cyril and Emily may well be that at the time of writing Lawrence was considerably involved with Jessie Chambers (the original of Emily) and that he was unable to detach himself sufficiently to write clearly on the subject. He reverted to this subject in Sons And Lovers and was then able to present a sharply defined picture of such a relationship - but, by then, he had to all intents and purposes broken off with Jessie Chambers. In The White Peacock, however, we get the merest hints of the conflict between Cyril and Emily. The extent to which they are attracted to one another is by no means clear, and it is only through explicit statement that we learn that Emily "always has her soul in her eyes" and has a "gift of sorrow". Though Cyril says this "fascinated me, but it drove me to rebellion", there is no indication of a break in their tenuous relationship until Emily suddenly informs Cyril that she is about to marry Renshaw. Cyril's reaction to this - "Mr. Renshaw", I said. "You have out-manoeuvred me all unawares, quite indecently." - raises serious doubts of the sincerity of his love for Emily or of his emotional maturity. And it is difficult to see what attracts Emily to Renshaw, an all too wooden peg hastily hewed to hang her sorrows on. Renshaw, in fact, is the sort of man who, commenting on George's plight, says, "Well, if he can't help it, he can't, poor chap. Though I do think a man should have more backbone."

The Cyril-Emily relationship, therefore, is inherently unsatisfactory and is out of place in the book. The main attention is concentrated on Lettie and George, and Emily and Cyril are very much in the background. Nor does their relationship contrast with, or act as a further commentary on, the central relationship of the novel. Lawrence would have us believe that Emily is perfectly happy in her marriage - speaking of the Renshaw home he says, "Emily was in perfect accord with its brownness, its shadows, its ease." - and since nothing in particular happens to Cyril after her marriage, it is hard to imagine that the results of the hesitation in their courtship are intended to resemble those in the case of Lettie and George. And it is equally hard to imagine that the outcome of their relationship is illustrative of the peaceful harmony attainable by those who are true to themselves, and so intended as a contrast with the fate of Lettie and George. Though one cannot agree with Mr. West that "Cyril and Emily find their doom", and that Cyril "is betrayed to death by being false to himself" (17) Renshaw is too much of a stick for us fully to believe in Emily's supposed happiness, and Cyril is altogether too sketchily drawn for us to infer the final effect Lettie's marriage has on him.

It has been said that Cyril is such a sketchy character largely because Lawrence had not mastered the technique of narration in the first person. Lawrence's inexperience in this method of narration led him, too, into other difficulties. In the first place it is necessary for Cyril to observe most of the incidents related in the book so that he can recount them. It is some time, however, before

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(17) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, pp.107, 108

one can accustom oneself to the ghostly presence of Cyril at private meetings between lovers, between Lettie and George or between Lettie and Leslie. Either one's belief in the authenticity of some of these scenes is shattered for, if it is hard to believe in Leslie making the following speech to Lettie alone, it is virtually impossible to imagine him making it in front of Cyril: "And I've won, won the ripe apples of your cheeks, and your breasts, and your very fists - they can't stop me - and - and - all your roundness and warmness and softness - I've won you Lettie." (18) Or, if, when one reaches the long scene depicting the final meeting of Lettie and George after fifteen years have passed, one has got used to the presence of Cyril on such occasions, one wonders how the main protagonists can ignore him so completely and one is distracted by his insubstantiality.

Where, for one reason or another, Cyril cannot be present at certain scenes and it is obvious that he is not, Lawrence makes the equally bad mistake of allowing Cyril to continue his story as if he were. The reader is betrayed on occasions such as the one where Cyril is "escorting Alice home" and yet continues to describe the conversation between Lettie and George in the room he has left behind him. (19) This method sometimes leads Lawrence to make mistakes which obtrude themselves on the reader: Cyril, watching Lettie leave their home on her way to Highclose one afternoon, describes her as looking "like a distant sail", and then a few sentences later he is able to see Leslie's cigar "glowing" - this, because Lawrence has to prepare the way for an account of the meeting between Leslie and Lettie by an absent Cyril.

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(18) The White Peacock, p.117
(19) Ibid. pp.45-50

When Cyril, towards the end of the book, is away from Nethermere, the device of keeping him acquainted with developments there by a string of letters is wearying. And when Lawrence discards this device the manner in which Cyril obtains information remains unexplained: "George ceased to write to me, but I learned his news elsewhere." (20)

In other respects also the construction of the book is somewhat faulty: characters like Cyril's mother and Annable's son Sam, who loom large in the narrative at certain stages, are thereafter forgotten and fade from the book; the detailed descriptions of the strange appearance of Cyril's father and of his death are largely irrelevant and have no organic connection with the book. Yet, nevertheless, Lawrence succeeds in achieving a certain tautness through his symbolism.

If the Cyril-Emily relationship fails to mirror that of Lettie and George, the story of the latter pair is cleverly related to that of Annable in the symbol of the "white peacock". For Annable, soured and disillusioned in his relationships with women, the peacock which he and Cyril watch foul its own perch, becomes a symbol of the vanity of woman:

> "The proud fool! - look at it! [says Annable, referring to the peacock]. Perched on an angel, too, as if it were a pedestal for vanity. That's the soul of a woman - or it's the devil".....
>
> ...."Just look!" he said, "the miserable brute has dirtied that angel. A woman to the end, I tell you, all vanity and screech and defilement." (21)

But when, after telling his story, Annable reflects that the blame for his failure with Lady Crystabel cannot entirely be placed on her, Cyril returns to Annable's original

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(20) The White Peacock, p.369
(21) Ibid. p.198

reference and suggests that he mark his modification by considering her rather as a white peacock - the word "white" appearing to be used here in an extenuating sense in much the same way as in the phrase "a white lie":

> "So she's dead - your poor peacock!" [Cyril] murmured.
>
> He got up, looking always at the sky, and stretched himself again. He was an impressive figure massed in blackness against the moonlight, with his arms outspread.
>
> "I suppose", he said, "it wasn't all her fault". "A white peacock we will say", I suggested. He laughed ..... (22)

Long after Annable's death Lawrence underlines his main theme by references to Lettie and George which connect them both with the symbolic peacock. Lettie is identified explicitly with a peacock:

> As she turned laughing to the two men, she let her cloak slide over her white shoulder and fall with silk splendour of a peacock's gorgeous blue over the arm of the large settee. There she stood, with her white hand upon the peacock of her cloak, where it tumbled against her dull orange dress. She knew her own splendour, and she drew up her throat laughing and brilliant with triumph. (23)

Lawrence thus forces the realisation on us that it is Lettie's vanity which is the cause of her mistaken marriage, and yet, with the white peacock brought to mind, we remember that it is not altogether her fault and that George's irresolution is as much to blame.

The connection between George and Annable is at first sight not so apparent. The reference occurs in the well-known passage where George and Cyril bathe together:

> As I watched him, he stood in white relief against the mass of green. He polished his arm, holding it out straight and solid; he rubbed his hair into curls, while I watched the deep muscles of his shoulders, and the bands stand out in his neck as he held it firm; I remembered the story of Annable. (24)

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(22) The White Peacock, p.202
(23) Ibid: pp.330-31
(24) Ibid: p.292

The white peacock is so striking an image that the mere mention of Annable recalls it and, consequently, his story. Then the seemingly irrelevant reference to Annable becomes pointed and we reflect that George's fine body, too, will be misused.

Lawrence also makes effective use of the binding symbol of the corn-harvest. The early scenes in which George and Cyril work together are so vividly described that when, at the end of the book, the two stand watching Emily's husband and his brothers "small in the distance, lifting the sheaves on the cart", these scenes are inevitably brought to mind. So, too, is the contrast between George as he is and as he was, and a unity is imparted to the book by bringing before us in this way the whole sweep of the action.

In this first novel Lawrence shows what might be called the novelist's touch: the ability to fix an impression with the penetrating detail, even when he is describing people or things which are relatively unimportant as far as the main purpose of the book is concerned. The finality of Annable's death is effortlessly evoked by the passing reference to the smell of his coffin: "The coffin is of new unpolished wood, gleaming and glistening in the sunlight; the men who carry it remember all their lives after the smell of new, warm elm-wood." (25)..... When Cyril first meets Renshaw he describes him and mentions that he had heard that Renshaw's father "had had his right hand chopped to bits in the chopping machine." Some twenty pages thereafter Lawrence's reference to this detail does much to conjure up the old man as a vital presence - "I shook hands with Tom Renshaw, and with the old man's hard, fierce left hand."

Lawrence adds a richness to the book by his use, too, of dramatic irony. When Lettie announces her engagement to Leslie and so helps to bring about the events which so radically alter their lives, the discussion on Marie and Cyril some few

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(25) The White Peacock, p.208

minutes before Lettie breaks the news to George takes on the irony attendant upon the uncertainty of life:

> "Woodside is so old, and so sweet and serene - it does reassure one."
>
> "Yes", said I, "we just live, nothing abnormal, nothing cruel and extravagant - just natural - like doves in a dove-cote." (36)

So do Cyril's remarks about Annable's home-made steps - shortly before the keeper's death: "I admired the care and ingenuity of the keeper, who had fitted and wedged the long stones into the uncertain pile." (37) The whole chapter entitled The Irony of Inspired Moments is of an even deeper irony, based as it is on the clash of character and circumstances as George's inspired moment coincides with the time when Lettie's mind is full of thoughts of her future marriage, when she has just spent a day buying articles for her trousseau and when, elaborately gowned and expecting Leslie, she is called on to meet George.

A striking feature of the novel is Lawrence's ability to describe landscape. Throughout the book there runs the subsidiary theme of Cyril's love for the countryside round Nethermere and of his profound regret and sense of loss at having to leave it. Lawrence's evocative power is compelling. His success in these descriptions seems to depend on a fine power of accurate observation coupled with a subtle use of imagery and rhythmic variation in his prose.

> The magnificent promise of spring was broken before the May-blossom was fully out. All through the beloved month the wind rushed in upon us from the north and north-east, bringing the rain fierce and heavy. The tender-budded trees shuddered and moaned; when the wind was dry, the young leaves flapped limp. The grass and corn grew lush, but the light of the dandelions was quite extinguished, and it seemed that only a long time back had we made merry before the broad glare of these flowers. The bluebells lingered and lingered; they fringed the fields for weeks like purple fringe of mourning. The pink campions came out only to hang heavy with rain; hawthorn buds remained

(36) The White Peacock, p.147
(37) Ibid. p.204

> tight and hard as pearls, shrinking into the brilliant green foliage; the forget-me-nots, the poor pleiades of the wood, were ragged weeds. Often at the end of the day, the sky opened and stately clouds hung over the horizon infinitely far away, glowing, through the yellow distance, with an amber lustre. They never came any nearer, always they remained far off, looking calmly and majestically over the shivering earth, then saddened, fearing their radiance might be dimmed, they drew away, and sank out of sight. (28)

Lawrence's precise observation and imagery are at once apparent in this passage:- "when the wind was dry, the young leaves flapped limp," the bluebells like "purple fringe of mourning", and hawthorn buds "tight and hard as pearls, shrinking into the brilliant green foliage." It is also noticeable how, in the first half of the passage, the drum-like rhythm of short-syllabled words and quick sentences is used to suggest the short sharp thuds of the rain. Then, towards the end of the passage, the rhythm changes and the longer, slowly-moving sentences suggest the lingering movement of the clouds. Lawrence is very good at description of stately sailing clouds. On another occasion he uses long "o" sounds and long smooth phrases to image such movement:

> Across the infinite skies of March great rounded masses of cloud had sailed stately all day, domed with a white radiance, softened with faint, fleeting shadows as if companies of angels were gently sweeping past; adorned with resting, silken shadows like those of a full white breast. All day the clouds had moved on to their vast destination, and I had clung to the earth yearning and impatient. (29)

When such rhythmic effects are used together with an unusual and sustained image - as the image of the woman in the following passage - Lawrence's prose is perhaps at its best:

> I was born in September, and love it best of all the months. There is no heat, no hurry, no thirst and weariness in corn harvest as there is in the hay. If the season is late, as is usual with us, then mid-September sees the corn still standing in stook. The mornings come slowly. The earth is like a woman married and fading; she does not leap up with a laugh for the first fresh kiss

(28) The White Peacock, p.286
(29) Ibid. p.171

> of dawn, but slowly, quietly, unexpectantly lies watching the waking of each new day. The blue mist, like memory in the eyes of a neglected wife, never goes from the wooded hill and only at noon creeps from the near hedges. There is no bird to put a song in the throat of morning; only the crow's voice speaks during the day. Perhaps there is the regular breathing hush of the scythe - even the fretful jar of the mowing machine. But next day, in the morning, all is still again. The lying corn is wet, and when you have bound it, and lift the heavy sheaf to make the stook, the tresses of oats wreathe round each other and droop mournfully. (30)

At times Lawrence turns his powers of observation to great comic effect as in the following enchanting description of the "eleven young pigs". He seems to possess the knack of thoroughly "understanding" the animals he is describing, a knack which one senses, too, in many of his animal poems:

> During Leslie's illness I strolled down to the mill one Saturday evening. I met George tramping across the yard with a couple of buckets of swill, and eleven young pigs rushing squealing about his legs, shrieking in an agony of suspense. He poured the stuff into a trough with luscious gurgle, and instantly ten noses were dipped in and ten little mouths began to slobber. Though there was plenty of room for ten, yet they shouldered and shoved and struggled to capture a larger space and many little trotters dabbled and spilled the stuff, and the ten sucking, clapping snouts twitched fiercely, and twenty little eyes glared askance, like so many points of wrath. They gave uneasy, gasping grunts in their haste. The unhappy eleventh rushed from point to point trying to push in his snout, but for his pains he got rough squeezing and sharp grabs on his ears. Then he lifted up his face and screamed screams of grief and wrath unto the evening sky.
>
> But the ten little gluttons only twitched their ears to make sure there was no danger in the noise, and they sucked harder, with much spilling and slobbing. George laughed like a sardonic Jove, but at last he gave ear and kicked the ten gluttons from the trough, and allowed the residue to the eleventh. This one, poor wretch, almost wept with relief as he sucked and swallowed in sobs, casting his little eyes apprehensively upwards, though he did not lift his nose from the trough, as he heard the vindictive shrieks of ten little fiends kept at bay by George. The solitary feeder, shivering with apprehension, rubbed the wood bare with his snout, then, turning up to heaven his eyes of gratitude, he reluctantly left the trough. I expected to see the ten fall upon him and devour him, but they did not; they rushed upon the empty trough, and rubbed the wood still drier, shrieking with misery. (31)

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(30) The White Peacock, p.84
(31) Ibid. pp.260-61

Lawrence's humour here is so delightful that one shrinks from analysis, but it is instructive to notice how effortlessly it springs from the felicitous incongruity of the language used to describe the objective incident. "The unhappy eleventh" "screams screams of grief and wrath unto the evening sky", "weeps with relief" and "turns up to heaven his eyes of gratitude"; while the ten little pigs (notice how the word "little" is quietly insisted on) shriek in an "agony of suspense" or "with misery" and assume, under Lawrence's expert hand, a comic vastness as they "shoulder and shove and struggle to capture a large space", "twitch fiercely", "glare askance" and shriek "vindictively", or are "kept at bay" by George.

There is a great deal of ready humour in this book. One thinks, for instance, of Annable's reply to Leslie when he catches Leslie's party trespassing:

> "Can't you use your eyes, you fool", replied Leslie, standing up and helping Lettie with her furs. "At any rate you can see there are ladies here."
>
> "Very sorry, sir! You can't tell a lady from a woman at this distance at dusk..." (32)

or of this scene in the bar parlour of the Ram Inn:

> She brought us glasses of whisky, and moved about supplying the men, who chaffed with her honestly and good-naturedly. Then she went out, but we remained in our corner. The men talked on the most peculiar subjects: there was a bitter discussion as to whether London is or is not a seaport - the matter was thrashed out with heat; then an embryo artist set the room ablaze by declaring there were only three colours, red, yellow and blue, and the rest were not colours, they were mixtures; this amounted almost to atheism, and one man asked the artist to dare to declare that his brown breeches were not a colour, which the artist did, and almost had to fight for it; next they came to strength, and George won a bet of five shillings by lifting a piano; then they settled down, and talked sex, 'sotto voce', one man giving startling accounts of Japanese and Chinese prostitutes in Liverpool. (33)

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(32) The White Peacock, p.176
(33) Ibid. p.265

But Lawrence's style in this book is not consistently so flexible and expressive. In the opening pages, particularly, there is a careless use of needlessly trite and wordy phrases:- "My mother vouchsafed no reply", (34) and "The child's.....hair was tossed....beneath her sailor hat. She flung aside this article of her attire." (35) Or at times it is extravagantly overcharged, as when Lettie says, "If we move the blood rises in our heel-prints." (36) Apart from occasional lapses such as these, however, the book suffers from the more serious defect of stilted dialogue when Lawrence attempts to deal with his upper middle class characters. When Lawrence wrote The White Peacock he had not yet "mixed in society" and pages and pages of heavy and artificial dialogue witness his inexperience. The following is a typical example:

> "Ain't it flippin 'ot?" drawled Cresswell, who had just taken his M.A. degree in classics: "This bloomin'stuff's dry enough - come an' flop on it."
>
> .....
>
> Cresswell twisted his clean-cut mouth in a little smile, saying:
>
> "Lord, a giddy little pastoral - fit for old Theocritus, ain't it, Miss Denys?"
>
> "Why do you talk to me about those classic people - I daren't even say their names. What would he say about us?"
>
> He laughed winking his blue eyes:
>
> "He'd make old Daphnis there", - pointing to Leslie - "sing a match with me, Damoetas - contesting the merits of our various shepherdesses - begin Daphnis, sing up for Amaryllis, I mean Nais, damn 'em, they were for ever getting mixed up with their nymphs."
>
> "I say, Mr. Cresswell, your language! Consider whom you're damning", said Miss Denys, leaning over and tapping his head with her silk glove.
>
> "You say any giddy thing in a pastoral", he replied..... "Strike up, Daphnis, something about honey or white cheese - or else the early apples that'll be ripe in a week's time."
>
> "I'm sure the apples you showed me are ever so little and green", interrupted Miss Denys; "they will never be ripe in a week - ugh, sour!"

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(34) The White Peacock, p.21
(35) Ibid. p.16
(36) Ibid. p.28

He smiled up at her in his whimsical way.

"Hear that, Tempest - 'Ugh, sour!' - not rich! Oh, love us, haven't you got a start yet? - isn't there aught to sing about, you blunt-faced kid?" (37)

Lawrence, however, was quick to learn and we do not find him making the same mistake in his later work. Even though he satirises the fashionable set in Aaron's Rod or Women in Love their talk is fresh and scintillating. And already in The White Peacock he shows mastery in handling dialect and folk dialogue. It is Annable's wife speaking:

"An' I niver thought as 'ow it were aught but a snared 'un; as if I should set 'im on to thieve their old doe; an' tough it was an' all; and 'im a thief, and me called all the names they could lay their tongues to; an' then in my bit of a pantry, takin' the very pots out; that stewpot as I brought all the way from Nottingham, an' I've 'ad it afore our Minnie wor born -" (38)

In this book Lawrence, both in his strength and weakness in handling of dialogue, is reminiscent of Hardy, who also inclines to a brilliant folk dialogue and stilted "social" talk. The similarity extends further, and one is strongly reminded of Hardy when Lawrence touches on country superstitions - those associated with the crow and with ghosts, for instance - or when he deals with dour rustics such as the "Parrot". And with Lawrence as with Hardy the countryside against which the tale is unfolded serves not as a background but as a vital presence. Lawrence does not seem to have been influenced by Hardy alone, for The White Peacock contains other echoes from the literature of the past. Though there is a great difference in tone between this book and Wuthering Heights, the Lettie-George-Leslie triangle reminds us sufficiently strongly of Cathy, Heathcliff and Edgar to bring the latter book to mind and, at times, Lettie resembles Cathy in her wildness and in the identification of herself with wild free creatures (see p.26 above). Young Sam,

(37) The White Peacock, pp.297-98
(38) Ibid. p.243

too, often recalls Jo of Bleak House and, though Lawrence cannot compare with Dickens in this respect, the portrayal of Alice seems to be an attempt at bluff caricature in the Dickens manner.

It is interesting to note the absence of such echoes in Lawrence's subsequent work as his own unique vision developed. It is as if he had thrown all his varied impressions into the making of this first novel without fully knowing how to organise them. For that reason the book has only a qualified success, but it must be regarded as an important book in a study of Lawrence - not alone for the undoubted talent which it reveals but because, as Mr. West says, "No new themes are to be found in the novels, they are all concerned with restating the themes of The White Peacock." (39) And it is this restatement, modified by Lawrence's further experience in the world of men and of letters, that is of absorbing interest.

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(39) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.111

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(39) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.111

III

THE TRESPASSER

The Trespasser, written between the impetuous White Peacock and the mature Sons and Lovers, is a slight work, which neither fulfils the promise of the first novel nor anticipates the achievement of the third. Its theme is a variation on that of The White Peacock, but in this book Lawrence's unsure handling of his theme is not offset, as it is in his first work, by a breadth of vision and a warm humanity.

Perhaps the most serious defect of the novel is the one-sidedness of Lawrence's view. All the characters are seen in relation to one, or at most, two situations; and this failure to portray anyone in sufficient detail vitally affects the significance of the experiences described.

Both Helena and Siegmund are seen, primarily, only in relation to one another in a specific love situation. Sexual conflict is the crucial characteristic of their relationship and Lawrence's treatment of it is the distinguishing feature of the book. His direct apprehension of a physical relationship is still unique, and even in a book which is a failure this directness singles out his work:

> He lay with his arms strong around her. Then she heard the beating of his heart, like the muffled sound of salutes, she thought. It gave her the same thrill of dread and excitement, mingled with a sense of triumph. Siegmund had changed again, his mood was gone, so that he was no longer wandering in a night of thoughts, but had become different, incomprehensible to her. She had no idea what she thought or felt. All she knew was that he was strong, and was knocking urgently with his heart on her breast, like a man who wanted something and who dreaded to be sent away. How he came to be so concentratedly urgent she could not understand.

> It seemed an unreasonable, an incomprehensible *obsession to her.* Yet *she was glad,* and she smiled in her heart, feeling triumphant and restored! Yet again, dimly, she wondered where was the Siegmund of ten minutes ago, and her heart lifted slightly with yearning, to sink with a dismay. This Siegmund was so incomprehensible. Then again, when *he raised his head and found her* mouth, his lips filled her with a hot flush like wine, a sweet, flaming flush of her whole body, most exquisite, as if she were nothing but a soft rosy flame of fire against him for a moment or two. That, she decided, was supreme, transcendental. (1)

The following passage indicates Lawrence's ability to capture the actual feel of physical sensation - how powerful, for instance, is the feel of Siegmund's moustache and mouth:

> Then, tucking her head in his breast, hiding her face, she timidly slid her hands along his sides, pressing softly, to find the contours of his figure. Softly her hands crept over the silky back of his waistcoat, under his coats, and as they stirred, his blood flushed up, and up again, with fire, till all Siegmund was hot blood, and his breast was one great ache.
>
> He crushed her to him - crushed her in upon the ache of his chest. His muscles set hard and unyielding; at that moment he was a tense, vivid body of flesh, without a mind; his blood, alive and conscious, running towards her. He remained perfectly still, locked about Helena, conscious of nothing.
>
> She was hurt and crushed, but it was pain delicious to her. It was marvellous to her how strong he was, to keep up that grip of her like steel. She swooned in a kind of intense bliss. At length she found herself released, taking a great breath, while Siegmund was moving his mouth over her throat, something like a dog snuffing her, but with his lips. Her heart leaped away in revulsion. His moustache thrilled her strangely. His lips, brushing and pressing her throat beneath the ear, and his warm breath flying rhythmically upon her, made her vibrate through all her body. Like a violin under the bow, she thrilled beneath his mouth, and shuddered from his moustache. Her heart was like fire in her breast. (2)

Yet Helena and Siegmund *have little existence* apart from this physical relationship. Before Helena is actually introduced (if I may ignore the opening chapter for a moment) we

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(1) The Trespasser, p.90
(2) Ibid. p.34

expectantly await a complex, if impalpable, character. We have come to know the complex emotions induced in Lawrence by the moon and, as Siegmund travels to meet Helena, he constantly connects her in his thoughts with the moon, until finally the identification is explicit:

> Outside the world lay in a glamorous pallor, casting shadows that made the farm, the trees, the bulks of villas, look like live creatures. The same pallor went through all the night, glistening on Helena as she lay curled up asleep at the core of the glamour, like the moon; on the sea rocking backwards and forwards till it rocked her island as she slept. She was so calm and full of her own assurance. It was a great rest to be with her. With her, nothing mattered but love and the beauty of things. He felt parched and starving. She had rest and love, like water and manna for him. She was so strong in her self-possession, in her love of beautiful things and of dreams. (3)

But Lawrence fails to develop the character of Helena in any other respect than that of a lover. The other aspects of her character which he does touch upon only image her attitude towards sex. Her sentimental romantic fantasy, ("'That yellow flower hadn't time to be brushed and combed by the fairies before dawn came. It is towzled....' so she thought to herself. The pink convolvuli were fairy horns or telephones from the day fairies to the night fairies.") (4) her dislike of extremes, ("'It is quite warm enough here,' she said, nestling in to him. 'Yes,' [says Siegmund] 'but the sting is missing. I like to feel the warmth biting in.' 'No, I do not. To be cosy is enough.'") (5) her shrinking from bare physical contact ("He would tease the expectant anemones, causing them to close suddenly over his finger. But Helena liked to watch without touching things.") (6) - these aspects, though unobtrusively introduced into the course of the narrative, do but emphasise her romantic

(3) The Trespasser, p.17
(4) Ibid. p.51
(5) Ibid. p.57
(6) Ibid. p.80

illusions about the nature of love and her revulsion from its physical consummation. In contrast to Cyril (of The White Peacock) whom Mr. West describes as a "disembodied presence", (7) Helena is all too much a fixed body and when, towards the end of the book, Siegmund suddenly realises "that he knew nothing of her life, her real inner life. She was a book written in characters unintelligible to him and to everybody," (8) the reader shares his feeling of dissatisfaction.

The character of Siegmund is not developed in any greater detail. Apart from his passion as a lover the only other characteristic which Lawrence stresses is his hesitancy, his inability to force an issue. Then the indication is either too obvious - as Siegmund lies passively in the sun on their last day together waiting for Helena to decide whether they should return or not - or quite explicit: "Like a man tangled up in a rope, he was not strong enough to free himself. He could not break with Helena and return to a degrading life at home; he could not leave his children and go to Helena." (9) And these direct indications in the portrayal of a character do not make the same forceful impression on a reader as those revealed naturally in contemplation of the character in action. The result is that Siegmund is not a convincing figure - we do not know enough about him for him to be so - and, as will be shown, too much significance is attached to his indecisiveness.

Lawrence's handling of the other characters in the book is in the same static simplified manner. Louisa remains throughout painfully affectionate to Helena, and Byrne is, as constantly, Helena's sympathetic understanding suitor. Despite

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(7) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.107
(8) The Trespasser, p.174
(9) Ibid. p.267

the promise of a revealing detail ("Presently Mrs. Verden cleared the supper table, sweeping together a few crumbs from the floor in the place where Helena had sat, carefully putting her pieces of broken bread under the loaf to keep moist.") (10) Mr. and Mrs. Verden are fleetingly shown only in relation to Helena's grief, while Siegmund's family is fixed in an attitude of hostility towards him - except for the brief caricature of their life with lodgers after his death.

The Trespasser is marred not only by Lawrence's unsatisfactory treatment of character but also by his inability to maintain purposive direction in the book. It has been said that the theme of this novel is a variation on that of The White Peacock and, in so far as Lawrence deals here with the harmful consequences which those who are untrue to their physical being bring down upon themselves, he again tackles the problem which held his attention in his first book. But in The Trespasser he deals with an additional and complicating factor - that of sexual conflict in the relationship between the male and female protagonists. Lettie and George were untrue to themselves but Lawrence implies that their physical relationship would have been an ideal one. The physical relationship between Helena and Siegmund is obviously not ideal, and it is in the working out of their relationship that Lawrence falters badly.

Helena would seem to be an immediate target for attack by Lawrence. In a love situation with a man she is prevented by moral considerations and specious romantic fancies from willingly entering into the natural physical consummation of their love, and in this way she is untrue to her physical self. The nature of her moral objection is not very clear, but when it is remembered that she is not married to Siegmund, Lawrence's

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(10) The Trespasser, p.268

one passing reference to it ("But Helena was, if it is not to debase the word, virtuous: an inconsistent virtue, cruel and ugly for Siegmund.") (11) indicates this aspect of her conflict and Lawrence's opposition to her attitude. Her romanticism, which seeks to ignore physical realities, is clear enough: "She held both his hands firm, pressing them in appeal for her dream love. He glanced at her wistfully, then turned away. She waited for him. She wanted his caresses and tenderness. He would not look at her." (12) Helena "belonged to that class of 'dreaming women' with whom passion exhausts itself at the mouth." (13) When Helena is finally brought up against the physical reality it is inevitable that she should experience a profound sense of shock: "Helena could not keep still; her body was full of strange sensations, of involuntary recoil from shock," (14) and "She felt it destroyed her. Her soul seemed blasted." (15)

Helena's attitude eventually leads to a break in their relationship. In a memorable scene she is feeling dispirited, calls for an idealised Siegmund, suddenly becomes conscious instead of "that animal in him she feared and hated" and in a wild gesture of repulsion pushes him desperately away from her. (16) This break is crucial. Helena bitterly regrets her action, but Siegmund grasps its significance and is unable to forget it.

Up to this point Lawrence's analysis and presentation of the conflict is good, but his subsequent handling of Helena is disappointing. The blame for the break in the relationship is laid squarely on Helena's false idealism, yet the retribution

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(11) The Trespasser, p.19
(12) Ibid. p.38
(13) Ibid. p.35
(14) Ibid. p.43
(15) Ibid. p.68
(16) Ibid. pp.127-131

which falls on her, and which Lawrence (as in The White Peacock) would have us believe is inevitable, is not at all clearly indicated. Siegmund finally commits suicide and Helena's unhappiness flows from this event - but along a very uneven course. She is grief-stricken at the death of her lover but Lawrence implies that she also laments her interference in Siegmund's married life. (Notice the odd tone and defensive defiance of her reply to Byrne's quip: "'More sorrow over one kitten brought to destruction than over all the sufferings of men.' 'For the latter, you see,' she replied, 'I am not responsible.'") (17) It is here that we are faced with a contradiction, for (as I hop to show later) in her relationship with Siegmund Lawrence seems all along to have morally exonerated Helena as far as Siegmund's family is concerned. In this way Helena is made to feel sorrow at what we have been urged to believe was inherently right in their relationship, and to show scant consciousness of what we have been led to believe was wrong. Moreover, although Lawrence describes well the trance-like effect induced in Helena by news of Siegmund's death, she tends, afterwards, to remain wooden in her grief, caught in a fixed attitude of sorrowful withdrawal from the world. It is significant that her initial sense of shock and grief, summed up in a phrase, is inexpressive: "'That was what I got,' she said, months afterwards; 'and it was like a brick, it was like a brick.'" (18) Lawrence's final touch in his treatment of Helena is skilful, but unfortunately it comes too late to focus the somewhat distorted view we have of her. Shrinking from the reality, she does not, as she had threatened to do, follow the course taken by Siegmund, but enters into a new relationship with Byrne which seems likely to be as unsatisfactory as that with Siegmund. Lawrence subtly suggests this by recalling a gesture familiar in her relationship with Siegmund:

(17) The Trespasser, p.285
(18) Ibid. p.265

> Helena put her arms round [Byrne] under his coat. She was cold. He felt a hot wave of joy suffuse him. Almost immediately she released him, and took off her hat. (19)

Lawrence is even more uncertain in his treatment of Siegmund. Siegmund is made to commit suicide and yet we are not wholly convinced of the likelihood of this important event. Lawrence tries desperately hard to convince us. In the first place he resorts to the device of a flash-back opening to the book. In the first chapter there are numerous references to what we gather to have been Siegmund's tragic death and so, from the outset, we are forced to prepare ourselves for some such eventuality. Then, during Siegmund's stay on the island, Lawrence diligently continues his work of preparation. There are some ten definite references to Siegmund's contemplation of suicide and death, varying from his inclination to walk over the edge of a cliff on one occasion to his sense of impending doom on others. (20) As a final preparation Siegmund is made to suffer from sunstroke, and it must be admitted that Lawrence, with his strong power of evoking physical sensation, is effective here:

> Siegmund lay still, with his eyes closed, enduring the exquisite torture of the trickling of drops of sweat. First it would be one gathering and running its irregular, hesitating way into the hollow of his neck. His every nerve thrilled to it, yet he felt he could not move more than to stiffen his throat slightly. While yet the nerves in the track of this drop were quivering, raw with sensitiveness, another drop would start from off the side of his chest, and trickle downwards among the little muscles of his side, to drip on to the bed. It was like the running of a spider over his sensitive, moveless body. Why he did not wipe himself he did not know. He lay still and endured this horrible tickling, which seemed to bite deep into him, rather than make the effort to move, which he loathed to do. The drops ran off his forehead down his temples. Those he did not mind: he was blunt there.

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(19) The Trespasser, pp.291-92

(20) Ibid. pp. 30, 61, 63-4, 101, 133, 138, 140, 146, 173.

> But they started again, in tiny, vicious spurts, down the sides of his chest, from under his armpits, down the inner sides of his thighs, till he seemed to have a myriad quivering tracks of a myriad running insects over his hot, wet, highly-sensitized body. His nerves were trembling one and all, with outrage and vivid suspense. It became unbearable. He felt that, if he endured it another moment he would cry out, or suffocate and burst. (21)

Then, fatally, Lawrence tries to justify Siegmund's suicide philosophically:

> "I know the heart of life is kind," said Siegmund, "because I feel it. Otherwise I would live in defiance. But Life is greater than me or anybody. We suffer, and we don't know why, often. Life doesn't explain. But I can keep faith in it, as a dog has faith in his master. After all, life is as kind to me as I am to my dog. I have, proportionally, as much zest. And my purpose towards my dog is good. I need not despair of life." (22)

Yet Siegmund's act remains palpably one of despair and non-defiance, hardly justified by his conception of the indifference of the forces at work in life.

The result is that we do not regard Siegmund's suicide as inevitable. The primary cause of this is that Siegmund is so insubstantial a figure. Ten different men would react differently in a similar situation, and we do not know enough about Siegmund, or of his relationship with his family, adequately to guage his reaction. We need to know more about his previous relationship with his wife and children to assess the chances of a reconciliation. As it is, the relationship is static: the view of his family is too one-sided and the finality of the breach ("I am a family criminal. Beatrice might come round, but the children's insolent judgment is too much.") (23) is not wholly clear. Altogether, therefore, the weight of Siegmund's suicide lies too heavily on the string of his characteristic inability to force an issue.

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(21) The Trespasser, pp.242-43
(22) Ibid. p.249
(23) Ibid. p.203

It is significant that Lawrence's language falters in his description of the event. Note the vagueness or hackneyed dullness of some of the key phrases underlined in the following passage:

> He was surprised to hear the ordinary cool tone of his own voice, for he was shuddering uncontrollably, and was almost sobbing. In a shaking, bewildered, disordered condition he set about fulfilling his purpose. He was hardly conscious of anything he did; try as he would, he could not keep his hands steady in the violent spasms of shuddering, nor could he call his mind to think. He was one shuddering turmoil. Yet he performed his purpose methodically and exactly. In every particular he was thorough, as if he were the servant of some stern will. It was a mesmeric performance in which the agent trembled with convulsive sickness. (24)

And then the finding of Siegmund's body is described in the following bathetic terms:

> "Hie, hie!" he suddenly cried in terror, and he drew back.
>
> Beatrice was opening her mouth to scream, when the window-cleaner exclaimed weakly, as if dubious:
>
> "I believe 'e's 'anged 'imself from the door-'ooks!"
> "No!" cried Beatrice. "No, no, no!"
> "I believe 'e 'as!" repeated the man.
> "Go in and see if he's dead!" cried Beatrice.
> The man remained in the doorway, peering fixedly.
> "I believe he is," he said doubtfully.
> "No - go and see!" screamed Beatrice. (25)

Yet, even were we to believe in Siegmund's suicide, the thematic implications of this act are mixed. Pursuing his theme, Lawrence indicates that Siegmund pays with his life for not being true to himself, for not having the courage to break with his family and go off with Helena. And all the while we are conscious he would be no more true to himself by doing so. He is not drawn compulsively to Helena - the physical obstruction to their happiness is too great for that, the break in their relationship too crucial. And Siegmund himself is fully aware of this:

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(24) The Trespasser, p.251
(25) Ibid. p.256

> ... the sense of humiliation, which he had got from her the day before, and which had fixed itself, bled him secretly, like a wound. This haemorrhage of self-esteem tortured him to the end.
>
> Helena had rejected him. She gave herself to her fancies only. For some time she had confused Siegmund with her god. Yesterday she had cried to her ideal lover, and found only Siegmund. It was the spear in the side of his tortured self-respect. (26)
>
> Helena had rejected him. In his heart he felt that in this love affair also he had been a failure. No matter how he contradicted himself and said it was absurd to imagine he was a failure as Helena's lover, yet he felt a physical sensation of defeat, a kind of knot in his breast which reason nor dialectics, nor circumstance, not even Helena, could untie. He had failed as lover to Helena. (27)

Lawrence's lack of direction leads the reader to view his attitude to the moral issues raised uncertainly. If the book were a Victorian novel the moral emphasis would be unmistakable - Siegmund would be made to expiate his unfaithfulness by killing himself and the moral code would be upheld. Yet, though Lawrence's attitude is obviously not conventional, it is curiously mixed. At first it seems unmoral: "I feel as if it were right - you and me, Helena - so, even righteous. It is so, isn't it? And the sea and everything, they all seem with us. Do you think so?" (28) But Lawrence is unable to sustain this attitude and both Helena and Siegmund, nagged at by doubt, are forced to consider the possible immorality of their relationship:

> "But you do continue to try so hard to justify yourself, as if you felt you needed justification," [said Helena].
>
> He laughed bitterly.
>
> "I tell you - a little thing like this [i.e. Mrs. Curtiss' expression of disapproval] - it remains tied tight round something inside me, reminding me for hours - well, what everybody else's opinion of me is."
>
> Helena laughed rather plaintively.
>
> "I thought you were so sure we were right," she said.
>
> He winced again.
>
> "In myself I am. But in the eyes of the world -."
>
> "If you feel so in yourself, is not that enough?" she said brutally. (29)

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(26) The Trespasser, pp.157-8
(27) Ibid. p.160
(28) Ibid. p.75
(29) Ibid. p.113

Helena's last question, however, is never really answered, except for an indication that an answer might well be in the negative: "Being a moralist rather than an artist, coming of fervent Wesleyan stock, she began to scourge herself. She had done wrong again." (30) And yet it is difficult to accept such a conclusion, for Lawrence has done enough in his quietly natural treatment of the relationship between Helena and Siegmund to make us feel that it is right, and to make us feel with him when he later lamented that his "beautiful Trespasser" had been called a "reprehensible jaunt" by the Nottingham Guardian. (31) Nevertheless doubts are raised and because the judgment which Lawrence passes on Siegmund, while not Victorian, is not clearly formed, left suspended between the conventional moral view and Le ore startling attitude.

A curious feature of this book is that Law 's use of symbolism is ineffectual in comparison with his direct treatment of the corresponding section in the novel, and is most effective where his direct handling of his subject is bad. Thus Lawrence's treatment of the physical relationship between Helena and Siegmund is fine, but one senses that he is straining after effect in his explicit symbolic expression of this relationship:

> "Surely", he said to himself, "it is like Helena;" and he laid his hands again on the warm body of the shore, let them wander, discovering, gathering all the warmth, the softness, the strange wonder of smooth warm pebbles, then shrinking from the deep weight of cold his hand encountered as he burrowed under the surface wrist-deep. In the end he found the cold mystery of the deep sand also thrilling. He pushed in his hands again and deeper, enjoying the almost hurt of the dark, heavy coldness. For the sun and the white flower of the bay were breathing and kissing him dry, were holding him in their warm concave, like a bee in a flower, like himself on the bosom of Helena, and flowing like the warmth of her breath in his hair came the sunshine, breathing near and lovingly: yet, under all, was this deep mass of cold, that the softness and warmth merely floated upon. (32)

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(30) The Trespasser, p.127
(31) Letter to Edward Garnett, 1912, - The Letters of D.H.Lawrence p.43
(32) The Trespasser, p.71

Yet, while his direct handling of the outcome of the Helena-Siegmund relationship is unsure, Lawrence's *symbolism* reveals his intuitive understanding of the relationship:

> [The moon] stood at last, whole and calm, before him; then the night took up this drinking-cup of fiery gold, lifting it with majestic movement overhead, letting stream forth the wonderful unwasted liquor of gold over the sea - a libation.
>
> Siegmund looked at the shaking flood of gold and paling gold spread wider as the night upraised the blanching crystal, poured out further and further the immense libation from the whitening cup, till at last the moon looked frail and empty.
>
> And there, exhaustless in the night, the white light shook on the floor of the sea. He wondered how it would be gathered up. "I gather it up into myself," he said. And the stars and the cliffs and a few trees were watching too. "If I have spilled my life," he thought, "the unfamiliar eyes of the land and sky will gather it up again."
>
> Turning to Helena, he found her face white and shining as the empty moon. (33)

Siegmund's last thought, coupled with the identification of Helena with the "empty moon" (which has let its richness stream forth, leaving it white and empty) leads us to realise that, if both have perhaps "spilled their lives" in the relationship, neither has been particularly enriched as a result.

The power with which Lawrence's writing is infused when he describes the moon is constantly noticeable. In yet another passage the moon is used symbolically to suggest Siegmund's inability to face up to the situation with which he is confronted (as the moon is unable to face the coming of the sun) and to indicate his only alternative - that of death (as the moon "dies" and leaves the morning sky). Such is the power of this passage that it more nearly convinces us of the likelihood of Siegmund's suicide than Lawrence's elaborate preparation for, and philosophical justification of, this event. Siegmund is watching the dawn shortly before he commits suicide:

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(33) The Trespasser, pp.140-41

> The day was pushing aside the boughs of darkness, hunting. The poor moon would be caught when the net was flung. Siegmund went out on the balcony to look at it. There it was, like a poor white mouse, a half-moon, crouching on the mound of its course. It would run nimbly over to the western slope, then it would be caught in the net, and the sun would laugh, like a great yellow cat, as it stalked behind playing with its prey, flashing out its bright paws. The moon, before making its last run, lay crouched, palpitating. The sun crept forth, laughing to itself as it saw its prey could not escape. The lightning, however, leaped low off the nest like a bird decided to go, and flew away. Siegmund no longer saw it opening and shutting its wings in hesitation amid the disturbance of the dawn. Instead there came a flush, the white lightning gone. The brief pink butterflies of sunrise and sunset rose up from the mown fields of darkness, and fluttered low in a cloud. Even in the west, they flew in a narrow rosy swarm. They separated, thinned, rising higher. Some, flying up, became golden. Some flew rosy gold across the moon, the mouse-moon motionless with fear. Soon the pink butterflies had gone, leaving a scarlet stretch like a field of poppies in the fens. As a wind, the light of day blew in from the east, puff after puff filling with whiteness the space which had been the night. Siegmund sat watching the last morning blowing in across the mown darkness, till the whole field of the world was exposed, till the moon was like a dead mouse which floats on water. (34)

This passage is representative of Lawrence's imagery. Other exact images come readily to mind: "The dark-faced pansies, in a little crowd, seemed gaily winking a golden eye at her." (35) "Quick to flag, she was easy to revive, like a white pansy flung into water." (36) "She looked . . in, and saw the waves like a line of children racing hand in hand, the sunlight pursuing, catching hold of them from behind, as they ran wildly till they fell, caught, with the sunshine dancing upon them like a white dog." (37) In fact, Lawrence's greatest achievement in this book is his description of the Isle of Wight: the sea, the cliffs and sky, the beach and caves and flowering countryside. And once again, as was noticed in The White Peacock, his rhythm expresses the sense - suggesting, in the following passage, for example, the regular and powerful drumming of breaking waves by short, abrupt sentences and sharp punctuation:

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(34) The Trespasser, pp.244-45
(35) Ibid. p. 51
(36) Ibid. p. 76
(37) Ibid. p.149

> Then he saw there was a ledge or platform at the base of the cliff, and it was against this the waves broke. They climbed the side of this ridge, hurried round to the front. There the wind caught them, wet and furious; the water raged below. Between the two Helena shrank, wilted. She took hold of Siegmund. The great, brutal water flung itself at the rock, then drew back for another heavy spring. Fume and spray were spun on the wind like smoke. The roaring thud of the waves reminded Helena of a beating heart. She clung closer to him, as her hair was blown out damp, and her white dress flapped in the wet wind. Always, against the rock, came the slow thud of the waves, like a great heart beating under the breast. There was something brutal about it that she could not bear. She had no weapon against brute force. (38)

Apart from the occasions already mentioned when Lawrence's writing deteriorates, however, the way in which the mysterious Hampson is made to talk is reminiscent of the unrealistic dialogue of portions of The White Peacock. A fair sample of his supposedly casual speech contains, for instance, the following elaborately worked out electricity image:

> "The best sort of women - the most interesting - are the worst for us.... By instinct they aim at suppressing the gross and animal in us. Then they are supersensitive - refined a bit beyond humanity. We, who are as little gross as need be, become their instruments. Life is grounded in them, like electricity in the earth; and we take from them their unrealized life, turn it into light or warmth or power for them. The ordinary woman is, alone, a great potential force, an accumulator, if you like, charged from the source of life. In us her force becomes evident." (39)

Indeed the Hampson interlude, entirely irrelevant and hardly successful as an intended commentary on the action, spoils the construction of the book - which, if simple and perhaps somewhat repetitive, is otherwise compact.

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(38) The Trespasser, p.62
(39) Ibid. pp.107-108

IV

SONS AND LOVERS

In November, 1912, Lawrence wrote to Edward Garnett:

> Your letter has just come. I hasten to tell you I sent the MS. of the Paul Morel novel to Duckworth registered, yesterday. And I want to defend it, quick. I wrote it again, pruning it and shaping it and filling it in. I tell you it has got form - form; haven't I made it patiently, out of sweat as well as blood? It follows this idea: a woman of character and refinement goes into the lower class, and has no satisfaction in her own life. She has had a passion for her husband, so the children are born of passion, and have heaps of vitality. But as her sons grow up she selects them as lovers - first the eldest, then the second. These sons are urged into life by their reciprocal love of their mother - urged on and on. But when they come to manhood, they can't love, because their mother is the strongest power in their lives, and holds them. It's rather like Goethe and his mother and Frau von Stein and Christiana.- As soon as the young men come into contact with women, there's a split. William gives his sex to a fribble, and his mother holds his soul. But the split kills him, because he doesn't know where he is. The next son gets a woman who fights for his soul - fights his mother. The son loves the mother - all the sons hate and are jealous of the father. The battle goes on between the mother and the girl, with the son as object. The mother gradually proves stronger, because of the tie of blood. The son decides to leave his soul in his mother's hands, and, like his elder brother, go for passion. He gets passion. Then the split begins to tell again. But, almost unconsciously, the mother realises what is the matter, and begins to die. The son casts off his mistress, attends to his mother dying. He is left in the end naked of everything, with the drift towards death.
>
> It is a great tragedy, and I tell you I have written a great book. It's the tragedy of thousands of young men in England - it may even be Bunny's tragedy. I think it was Ruskin's, and men like him. - Now tell me if I haven't worked out my theme, like life, but always my theme. Read my novel. It's a great novel. If you can't see the development - which is slow, like growth - I can. (1)

It is not often, when we read a great novel, that we are fortunate enough to be presented with so explicit a statement of the author's purpose in writing the book; fortunate, because we are the more easily able to estimate his achievement in relation to

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(1) Letters, pp.76-7

his declared intention. And the achievement of Sons and Lovers is markedly greater than that of the first two novels, for in this book there are no traces of uncertainty and the themes of both the earlier novels are harmoniously integrated into a convincing whole.

> She had, however, now determined to abandon the charge of herself to serve her children. When the children grew up, either they would unconsciously fling her away, back upon herself again in bitterness and loneliness, or they would tenderly cherish her, chafing at her love-bonds occasionally.

The above passage is a description not of Mrs. Morel, but of Lettie, (2) and when it is remembered that George deteriorates through taking to drink, it can be seen to what extent Sons and Lovers is a restatement of the theme of Lawrence's first novel. Yet what a difference there is in the restatement! No longer are we confronted with Lawrence's hesitant treatment of Lettie after her marriage, with his failure to imagine the full implications of her attitude (revealed even in the tentative tone of the "chafing at her love-bonds occasionally" in the passage quoted); with his inability to face directly George's bestiality. Instead, his imaginative conception of the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Morel is complete, and because the consequences of the rupture in their relationship are envisaged within the bounds of their marriage (not apart, as in the case of George and Lettie) and in their effect upon a second generation, the achievement is all the more telling.

It is significant that Lawrence, with the artist's instinct for avoiding repetition of what has already been successfully expressed, does not deal at length with the nature of the initial physical attraction between Mr. and Mrs. Morel (as he did with Lettie and George). Though we are

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(2) The White Peacock, p.366

never allowed to forget the central fact of this attraction, it is stated with a new economy and is cleverly linked with the development in plot. A single striking image initially compels our attention: "The dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle, ... seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her." (3) A neat touch in Lawrence's use of dialogue quietly emphasises Morel's winning manner: "'Shouldn't ter like it?' he asked tenderly. ''Appen not, it 'ud dirty thee.' She had never been 'thee'd' and 'thou'd' before." (4) Then, in the storm of conflict between the two, we tend to forget their first love until, mid-way through the book, Lawrence brings it home to us. In that delightfully comic scene where Morel, a fine physical specimen, laments his condition ("'I'm nowt b'r a skinned rabbit. My bones fair juts out on me.... I'm nobbut a rack o' faggots.'... It was his fixed belief that, because he did not get fat, he was as thin as a starved rat.") (5) there is a sudden flash of recognition on the reader's part:

> "You've had a constitution like iron," she said; "and never a man had a better start, if it was body that counted. You should have seen him as a young man," she cried suddenly to Paul, drawing herself up to imitate her husband's once handsome bearing.
>
> Morel watched her shyly. He saw again the passion she had had for him. It blazed upon her for a moment. He was shy, rather scared, and humble. Yet again he felt his old glow. And then immediately he felt the ruin he had made during these years. (6)

Finally, when Paul's relations with Miriam reach a crisis, Lawrence not only refers us back to the original passion of Mr. and Mrs. Morel, but skilfully uses our awareness of the significance of their passion to emphasise Paul's realisation of the break between Miriam and himself:

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(3) Sons and Lovers, p.16
(4) Ibid. p.17
(5) Ibid. pp.212-13
(6) Ibid. p.213

"But my mother, I believe, got real joy and satisfaction out of my father at first. I believe she had a passion for him; that's why she stayed with him. After all, they were bound to each other."

"Yes," said Miriam.

"That's what one must have, I think" he continued - "the real, real flame of feeling through another person - once, only once, if it only lasts three months. See, my mother looks as if she'd had everything that was necessary for her living and developing. There's not a tiny bit of feeling of sterility about her."

"No," said Miriam.

"And with my father, at first, I'm sure she had the real thing. She knows; she has been there. You can feel it about her, and about him, and about hundreds of people you meet every day; and, once it has happened to you, you can go on with anything and ripen." (7)

The lightness of Lawrence's touch in indicating by these means the original basis of the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Morel is most effective. But Lawrence is primarily interested (in this book) in the outcome of their relationship, and it is with deep understanding, fine characterisation and an eye for the revealing incident that he describes their marriage.

Lawrence's portrayal of the deterioration in their relationship is detailed and comprehensive. Realistically he shows that each, in a measure, is responsible for this deterioration which flows directly, as Mr. West suggests, (8) from their inability to make the most of what is positive in their relationship - their physical passion for each other, and thus from ...ing false to their true natures." Mrs. Morel makes the initial mistakes. In her consciousness she allows to rankle as major issues her discoveries that Morel has deceived her in respect of his financial stability; that there "was carryin's-on" at Morel's dancing-classes, before his marriage; that Morel likes to stop for a drink and a chat on his way home from work.

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(7) Sons and Lovers, pp.338-39
(8) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, pp.75, 114.

Unable to be "content with the little he might be, she would have him the much that he ought to be," (9) and she freezes towards him. The result is that Morel takes steadily to drink and the couple begin to clash violently. It is here that Morel fails. I cannot agree with Mr. West that part of his failure lies in "not clearing out" (10) - by the time he threatens to do so the damage to himself (and to his wife and children) is irreparable. His failure lies rather in his defeatism, in his inability to swing his wife round to what is valuable in their relationship. He, too, turns his back on the physical glow between them, and Lawrence's judgment of him is clear: "He was an outsider. He had denied the God in him." (11)

Lawrence relies on the use of short but intensely dramatic scenes to reveal the break between the Morels. The accumulated bitterness of both surges to a head in these scenes, which are so powerfully described that they remain fixed in the reader's mind. Yet, in the control which he exercises, Lawrence is reminiscent of Thackeray, and his scenes have an effect similar to that memorable scene where Rawdon discovers Becky and Lord Steyne together on his return from "Mr. Moss's dismal place of hospitality." Slowly revealed tendencies become manifest in a flash. It is perhaps necessary to state, for there are critics who view Lawrence as, at best, an unconscious artist, (see page 13 above) that Lawrence's technique in this respect is quite deliberate. In January, 1914, he wrote to Edward Garnett:

> I have no longer the joy in creating vivid scenes, that I had in Sons and Lovers. I don't care much more about accumulating objects in the powerful light of emotion, and making a scene of them. (12)

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(9) Sons and Lovers, p.23
(10) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.114
(11) Sons and Lovers, p.73
(12) Letters, p.177

Notice the restraint of the following scene, for instance; and how, when Mrs. Morel comes downstairs, the objects which meet her eye are slowly described and placed in the scene:

> William was only one year old, and his mother was proud of him, he was so pretty. She was not well off now, but her sisters kept the boy in clothes. Then, with his little white hat curled with an ostrich feather, and his white coat, he was a joy to her, the twining wisps of hair clustering round his head. Mrs. Morel lay listening, one Sunday morning, to the chatter of the father and child downstairs. Then she dozed off. When she came downstairs, a great fire glowed in the grate, the room was hot, the breakfast was roughly laid, and seated in his armchair, against the chimney-piece, sat Morel, rather timid; and standing between his legs, the child - cropped like a sheep, with such an odd round poll - looking wondering at her; and on a newspaper spread out upon the hearthrug, a myriad of crescent-shaped curls, like the petals of a marigold scattered in the reddening firelight.
>
> Mrs. Morel stood still. It was her first baby. She went very white, and was unable to speak.
>
> "What dost think o' 'im?" Morel laughed uneasily.
>
> She gripped her two fists, lifted them, and came forward. Morel shrank back.
>
> "I could kill you, I could!" s ` said. She choked with rage, her two fists uplifted.
>
> "Yer non want to make a wench on 'im," Morel said, in a frightened tone, bending his head to shield his eyes from hers. His attempt at laughter had vanished.
>
> The mother looked down at the jagged, close-clipped head of her child. She put her hands on his hair, and stroked and fondled his head.
>
> "Oh - my boy!" she faltered. Her lip trembled, her face broke, and, snatching up the child, she buried her face in his shoulder and cried painfully.... (13)

The following scene appears to flow carelessly from Lawrence's pen, but a careful reading reveals how, with a variation in technique, he retains an apparent spontaneity while actually mounting the scene in such a way that, point for point, Mr. and Mrs. Morel successively exacerbate each other's feelings:

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(13) Sons and Lovers, pp.21-22

Just then Morel came in. He had been very jolly in the Nelson, but coming home had grown irritable. He had not quite got over the feeling of irritability and pain, after having slept on the ground when he was so hot; and a bad conscience afflicted him as he neared the house. He did not know he was angry. But when the garden-gate resisted his attempts to open it, he kicked it and broke the latch. He entered just as Mrs. Morel was pouring the infusion of herbs out of the saucepan. Swaying slightly, he lurched against the table. The boiling liquor pitched. Mrs. Morel started back

"Good gracious," she cried, "coming home in his drunkenness!"

"Comin' home in his what?" he snarled, his hat over his eye.

Suddenly her blood rose in a jet.

"Say you're not drunk!" she flashed.

She had put down the saucepan, and was stirring the sugar into the beer. He dropped his two hands heavily on the table and thrust his face forward at her.

"'Say you're not drunk,'" he repeated. "Why, nobody but a nasty little bitch like you 'ud 'ave such a thought."

He thrust his face forward at her.

"There's money to bezzle with, if there's money for nothing else."

"I've not spent a two-shillin' bit this day," he said.

"You don't get as drunk as a lord on nothing," she replied. "And," she cried, flashing into sudden fury, "if you've been sponging on your beloved Jerry, why let him look after his children, for they need it."

"It's a lie, it's a lie. Shut your face, woman."

They were now at battle-pitch. Each forgot everything save the hatred of the other and the battle between them. She was fiery and furious as he. They went on till he called her a liar.

"No," she cried, starting up, scarce able to breathe. "Don't call me that - you, the most despicable liar that ever walked in shoe-leather." She forced the last words out of suffocated lungs.

"You're a liar!" he yelled, banging the table with his fist. "You're a liar, you're a liar!"

She stiffened herself with clenched fists.

"The house is filthy with you," she cried.

"Then get out on it - it's mine. Get out on it!" he shouted. "It's me as brings th' money whoam, not thee. It's my house, not thine. Then ger out on't - ger out on't!"

"And I would," she cried, suddenly shaken into tears of impotence. "Ah, wouldn't I, wouldn't I have gone long ago, but for those children. Ay, haven't I repented not going years ago, when I'd only the one" - suddenly drying into rage. "Do you think it's for you I stop - do you think I'd stop one minute for you?"

"Go, then," he shouted, beside himself. "Go!"

"No!" she faced round. "No," she cried loudly, "you shan't have it all your own way; you shan't do all you like. I've got those children to see to. My word," she laughed, "I should look well to leave them to you."

"Go," he cried thickly, lifting his fist. He was afraid of her. "Go!"

"I should be only too glad. I should laugh, laugh, my lord, if only I could get away from you," she replied.

He came up to her, his red face, with its blood-shot eyes, thrust forward, and gripped her arms. She cried in fear of him, struggling to be free. Coming slightly to himself, panting, he pushed her roughly to the outer door, and thrust her forth, slotting the bolt behind her with a bang. (14)

In scenes such as these Lawrence decisively swings our sympathy away from Morel, and it is interesting to note that in later life he felt he had not been altogether fair to his father - it is, of course, well known that Mr. and Mrs. Morel are portraits of his father and mother. Father Tiverton quotes E. and A. Brewster (15) as saying, "he felt like re-writing Sons and Lovers: he had not done justice there, he said, to his father - 'a clean-cut, and exuberant spirit, a true pagan' - and he now blamed his mother for her self-righteousness." (16) And, in fact, in two early sketches, Adolf and Rex, which are included in Phoenix (the collection of his posthumous papers) Lawrence treats his father with great sympathy and it is a carping mother who appears in an unfavourable light. Despite Lawrence's regrets, however, I feel that in the work of art, which has an existence independent of the real life experiences which might have prompted its creation, Lawrence's portrayal of the

(14) Sons and Lovers, pp.28-29.
(15) E. and A. Brewster: Reminiscences and Correspondence of D. H. Lawrence.
(16) Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p.35

relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Morel has a sustained conviction about it. For Lawrence, the writer, does manage to maintain a necessary balance in his work.

The characterisation of Morel is never allowed to deteriorate into a horror caricature, into a flat one-sided picture of a man who is always and only a brute - as is, for instance, Mr. Williams' present-day portrait of Kowalski in A Streetcar Named Desire. To the end we believe in Morel as a living figure. Even when he is described at his worst, Lawrence adds the little touch which makes us remember the whole man. When, for example, after the scene quoted above where Morel pushes his wife out of the house, Mrs. Morel later raps on the window to awaken him, we are made aware of Morel's physical courage - despite his cowardly treatment of his wife: "He started awake. Instantly she saw his fists set and his eyes glare. He had not a grain of physical fear. If it had been twenty burglars, he would have gone blindly for them. He glared round, bewildered, but prepared to fight." (17) Then he has the grace, at least, to feel ashamed of his behaviour. He opens the door and hurries away. (At this stage, it may be noticed, Lawrence neatly reveals a tendentious trait in Mrs. Morel's character: "He had ripped his collar off his neck in his haste to be gone ere she came in, and there it lay with bursten button-holes. It made her angry.") (18) There are constant and quickening variations in his attitude towards his wife. After this incident he was "for some days abashed and ashamed" but then he "soon regained his old bullying indifference." Then again his sympathy is awakened by her pregnancy and he stays in of nights, does not drink, and even brings up a cup of tea to his wife while she lies in bed in the morning. When they quarrel again his perverse obstinacy makes it impossible for him

(17) Sons and Lovers, p.32
(18) Ibid. p.33

to admit openly that he is wrong, to apologise - instead he blames his wife, but "nothing could prevent his inner consciousness inflicting on him the punishment which ate into his spirit like rust, and which he could only alleviate by drinking." (19) And so Morel passes before us at times despicable in his brutality, at times an attractive personality in, for instance, his old-world gallantry to the women friends whom his sons bring home, to Gyp and to Clara.

The balance is not alone preserved by the detailed characterisation of Morel. Lawrence indicates, too, that Mrs. Morel is not prepared to meet her husband's tentative advances half-way. Though Morel is not dismayed by her grumbling, she rails at him about the sugar when he does think of bringing her a cup of tea. And at the end of that other particularly vivid scene where Morel in a fury throws a drawer at her, Mrs. Morel, understandably but crucially for the future of their relationship, is unable to respond to his stumbling attempt at reconciliation:

> Walter Morel remained as he had stood, leaning on the table with one hand, looking blank. When he was sufficiently sure of his balance, he went across to her, swayed, caught hold of the back of her rocking-chair, almost tipping her out; then, leaning forward over her, and swaying as he spoke, he said, in tone of wondering concern:
>
> "Did it catch thee?"
>
> He swayed again, as if he would pitch on the child. With the catastrophe he had lost all balance.
>
> "Go away," she said, struggling to keep her presance of mind.
>
> He hiccoughed. "Let's - let's look at it," he said, hiccoughing again.
>
> "Go away," s'
>
> "Lemme - lemme it, lass."
>
> She smelled him of drink, felt the unequal pull of his swaying grasp on the back of her rocking-chair.
>
> "Go away," she said, and weakly she pushed him off. (20)

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(19) Sons and Lovers, p.49
(20) Ibid. p.47

There is a great pathos about the outcome of the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Morel. If they brought the consequences upon themselves by "denying the God" in them, each is made bitterly aware of the ruins of their marriage. When Mrs. Morel is dying she "held herself rigid, so that she might die without ever uttering the great cry that was tearing from her." But "sometimes... she talked about her husband. Now she hated him. She did not forgive him. She could not bear him to be in the room. And a few things, the things that had been most bitter to her, came up again so strongly that they broke from her, and she told her son." (21) And then, when she is dead, how effectively but undemonstratively does Lawrence convey Morel's plight to us: Paul comes home late at night and finds his father still up. He realises "with a start, that he had been afraid to go to bed, alone in the house with his dead." (22) We remember, with a start, Morel's great courage.

But the description of the effects of such a relationship on the main protagonists is but part of Lawrence's wider purpose, which is to present a full vivid picture of the life of the whole Morel family and, in particular, to analyse the effect of this relationship on the children. For in Sons and Lovers Lawrence studies the inevitability of abnormal growth in the children of such a marriage. The children, who side with the mother, are unable to enter into a normal relationship with either of the parents. In the case of Paul, with whom Lawrence is primarily concerned, the conflict of his parents compels him to an intense love for his mother and, at the same time, to an intense hatred of his father.

Lawrence's use of the vivid symbol to suggest Paul's hatred of Morel is most effective. Mrs. Morel is nursing the young Paul when Morel throws the drawer at her and cuts her forehead. He moves round her trying to apologise:

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(21) Sons and Lovers, p.410
(22) Ibid. p.426

> He stood, bending forward, supported on his hands, which grasped his legs just above the knee. He peered to look at the wound. She drew away from the thrust of his face with its great moustache, averting her own face as much as possible. As he looked at her, who was cold and impassive as stone, with mouth shut tight, he sickened with feebleness and hopelessness of spirit. He was turning drearily away, when he saw a drop of blood fall from the averted wound into the baby's fragile, glistening hair. Fascinated, he watched the heavy dark drop hang in the glistening cloud, and pull down the gossamer. Another drop fell. It would soak through to the baby's scalp. He watched, fascinated, feeling it soak in; then finally his manhood broke. (23)

This symbol of the drop of blood has great dramatic force. As the blood, spilt by Mrs. Morel in her gesture of withdrawal and revulsion from Mr. Morel, slowly soaks into the baby's hair, Paul symbolically shares Mrs. Morel's horror and is united with her by a tie of blood in hatred of the father.

It is interesting that Lawrence stresses Paul's repudiation of his father in his earliest infant consciousness. Indeed he even suggests a pre-natal awareness of conflict. Though I do not think he is so effective here for the reference is too deliberate, the incident where Mrs. Morel, pregnant with Paul, is chased out of the house by Morel is symbolic of the father's rejection of mother and child: Mrs. Morel, pushed outside, "walked down the garden path, trembling in every limb, while the child boiled within her." (24)

Finally Paul's hatred of his father is skilfully linked with the symbol of the ash-tree. It is significant that Morel likes the noise of the wind through the tree, while Paul hates it and identifies it rather with a horror and fear of his father:

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(23) Sons and Lovers, p.48
(24) Ibid. p.50

In front of the house was a huge old ash-tree. The west wind, sweeping from Derbyshire, caught the houses with full force, and the tree shrieked again. Morel liked it.

"It's music," he said. "It sends me to sleep."

But Paul and Arthur and Annie hated it. To Paul it became almost a demoniacal noise. The winter of their first year in the new house their father was very bad. The children played in the street, on the brim of the wide, dark valley, until eight o'clock. Then they went to bed. Their mother sat sewing below. Having such a great space in front of the house gave the children a feeling of night, of vastness, and of terror. This terror came in from the shrieking of the tree and the anguish of the home discord. Often Paul would wake up, after he had been asleep a long time, aware of thuds downstairs. Instantly he was wide awake. Then he heard the booming shouts of his father, come home nearly drunk, then the sharp replies of his mother, then the bang, bang of his father's fist on the table, and the nasty snarling shout as the man's voice got higher. And then the whole was drowned in a piercing medley of shrieks and cries from the great, wind-swept ash-tree. The children lay silent in suspense, waiting for a lull in the wind to hear what their father was doing. He might hit their mother again. There was a feeling of horror, a kind of bristling in the darkness, and a sense of blood. They lay with their hearts in the grip of an intense anguish. The wind came through the trees fiercer and fiercer. All the cords of the great harp hummed, whistled, and shrieked. And then came the horror of the sudden silence, silence everywhere, outside and downstairs... (25)

It is interesting to note how the "shrieking of the tree and the anguish of the home discord" are linked too by Lawrence in a poem entitled Discord in Childhood: (26)

Outside the house an ash-tree hung its terrible whips,
And at night when the wind rose, the lash of the tree
Shrieked and slashed the wind, as a ship's
Weird rigging in a storm shrieks hideously.

Within the house two voices arose, a slender lash
Whistling she-delirious rage, and the dreadful sound
Of a male thong booming and bruising, until it had drowned
The other voice in a silence of blood, 'neath the noise of the ash.

It is significant that the only time Paul is able to regard the ash-tree without a feeling of horror is when he brings home his first earnings to his mother. Then, Lawrence

(25) Sons and Lovers, pp.69-70
(26) Selected Poems, p.9

seems to imply, he feels (even if unconsciously) independent of his father:

> And then he came to the corner at *home*, which faced the other side of the night. The ash-tree seemed a friend now. His mother rose with gladness as he entered. He put his eight shillings proudly on the table. "It'll help, mother?" he asked wistfully. (27)

Yet his childhood associations are so strong that, even in later life, when he is confronted with trouble, sight of the ash-tree reawakens his old feelings: William's body is brought into the house and "Paul went to the bay window and looked out. The ash-tree stood monstrous and black in front of the wide darkness." (28) In this context the ash-tree symbol takes on an even deeper layer of meaning; when we remember that, in his letter to Garnett, Lawrence (with his belief in the interaction of physical and psychic ills) mentions that "the split kills him;" i.e. that the split in William's personality is responsible for his death (see page 56 above). This split is most directly attributable to Morel's behaviour, and it is while Morel is arranging the furniture in the room before the arrival of William's coffin, that Paul sees the ash-tree, identified by all the children with the father's bestiality, "monstrous and black."

Although Lawrence reveals Paul's intense hatred of his father in this way (one notices, too, that "the children were all rabid teetotallers") (29) he is as careful to preserve a balance in this relationship, as he was in the relationship between husband and wife. When Paul helps Morel in his work about the house they have *moments of happiness* together and, when Mrs. Morel dies, there is a warm sympathy between the two. In addition Lawrence shows that Paul, like his mother, often

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(27) Sons and Lovers, pp.124-25
(28) Ibid. p.151
(29) Ibid. p.64

callously rejects the father's approaches. In the following scene, for instance, one's sympathy veers round towards the pitiful father, though one remembers the drops of blood and understands Paul's deep-rooted enmity. Paul is recovering from an illness and Morel comes into his room:

"Are ter asleep, my darlin'?" Morel asked softly.

"No; is my mother comin'?"

"She's just finishin' foldin' the clothes. Do you want anything?" Morel rarely "thee'd" his son.

"I don't want nothing. But how long will she be?"

"Not long, my duckie."

The father waited undecidedly on the hearthrug for a moment or two. He felt his son did not want him. Then he went to the top of the stairs and said to his wife:

"This childt's axin' for thee; how lon_e art goin' to be?"

"Until I've finished, good gracious! Tell him to go to sleep."

"She says you're to go to sleep," the father repeated gently to Paul.

"Well, I want her to come," insisted the boy.

"He says he can't go off till you come," Morel called downstairs.

"Eh, dear! I shan't be long. And do stop shouting downstairs. There's the other children - "

Then Morel came again, and crouched before the bedroom fire. He loved a fire dearly.

"She says she won't be long," he said.

He loitered about indefinitely. The boy began to get feverish with irritation. His father's presence seemed to aggravate all his sick impatience. At last, Morel, after having stood looking at his son awhile, said softly:

"Good-night, my darling."

"Good-night," Paul replied, turning round in relief to be alone. (30)

The hatred of the son for the father is coupled with his intense love for the mother, and throughout the book Lawrence carefully details Paul's love for Mrs. Morel.

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(30) Sons and Lovers, p.77

Gradually it is revealed; either implicitly in such scenes as the one quoted above, in their excursion to Nottingham, in Paul's eagerness to do things for his mother - whether it be to gather blackberries for her as a child, to find a spray for her, or even to please her with his success as a painter which he finally feels only through her - or explicitly in Paul's conscious determination to make up to his mother for the treatment she has received from the father. At the same time Mrs. Morel gradually turns from Morel to her sons, and especially to Paul who is the weakest physically of her children, until, firm in her determination to "make up to him for having brought him into the world unloved," she envelops him in her love and accepts even his gifts in the manner of "a woman accepting a love-token." (31)

Paul's hatred of his father and his intense love for his mother prevent his normal growth and development as a man. Not only is he unable to enter into relationships with other women (this will be discussed later) but he is also involved in a very complicated relationship with his mother. Lawrence treats this aspect of Paul's development with astonishing honesty and depth of understanding (for Paul is, in fact, a self-portrait) and with a fine subtlety in characterisation and selection of incident.

Lawrence's honesty is at once apparent for, as Paul grows up, he does not shirk the inevitable development of a sexual twist in the relations of mother and son. With great delicacy but quite unambiguously he reveals the physical aspects of their relationship. Paul is sixteen when he falls seriously ill:

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(31) Sons and Lovers, p.79

Paul was very ill. His mother lay in bed at nights with him; they could not afford a nurse. He grew worse, and the crisis approached. One night he tossed into consciousness in the ghastly, sickly feeling of dissolution, when all the cells in the body seem in intense irritability to be breaking down, and consciousness makes a last flare of struggle, like madness.

"I s'll die, mother!" he cried, heaving for breath on the pillow.

She lifted him up, crying in a small voice:

"Oh, my son - my son!"

That brought him to. He realized her. His whole will rose up and arrested him. He put his head on her breast, and took ease of her for love. (32)

Later, in a masterly scene, Lawrence reveals the fundamental nature of this relationship. At first the physical complication of their love is again delicately alluded to:

He had taken off his collar and tie, and rose, bare-throated, to go to bed. As he stooped to kiss his mother, she threw her arms round his neck, hid her face on his shoulder, and cried, in a whimpering voice, so unlike her own that he writhed in agony:

"I can't bear it. I could let another woman - but not her. She'd leave me no room, not a bit of room -"

And immediately he hated Miriam bitterly.

"And I've never - you know, Paul - I've never had a husband - not really -"

He stroked his mother's hair, and his mouth was on her throat.

"And she exults so in taking you from me - she's not like ordinary girls."

"Well, I don't love her, mother," he murmured, bowing his head and hiding his eyes on her shoulder in misery. His mother kissed him a long, fervent kiss.

"My boy!" she said, in a voice trembling with passionate love.

Without knowing, he gently stroked her face.

"There," said his mother, "now go to bed. You'll be so tired in the morning." As she was speaking she heard her husband coming. (33)

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(32) Sons and Lovers, p.154
(33) Ibid. p.229

Unobtrusively then, and in a few words, Lawrence's handling of Mrs. Morel is superb as, with the approach of her husband, she realises, with a sudden feeling of guilt, how she has compromised her son:

> "There's your father - now go." Suddenly she looked at him almost in fear. "Perhaps I'm selfish. If you want her, take her my boy." His mother looked so strange, Paul kissed her, trembling.
>
> "Ha - mother!" he said softly. (34)

With what subtlety does Lawrence describe the ensuing scene between father and son! Without knowing it, Paul is compelled to regard his father as a rival, sexually, for his mother, and so a trivial incident is sufficient to start the fire of his unnatural enmity. Morel takes a pie which Mrs. Morel had bought for Paul and, challenged, throws it in the fire:

> Paul started [illegible]s feet.
>
> "Waste your own stuff!" he cried.
>
> "What - what!" suddenly shouted Morel, jumping up and clenching his fist. "I'll show yer, yer young jockey!"
>
> "All right!" said Paul viciously, putting his head on one side. "Show me!"
>
> He would at that moment dearly have loved to have a smack at something. Morel was half crouching, fists up, ready to spring. The young man stood, smiling with his lips.
>
> "Ussha!" hissed the father, swiping round with a great stroke just past his son's face. He dared not, even though so close, really touch the young man, but swerved an inch away.
>
> "Right!" said Paul, his eyes upon the side of his father's mouth, where in another instant his fist would have hit. He ached for that stroke. But he heard a faint moan from behind. His mother was deadly pale, and dark at the mouth. (35)

And so Paul restrains himself, but a moment later Lawrence reveals a hidden cause of his agitation:

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(34) Sons and Lovers, p.329
(35) Ibid. p.230

"Can you go to bed, mother?"

"Yes, I'll come."

"Sleep with Annie, mother, not with him."

"No. I'll sleep in my own bed."

"Don't sleep with him, mother."

"I'll sleep in my own bed." (36)

That Lawrence fully understands the nature of the relationship between Paul and Mrs. Morel is borne out by these scenes, so there can be little doubt about his deliberate intention in the following passage. His development of Paul is so gradual that, even though Paul is shown fighting against the bonds of this relationship, Lawrence does not at first allow him to come to a full understanding of the situation. The sanctities involved are so powerful that Paul is unable to link his virginity with his sexual passion for his mother - instead he is forced to rationalise:

> A good many of the nicest men he knew were like himself, bound in by their own virginity, which they could not break out of. They were so sensitive to their women that they would go without them for ever rather than do them a hurt, an injustice. Being the sons of mothers whose husbands had blundered rather brutally through their feminine sanctities, they were themselves too diffident and shy. They could easier deny themselves than incur any reproach from a woman; for a woman was like their mother, and they were full of the sense of their mother. They preferred themselves to suffer the misery of celibacy, rather than risk the other person. (37)

The skill displayed in the handling of Paul is paralleled in the handling of Mrs. Morel. In her sexual jealousy she, too, flares into a rage over a trivial incident when Paul, busy with Miriam, allows the bread to burn. And she, too, is forced unwittingly to reveal the real nature of her grievance against Miriam. Paul comes home late one night after being with Miriam and his mother is angry. Notice the force of the "besides" in the following passage and of the use of the word "disgusting":

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(36) Sons and Lovers, p.231
(37) Ibid. p.299

"You wouldn't say anything if I went with Edgar."

"You know I should. You know, whoever you went with, I should say it was too far for you to go trailing, late at night, when you've been to Nottingham. Besides" - her voice suddenly flashed into anger and contempt - "it is disgusting - bits of lads and girls courting." (38)

There is a rich irony in Mrs. Morel's rationalisation in her assessment of what is preventing Paul's normal growth; while the oreadth of Lawrence's view is emphasised by the validity of her criticism of Miriam:

"She exults - she exults as she carries him off from me," Mrs. Morel cried in her heart when Paul had gone. "She's not like an ordinary woman, who can leave me my share in him. She wants to absorb him. She wants to draw him out and absorb him till there's nothing left of him, even for himself. He will never be a man on his own feet - she will suck him up." So the mother sat, and battled and brooded bitterly. (39)

The irony in the following passage is also effective: "There was a perpetual little knitting of his brows, such as she had seen when he was a small baby, and which had been gone for many years. Now it was the same again. And she could do nothing for him. He had to go on alone, make his own way."(40) At this stage Paul is going through a crisis and mention of his "knitted brows" carries our minds back to this childhood mannerism and to a remembrance that it was when she first noticed this "peculiar knitting of the baby's brows, ... as if it were trying to understand something that was pain" (41) that Mrs. Morel determined to make up to Paul for "having brought him into the world unloved," that it was then that she began to pour out her excessive mother love which, in the end, is the cause of his having to pass through the crisis. It is ironic that she now disclaims responsibility for him and can only visualise his "making his own way, alone." The force of this apparently casual detail of the "knitted brows" is similar to that of the corn-harvest in The White Peacock - the reference to the same

(38) Sons and Lovers pp.175-76
(39) Ibid. p.208
(40) Ibid. p.312
(41) Ibid. p.44

symbol under different circumstances binds the book together and brings before us at a glance the whole sweep of intervening action.

In his struggle for self-understanding Paul finally arrives at the truth of his position:

> Sometimes he hated [his mother] and pulled at her bondage. His life wanted to free itself of her. It was like a circle where life turned back on itself, and got no farther. She bore him, loved him, kept him, and his love turned back into her, so that he could not be free to go forward with his own life, really love another woman. (42)

It is then but a short step to the realisation that he would not be able to love another woman while his mother lived (43) and, significantly, Mrs. Morel soon after begins to die of cancer - though it must be pointed out that this is not a device introduced artificially into the plot; the first reference to her ill-health is made as early as the excursion to Nottingham and, after the numerous indications which follow, it comes as no surprise to the reader when she falls seriously ill while staying with Annie. In his handling of Paul's responses to this situation Lawrence most successfully works out one part of his theme. He succeeds largely through a skilful synthesis of explicit action and underlying symbolic meaning.

Both Mr. West and Mr. Aldington stress the significance of the fact that Paul finally kills his mother by giving her an overdose of morphia and "thinks of hastening the work of the drug by smothering her." (44) Neither of these critics draws attention, however, to a curious boyhood action of Paul's, which I feel is closely relatedto his killing of his mother and which lends to this latter act an even greater conviction and significance. It will be remembered that as a lad Paul unwittingly smashes one of Annie's dolls. She is most

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(42) Sons and Lovers, pp.367-68
(43) Ibid. p.374
(44) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.15;
N.B. Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But... p.86

upset but forgives him. Then, a few days later, he suddenly insists on burning the broken doll and says, when he has finished doing so:

> "That's the sacrifice of Missis Arabella ... An' I'm glad there's nothing left of her."
>
> Which disturbed Annie inwardly, although she could say nothing. He seemed to hate the doll so intensely, because he had broken it. (45)

At first sight this incident appears strangely irrelevant, but it points to an important trait in Paul's character. The fact that he had broken the doll upsets him intensely and the "sacrifice" represents not only a desire to remove from sight an object which it is painful for him to contemplate, but also an obscure atonement - a purge of his feelings of guilt, of which he is strongly conscious so long as the battered doll remains in existence.

Paul's attitude to his mother's illness is analogous. His anguish is obvious. Nowhere else in the book is his intense love for his mother shown so poignantly as in the sick-room scenes:

> All day long he was conscious of nothing but her. It was a long ache that made him feverish. Then, when he got home in the early evening, he glanced through the kitchen window. She was not there; she had not got up.
>
> He ran straight upstairs and kissed her. He was almost afraid to ask:
>
> "Didn't you get up, Pigeon?"
>
> "No," she said. "It was that morphia; it made me tired."
>
> "I think he gives you too much," he said.
>
> "I think he does," she answered.
>
> He sat down by the bed, miserably. She had a way of curling and lying on her side, like a child. The grey and brown hair was loose over her ear.
>
> "Doesn't it tickle you?" he said, gently putting it back.
>
> "It does," she replied.

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(45) Sons and Lovers, p.68

His face was near hers. Her blue eyes smiled straight into his, like a girl's - warm, laughing with tender love. It made him pant with terror, agony and love.

"You want your hair doing in a plait," he said. "Lie still."

And going behind her, he carefully loosened her hair, brushed it out. It was like fine long silk of brown and grey. Her head was snuggled between her shoulders. As he lightly brushed and plaited her hair, he bit his lip and felt dazed. It all seemed unreal, he could not understand it. (46)

His love for her is so great that he begins to wish for her death, to spare her further pain. But he also wishes to spare himself the agony of watching her in her misery; and with fine, though chilling, dramatic force, Lawrence shows how Paul in the intensity of his love and suffering is compelled to resent her not dying ("It'll only keep your strength up," he says to her as he hands her food;) (47) how he dilutes her milk with water so that it should not sustain her. Finally he determines to kill her:

That evening he got all the morphia pills there were, and took them downstairs. Carefully he crushed them to powder.

"What are you doing?" said Annie.

"I s'll put 'em in her night milk."

Then they both laughed together like two conspiring children. On top of all their horror flickered this little sanity. (48)

In this crucial passage, which is at first sight so perplexing, Lawrence makes two important points. By describing Paul's laughter as "this little sanity" he suggests the compassionate element in the killing. This is partly a mercy-killing, a "sane" defiance of established law, and Paul's laughter not only reflects the tension which he feels, but also involuntarily

(46) Sons and Lovers, p.409
(47) Ibid. p.415
(48) Ibid. p.416

expresses his desire for reassurance of the sanity of his act and for an everyday normality. But it is even more significant that Lawrence should picture Paul and Annie laughing together "like two conspiring children". This image refers us back to their former childhood "conspiracy", to the burning of the doll, and this, together with Lawrence's portrayal of Paul's grief at his mother's death, prepares the way for our understanding of the irresistible compulsion behind his deed and of its underlying significance. The intense pathos of the following scene, which is conveyed with such simplicity, is unmatched in Lawrence's work:

> The room was cold, that had been warm for so long. Flowers, bottles, plates, all sick-room litter was taken away; everything was harsh and austere. She lay raised on the bed, the sweep of the sheet from the raised feet was like a clean curve of snow, so silent. She lay like a maiden asleep. With his candle in his hand, he bent over her. She lay like a girl asleep and dreaming of her love. The mouth was a little open, as if wondering from the suffering, but her face was young, her brow clear and white as if life had never touched it. He looked again at the eyebrows, at the small, winsome nose a bit on one side. She was young again. Only the hair as it arched so beautifully from her temples was mixed with silver, and the two simple plaits that lay on her shoulders were filigree of silver and brown. She would wake up. She would lift her eyelids. She was with him still. He bent and kissed her passionately. But there was coldness against his mouth. He bit his lip with horror. Looking at her, he felt he could never, never let her go. No! He stroked the hair from her temples. That, too, was cold. He saw the mouth so dumb and wondering at the hurt. Then he crouched on the floor, whispering to her:
>
> "Mother, mother!" (49)

This passage recalls Lawrence's poem The Virgin Mother, (50) which he wrote after the death of his mother:

> My little love, my darling,
> You were a doorway to me;
> You let me out of the confines
> Into this strange countrie,
> Where people are crowded like thistles,
> Yet are shapely and comely to see.
>
> My little love, my dearest,
> Twice have you issued me,
> Once from your womb, sweet mother,
> Once from myself, to be
> Free of all hearts, my darling,
> Of each heart's home-life free.

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(49) Sons and Lovers, p.424
(50) Amores, pp.63-5

And so, my love, my mother,
I shall always be true to you;
Twice I am born, my dearest,
To life, and to death, in you;
And this is the life hereafter
Wherein I am true.

I kiss you good-bye, my darling,
Our ways are different now;
You are a seed in the night-time,
I am a man, to plough
The difficult glebe of the future
For God to endow.

I kiss you good-bye, my dearest,
It is finished between us here.
Oh, if I were calm as you are,
Sweet and still on your bier!
O God, if I had not to leave you
Alone, my dear!

Is the last word now uttered,
Is the farewell said?
Spare me the strength to leave you
Now you are dead.
I must go, but my soul lies helpless
Beside your bed.

It is no ordinary love of son for mother, nor compassion alone which prompts the death-draught. Paul's killing of his mother is symbolical of his struggle for life. In much the same way as the doll, Mrs. Morel is "sacrificed" so that Paul can assuage his feelings of sexual guilt, so that he can decisively, by his own act, finally repudiate their relationship, free himself from her domination and make a stand for normal life. In this regard it is curious to note Lawrence's remark in his letter to Garnett - Paul "is left in the end naked of everything, with the drift towards death" (see page 56 above). Although, in the weeks which follow his mother's death, Paul "wanted everything to stand still, so that he could be with her again," and although "he could not tell one day from another, one week from another, hardly one place from another," (51) "in the end" he is left, rather, with a determination to make the most of his life. The closing passage of the novel quite decisively indicates his determination:

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(51) Sons and Lovers, p.436

But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply,
he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence.
His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not
take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her.
He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town,
quickly. (52)

And in a poem entitled Hymn to Priapus, (53) also written shortly after his mother's death, Lawrence movingly owns his instinctive will to life:

My love lies underground
With her face upturned to mine,
And her mouth unclosed in a last long kiss
That ended her life and mine.

I dance at the Christmas party
Under the mistletoe
Along with a ripe, slack country lass
Jostling to and fro.

The big, soft country lass,
Like a loose sheaf of wheat
Slipped through my arms on the threshing floor
At my feet.

The warm, soft country lass,
Sweet as an armful of wheat
At threshing-time broken, was broken
For me, and ah, it was sweet!

Now I am going home
Fulfilled and alone,
I see the great Orion standing
Looking down.

He's the star of my first beloved
Love-making.
The witness of all that bitter-sweet
Heart-aching.

Now he sees this as well,
This last commission.
Nor do I get any look
Of admonition.

He can add the reckoning up
I suppose, between now and then,
Having walked himself in the thorny, difficult
Ways of men.

He has done as I have done
No doubt:
Remembered and forgotten
Turn and about.

My love lies underground
With her face upturned to mine,
And her mouth unclosed in the last long kiss
That ended her life and mine.

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(52) Sons and Lovers, p.446
(53) The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, pp.336-38

She fares in the stark immortal
Fields of death;
I in these goodly, frozen
Fields beneath.

Something in me remembers
And will not forget.
The stream of my life in the darkness
Deathward set!

And something in me has forgotten,
Has ceased to care.
Desire comes up, and contentment
Is debonair.

I, who am worn and careful,
How much do I care?
How is it I grin then, and chuckle
Over despair?

Grief, grief, I suppose and sufficient
Grief makes us free
To be faithless and faithful together
As we have to be.

Indeed it is the last symbolical twist to the relationship of Paul and Mrs. Morel which lifts the book to a great height. In his portrayal of Lettie and George, of Helena and Siegmund, and then of Mr. and Mrs. Morel Lawrence deals with the consequences which flow from being untrue to oneself - but his approach is essentially negative. Paul, however, is shown fighting to be true to himself, and his final choice of life is a positive action of more enduring significance.

This assertion of positive values also marks Lawrence's treatment of the relationship between Miriam and Paul which, to judge from the following quotations, is also a re-statement of the Emily-Cyril and Helena-Siegmund relationships:

> "Ha! - Ha-a-a!" she said with a deep-throated vowel, as she put her face against the child's small breasts, so round, almost like a girl's, silken and warm and wonderful. She kissed him, and touched him, and hovered over him, drinking in his baby sweetnesses, the sweetness of the laughing little mouth's wide, wet kisses, of the round, waving limbs, of the little shoulders so winsomely curving to the arms and the breasts, of the tiny soft neck hidden very warm beneath the chin, tasting deliciously with her lips and her cheeks all the exquisite softness, silkiness, warmth, and tender life of the baby's body.

A woman is so ready to disclaim the body of a man's love; she yields him her own soft beauty with so much gentle patience and regret; she clings to his neck, to his head and his cheeks, fondling them for the soul's meaning that is there and shrinking from his passionate limbs and his body. It was with some perplexity, some anger and bitterness that I watched Emily moved almost to ecstasy by the baby's small innocuous person. (54)

Her youngest brother was only five. He was a frail lad, with immense brown eyes in his quaint fragile face - one of Reynold's "Choir of Angels," with a touch of elf. Often Miriam kneeled to the child and drew him to her.

"Eh, my Hubert!" she sang, in a voice heavy and surcharged with love. "Eh, my Hubert!"

And, folding him in her arms, she swayed slightly from side to side with love, her face half lifted, her eyes half closed, her voice drenched with love.

"Don't!" said the child, uneasy - "don't, Miriam!"

"Yes; you love me, don't you?" she murmured deep in her throat, almost as if she were in a trance, and swaying also as if she were swooned in an ecstasy of love.

"Don't," repeated the child, a frown on his clear brow.

"You love me, don't you?" she murmured.

"What do you make such a fuss for?" cried Paul, all in suffering because of her extreme emotion. "Why can't you be ordinary with him?" (55)

He straightened himself. His back was towards her. She put her two hands on his sides and ran them quickly down. "You are so fine!" she said. He laughed, hating her voice, but his blood roused to a wave of flame by her hands. She did not seem to realize him in all this. He might have been an object. She never realized the male he was. (56)

And:

He would tease the expectant anemones, causing them to close suddenly over his finger. But Helena liked to watch without touching things. (57)

As he went round the back, he saw Miriam kneeling in front of the hen-coop, some maize in her hand, biting her lip, and crouching in an intense attitude. The hen was eyeing her wickedly. Very gingerly she put forward her hand. The hen bobbed for her. She drew back quickly with a cry, half of fear, half of chagrin.

"It won't hurt you," said Paul.

She flushed crimson and started up.

"I only wanted to try," she said in a low voice.

(54) The White Peacock, p.257
(55) Sons and Lovers, p.167
(56) Sons and Lovers, p.205
(57) The Trespasser, p.80

"See, it doesn't hurt," he said, and, putting only two corns in his palm, he let the hen peck, peck, peck at his bare hand. "It only makes you laugh," he said.

She put her hand forward, and dragged it away, tried again, and started back with a cry.... (58)

That night she met his passion with love. It was not his passion she wanted, actually. But she desired that he should want her madly, and that he should have all - everything. It was a wonderful night to him.... But she felt it destroyed her. Her soul seemed blasted. (59)

He stood against a pine-tree trunk and took her in his arms. She relinquished herself to him, but it was a sacrifice in which she felt something of horror. This thick-voiced, oblivious man was a stranger to her. (60)

It will be remembered that Lawrence's portrayal of the Emily-Cyril relationship was most unsatisfactory - neither character nor situation were imaginatively realised - and that, while his handling of the physical side of the Helena-Siegmund relationship was good, the thematic implications of the relationship were muddled. In contrast, his handling of Paul and Miriam is sure throughout.

In the first place there is none of the vagueness which clouds the corresponding relationship in The White Peacock: both Miriam and Paul are fully imagined. There is a pleasing symmetry about their contrasted sex attitudes: The White Peacock-ed feelings spring directly from his relationship with his mother, Miriam's attitude, too, is a result of her mother's influence. Mrs. Leivers is the sort of woman who "exalted everything - even a bit of housework - to the plane of a religious trust," (61) and it is interesting to note how this aspect of Mrs. Leivers' character is firmly brought within the scope of Lawrence's main purpose. The essential falsity of her attitude is shown in its effect on her approach towards physical love - "Mother said to me," says Miriam, 'There is one thing in marriage that is always dreadful, but you have to bear it.' And I believed it." (62) In his attack on what Mr. Potter calls "this worn-out

(58) Sons and Lovers, p.140
(59) The Trespasser, p.68
(60) Sons and Lovers, p.306
(61) Sons and Lovers, p.161
(62) Sons and Lovers, p.311

Christian love-ideal," (63) Lawrence shows the effects of such an attitude on the second generation. Miriam develops a similar religious intensity and a love for things which, from a theoretical religious viewpoint, can be deemed "pure". Thus her attitude towards her baby brother, (see page 83 above) which mirrors a religious conception of a mother and child relationship; *and thus her love of flowers* - God's natural gifts to man: "To her, flowers appealed with such strength she felt she must make them part of herself. When she bent and breathed a flower, *it was as if she and the flower were loving each other.* Paul hated her for it. There seemed a sort of exposure about the action, something too intimate." (64) But such love is obviously excessive and Lawrence, with fine psychological understanding, relates it to her attitude towards sex. Her sex attitude mirrors her mother's: in a relationship with a man it is his soul and spirit which are of supreme importance; about the physical act of love there is at once a sense of "sin", which associates it with a feeling of disgust. So strong is this feeling that Miriam cannot even bear to contemplate the everyday matters of "birth and of begetting" on the farm:

> The men did all the discussing of farm matters outside. But, perhaps, because of the continual business of birth and of begetting which goes on upon every farm, Miriam was the more hypersensitive to the matter, and her blood was chastened almost to disgust of the faintest suggestion of such intercourse. Paul took his pitch from her, and their intimacy went on in an utterly blanched and chaste fashion. It could never be mentioned that the mare was in foal. (65)

The continued relation of Miriam's sexual attitude to her religious feelings is telling. Her "'purity' prevents even their first love-kiss," (66) and when, at Paul's insistence, she later agrees to a physical relationship with him, she "submits, religiously, to the sacrifice." (67) This image

(63) Stephen Potter: A First Study, p.47
(64) Sons and Lovers, p.188
(65) Ibid. p.177
(66) Ibid. p.194
(67) Ibid. p.304

of the "sacrifice" is most effective for, at once in keeping with Miriam's character and the natural culmination of her attitude, it reveals in a flash the utter impossibility of a satisfactory physical relationship between Miriam and Paul. And how deftly does Lawrence follow this up. When, after intercourse, the two are self-consciously discussing their reactions, and Paul maintains that Miriam still believes - like her mother - that the act is dreadful, Miriam replies: "No!... I believe, as you do, that loving, even in that way, is the high-water mark of living." (68) The tone of the "even", the accentuation of "that", and the hackneyed vagueness of "the high-water mark of living" (from Miriam, who is always precise in her language) reveal only too clearly what her attitude is.

Lawrence's portrayal of this relationship, too, gains force from the fact that it is not one-sided. The difficulties are not all of Miriam's making and we do not always see Miriam in the same light. In her fight with Paul against his mother and against Clara and, in the following scenes, we become aware of other aspects of her character. We see her forthright common-sense challenging Paul's inclination to give in to his mother:

> "Don't forget that bread, our Paul," cried Annie. "Good night, Miriam. I don't think it will rain."
>
> When they had all gone, Paul fetched the swathed loaf, unwrapped it, and surveyed it sadly.
>
> "It's a mess!" he said.
>
> "But," answered Miriam impatiently, "what is it, after all - twopence ha'penny."
>
> "Yes, but - it's the mater's precious baking, and she'll take it to heart..." (69)

We see her honesty and fearlessness in facing issues. Paul is announcing his intention of breaking with her:

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(68) Sons and Lovers, p.311
(69) Ibid. p. 223

"You see," he said, "with me - I don't think one person would ever monopolize me - be everything to me - I think never."

This she did not consider.

"No," she murmured. Then, after a pause, she looked at him, and her dark eyes flashed.

"This is your mother," she said. "I know she never liked me."

"No, no, it isn't," he said hastily. (70)

We observe her natural and wholesome cattishness:

Miriam put her finger in her mouth.

"Were you late home?" she asked.

At last he resented her tone.

"I caught the seven-thirty."

"Ha!"

They walked on in silence and he was angry.

"And how is Clara?" asked Miriam.

"Quite all right, I think."

"That's good!" she said, with a tinge of irony. "By the way, what of her husband? One never hears anything of him." (71)

But Paul's complicated feelings are also a hindrance in their relationship. At first, taking a lead from Miriam, he regards their relationship as platonic. Lawrence cleverly reveals this:

They continued to mount the winding staircase. A high wind, blowing through the loopholes, went rushing up the shaft, and filled the girl's skirts like a balloon, so that she was ashamed, until he took the hem of her dress and held it down for her. He did it perfectly simply, as he would have picked up her glove... (72)

Paul's action is naturally gentlemanly, but it also never occurs to him to connect Miriam with a sexual relationship.

Then his physical passion suddenly awakens and it is significant that Lawrence relates this to a symbolical fullness of the moon:

The way home was through a gap in the sandhills, and then along a raised grass road between two dykes. The country was black and still. From behind the sandhills came the whisper of the sea. Paul and Miriam walked in silence. Suddenly he started. The whole of his blood seemed to burst into flame, and he could scarcely breathe. An enormous orange moon was staring at them from the rim of the sandhills. He stood still, looking at it.

(70) Sons and Lovers, p.341
(71) Ibid. p.357
(72) Ibid. p.183

"Ah!" cried Miriam when she saw it.

> He remained perfectly still, staring at the immense and ruddy moon, the only thing in the far-reaching darkness of the level. His heart beat heavily, the muscles of his arms contracted. (73)

Although it is Miriam's "purity" which shortly thereafter prevents their first kiss, Lawrence skilfully shows that it is Paul, because of his own conflicts, who is forced to question his feelings and to rationalise: "He was afraid of her love for him. It was too good for him, and he was inadequate. His own love was at fault, not hers." (74) Yet Lawrence indicates quite clearly his own attitude to Paul's squeamishness. Paul himself later veers round and says to Miriam, "Don't you think we have been too fierce in our what they call purity? Don't you think that to be *so much afraid* and *averse is a sort of dirtiness*?" (75)

All along, of course, Paul's apparent squeamishness is but rationalisation. The real cause of his difficulty is his relationship with his mother; as long as his love of Miriam is identified with his love for his mother, any thought of a physical relationship with Miriam *is unconsciously repugnant* to him: "I can only give friendship - it's all I'm capable of - it's a flaw in my make-up," he says to Miriam, (76) and then more explicitly:

> "You'll never believe that I can't - can't physically, any more than I can fly up like a skylark -"
>
> "What?" she murmured. Now she dreaded.
> "Love you." (77)

And so Paul suffers intensely; unable to abandon his relationship with Miriam he yet remains highly conscious of its limitations. He tries to maintain his intellectual friendship with her, but Lawrence has already indicated, through a deft use of sexual phraseology, the incompleteness of such a relationship:

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(73) Sons and Lovers, p.193
(74) Ibid. p. 224
(75) Ibid. p. 301
(76) Ibid. p. 237
(77) Ibid. p. 238

> She looked up at him, with her dark eyes one flame of love. *He laughed uncomfortably.* Then he began to talk about the design. There was for him the most intense pleasure in talking about his work to Miriam. All his passion, all his wild blood, went into this intercourse with her, when he talked and conceived his work. She brought *forth to him* his imaginations. She did not understand, any more than a woman understands when she conceives a child in her womb. But this was life for her and for him. (78)

Finally, as his struggle to free himself from his mother's domination progresses, Paul determines to attempt a physical relationship with Miriam. But even then - and one is reminded of Lawrence's conception of the development of the book: "Slow, like growth" (see letter to Garnett, p.56 above) he is again forced, first, to rationalise not only his own hesitancy, but Miriam's as well:

> He had no aversion for her. No, it was the opposite; it was a strong desire battling with a still stronger shyness and virginity. It seemed as if virginity were a positive force, which fought and won in both of them. And with her he felt it so hard to overcome; yet he was nearest to her, and with her alone could he deliberately break through. (79)

For the reader there is a deep irony in Paul's last thought. Miriam, because of her own difficulties, cannot respond to Paul and, unlike him, she does not really try to fight through to a healthy attitude. Inevitably their attempt is a failure:

> Now he realized that she had not been with him all the time, that her soul *had* stood apart, in a sort of horror. He was physically at rest, but no more. Very dreary at heart, very sad, and very tender, his fingers wandered over her face pitifully. (80)

In his handling of the outcome of the relationship between Miriam and Paul, Lawrence evidences none of the uncertainty noticeable in his treatment of Helena and Siegmund under

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(78) Sons and Lovers, p.218
(79) Ibid. p.298
(80) Ibid. p.307

similar circumstances. Many years later (1925) in a letter to Dorothy Brett he explicitly repudiated the sort of relationship with which Paul and Miriam would have had to be content, had they remained together: "Friendship between a man and a woman, as a thing of first importance to either, is impossible: and I know it. We are creatures of two halves, spiritual and sensual - and each half is as important as the other. Any relation based on the one half - say the delicate spiritual half alone - inevitably brings repulsion and betrayal. It is halfness or partness, which causes Judas." (81) In the novel, Miriam leads Paul to a full realisation of the impossibility of their relationship. Paul tells her that he finally wishes to break with her and she is angry:

> "I have said you were only fourteen - you are only four!"
>
> He still dug at the earth viciously. He heard.
>
> "You are a child of four," she repeated in her anger.
>
> He did not answer, but said in his heart: "All right; if I'm a child of four, what do you want me for? I don't want another mother." (82)

The cleavage between them is fundamental. Both feel, though for different reasons, that Paul is being untrue to himself and in this difference the cleavage is crystallized. When Paul is physically attracted to Clara, Miriam bitterly reflects that he "could choose the lesser in place of the higher... He could be unfaithful to himself, unfaithful to the real, deep Paul Morel." (83) But Paul is not prepared artificially to divide himself in half. He is struggling to be true to himself and he finally breaks with Miriam - a positive action which is as significant as his determination not to follow his mother "into the darkness":

> He felt in leaving [Miriam] he was defrauding her of life. But he knew that, in staying, stifling the inner, desperate man, he was denying his own life. And he did not hope to give life to her by denying his own. (84)

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(81) Letters, pp.626-27
(82) Sons and Lovers, p.316
(83) Ibid. p.268
(84) Ibid. p.444

The reader feels the necessity and the inevitability of this conclusion to the relationship of Paul and Miriam, an inevitability which is reinforced by Lawrence's previous symbolic intimation of such a conclusion. Just before intercourse takes place between them for the first time Paul is climbing a cherry tree and Miriam is watching him:

> He looked down. There was a faint gold glimmer on her face, that looked very soft, turned up to him.
>
> "How high you are!" she said.
>
> Beside her, on the rhubarb leaves, were four dead birds, thieves that had been shot. Paul saw some cherry-stones hanging quite bleached, like skeletons, picked clear of flesh. He looked down again to Miriam. (85)

Paul seems here to have a premonition - intercourse with Miriam will somehow seem a violation, a "picking clear of flesh", an intrusion, which cannot make for life but only for death.

Although our attention is focused on the development of Paul, we are at the same time made intensely aware of the industrialised society in which he lives and of the ordinary miner's underground, and small-village social, life. The question of the extent of Morel's earnings for the week, the manner in which the money is collected by the children, and the way the money is shared out among the miners (this last described with delightful humour as Morel and his work-mates place the money on a table and then divide it *among* themselves by each taking "a sovereign till there were no more sovereigns; each half-a-crown till there were no more half-crowns" and so on till whatever money remains indivisible is spent on drinks (86)) - these facts form so much a part of Paul's life that we are scarcely conscious how detailed the background is. And when Lawrence shows Morel in a rare scene of harmonious intimacy with his family he not only enables us to see Morel in a different light but presents, too, further details of mining at that time: we watch Paul, for instance, helping his father to make

(85) Sons and Lovers, p.305
(86) Ibid. p.216

blasting-fuses and, quite by the way, learn of the use of horses in the mines as Morel begins his favourite anecdote:

> "Well, there's one little 'oss - we call 'im Taffy," he would begin, "An' he's a fawce un!"
> Morel had a warm way of telling a story. He made one feel Taffy's cunning.
> "He's a brown un..." (87)

(It may be noted, too, what mastery Lawrence displays in his handling of dialogue in this book. Gone are the artificialities observable in the dialogue of his previous work: instead the talk in Sons and Lovers is vividly realistic and the ease with which Lawrence explains the meaning of the strange word "fawce" in the above passage exemplifies his mastery.) Similarly we automatically note how early the miner leaves home in the morning, we remember that he takes with him only two thick slices of bread for his day's food while underground, and we notice the ritual of the wash in the scullery and the change into clean clothes at the end of the day's work. All these apparently casual details merge to form a comprehensive background, which is a considerable aid to a fuller understanding of the specific story of the Morels.

In this respect it is interesting to note the opening of the book, which Mr. West described as "an unsurpassed description of the last phase of the industrial revolution," (88) and which, from the outset, draws attention to the mining background. But more significant is the fact that it is so effective an opening - in contrast to the awkwardly descriptive first-person beginning of The White Peacock and the flashback technique of The Trespasser. The certainty with which Lawrence gradually moves from the general picture of industrial conditions to the description of the "Bottoms", which symbolise the change, and then naturally to Mrs. Morel is characteristic of the manner in which the whole book is constructed.

For, as Lawrence claimed in his letter to Garnett, the book has got form. I find it difficult to understand how

(87) Sons and Lovers, p.74
(88) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.113

Mr. West can feel that the form is haphazard: "This weakness is apparent in Sons and Lovers which would have been an altogether different book if Paul Morel's father had cleared out in Chapter II with his bundle.." (89). In the first place such critical "guesses" remind one rather of those hazarded about Hamlet's student life at Wittenberg - they are entirely irrelevant as far as the actual work of art is concerned. And secondly Mr. West seems to have missed the inevitability of events in Sons and Lovers. This is a compact book. There is scarcely an irrelevant incident in it, and from the opening pages it progresses in a slow but tight movement to its forceful conclusion. It has none of the looseness noticeable even in books like David Copperfield or Pendennis, where the dominant presence of the main characters alone provides a unity. Sons and Lovers is not only bound by the presence of Paul - throughout one feels beneath the surface action a clear purpose and order - and though it incidentally is a fine study in the growth and development to maturity of the main character, it is made so much the greater by the author's integration of this study within a theme of wider significance.

The manner in which Lawrence handles William and Clara is further evidence of the symmetry of this book. The main emphasis falls naturally on the interwoven relations of Paul and Mrs. Morel and Paul and Miriam, but Lawrence makes us well aware that a relationship such as that of Mr. and Mrs. Morel can give rise to an entanglement different from that pictured in the Paul-Mrs.Morel-Miriam embroilment. A son who is subject to a too intense love for his mother may also find that he can readily have sexual relations with another woman, but that he cannot really bring himself to love such a woman - because of his inability consciously to identify sexual passion with the object of his love, i.e. with the mother.

This is the development that we watch in the case of William. We just see enough of William's dissatisfac-

(89) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.118

tion with Gyp for us to recall that it was to her eldest son that Mrs. Morel first turned in her withdrawal from her husband. And with that vivid scene where William nearly comes to blows with his father, Lawrence not only links William's story to the main theme (for when Paul is later placed in a similar position we remember the earlier incident) but also points to the real nature of William's relationship with his mother. With sure artistic instinct Lawrence does not enter into great detail in his portrayal of William - a detailed study of William would have tended to overload the book and to distract attention from Paul on whom, all along, the main interest is concentrated. Instead, the portrayal of William fits neatly into the pattern of the book and, like an overture, effectively introduces the main work.

Lawrence's attention to form is perhaps even more evident in his handling of Clara. Ada Lawrence mentions that, whereas the majority of the characters in Sons and Lovers are drawn from life, Clara is entirely fictitious. (90) Lawrence obviously introduces her into the narrative, therefore, to round off his portrayal of Paul. Paul's relationship with Clara mirrors that of William and Gyp and is a necessary stage in his slow development to self-understanding. At the same time it is in complete contrast to his relationship with Miriam, and underlines his inability to have a satisfactory relationship with any woman while he remains bound to his mother. And it is the full knowledge of Paul's sense of hopelessness, arising from his realisation of his failure with Clara as well as with Miriam, that lends such power to his killing of his mother.

It may also be noted that Paul's association and growing intimacy with Clara takes place against the background of Jordan's House of Surgical Appliances, and that in this way Paul's life at work (which might otherwise be isolated from his life at home) is integrated into the book.

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(90) Ada Lawrence: Young Lorenzo, p.71

Sons and Lovers is a great book and must be ranked as Lawrence's best work. Its greatness seems to lie in the successful expression of a profound and significant idea within an aesthetic work, which has an artistic significance quite apart from the purpose behind its conception. In it Lawrence has managed to pin the elusive feel of life to such effect that it is the life which, transcending theory, becomes all-important. In reading Sons and Lovers we, too, partake of an intense experience and it is only afterwards that we begin to question the point of that experience. And when we, then, become convinced of its purposive significance we realise to the full the greatness of the book.

For Sons and Lovers has a significance which spreads beyond the immediate truth of the study of the Morel family. In it Lawrence deals with a fundamental problem of human relationships; in it he seeks to show the intense effort needed to smash the inevitable continuity of abnormality in the development of sons of unfulfilled mothers. A portion of the unpublished foreword to the book makes this clear:

> But the man who is the go-between from Woman to Production is the lover of that woman. And if that Woman be his mother, then is he her lover in part only; he carries for her, but is never received into her for his confirmation and renewal, and so wastes himself away in the flesh. The old son-lover was Oedipus. The name of the new one is legion. And if a son-lover take a wife, then is she not his wife, she is only his bed. And his life will be torn in twain, and his wife in her despair shall hope for sons, that she may have her lover in her hour. (91)

Sons and Lovers is a key work in any study of the development of Lawrence as a writer. It marks the end of his first period: in it he successfully works out the themes of his previous novels and with it he leaves the life of his youth. This book, too, goes far to explaining Lawrence's future preoccupation with the sexual relations of men and women. In Sons and Lovers he showed that Paul's conflict stemmed directly

(91) From a letter to Garnett, 1913, Letters, p.102

from the unsuccessful relationship between his father and mother. And though Lawrence showed that Paul was strong enough to fight himself free, he realised that a general remedy for such a situation could not lie in a similar crushing intensity of struggle but in a new approach to the originally complicating relationship of father and mother. Henceforth Lawrence devoted himself to working out the basis of a satisfactory relationship between husband and wife, a relationship in which the wife would be fulfilled and so would not need to turn to her sons for fulfilment, a relationship which would preclude a repetition of the intense suffering of Paul - of Lawrence's own suffering.

V

THE RAINBOW AND WOMEN IN LOVE.

Though The Rainbow was first published in 1915 and Women in Love in 1920, it is proposed to treat both books as a single work of art. This procedure has been adopted because Lawrence himself regarded each novel as only part of a whole - in a letter to Martin Secker (1920) he said: "The Rainbow and Women in Love are really an organic artistic whole. I cannot but think it would be well to issue them as Women in Love Vol. I and Vol. II." (1) An understanding of Lawrence's most complex theme in this work is dependent upon a recognition of the continuous process of development which informs it, from the opening pages of The Rainbow to the close of Women in Love.

This massive 1000-page work is so complex that critical synthesis must necessarily precede critical analysis - one has first to piece together somewhat diffuse parts to gain an idea of Lawrence's over-all intention before one can estimate his achievement. In this book (Vols. I and II) he declares the necessity for a new relationship between men and women; a relationship which is based on the need felt by both the man and the woman to retain a distinct individuality within a close union, and which is a concomitant of the change over the years in an industrial society. In order to express this theme Lawrence traces the different relations of the men and women of the Brangwen family through three successive generations.

The first relationship with which Lawrence deals is that between Tom Brangwen and Lydia Lensky. It is at once significant that they come together not long after the opening of new collieries near the Marsh Farm:

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(1) Letters, p.496

> About 1840, a canal was constructed across the meadows of the Marsh Farm, connecting the newly-opened collieries of the Erewash Valley. A high embankment travelled along the fields to carry the canal, which passed close to the homestead, and, reaching the road, went over in a high bridge....
>
> The Brangwens received a fair sum of money from this trespass across their land. Then, a short time afterwards, a colliery was sunk on the other side of the canal, and in a while the Midland Railway came down the valley at the foot of the Ilkeston hill, and the invasion was complete. The town grew rapidly, the Brangwens were kept busy producing supplies, they became richer, they were almost tradesmen. (2)

Their relationship, therefore, is developed against this changed, but more or less stable, industrial background, at a time when the impact of the new machinery was felt but when the effects of its use appeared generally beneficial. And this stability is reflected in Tom's unquestioning adherence to the certain moral values of the past. Though the attraction between Lydia and himself is purely physical, their relationship is at first spoilt by his attitude:

> When she opened and turned to him, then all that had been and all that was, was gone from her, she was as new as a flower that unsheathes itself and stands always ready, waiting, receptive. He could not understand this. He forced himself, through lack of understanding, to the adherence to the line of honourable courtship and sanctioned, licensed marriage. Therefore, after he had gone to the vicarage and asked for her, she remained for some days held in this one spell, open, receptive to him, before him. He was roused to chaos. He spoke to the vicar and gave in the banns. Then he stood to wait.
>
> She remained attentive and instinctively expectant before him, unfolded, ready to receive him. He could not act, because of self-fear and because of his conception of honour towards her. So he remained in a state of chaos.
>
> And, after a few days, gradually she closed again, away from him, was sheathed over, impervious to him, oblivious. Then a black, bottomless despair became real to him, he knew what he had lost.... (3)

Then they marry, but they remain strangers to each other and share a physical intimacy alone. Lawrence carefully analyses the ebb and flow of such a purely physical

(2) The Rainbow, pp.11-12
(3) Ibid. p.57

relationship. At times the satisfaction which they derive from their sexual relations outweighs the lack of personal intimacy - "What did it matter who they were, whether they knew each other or not?" (4) Then, when Lydia withdraws from Tom during her pregnancy and the weaning of their child, there is little left to bind them together: "... he raged, and, filled with suppression that became hot and bitter, hated her in his soul that she did not want him ..... he had mad outbursts, and drank and made ugly scenes." (5) When they come together again the impersonality of their relationship, of which both are acutely conscious, nearly causes a final break in their marriage. They both flare up:

> "You come to me as if it was for nothing, as if I was nothing there. When Paul came to me, I was something to him - a woman, I was. To you I am nothing - it is like cattle - or nothing -"
>
> "You make me feel as if I was nothing," he said. (6)

But, after this outburst (some two years after their marriage) they are mysteriously re-united in an even closer bond of physical intimacy. Their physical delight in each other remains a permanent feature of their marriage, and is of such lasting satisfaction that, when Anna is about to be married, Tom reflects:

> Was his life nothing? Had he nothing to show, no work? He did not count his work, anybody could have done it. What had he known, but the long, marital embrace with his wife! Curious, that this was what his life amounted to! At any rate, it was something, it was eternal. He would say so to anybody, and be proud of it. He lay with his wife in his arms, and she was still his fulfilment, just the same as ever. And that was the be-all and end-all. Yes, and he was proud of it. (7)

Tom and Lydia, therefore, finally achieve a happy marriage and, although Lawrence does not explicitly refer

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(4) The Rainbow, p.64
(5) Ibid. p.84
(6) Ibid. p.95
(7) Ibid. p.130

this achievement to the external scene, I feel that the wider implications of the book make it clear that their marriage reflects the initial harmony which marks the mechanisation of industry. The old moral values are maintained and, as if the effects of mechanisation on the worker were not yet felt, it is significant that the problem of the preservation of individuality within marriage is dealt with negatively; i.e. the clashes between Tom and Lydia are not a result of a striving to preserve individuality but arise rather from resentment at impersonality - the industrial threat to the individual is not yet so marked that, within marriage, he should attempt to assert his individuality at the expense of his partner.

The nature of this threat is more clearly shown in the relationship of Will and Anna, the relationship of the second generation. It is significant that the scene shifts from the placid farm-life of the Marsh, and that Will is a draughtsman in a lace factory. The extent to which he has become an automaton, negating his own individuality at the behest of an industrial system, is revealed on the first day of his honeymoon. He has "some weeks of holiday," but "in the morning, as the carts clanked by, and children shouted down the lane; as the hucksters came calling their wares, and the church clock struck eleven, and he and she had not yet got up, even to breakfast, he could not help feeling guilty, as if he were committing a breach of the law - ashamed that he was not up and doing." (8) He is so subjected to his work that, throughout their honeymoon, "it troubled Will Brangwen a little, in his orderly, conventional mind, that the established rule of things had gone so utterly." (9) But the factory system does not leave room for an individual enjoyment of work: Will's work is "done purely by effort of will," (10) and, in reaction, his relationship with Anna soon

(8) The Rainbow, p.146
(9) Ibid. p.151
(10) Ibid. p.223

makes clear to him how little he is intrinsically concerned with the everyday world of his work:

> He surveyed the rind of the world: houses, factories, trams, the discarded rind; people scurrying about, work going on, all on the discarded surface. An earthquake had burst it all from inside. It was as if the inner surface of the world had been broken away entire: Ilkeston, streets, church, people, work, rule-of-the-day, all intact; and yet peeled away into unreality, leaving here exposed the inside, the reality: one's own being, strange feelings and passions and yearnings and beliefs and aspirations, suddenly become present, revealed, the permanent bedrock, knitted one rock into the woman one loved. (11)
>
> And yet, for his own part, for his private being, Brangwen felt that the whole of the man's world was exterior and extraneous to his own real life with Anna. Sweep away the whole monstrous superstructure of the world of to-day, cities and industries and civilisation, leave only the bare earth with plants growing and waters running, and he would not mind, so long as he were whole, had Anna and the child and the new, strange certainty in his soul. Then, if he were naked, he would find clothing somewhere, he would make a shelter and bring food to his wife.
>
> And what more? What more would be necessary? The great mass of activity in which mankind was engaged meant nothing to him. By nature, he had no part in it...(12)

Will's attitude to his work profoundly affects his relationship with Anna. In the early days of their marriage it at first appears as if their relationship is similar to that of Lydia and Tom. Physical attraction is the basis of the marriage of Will and Anna, too, and they also experience the disappointment of the ebb and flow of physical passion. But, when Will feels rejected by Anna, his reaction is more intense than that of Tom: "The dark storms rose in him, his eyes glowed black and evil, he was fiendish in his thwarted soul." (13) And when Anna withdraws from him during her pregnancy we are made aware of the deep forces at work within him:

> And he was unsatisfied, unfulfilled, he raged in torment, wanting, wanting. It was for her to satisfy him: then let her do it. Let her not come with flowery handfuls of innocent love. He would throw these aside and trample the flowers to nothing. He would

(11) The Rainbow, p.152
(12) Ibid. pp.195-6
(13) Ibid. p.154

> destroy her flowery, innocent bliss. Was he not entitled to satisfaction from her, and was not his heart all raging desire, his soul a black torment of unfulfilment? Let it be fulfilled in him, then, as it was fulfilled in her. He had given her her fulfilment. Let her rise up and do her part. (14)

But they, too, come together in moments of fulfilment so that if "one day it seemed as if everything was shattered, all life spoiled, ruined, desolated and laid waste ... the next day it was all marvellous again, just marvellous." (15) Superimposed on the sexual conflict, however, there begins the conflict of opposing personalities. Will, in reaction to the negation of his personality at work, seeks to find significance, and to lose himself, in a great mystical passion for Anna, which is connected with his mystical religious passion. And Anna, whose approach to life is rational, bitterly resents his mysticism:

> He did not want things to be intelligible.... In church, he wanted a dark, nameless emotion, the emotion of all the great mysteries of passion.... He ignored the sermon, he ignored the greatness of mankind, he did not admit the immediate importance of mankind. He did not care about himself as a human being. He did not attach any vital importance to his life in the drafting office, or his life among men. That was just merely the margin to the text. The verity was his connection with Anna and his connection with the Church, his real being lay in his dark emotional experience of the Infinite, of the Absolute. And the great mysterious, illuminated capitals to the text, were his feelings with the Church... It exasperated her beyond measure. (16)

> It was always the unknown, always the unknown, and she clung fiercely to her known self. (17)

It is significant that Will, whose individuality in the world of men is crushed, seeks to assert himself in his marriage relationship. But Anna, too, wishes to preserve her own individuality and she fiercely attacks Will's beliefs. A violent conflict results in which she feels that he wants "to impose himself on her," (18) while "the deep root of his enmity lay in the fact that she jeered at his soul." (19)

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(14) The Rainbow, p.184
(15) Ibid. p.189
(16) Ibid. p.181
(17) Ibid. p.169
(18) Ibid. p.172
(19) Ibid. p.173

Will's attempt at domination is revealed in a flashing scene, which is effective because so rare in The Rainbow:

> She almost against herself, clung to the worship of the human knowledge. Man must die in the body, but in his knowledge he was immortal. Such, somewhere, was her belief, quite obscure and unformulated. She believed in the omnipotence of the human mind.
>
> He, on the other hand, blind as a subterranean thing, just ignored the human mind and ran after his own dark-souled desires, following his own tunnelling nose. She felt often she must suffocate. And she fought him off.
>
> Then he, knowing he was blind, fought madly back again, frantic in sensual fear. He did foolish things. He asserted himself on his rights, he arrogated the old position of master of the house.
>
> "You've a right to do as I want," he cried.
>
> "Fool!" she answered. "Fool!"
>
> "I'll let you know who's master," he cried.
>
> "Fool!" she answered. "Fool! I've known my own father, who could put a dozen of you in his pipe and push them down with his finger-end. Don't I know what a fool you are!" (20)

A passage in Fantasia of the Unconscious throws some light on Lawrence's implicit condemnation of Will and Anna for their failure to let each other be, to respect each other's individuality:

> I am I, but also you are you, and we are in sad need of a theory of human relativity. We need it much more than the universe does. The stars know how to prowl round one another without much damage done. But you and I, dear reader, in the first conviction that you are me and that I am you, owing to the oneness of mankind, why, we are always falling foul of one another, and chewing each other's fur. (21)

With Will and Anna the struggle for domination is so intense that Will carries it over into their sexual relations, seeking, in some manner, to impose his view on her sexually:

> Then she turned fiercely on him, and fought him. He was not to do this to her, it was monstrous. What horrible hold did he want to have over her body? Why did he want to drag her down, and kill her spirit? Why did he want to deny her spirit? Why did he deny her spirituality, hold her for a body only? And was he to claim her carcase? (22)

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(20) The Rainbow, pp.175-6
(21) Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.20
(22) The Rainbow, p.188

Since neither of the two, however, is prepared to give in, each eventually abandons the attempt at subordination of the other. Anna comes to have "a sort of respect" for Will, who gives up "trying to have the spiritual superiority and control" and lives "simply by her physical love for him." (23) But this arrangement is in the nature of a compromise; it does not represent a fully achieved and mutually recognised individuality. As a result Will is not fully satisfied: "His abandoning of claims, his living isolated upon his own interest, made him seem unreal, unimportant." (24) He remains quiescent and aloof for seven years while Anna is occupied in bearing and rearing children, but then his dissatisfaction asserts itself. His sense of failure with Anna leads him, unsuccessfully, to attempt to seduce a young girl, and this event is of great significance in the book. For the reader, conscious of Tom's adherence to accepted moral standards, this represents the first break in the acceptance of the old moral values; a break which, within the pattern of the book, must be linked with the growing neutralisation of the individual in an industrial society and with the individual's unconscious revolt against the values of such a society. But explicitly it is also a strange means of bringing Anna and Will finally together. She becomes instinctively aware of the attempted seduction and rouses to meet him on his own ground. She awakens in him a renewed and extreme physical passion for her and for some time they live in "a passion of sensual discovery." (25) This passion, thereafter, so dominates their lives that both attain fulfilment and remain happy and contented (Anna, it might be noted, bears nine children). The thematic implications of their coming together, though, are more involved. In the first place it is clear that they do not solve the problem of the mutual preservation of individuality within marriage - they merely side-step it. Their "modus vivendi" is successful enough, but in their rediscovered joy they take little account of each other as individuals; their passion, like

(23) The Rainbow, p. 211
(24) Ibid. p.211
(25) Ibid. p.239

that of Tom and Lydia, becomes completely impersonal and the harmony which finally marks the relationship of the second generation is essentially not an advancement on that of the first:

> This was what their love had become, a sensuality violent and extreme as death. They had no conscious intimacy, no tenderness of love. It was all the lust and the infinite, maddening intoxication of the senses, a passion of death. (26)

But, at the same time, Will's fulfilment in marriage does enable him to reassert his individuality in the eternal everyday world:

> And gradually, Brangwen began to find himself free to attend to the outside life as well. His intimate life was so violently active, that it set another man in him free. And this new man turned with interest to public life to see what part he could take in it. This would give him scope for new activity, activity of a kind for which he was now created and released... (27)

The pressure of industrialism is too great for him to change his role in the lace factory but, after hours, he starts night-classes in woodwork for the village boys and so takes part in an individual, purposive activity beyond his marriage. Then, some ten years later, he finally manages to escape altogether from his deadening work in the factory - though it is significant that his relationship with Anna does not change:

> He knew his work in the lace designing meant little to him personally, he just earned his wage by it. He did not know what meant much to him. Living close to Anna Brangwen, his mind was always suffused through with physical heat, he moved from instinct to instinct, groping, always groping on.
>
> When it was suggested to him that he might apply for one of the posts as hand-work instructor, posts about to be created by the Nottingham Education Committee, it was as if a space had been given to him, into which he could remove from his hot, dusky enclosure. He sent in his application, confidently, expectantly. He had a sort of belief in his supernatural fate. The inevitable weariness of his daily work had stiffened some of his muscles, and made a slight deadness in his ruddy, alert face. Now he might escape. (28)

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(26) The Rainbow, p.240
(27) Ibid. p.241
(28) Ibid. p.433

But even the possibilities of such escape appear more remote by the time Ursula, of the third generation of Brangwens, reaches maturity. The mechanisation of industry and the attendant effect on society are now more markedly noticeable..... Ursula goes to visit her Uncle Tom (son of Tom and Lydia).

> He lived in a large new house of red brick, standing outside a mass of homogeneous red-brick dwellings, called Wiggiston. Wiggiston was only seven years old. It had been a hamlet of eleven houses on the edge of healthy, half-agricultural country. Then the great seam of coal had been opened. In a year Wiggiston appeared, a great mass of pinkish rows of thin, unreal dwellings of five rooms each. The streets were like visions of pure ugliness; a grey-black macadamised road, asphalt causeways, held in between a flat succession of wall, window, and door, a new-brick channel that began nowhere, and ended nowhere. Everything was amorphous, yet everything repeated itself endlessly. Only now and then, in one of the house-windows Vegetables or small groceries were displayed for sale. (29)

And the fate of the individual within such a society is now more clearly decided. Tom, a colliery manager, tells Ursula and Winifred how his housekeeper's husband has died of consumption contracted while working in the mine. Then he says:

> "She'll be getting married again directly. One man or another - it does not matter very much. They're all colliers."
>
> "What do you mean?" asked Ursula. "They're all colliers?"
>
> "It is with the women as with us," he replied. "Her husband was John Smith, loader. We reckoned him as a loader, he reckoned himself as a loader, and so she knew he represented his job. Marriage and home is a little side-show. The women know it right enough, and take it for what it's worth. One man or another, it doesn't matter all the world. The pit matters. Round the pit there will always be the side-shows, plenty of 'em."
>
> He looked round at the red chaos, the rigid, amorphous confusion of Wiggiston.
>
> "Every man his own little side-show, his home, but the pit owns every man. The women have what is left. What's left of this man, or what is left of that - it doesn't matter altogether. The pit takes all that really matters."

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(29) The Rainbow, p.349

"It is the same everywhere," burst out Winifred. "It is the office, or the shop, or the business that gets the man, the woman gets the bit the shop can't digest. What is he at home, a man? He is a meaningless lump - a standing machine, a machine out of work."

"They know they are sold," said Tom Brangwen. "That's where it is. They know they are sold to their job. If a woman talks her throat out, what difference can it make? The man's sold to his job. So the woman don't bother. They take what they can catch - and 'vogue la galère'."

"Aren't they very strict here?" asked Miss Inger.

"Oh, no. Mrs. Smith has two sisters who have just changed husbands. They're not very particular - neither are they very interested. They go dragging along what is left from the pits. They're not interested enough to be very immoral - it all amounts to the same thing, moral or immoral - just a question of [illegible]. The most moral duke in England makes two hundred and a year out of these pits. He keeps the morality and up." (30)

Ursula, significantly, rebels not only against this mechanisation but also against the completed relationship of her father and mother which, in its aloofness, is in opposition to the working world:

Hatred sprang up in Ursula's heart. If she could she would smash the machine. Her soul's action should be the smashing of the great machine. If she could destroy the colliery, and make all the men of Wiggiston out of work, she would do it. Let them starve and grub in the earth for roots, rather than serve such a Moloch as this. (31)

This long trance of complacent child-bearing had kept [Anna] young and undeveloped.... All these years nothing had happened save the coming of the children, nothing had mattered but the bodies of her babies. As her children came into consciousness, as they began to suffer their own fulfilment, she cast them off. But she remained dominant in the house. Brangwen continued in a kind of rich drowse of physical heat, in connection with his wife. They were neither of them quite personal, quite defined as individuals, so much were they pervaded by the physical heat of breeding and rearing their young.

How Ursula resented it, how she fought against the close, physical, limited life of herded domesticity!" (32)

So Ursula determines to leave her parents' home and to become a teacher, a striking departure for a Brangwen woman

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(30) The Rainbow, pp. 353-4
(31) Ibid. p.355
(32) Ibid. p.359

and illustrative of the gradual change in the status of women. (One remembers that Ursula's friend Winifred is most interested in the "Women's Movement" of the time). But, in becoming a teacher, Ursula wishes not only to assert her womanly independence but to strike her blow against the world of the machine and for personal relationships:

> She dreamed how she would make the little, ugly children love her. She would be so personal. Teachers were always so hard and impersonal. There was no vivid relationship. She would make everything personal and vivid, she would give herself, she would give, give, give all her great stores of wealth to her children, she would make them so happy, and they would prefer her to any teacher on the face of the earth. (33)

In that brilliant chapter entitled The Man's World (written with a conviction surely indicative of personal experience) Lawrence shows, however, that the mechanisation of industry is all-pervasive in its effects. It has led, in fact, to the complete change of a culture, and has imposed its own imprint on society at large. In her teaching Ursula also falls foul of the system and, strive as she does to retain her individuality, she too is eventually forced to submit to the machine:

> Must she be like this? [i.e. like Mr. Brunt]. She could feel the ghastly necessity. She must become the same - put away the personal self, become an instrument, an abstraction, working upon a certain material, the class, to achieve a set purpose of making them know so much each day. And she could not submit. Yet gradually she felt the invincible iron closing upon her. The sun was being blocked out. Often when she went out at play-time and saw a luminous blue sky with changing clouds, it seemed just a fantasy, like a piece of painted scenery. Her heart was so black and tangled in the teaching, her personal self was shut in prison, abolished, she was subjugate to a bad, destructive will. How then could the sky be shining? There was no sky, there was no luminous atmosphere of out-of-doors. Only the inside of the school was real - hard, concrete, real and vicious. (34)

> She had another self, another responsibility. She was no longer Ursula Brangwen, daughter of William Brangwen. She was also Standard Five teacher in St. Philip's School. And it was a case now of being Standard Five teacher, and nothing else. For she could not escape. (35)

(33) The Rainbow, p.272
(34) Ibid. p.388 /72
(35) Ibid. pp.395-96

As a result Ursula eventually turns her back on the world and tries to escape from the hard reality in a love relationship with Skrebensky. ("She was in dread of the material world ... She wanted to run to meet Skrebensky, the new life, the reality.") (36) In doing so she also turns her back on the accepted values of the world, and she and Skrebensky live as husband and wife without being married. The change, witnessed through three generations of Brangwens (and noticeable, too, in the behaviour of the colliers - see "the most moral duke in England" quotation, p.107 above) is now complete and the old moral code revoked. But because Ursula wishes to deny the existence of the outside world she is forced, in her relationship with Skrebensky, to seek for a most intense sexual experience with him. An extraordinary fulfilment alone can compensate for the withdrawal from the world:

> The trouble began at evening. Then a yearning for something unknown came over her, a passion for something she knew not what. She would walk the foreshore alone after dusk, expecting, expecting something, as if she had gone to a rendezvous. The salt, bitter passion of the sea, its indifference to the earth, its swinging, definite motion; its strength, its attack, and its salt burning, seemed to provoke her to a pitch of madness, tantalising her with vast suggestions of fulfilment. And then, for personification, would come Skrebensky, Skrebensky, whom she knew, whom she was fond of, who was attractive, but whose soul could not contain her in its waves of strength, nor his breast compel her in burning, salty passion. (37)

This fulfilment she is unable to obtain until, finally, she forces the issue. But then she resorts to sexual domination and, in her terrifying consummation, she denies Skrebensky's individuality, using him impersonally, as an instrument. Thereafter continued relationship between them is impossible:

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(36) The Rainbow, p.447
(37) Ibid. p.484

> She lay motionless, with wide-open eyes looking at the moon. He came direct to her, without preliminaries. She held him pinned down at the chest, awful. The fight, the struggle for consummation was terrible. It lasted till it was agony to his soul, till he succumbed, till he gave way as if dead, and lay with his face buried, partly in her hair, partly in the sand, motionless, as if he would be motionless now for ever, hidden away in the dark, buried, only buried, he only wantedto be buried in the goodly darkness, only that, and no more.
>
> He seemed to swoon. It was a long time before he came to himself. He was aware of an unusual motion of her breast. He looked up. Her face lay like an image in the moonlight, the eyes wide open, rigid. But out of the eyes, slowly, there rolled a tear, that glittered in the moonlight as it ran down her cheek. (38)

After they have parted, Ursula regrets her behaviour: "She had been wrong, she had been arrogant and wicked, wanting that other thing, that fantastic freedom, that illusory, conceited fulfilment which she had imagined she could not have with Skrebensky. Who was she to be wanting some fantastic fulfilment in her life?" (39) But, somehow, after this experience and her subsequent nightmare miscarriage, (a too convenient plot mechanism, this) she arrives at an understanding of herself and is left with the hope of a new order in the world of men:

> Nay, when she looked ahead, into the undiscovered land before her, what was there she could recognise but a fresh glow of light and inscrutable trees going up from the earth like smoke? It was the unknown, the unexplored, the undiscovered upon whose shore she had landed, alone, after crossing the void, the darkness which washed the New World and the Old. (40)

The relationship of Gudrun and Gerald serves as a commentary on that of Ursula and Skrebensky, but carried a step further to ultimate destruction. Nor is it chance that the greater fierceness of the struggle between them is paralleled by the final inhuman mechanisation of industry. And it is significant that Gerald himself is directly responsible for the change. In that masterly chapter The Industrial Magnate Lawrence analyses the change wrought by Gerald:

(38) The Rainbow, p.486
(39) Ibid. p. 491
(40) Ibid. p. 500

Without bothering to think to a conclusion, Gerald jumped to a conclusion. He abandoned the whole democratic-equality problem as a problem of silliness. What mattered was the great social productive machine. Let that work perfectly, let it produce a sufficiency of everything, let every man be given a rational portion, greater or less according to his functional degree or magnitude, and then, provision made, let the devil supervene, let every man look after his own amusements and appetites, so long as he interfered with nobody. (41)

Gradually Gerald got hold of everything. And then began the great reform. Expert engineers were introduced in every department. An enormous electric plant was installed, both for lighting and for haulage underground, and for power. The electricity was carried into every mine. New machinery was brought from America, such as the miners had never seen before, great iron men, as the cutting machines were called, and unusual appliances. The working of the pits was thoroughly changed, all the control was taken out of the hands of the miners, the butty system was abolished. Everything was on the most accurate and delicate scientific method, elevated and expert men were in control everywhere, the miners were reduced to mere mechanical instruments. They had to work hard, much harder than before, the work was terrible and heart-breaking in its mechanicalness.

But they submitted to it all. The joy went out of their lives, the hope seemed to perish as they became more and more mechanised. And yet they accepted the new conditions. They even got a further satisfaction out of them. At first they hated Gerald Crich, they swore to do something to him, to murder him. But as time went on, they accepted everything with some fatal satisfaction. Gerald was their high priest, he represented the religion they really felt. His father was forgotten already. There was a new world, a new order, strict, terrible, inhuman, but satisfying in its very destructiveness. The men were satisfied to belong to the great and wonderful machine, even whilst it destroyed them. It was what they wanted. It was the highest that man had produced, the most wonderful and superhuman. They were exalted by belonging to this great and superhuman system which was beyond feeling or reason, something really godlike. Their hearts died within them, but their souls were satisfied. It was what they wanted. Otherwise Gerald could never have done what he did. He was just ahead of them in giving them what they wanted, this participation in a great and perfect system that subjected life to pure mathematical principles. This was a sort of freedom, the sort they really wanted. It was the first great step in undoing, the first great phase of chaos, the substitution of the mechanical principle for the organic, the destruction of the organic purpose, the organic unity, and the subordination of every organic unit to the great mechanical purpose. It was pure organic disintegration and pure mechanical organisation. This is the first and finest state of chaos. (42)

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(41) Women in Love, p.238
(42) Ibid. pp.241-42

With this "pure mechanical organisation", there disappear the last vestiges of the old values. Gerald's father feels that "the whole frame of the real life was broken for him. He had been right according to his lights. And his lights had been those of the great religion. Yet they seemed to have become obsolete, to be superseded in the world." (43) As if to emphasise this, Gerald and Gudrun, in their relationship, ignore all moral standards. They, too, live together as husband and wife without being married.

Their attraction to one another is complex, but it is connected with the sort of relationship that exists between Gerald and his workers. Gerald's will to dominate is expressed not only in his attitude towards his work but also in his attitude towards Gudrun:

> And it was his will to subjugate Matter to his own ends. The subjugation itself was the point, the fight was the be-all, the fruits of victory were mere results. It was not for the sake of money that Gerald took over the mines. He did not care about money, fundamentally. He was neither ostentatious nor luxurious, neither did he care about social position, not finally. What he wanted was the pure fulfilment of his own will in the struggle with the natural conditions. His will was now, to take the coal out of the earth, profitably. The profit was merely the condition of victory, but the victory itself lay in the feat achieved. (44)

> [Gudrun] appealed to Gerald strongly. He felt an awful, enjoyable power over her, an instinctive cherishing very near to cruelty. For she was a victim. He felt that she was in his power, and he was generous. The electricity was turgid and voluptuously rich in his limbs. He would be able to destroy her utterly in the strength of his discharge. (45)

The relation of Gerald's will to dominate with his sexual attitude is revealed in the description of his cruel handling of the mare at the railway crossing:

> Meanwhile the eternal trucks were rumbling on, very slowly, treading one after the other, one after the other, like a disgusting dream that has no end. The connecting chains were grinding and squeaking as the tension varied, the mare pawed and struck away mechanically now, her terror fulfilled in her, for now the man encompassed her; her paws were blind and pathetic as she beat the air, the man closed round her, and brought her down almost as if she were part of his own physique. (46)

(43) Women in Love, p. 241, (44) Ibid. p.234
(45) Ibid. p.66. (46) Ibid. pp.114-15

And for Gudrun, who watches Gerald and the horse, there exists in his struggle that sort of attraction of repulsion, which characterises the attitude of the miners towards mechanisation:

> Gudrun was as if numbed in her mind by the sense of indomitable soft weight of the man, bearing down into the living body of the horse: the strong, indomitable thighs of the blond man clenching the palpitating body of the mare into pure control; a sort of soft white magnetic domination from the loins and thighs and calves, enclosing and encompassing the mare heavily into unutterable subordination, soft blood-subordination, terrible. (47)

But Gudrun herself has a similar sort of desire for physical domination, a fact which is revealed in her headlong rush on the bullocks after her strangely passionate eurythmic dancing to them:

> Then in a sudden motion, she lifted her arms and rushed sheer upon the long-horned bullocks, in shuddering irregular runs, pausing for a second and looking at them, then lifting her hands and running forward with a flash, till they ceased pawing the ground, and gave way, snorting with terror, lifting their heads from the ground and flinging themselves away, galloping off into the evening, becoming tiny in the distance, and still not stopping.
>
> Gudrun remained staring after them, with a mask-like defiant face. (48)

This is made still clearer in her struggle to hold the "great lusty rabbit":

> Gudrun stood for a moment astounded by the thunderstorm that had sprung into being in her grip. Then her colour came up, a heavy rage came over her like a cloud. She stood shaken as a house in a storm, and utterly overcome. Her heart was arrested with fury at the mindlessness and the bestial stupidity of this struggle, her wrists were badly scored by the claws of the beast, a heavy cruelty welled up in her.
>
> Gerald came round as she was trying to capture the flying rabbit under her arm. He saw, with subtle recognition, her sullen passion of cruelty. (49)

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(47) Women in Love, pp.116-17
(48) Ibid. p.176
(49) Ibid. pp.251-2

Both Gudrun and Gerald turn to each other to escape from the outside world; she to "escape from the heavy slough of the pale, underworld, automatic colliers," (50) and he, when his task is accomplished in the mines and his father is dying, to escape from a feeling of nullity "like a bubble filled with darkness, round which whirled the iridescence of his consciousness, and upon which the pressure of the outer world, the outer life, roared vastly." (51) But their coming together can only end disastrously for in both, as if in reaction to the mechanical outside world, there is a desire for unrestraint, for the height of sensual fulfilment:

> They both felt the subterranean desire to let go, to fling away everything, and lapse into a sheer unrestraint, brutal and licentious. A strange black passion surged up pure in Gudrun. She felt strong. She felt her hands so strong, as if she could tear the world asunder with them. She remembered the abandonment of Roman licence, and her heart grew hot. She knew she wanted this herself also - or something, something equivalent. Ah, if that which was unknown and suppressed in her were once let loose, what an orgiastic and satisfying event it would be. And she wanted it, she trembled slightly from the proximity of the man, who stood just behind her, suggestive of the same black licentiousness that rose in herself. She wanted it with him, this unacknowledged frenzy. (52)

And in both there is the savage desire to dominate - even at the cost of the extinction of the individuality of the other. So, to Gudrun "his passion was awful... tense and ghastly, and impersonal, like a destruction, ultimate. She felt it would kill her. She was being killed." (53) And Gerald feels that "her senses were entirely apart from him, cold and destructive of him. It was her overbearing will that insisted." (54) Yet Gerald resents even more than her attempt at domination her bid to thwart him, her flirtation with Loerke. He pursues her, denying her even the right to the slightest independent individuality - the right to a private enjoyment of a sunset - hating her, and yet tied to her. In the end he

(50) Women in Love, p.123
(51) Ibid. p.340
(52) Ibid. p.302
(53) Ibid. p.469
(54) Ibid. p.468

realises the futility of their relationship but feels there is only one way left to free himself from Gudrun. He attempts to kill her and then wanders off into the snow, to die of exposure. Gudrun's experience with Gerald leads her to abandon her view of the paramount importance of a sexual relationship with a man, and she turns to the physically unattractive Loerke for a "companionship in intelligence".

It is worth noticing, as Dr. Leavis points out, that Loerke's role is not merely functional. Lawrence's scheme is so complex that Loerke, the artist, has a significance quite apart from his liaison with Gudrun, and his connection with Gerald is a stronger one than that of contrasted rival in a triangle situation. Loerke is "doing a great frieze for a factory in Cologne" and, expounding his view of his art to Gudrun and Ursula, he says:

> "Since churches are all museum stuff, since industry is our business, now, then let us make our places of industry our art - our factory-area our Parthenon, ecco!..... Art should interpret industry, as art once interpreted religion .... What is man doing, when he is at a fair like this? [he refers here to his frieze]. He is fulfilling the counterpart of labour - the machine works him, instead of he the machine. He enjoys the mechanical motion in his own body." (55)

Though Loerke is a minor character he is thus firmly integrated into the main theme and, as Dr. Leavis says, "the relation of [his] attitude to Gerald's doesn't need labouring: both artist and industrialist accept, from their different points of view, the triumph of mechanism, and the implicit reduction of human life to mere instrumentality." (56)

In his portrayal of these relationships, then, the relationships of Tom and Lydia, of Will and Anna, of Ursula and Skrebensky and of Gerald and Gudrun, Lawrence attempted the vast undertaking of correlating changes in personal relationships with general changes in a society consequent upon the progressive

(55) Women in Love, pp.447-48: Quoted by Dr. Leavis.
(56) F. R. Leavis: Scrutiny Mar; 1951, Essay on Women in Love, p.3al

mechanisation of industry. This much seems clear - despite the more common view expressed by Mr. Aldington who, referring only to the first volume of this work, says: "What Lawrence had done through his story of three generations of Brangwens was to build up an exposition of his belief in marriage as the consummation of life in Man and Woman." (57) In fact, Lawrence's intention seems rather to have been the portrayal of the inadequacy of those relationships between men and women, a view which is backed by his own explicit statement. Writing to Lady Cynthia Asquith, he said: "You ask me about the message of the Rainbow. I don't know myself what it is; except that the older world is done for, toppling on top of us: and that it's no use the men looking to the women for salvation, nor the women looking to sensuous satisfaction for their fulfilment. There must be a new world." (58) Then, in the second volume and parallel to the portrayal of Gerald and Gudrun, he contrasts with all these "old" relationships the relationship of Birkin and Ursula, the relationship which he believes will form the basis of "a new world". Before discussion of this relationship, however, it is perhaps as well to consider the extent of Lawrence's achievement in his handling of the relationships already referred to - for our belief in the necessity for a new relationship is largely dependent on our acceptance of Lawrence's conception of the changes in society and of the inadequacy of the old relationships.

Lawrence's handling of the background material of the book is, I feel, eminently successful. By dealing with three generations of Brangwens he impresses on us a sense of the passing of time and emphasises the change in values of society by the growing independence and "emancipation" of the Brangwen women of the third generation. At the same time one is throughout aware of the steady mechanisation of industry which, with gathering momentum, reaches its peak in Gerald's handling of his colliers.

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(57) Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But... pp.170-1
See, too, Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p.25

(58) Letters, p.316

Lawrence's touch here is light but sure, for the references to such mechanisation are introduced naturally into the flow of the narrative and one never feels that he is forcing this point home. The effect which this mechanisation has on the attitudes of the various characters is subtly suggested. The connection between the two is entirely implicit but, as has been shown, once the pattern of the book is grasped, it is clearly revealed.

In his direct handling of the personal relationships, however, I feel that Lawrence is not altogether successful. Though one is at length able to understand the thematic implications of these relationships and to form a mental picture of their pattern, one's final impression is perhaps too intellectual - one is only theoretically convinced of the truth of Lawrence's view. It is only rarely that Tom, Lydia, Will, Anna and Skrebensky flash into full life and that the reader's sympathy is wholly engaged. And when one does not fully believe in the characters as human beings the significance of their actions is proportionately reduced. Nevertheless Lawrence's characters are by no means stock figures or caricatures - as one might have expected from a writer whose previous ability to create convincingly detailed characters was so marked. His technique in this respect was quite deliberate, as is revealed in the following letter to Edward Garnett:

> I only care about what the woman <u>is</u> - what *she* <u>*is*</u> - inhumanly, physiologically, materially - according to the use of the word: but for me, what she <u>is</u> as a phenomenon (or as representing some greater inhuman will) instead of what she feels according to the human conception... You mustn't look in my novel for the old stable <u>ego</u> of the *character*. There is another <u>ego</u>, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercize, to discover are states of the same single radically unchanged element. (Like as diamond and coal are the same pure single element of carbon. The ordinary novel would trace the history of the diamond - but I say, "Diamond, what! This is carbon." And my diamond might be coal or soot, and my theme is carbon).
>
> ..... I don't care [for] the old-fashioned human element which causes one to conceive a character in a certain moral scheme and make him consistent. The certain moral scheme is what I object to. (59)

(59) <u>Letters</u>, p.198

One can readily understand what led Lawrence to adopt this technique. In this work he was primarily concerned with deep, elemental, physical responses which are veiled over in the everyday personality. And in order to come to grips with these responses he perforce abandoned the everyday personality. As he said later, he was not interested in "childish things like: 'Do I love the girl, or don't I?' - 'Am I pure and sweet, or am I not?'- 'Do I unbutton my right glove first, or my left?' - 'Did my mother ruin my life by refusing to drink the cocoa which my bride had boiled for her?' These questions and their answers don't really interest me any more, though the world still goes sawing them over." (60) At the same time it was necessary, within the pattern of the book, that his characters should appear to be universal figures; unmarked by individual idiosyncrasies they were to be representative of humanity caught up in a mechanised world. And in describing such physical responses and in making us feel that the conflicts of the characters are of more than individual significance Lawrence largely achieves what he set out to do but, as has been said, his success is intellectual. We cannot really believe in a character who seems to have a physical being alone, and our view of Tom and Lydia, Will and Anna and Ursula and Skrebensky is restricted to their physical relationships. For this view to be complete we would need to know far more about the characters, about their everyday personalities; but, in clinging to his new conception of character, Lawrence neglected a primary requisite of the great novel - a fullness of view. Therefore, when we are told, for instance, that "her whole soul was implicated with Skrebensky - not the young man of the world, but the undifferentiated man he was," (61) we know so little of "the young man of the world" that it is difficult to believe in Skrebensky at all.

(60) Surgery for the Novel - Or a Bomb, in Phoenix, pp.519-20
(61) The Rainbow, p.457

Lawrence's conception of the undifferentiated man or woman posed him a technical problem which he did not resolve. When character is abstracted so far back that it comprises only an elemental base, that it is all carbon, this base becomes common to different people; and although we may at times be led to accept that, deep-down, we are all alike, we do generally believe that human beings are different. When Lawrence ignores these differences and concentrates on the common base he not only distorts his view but, to a certain extent, runs counter to his purpose. It is essential that we recognise in the story of the personal relationships of three generations of Brangwens and of the parallel mechanisation of industry a continuous process which inevitably affects different individuals. And in the book there are times when it is difficult to distinguish one character from another - a grave defect in any novel (which, in reflecting life, should reflect its variety) and particularly so in this. It is difficult, for instance, to distinguish readily between Tom and Will. Descriptions of Tom such as "gradually he grew into a raging fury against her," or "[he was] underneath a solid power of antagonism to her" (62) might equally well apply to Will: "The dark storms rose in him... [he was] black and electric with fury," (63) or "He went out cold with corpse-like anger, leaving her alone. He hated her." (64) It therefore comes as something of a shock when Lawrence tries to make us believe that Tom and Will are radically different, and shocks such as these tend to arouse a general disbelief:

> If, as very often, they went to the Marsh for tea on Sundays, then [Anna] regained another, lighter world, that had never known the gloom and the stained glass and the ecstasy of chanting. Her husband was obliterated, she was with her father again, who was so fresh and free and all daylight. Her husband, with his intensity and his darkness, was obliterated. She left him, she forgot him, she accepted her father. (65)

(62) The Rainbow, p.63
(63) Ibid. p.154 p.63
(64) Ibid. p.164
(65) Ibid. p.171

The following description, too, which is of Gudrun, might easily be of Ursula:

> Then he clambered into the boat. Oh, and the beauty of the subjection of his loins, white and dimly luminous as he climbed over the side of the boat, made her want to die, to die. The beauty of his dim and luminous loins as he climbed into the boat, his back rounded and soft - ah, this was too much for her, too final a vision. She knew it, and it was fatal. The terrible hopelessness of fate, and of beauty, such beauty! (66)

The above passage is also indicative of a further defect in Lawrence's technique. It may well be that trivial incidents provoke strong reactions in our hidden innermost consciousness, but when, in a novel, we remain aware of the surface situation and are at the same time confronted with an incongruous reaction on the same level, the effect is one of overstatement which appears a little ridiculous. This is not only apparent in the above passage where Gerald's climbing into a boat makes Gudrun "want to die, to die." Similar incongruities are to be found in both volumes of the book, as can be seen from the underlined words and phrases in the following passages:

> [Will] knew it was so: wine was wine, water was water, for ever: the water had not become wine. The miracle was not a real fact. She seemed to be destroying him. He went out, dark and destroyed, his soul running its blood. And he tasted of death. Because his life was formed in these unquestioned concepts. (67)

> There it [i.e. the body of Tom] looked still and grand. He was perfectly calm in death, and now he was laid in line, inviolable, unapproachable. To Anna, he was the majesty of the inaccessible male, the majesty of death. It made her still and awe-stricken, almost glad. (68)

Ursula is apparently watching a wedding, which is of no particular interest to her, quite casually:

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(66) Women in Love, p.189
(67) The Rainbow, p.174
(68) Ibid. p.264

> And no bridegroom had arrived! It was intolerable for her. Ursula, her heart strained with anxiety, was watching the hill beyond: the white, descending road, that should give sight of him. There was a carriage. It was running. It had just come into sight. Yes, it was he. Ursula turned towards the bride and the people, and, from her place of vantage, gave an inarticulate cry. She wanted to warn them that he was coming. But her cry was inarticulate and inaudible, and she flushed deeply, between her desire and her wincing confusion. (69)

Birkin is late for breakfast and, when he finds the atmosphere a bit strained, he leaves the table:

> Suddenly Birkin got up and went out.
> "That's enough," he said to himself involuntarily.
> Hermione knew his motion, though not in her consciousness. She lifted her heavy eyes and saw him lapse suddenly away, on a sudden, unknown tide, and the waves broke over her. Only her indomitable will remained static and mechanical, she sat at the table making her musing, stray remarks. But the darkness had covered her, she was like a ship that has gone down. It was finished for her too, she was wrecked in the darkness. Yet the unfailing mechanism of her will worked on, she had that activity.
> "Shall we bathe this morning?" she said, suddenly looking at them all. (70)

The other main drawback to Lawrence's handling of character is that, in contrad tinction to the vivid scenes of Sons and Lovers, he adopted what he called an "exhaustive method". (71) This, however, only applies to the first volume of the work - to The Rainbow which, as he wrote to Edward Garnett, is "all analytical - quite unlike Sons and Lovers, not a bit visualised." (72) The effect of this method is a characterisation by statement which, since it is not reinforced by revealing the characters in action, has to be taken for granted and is consequently unconvincing:

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(69) Women in Love, p.19
(70) Ibid. p.102
(71) Letters, p.177
(72) Ibid. pp.111-12

> So [Tom] *had to* begin the bitter lesson, to abate himself, to take less than he wanted. For [Lydia] was Woman to him, all other women *were her shadows*. For she had satisfied him. And he wanted it to go on. And it could not. However he raged, and, filled *with suppression that became hot* and bitter, hated her in his soul that she did not want him, however he had mad outbursts, and *drank* and made ugly *scenes*, still he knew, he was only kicking against the pricks. It was not, he had to learn, that she would not want him enough, *as much as* he demanded that she should want him. It was that she could not. She could only want him in her own way, and to *her own measure*. And *she had spent* much life before he found her as she was, the woman who could take him and give him fulfilment. She had taken him *and given him* fulfilment. She still would do so, in her own times and ways. But he must control himself, measure *himself to her*.
>
> He wanted to give her all his love, all his passion, all his essential energy. But it could not be. He must find other things than her, *other centres of* living. She sat close and impregnable with the child. And he was jealous of the child. (73)

> [Will] still remained motionless, seething with inchoate rage, when his whole nature seemed to disintegrate. He seemed to live with a strain upon *himself*, and occasionally *came* these dark, chaotic rages, the lust for destruction. [Anna] then fought with him, and their fights were *horrible*, murderous. And *then* the passion between them came just as black and awful. (74)

We do not see Tom's "mad outbursts" nor is his jealousy of the child further defined; we do not witness Will's "dark, chaotic rages" or the "blackand awful passion" between Anna and himself, and Lawrence's characterisation consequently appears flat and dead. Constant analysis of this sort tends to become wearying, so that the few vivid descriptions in the book, the descriptions of the wedding feast of Anna and Will, of Tom's drowning, of Ursula's teaching, stand out too pronouncedly. And where Lawrence reluctantly allows a semblance of action to illustrate his analysis, the "scene" is often unable to bear the weight of his previous comment and comes as an anti-climax:

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(73) The Rainbow, p.84
(74) Ibid. p. 212

> And [Anna] loved the intent, far look of [Will's] eyes when they rested on her: intent, yet far, not near, not with her. And she wanted to bring them near. She wanted his eyes to come to hers, to know her. And they would not. They remained intent, and far, and proud, like a hawk's, native and inhuman as a hawk's. So she loved him and caressed him like a *hawk*, till *he was keen* and instant, but without tenderness. He came to her fierce and hard, like a hawk striking and taking her. He was no mystic any more, she was his aim and object, his prey. And she was carried off, and he was satisfied, or satiated at last.
>
> Then immediately she began to retaliate on him. She too was a hawk. If she imitated the pathetic plover running plaintive to him, that was part of the game. When he, satisfied, moved with a proud, insolent slouch of the body and a half-contemptuous drop of the head, unaware of her, ignoring her very existence, after taking his fill of her and getting his satisfaction of her, her soul roused, its pinions became like steel, and she struck at him. When he sat on his perch glancing sharply round with solitary pride, pride eminent and fierce, she dashed at him and threw him from his station savagely, she goaded him from his keen dignity of a male, she harassed him from his unperturbed pride, till he was made with rage, his light brown eyes burned with fury, they saw her now, like flames of anger they flared at her and recognised her as the enemy.
>
> Very good, she was the enemy, very good. As he prowled round her, she watched him. As he struck at her, she struck back.
>
> He was angry because she had carelessly pushed away his tools so that they got rusty.
>
> "Don't leave them littering in my way, then," she said.
> "I shall leave them where I like," he cried.
> "Then I shall throw them where I like."
>
> They glowered at each other, he with rage in his hands, she with her soul fierce with victory. They were very well matched. They would fight it out. (75)

As far as Will and Anna are concerned this defect is to some extent offset by what may be called symbolical action, which crystallises Lawrence's analysis. When Anna is pregnant and engages in her strange nude dance, for instance, ("she would dance his nullification") her opposition to Will's domination and her assertion of her own individuality are strikingly revealed:

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(75) The Rainbow, pp.164-5

> He watched, and his soul burned in him. He turned aside, he could not look, it hurt his eyes. Her fine limbs lifted and lifted, her hair was sticking out all fierce, and her belly, big, strange, terrifying, uplifted to the Lord. Her face was rapt and beautiful, she danced exulting before her Lord, and knew no man. (76)

In the same way their intellectual conflict, the conflict between the mystical and the commonsense approach to life, and Anna's mental bullying are brought into vivid relief during their visit to the cathedral. Will loses himself in "passionate intercourse" with the majestic cathedral but Anna forces him to attend to some "wicked, odd little faces carved in stone... which peeped out of the grand tide of the cathedral like something that knew better":

> She laughed with a pouf! of laughter.
>
> "You hate to think he put his wife in your cathedral, don't you?" she mocked, with a tinkle of profane laughter. And she laughed with malicious triumph.
>
> She had got free from the cathedral, she had even destroyed the passion he had. She was glad. He was bitterly angry. Strive as he would, he could not keep the cathedral wonderful to him. He was dissillusioned. That which had been his absolute, containing all heaven and earth, was become to him as to her, a shapely heap of dead matter - but dead, dead. (77)

Significantly, this rejection by Will of the cathedral and hence of the old religious values, occurs shortly before he attempts to seduce the young Nottingham girl.

It is not on the score of a characterisation by statement, however, that the relationship between Birkin and Ursula can be faulted. In fact, in the second volume of this work Lawrence seems to have modified his conception of character and to have abandoned altogether the "exhaustive method" of writing. The differences in technique between The Rainbow and Women in Love are at once apparent. The long analyses of the former give way in the latter to vivid scenes as Lawrence returns to a depiction of character in action. And though he retains

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(76) The Rainbow, p.186
(77) Ibid. p.208

his interest in elemental carbon, he does portray, in fair detail, the external man or woman - a compromise which he would have done well to apply to the first volume. It is true that Gudrun and Ursula tend to remain undifferentiated characters, but Birkin and Gerald are fairly sharp and distinct. Gerald, especially, is a convincing character, as Dr. Leavis shows in detail. * The frequent references to his "accidental" killing of his brother and the suggestion, during his stay with Halliday, that he is likely to burst through his conventional behaviour ("He was so conventional at home, that when he was really away, and on the loose, as now, he enjoyed nothing so much as full outrageousness") (78) reinforce the descriptions of his behaviour in the collieries and with the horse, and prepare the way for the outcome of his relationship with Gudrun.

The relationship of Birkin and Ursula seems rather to break down finally through a lapse, on Lawrence's part, into woolly language and because of a puzzling ambiguity in his conception. Initially, though, the relationship is well developed and Lawrence's pattern, maintained throughout this long work, is completed.

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* F. R. Leavis: Scrutiny Autumn 1950, March, 1951, June 1951. Essay on Women in Love.

Dr. Leavis' treatment of Gerald is, in fact, so detailed that it seems to lead him to overemphasise Gerald's importance in the book. He says that he intends "to consider Women in Love as it focuses on Gerald, as so much of it does," and then:

> The drar centres in Gerald, involving as it doe gnostic presentment of the large move ilisation, has the effect - one diffic the nature of the case, to test in a co pages - of bulking a good deal more largely in the whole than the Birkin-Ursula theme..... In Birkin's married relations with Ursula the book invites us to localize the positive....solution of the problem; the norm, in relation to which Gerald's disaster gets its full meaning. (March 1951, p.325)

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(78) Women in Love, p.81

It has already been noticed how, in the previous relationships, the different partners, variously affected by the mechanisation of life in the external world, turn to each other for escape but otherwise submit to the system. Birkin and Ursula, however, not only turn their backs on the system but positively withdraw from it. It is of course convenient that Birkin should be endowed with a private income, but both he and Ursula nevertheless do retire from their jobs. *Their rejection of the world as it is, is further emphasised by the symbolical action of giving away even the chair which they buy shortly before their marriage. They have a desire to be completely dispossessed, to start afresh in their new relationship:*

I feel that this is a mistaken estimate which springs largely from Dr. Leavis' initial error in treating Women in Love as a separate book. Once the intricate pattern which runs through both parts of the whole work is seen, it is clear that it is not in Gerald alone that "the diagnostic presentment of the large movement of civilisation" is embodied. Gerald should rather be viewed as but the final link in the pattern, as a figure in whom the results of the mechanisation of industry become finally manifest - and not as a figure in whom "the drama centres." Nor, as I hope to show, is there a separate "Birkin-Ursula *theme*.....in relation to which Gerald's disaster gets its full meaning." The Birkin-Ursula relationship fits neatly into place in the pattern and it is this relationship, if any, which is central to the book and which gets its full meaning from Gerald's disaster. For it is this supposedly fully achieved relationship which Lawrence contrasts with all the previous relationships, and the success of the book depends largely on whether we are convinced by it or not. In fact, as I hope to show, Lawrence seems to fail here, and yet Dr. Leavis, in a comprehensive and stimulating essay, pronounces the book to be a great success without really coming to grips with the crucial question of the sexual relations of Birkin and Ursula. He simply accepts their "union as successful" (March 1951, p.330) and, referring to an element of "jargon" which he does detect in the one passage dealing with this question that he quotes (Women in Love, p.335), he judges the fault to be only "marginal in [its] unsatisfactoriness" (Autumn 1950, p.205). It is because he does not see the whole pattern and consequently does not attach to the Birkin-Ursula *relationship the importance* it merits, that he is able to dismiss the fault as not "bulking.... large in the book." (Autumn 1950, p.205)

"I don't want to inherit the earth," she said. "I don't want to inherit anything."

He closed his hand over hers.

"Neither do I. I want to be disinherited."

She clasped his fingers closely.

"We won't care about anything," she said.

He sat still, and laughed.

"And we'll be married, and have done with them," she added.

Again he laughed.

"It's one way of getting rid of everything," she said, "to get married."

"And one way of accepting the whole world," he added.

"A whole other world, yes," she said happily. (79)

The attitude of Birkin and Ursula is better understood when it is related to Lawrence's own views. In a letter to Lady Cynthia Asquith (written at about the time he was writing Women in Love) he said:

> One must destroy the spirit of money, the blind spirit of possession. It is the dragon for your St. George: neither rewards on earth nor in heaven, of ownership: but always the give and take, the fight and the embrace, no more, no diseased stability of possessions, but the give and take of love and conflict, with the eternal consummation in each. (80)

Even by refusing to encumber themselves with a chair, Birkin and Ursula are seeking to avoid the perpetuation of "the spirit of possession" in the world, which has given rise to the mechanisation of life.

It is also significant that, in the relationship of Birkin and Ursula, there is re-established a new moral code. In the previous relationships Lawrence showed the growing disbelief in moral values, culminating in the "liaison" of Gerald and Gudrun. Though Birkin and Ursula do not feel bound by these values ("The old ideals are dead as nails - nothing there," says Birkin) (81) and though they, in fact, have intercourse before marriage, they do get married and they do believe in legal marriage. But their marriage is not so much

(79) Women in Love, p.382
(80) Letters, p.246
(81) Women in Love, p.59

an assertion of the old values as evidence of a new belief in a revitalised relationship:

> "It seems to me" [says Birkin] "there remains only this perfect union with a woman - sort of ultimate marriage - and there isn't anything else." (82)

Birkin's rejection of the old marriage relationship is clear and is tied up with his rejection of the world.

> He knew that Ursula was referred back to him. He knew his life rested with her. But he would rather not live than accept the love she proffered. The old way of love seemed a dreadful bondage, a sort of conscription. What it was in him he did not know, but the thought of love, marriage, and children, and a life lived together, in the horrible privacy of domestic and connubial satisfaction, was repulsive. He wanted something clearer, more open, cooler, as it were. The hot narrow intimacy between man and wife was abhorrent. The way they shut their doors, these married people, and shut themselves in to their own exclusive alliance with each other, even in love, disgusted him. It was a whole community of mistrustful couples insulated in private houses or private rooms, always in couples, and no further life, no further immediate, no disinterested relationship admitted: a kaleidoscope of couples, disjoined, separatist, meaningless entities of married couples. True, he hated promiscuity even worse than marriage, and a liaison was only another kind of coupling, reactionary from the legal marriage. Reaction was a greater bore than action. (83)

But it is linked also with a desire to avoid the clash of opposing individualities, the attempt by either the man or the woman to dominate each other - revealed so clearly in the previous relationships. The new relation is to be a "unison in separateness", in which the individuality of both partners will be fully preserved:

> "There is," he said, in a voice of pure abstraction, "a final me which is stark and impersonal and beyond responsibility. So there is a final you. And it is there I would want to meet you - not in the emotional, loving plane - but there beyond, where there is no speech and no terms of agreement. There we are two stark, unknown beings, two utterly strange creatures, I would want to approach you, and you me. And there could be no obligation, because there is no standard for action there, because no understanding has been

(82) Women in Love, p.59
(83) Ibid. p.208

reaped from that plane. It is quite inhuman - so there can be no calling to book, in any form whatsoever - because one is outside the pale of all that is accepted, and nothing known applies. One can only follow the impulse, taking that which lies in front, and responsible for nothing, asked for nothing, giving nothing, only each taking according to the primal desire."

Ursula listened to this speech, her mind dumb and almost senseless, what he said was so unexpected and so untoward.

"It is just purely selfish," she said.

"If it is pure, yes. But it isn't selfish at all. Because I don't know what I want of you. I deliver myself over to the unknown, in coming to you, I am without reserves or defences, stripped entirely, into the unknown. Only there needs the pledge between us, that we will both cast off everything, cast off ourselves even, and cease to be, so that that which is perfectly ourselves can take place in us." (84)

Finally a crucial feature of the relationship of Birkin and Ursula is their changed attitude towards their sexual relations. This is a logical development, an integral part of the pattern of the book, for it was in their sexual relations that the struggle for domination between the various partners of the previous relationships was shown at its fiercest. Birkin's rejection of Ursula's previous attitude with Skrebensky, a desire for immense sensual fulfilment, is shown in his reflections on the carved African figure. The figure represents for Birkin an ultimate experience of sensual gratification whose end is dissolution, an experience beyond the reach of northern peoples and which there is no point in their seeking to emulate:

There came back to him ... a statuette about two feet high, a tall, slim, elegant figure from West Africa, in dark wood, glossy and suave. It was a woman, with hair dressed high, like a melon-shaped dome. He remembered her vividly: she was one of his soul's intimates. Her body was long and elegant, her face was crushed tiny like a beetle's, she had rows of round heavy collars, like a column of quoits, on her neck. He remembered her: her astonishing cultured elegance, her diminished, beetle face, the astounding long elegant body, on short, ugly legs, with such protuberant buttocks, so weighty and unexpected below her slim long loins. She knew what he himself did not know. She had thousands of years of purely sensual, purely unspiritual knowledge behind her. It must have been thousands of years since her race had died, mystically;

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(84) Women in Love, pp.151-2

> that is, since the relation between the senses and the outspoken mind had broken, leaving the experience all in one sort, mystically sensual. Thousands of years ago, that which was imminent in himself must have taken place in these Africans: the goodness, the holiness, the desire for creation and productive happiness must have lapsed, leaving the single impulse of knowledge in one sort, mindless progressive knowledge through the senses, knowledge arrested and ending in the senses, mystic knowledge in disintegration and dissolution, knowledge such as the beetles have, which live purely within the world of corruption and cold dissolution. (85)

Mr. Potter, Father Tiverton and Dr. Leavis have all drawn attention to Birkin's further musing on the subject:

> There remained this way, this awful African process, to be fulfilled. It would be done differently by the white races. The white races, having the arctic north behind them, the vast abstraction of ice and snow, would fulfil a mystery of ice-destructive knowledge, snow-abstract annihilation.....
>
> Birkin thought of Gerald. He was one of these strange white wonderful demons from the north, fulfilled in the destructive frost mystery. And was he fated to pass away in this knowledge, this one process of frost-knowledge, death by perfect cold? Was he a messenger, an omen of the universal dissolution into whiteness and snow? (86)

It is no coincidence that Gerald, with his inhumanly cold mechanical will, should die in the snow.

The new physical relationship which Lawrence describes as an alternative to that fated to end in "cold dissolution", mysteriously centres round the loins. But if his preparation for this rather startling departure is thorough (besides its place in the pattern of the book, Lawrence cleverly shows that it is not only Ursula who at first resists the new relation but that Birkin, too, on occasion "lapses into the old fire of burning passion") (87) his actual handling of their new sexual relationship is most unsatisfactory. This physical equivalent of "unison in separateness" is so crucial a point, however, that it is necessary to quote Lawrence's description of it at length:

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(85) Women in Love, pp.265-66
(86) Ibid. pp.266-67
(87) Ibid. p.195

"We love each other," she said in delight.

"More than that," he answered, looking down at her with his glimmering, easy face.

Unconsciously, with her sensitive finger-tips, she was tracing the back of his thighs, following some mysterious life-flow there. She had discovered something, something more than wonderful, more wonderful than life itself. It was the strange mystery of his life-motion, there, at the back of the thighs, down the flanks. It was a strange reality of his being, the very stuff of being, there in the straight downflow of the thighs. It was here she discovered him one of the sons of God such as were in the beginning of the world, not a man, something other, something more.

This was release at last. She had had lovers, she had known passion. But this was neither love nor passion. It was the daughters of men coming back to the sons of God, the strange inhuman sons of God who are in the beginning.

Her face was now one dazzle of released, golden light, as she looked up at him, and laid her hands full on his thighs, behind, as he stood before her. He looked down at her with a rich bright brow like a diadem above his eyes. She was beautiful as a new marvellous flower opened at his knees, a paradisal flower she was, beyond womanhood, such a flower of luminousness. Yet something was tight and unfree in him. He did not like this radiance - not altogether.

It was all achieved for her. She had found one of the sons of God from the Beginning, and he had found one of the first most luminous daughters of men.

She traced with her hands the line of his loins and thighs, at the back, and a living fire ran through her, from him, darkly. It was a dark flood of electric passion she released from him, drew into herself. She had established a rich new circuit, a new current of passional electric energy, between the two of them, released from the darkest poles of the body and established in perfect circuit. It was a dark fire of electricity that rushed from him to her, and flooded them both with rich peace, satisfaction.

"My love," she cried, lifting her face to him, her eyes, her mouth open in transport.

"My love," he answered, bending and kissing her, always kissing her.

She closed her hands over the full, rounded body of his loins, as he stooped over her, she seemed to touch the quick of the mystery of darkness that was bodily him. She seemed to faint beneath, and he seemed to faint, stooping over her. It was a perfect passing away for both of them, and at the same time the most intolerable accession into being, the marvellous fulness of immediate gratification, overwhelming, out-flooding from the source of the deepest life-force, the darkest, deepest, strangest life-source of the human body, at the back and base of the loins.

After a lapse of stillness, after the rivers of strange dark fluid richness had passed over her, flooding, carrying away her mind and flooding down her spine and down her knees, past her feet, a strange flood, sweeping away everything and leaving her an essential new being, she was left quite free, she was free in complete ease, her complete self. So she rose, stilly and blithe, smiling at him. He stood before her, glimmering, so awfully real, that her heart almost stopped beating. He stood there in his strange, whole body, that had its marvellous fountains, like the bodies of the sons of God who were in the beginning. There were strange fountains of his body, more mysterious and potent than any she had *imagined or known, more satisfying*, ah, finally mystically - physically satisfying. She had thought there was no source deeper than the phallic source. And now, behold, from the smitten rock of the man's body, from the strange marvellous flanks and thighs, deeper, further in mystery than the phallic source, came the floods of ineffable darkness and ineffable riches. (88)

"We will stay here," he said, "and put out the lights."

He extinguished the lamps at once, and it was pure night, with shadows of trees like realities of other, nightly being. He threw a rug on to the bracken, and they sat in stillness and mindless silence. There were faint sounds from the wood, but no disturbance, no possible disturbance, the world was under a strange ban, a new mystery had supervened. They threw off their clothes, and he gathered her to him, and found her, found the pure lambent reality of her forever invisible flesh. Quenched, inhuman, his fingers upon her unrevealed nudity were the fingers of silence upon silence, the body of mysterious night upon the body of mysterious night, the night masculine and feminine, never to be seen with the eye, or known with the mind, only known as a palpable revelation of living otherness.

She had her desire of him, she touched, she received the maximum of unspeakable communication in touch, dark, subtle, positively silent, a magnificent gift and give again, a perfect acceptance and yielding, a mystery, the reality of that which can never be known, vital, sensual reality that can never be transmuted into mind content, but remains outside, living body of darkness and silence and subtlety, the mystic body of reality. She had her desire fulfilled. He had his desire fulfilled. For she was to him what he was to her, the immemorial magnificence of mystic, palpable, real otherness. (89)

The impossibility of what Lawrence was trying to do is revealed in the last paragraph of the above passage. If the experience of Birkin and Ursula was really "unspeakable.... a mystery, the reality of that which can never be known.... never be transmuted into mind content", he had much better never have attempted to communicate the experience. As it is he fails completely in the attempt. And the measure of his failure is the

(88) Women in Love, pp.330-31
(89) Ibid. p.337

deterioration in the quality of his writing. The first passage quoted is, in a way, reminiscent of Swinburne. Lawrence's prose has a surging rhythm which almost sweeps one away but, on reflection, one is checked by the lack of coherence and the empty meaninglessness of his words. It is as if by the mere force of repetition he wishes to dragoon the reader into acceptance. Moreover he loses control of his visual description: Birkin is both "glimmering, easy" and "tight and unfree"; a "living fire" runs "darkly" from him to her; and the "fountain" of Birkin's body is "mystically-physically satisfying". It is significant, too, that a writer of Lawrence's ability should, in this description, resort so often to such weak adjectives as "strange", "wonderful" and "marvellous" as a means of communication. Ursula gets up "stilly" and her sense of awe is expressed by "her heart almost stopped [illegible]". Birkin's body, which has been caressed, becomes a rock" and when the reader's mind, conditioned by frequent mention of the "sons of God from the Beginning" and "luminous daughters of men", hearkens back to the Old Testament and awaits a rushing forth of water, Lawrence provides a "flood of ineffable darkness and ineffable riches". It is indeed difficult to understand what is meant by a "current of passional electric energy", and the insertion of the word "electric" in the phrase "a dark flood of electric passion" hardly redeems the cliché.

The result of this sort of writing is that the reader's tendency to be sceptical of a non-phallic sexual relation is changed to frank disbelief, a feeling which is enforced by the ridiculous lengths to which Lawrence subsequently goes in describing the fulfilled Birkin:

> He sat still like an Egyptian Pharaoh, driving the car. He felt as if he were seated in immemorial potency, like the great carven statues of real Egypt, as real and as fulfilled with subtle strength, as these are, with a vague inscrutable smile on the lips. He knew what it was to have the strange and magical current of force in his back and loins, and down his legs, force so perfect that it stayed him immobile, and left his face

> subtly, mindlessly smiling. He knew what it was to be awake and potent in that other basic mind, the deepest physical mind. And from this source he had a pure and magic control, magical, mystical, a force in darkness, like electricity.....
>
> They ran on in silence. But with a sort of second consciousness he steered the car towards a destination. For he had the free intelligence to direct his own ends. His arms and his breast and his head were rounded and living like those of a Greek, he had not the unawakened straight arms of the Egyptian, nor the sealed, slumbering head. A lambent intelligence played secondarily above his pure Egyptian concentration in darkness. (90)

It is ridiculous that Birkin, already compared to an impassive Egyptian, has then to be compared to an intelligent, lively Greek in order to underline his ability to steer a car.

Nor is the reader finally convinced of Ursula's conversion. When, towards the end of the book, she champions the new relationship, one feels that she is all too patently mouthing Birkin's views:

> "You above everybody can't get away from the fact that love, for instance, is the supreme thing, in space as well as on earth." [said Gudrun]
>
> "No," said Ursula, "it isn't. Love is too human and little. I believe in something inhuman, of which love is only a little part. I believe what we must fulfil comes out of the unknown to us, and it is something infinitely more than love. It isn't so merely human." (91)

Then, too, when Lawrence passes his verdict on the relationship of Gerald and Gudrun, one cannot help feeling that what he says might equally well apply to the physical relationship of Birkin and Ursula:

> But between two particular people, any two people on earth, the range of pure sensational experience is limited. The climax of sensual reaction, once reached in any direction, is reached finally, there is no going on. There is only repetition possible, or the going apart of the two protagonists, or the subjugation of the one will to the other, or death. (92)

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(90) Women in Love, p.335
(91) Ibid. pp.483-5
(92) Ibid. p.477

(90) Women in Love, p.335
(91) Ibid. pp.483-5
(92) Ibid. p.477

And, as if the physical relationship of Birkin and Ursula were not sufficiently involved, there remains about it an ambiguity which is not resolved. At first it appears that Birkin is ready to accept *normal* sexual intercourse, if in an altered light: "He wanted sex to revert to the level of the other appetites, to be regarded as a functional process, not as a fulfilment. He believed in sex marriage." (93) Then, in the already quoted descriptions of Birkin's new fulfilment, Lawrence seems to imply that Birkin and Ursula abandon sexual intercourse altogether. Finally, and this is the last reference to their sexual relationship, it seems clear that they revert to normal (or abnormal) intercourse:

> They might do as they liked - this she realised as she went to sleep. How could anything that gave one satisfaction be excluded? What was degrading? Who cared? Degrading things were real, with a different reality. And he was so unabashed and unrestrained. Wasn't it rather horrible, a man who could be so soulful and spiritual, now to be so - she balked at her own thoughts and memories: then she added - so bestial? So bestial, they two! - so degraded! She winced. But after all, why not? She exulted as well. Why not be bestial, and go the whole round of experience? She exulted in it. She was bestial. How good it was to be really shameful! There would be no shameful thing she had not experienced. Yet she was unabashed, she was herself. Why not? She was free, when she knew everything, and no dark shameful things were denied her. (94)

The defects in Lawrence's presentation of these different relationships are accentuated by the fact that he does not fully preserve the continuity necessary in a work with so elaborate a pattern. One can make out the broad outlines of the pattern but they are obscured by the patent differences in style and technique (already referred to) which tend too firmly to divide the second volume from the first. In addition, connection between the various generations of Brangwens is not really maintained. By the time Lawrence is describing the third generation he seems to lose interest in the earlier Brangwens. Thus, when Ursula is beginning her teaching career, the death of Lydia is announced quite casually:

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(93) Women in Love, p.108
(94) Ibid. pp.486-8

> [Ursula] waited at the terminus for the tram.... Before her was the station to Nottingham, whence Theresa had gone to school half an hour before; behind her was the little church school she had attended when she was a child, when her grandmother was alive. [Her grandmother] had been dead two years now. (95)

This announcement is obviously sandwiched into the narrative and its inconsequential tone jars all the more when, a few lines later, Lawrence says that "Ursula would sometimes say she had loved her grandmother more than anyone else in the world." (96)

Will and Anna, too, fade from the narrative when attention is concentrated on Ursula and Gudrun. In Women in Love mention is made early on of Will playing the organ at the wedding of Gerald's sister, and Anna is momentarily shown preoccupied with her children, but little active interest is taken in them. When, for instance, they do appear setting out for the Crich water-party, it is difficult to connect them with their fiery past. Will, we learn, "as usual, looked rather crumpled in his best suit, as if he were the father of a young family and had been holding the baby while his wife got dressed." And Anna "had a perfect calm sufficiency, an easy indifference to any criticism whatsoever, as if she were beyond it. Her clothes were always rather odd, and as a rule slip-shod, yet she wore them with a perfect ease and satisfaction. Whatever she had on, so long as she was barely tidy, she was right, beyond remark; such an aristocrat she was by instinct." (97)

The tendency towards a slack construction is emphasised by the devices to which Lawrence resorts in order to try to bind the work together. Only once does one come across an implicitly binding image - when Will, during his courtship of Anna, presents her with his phoenix butter-stamper: quite naturally, then, Lawrence mentions that "in the morning... when the butter was made, she fetched his seal in place of the old wooden stamper of oak-leaves and acorns"; (98) and the reader's

(95) The Rainbow, p.373
(96) Ibid. p.373
(97) Women in Love, p.162
(98) The Rainbow, p.117

mind is taken back to the first mention of the oak-leaf stamper, to the time when Lydia came to buy butter from Tom: "[Tom] Brangwen looked at the table. There was a large pat of butter on a plate, almost a pound. It was round, and stamped with acorns and oak-leaves." (99) But this link occurs early on in the work and, for the rest, Lawrence relies on statement or on reminiscence by Ursula to weld the book together:

> She heard him breathing heavily, strangely, beside her. A terrible and magnificent sense of his strangeness possessed her. But she shrank a little now, within herself. Hesitating, they continued to walk on, quivering like shadows under the ash-trees of the hill, where her grandfather had walked with his daffodils to make his proposal, and where her mother had gone with her young husband, walking close upon him as Ursula was now walking upon Skrebensky. (100)

> No matter! Every hill-top was a little different, every valley was somehow new. Cossethay and her [Ursula's] childhood with her father; the Marsh and the little church school near the Marsh, and her grandmother and her uncles; the High School at Nottingham and Anton Skrebensky; Anton Skrebensky and the dance in the moonlight between the fires; then the time she could not think of without being blasted, Winifred Inger, and the months before becoming a school-teacher; then the horrors of Brinsley Street, lapsing into comparative peacefulness, Maggie, and Maggie's brother, whose influence she could still feel in her veins, when she conjured him up; then college, and Dorothy Russell, who was now in France, then the next move into the world again! (101)

> A flash of a few lights on the darkness - Ghent station! A few more spectres moving outside, on the platform - then the bell - then motion again through the level darkness. Ursula saw a man with a lantern come out of a farm by the railway, and cross to the dark farm-buildings. She thought of the Marsh, the old, intimate farm-life at Cossethay. My God, how far was she projected from her childhood, how far was she still to go! In one life-time one travelled through aeons. The great chasm of memory from her childhood in the intimate country surroundings of Cossethay and the Marsh Farm - she remembered the servant Tilly, who used to give her bread and butter sprinkled with brown sugar, in the old living-room where the grandfather clock had two pink roses in a basket painted above the figures on the face - and now when she was travelling into the unknown with Birkin, an utter stranger - was so great, that it seemed she had no identity, that the child she had been, playing in Cossethay churchyard, was a little creature of history, not really herself. (102)

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(99) The Rainbow, p.35
(100) Ibid. p.303
(101) Ibid. p.442
(102) Women in Love, p.412

Lawrence's pattern is obscured, too, by irrelevant detail. Though the incident might conform with his view of an "allotropic state", mention that Tom "laid open his master's head with a slate" (103) is of little moment in the book and there is no further development of this aspect of Tom's character. Nor is there any justification for a description of Ursula's encounter with the bargeman, during which he names his child after her; while too great attention is paid to Halliday and the Café Pompadour - one suspects, here, an uncontrolled desire to satirize Heseltine (though, apart from this, it must be admitted that Women in Love itself, with the parallel development of the relationships of Birkin and Ursula and of Gerald and Gudrun, has a neat shape). Then, too, Lawrence touches on relationships which have no real place in the scheme of the book. Will's possessive love for Ursula as a child is described as if it were to be of importance, but this relationship is soon abandoned and is, in fact, of no significance. The same applies to Ursula's homosexual relationship with Winifred and, to a lesser extent, to Birkin's relationship with Gerald. In his portrayal of the latter relationship Lawrence returns, as Mr. West points out, (104) to the theme of a close physical and spiritual relationship between men, which he first dealt with in the relationship of George and Cyril in The White Peacock. The relationship is of some significance in the present work because of Birkin's view of the desirability of a strong friendship external to marriage: "You [Ursula] are enough for me," he says, "as far as a woman is concerned. You are all women to me. But I wanted a man friend, as eternal as you and I are eternal." (105) In the long run, however, the emphasis laid on this relationship only casts further doubt on the supposedly achieved fulfilment of Birkin and Ursula - as is shown by the rather queer and indecisive ending of the book:

(103) The Rainbow, p.17
(104) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, pp.130-31
(105) Women in Love, p.507

"Did you need Gerald?" [Ursula] asked one evening.
"Yes," [Birkin] said.
"Aren't I enough for you?" she asked.
"No," he said. "You are enough for me, as far as a woman is concerned....."
"You can't have two kinds of love. Why should you!"
"It seems as if I can't," he said. "Yet I wanted it."
"You can't have it, because it's false, impossible," she said.
"I don't believe that," he answered. (106)

The book is also spoilt by what Virginia Woolf might have called "unconsumed philosophy" (see p. 13 above). It is as if Lawrence was determined to emphasise his "back to the blood" philosophy without consideration for the demands of form. The clearest pronunciation of this philosophy is to be found in his long letter to Ernest Collings (1913) of which the following is an important extract:

> My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and a bridle. What do I care about knowledge? All I want is to answer to my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind, or moral, or what-not.... (107)

This philosophy was already implicit in Lawrence's previous work: one remembers the vivid rabbit-chase in The White Peacock and Annable's manner of bringing up his children; and one remembers Morel's violently impulsive actions in Sons and Lovers. Then, too, in the novels it is noticeable that the male and female characters follow unhesitatingly the initial impulse of attraction to one another - Tom determines to marry Lydia after merely passing her in the road, and Will and Anna, Ursula and Skrebensky, Gerald and Gudrun, and Birkin and Ursula are all drawn impulsively to one another. In Women in Love, however, there is explicit discussion of Lawrence's view:

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(106) Women in Love, pp.507-8
(107) Letters, pp.94-5

"You don't believe in having any standard of behaviour at all, do you?" [Gerald] challenged Birkin censoriously.

"Standard - no. I hate standards. But they're necessary for the common ruck. Anybody who is anything can just be himself and do as he likes."

"But what do you mean by being himself," said Gerald....

"I mean just doing what you want to do.... It's the hardest thing in the world to act spontaneously on one's impulses - and it's the only really gentlemanly thing to do - provided you're fit to do it..... I should like [people] to like the purely individual thing in themselves, which makes them act in singleness. And they only like to do the collective thing." (108)

In this way Lawrence attempts to link his view with the question of full individuality, which is important in the book. But, in fact, the actions which symbolically express this philosophy are extraneous to his theme. Little or no significance can be attached, for instance, to the incident where Minette slashes the hand of an unnamed "young man". And, although Dr. Leavis convincingly shows (109) that the incident where Hermione crashes a paper-weight on to Birkin's head is the inevitable outcome of the collapse of her mechanical will (to which she is slavishly subject) the sequel to this incident in which Birkin rushes off into the woods, undresses, and rubs his body against the "responsive vegetation" must appear strange even to those who believe in spontaneous action. Nor is Birkin's justification of Hermione's attack convincing - "You were quite right, to biff me - because I know you wanted to. So there's the end of it." (110) One feels that these incidents are too deliberately introduced, almost as propaganda for Lawrence's special view-point. In passing, it is interesting to note that Lawrence later tacitly repudiated this conception of wholly impulsive living. In Psycho-analysis and the Unconscious he makes it plain, as Dr. Leavis says, "that without a proper use of intelligence there can be no solution of the problems of mental, emotional and spiritual health. We are committed, he

(108) Women in Love, p.34
(109) F.R.Leavis; Women in Love in Scrutiny, June 1951, pp.19-27
(110) Women in Love, p.112

insists, to consciousness and self-responsibility. The mind - mental consciousness - has its essential part in the prosperous functioning of the psyche; but it cannot, with its will-enforced ideas or ideals, command the sources of life, though it can thwart them. The power of recognising justly the relation of idea and will to spontaneous life, of using the conscious mind for the attainment of 'spontaneous-creative fulness of being' is intelligence." (111) And the following passage makes it clear that Lawrence's "back to the blood" campaign was pressed more for its value in his fight against what he considered a false idealism than for its intrinsic worth:

> Every man must live as far as he can by his own soul's conscience. But not according to any ideal.... In the same way, we know we cannot live purely by impulse. Neither can we live solely by tradition. We must live by all three, ideal, impulse and tradition, each in its hour..... Man always falls into one of three mistakes. In China, it is tradition. And in the South Seas, it seems to have been impulse. Ours is idealism. (112)

Although Lawrence's construction is loose, he emphasises his theme with well-sustained symbolism. The central symbol of this work is the moon, which is clearly identified with sexual passion. When Tom proposes to Lydia, the uncertainty of their initial passion and his feeling that "she was drifting *away from him*" (113) when her "response" was not "thundering at him till he could bear no more", is reflected in the movement of the moon when he leaves her house:

> Sometimes a high moon, liquid-brilliant, scudded across a hollow space and took cover under electric, brown-iridescent cloud-edges. Then there was a blot of cloud, and shadow. Then somewhere in the night a radiance again, like a vapour. And all the sky was teeming and tearing along, a vast disorder of flying shapes and darkness and ragged fumes of light and a great brown circling halo, then the terror of a moon running liquid-brilliant into the open for a moment, hurting the eyes before she plunged under cover of cloud again. (114)

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(111) F. R. Leavis: Mr. Eliot and Lawrence in Scrutiny June 1951, pp.71-2

(112) Fantasia of the Unconscious, pp.120-21

(113) The Rainbow, p.49

(114) Ibid. p.50

When Will and Anna, during the "putting up of the sheaves", meet for the first time in physical passion they do so under a bright moon:

> She took her new two sheaves and walked towards him, as he rose from stooping over the earth. He was coming out of the near distance. She set down her sheaves to make a new stook. They were unsure. Her hands fluttered. Yet she broke away, and turned to the moon, which laid bare her bosom, so she felt as if her bosom were heaving and panting with moonlight. And he had to put up her two sheaves, which had fallen down. He worked in silence. The rhythm of the work carried him away again, as she was coming near.
>
> They worked together, coming and going, in a rhythm, which carried their feet and their bodies in tune. She stooped, she lifted the burden of sheaves, she turned her face to the dimness where he was, and went with her burden over the stubble. She hesitated, set down her sheaves, there was a swish and hiss of mingling oats, he was drawing near, and she must turn again. And there was the flaring moon laying bare her bosom again, making her drift and ebb like a wave.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Were they never to meet?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And the work went on. The moon grew brighter, clearer, the corn glistened.....
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Till at last, they met at the shock, facing each other, sheaves in hand. And he was silvery with moonlight, with a moonlit, shadowy face that frightened her. She waited for him. (115)

Ursula and Skrebensky, too, exchange their first kiss in the moonlight:

> She stood for some moments out in the overwhelming luminosity of the moon. She seemed a beam of gleaming power. She was afraid of what she was. Looking at him, at his shadowy, unreal, wavering presence a sudden lust seized her, to lay hold of him and tear him and make him into nothing. Her hands and wrists felt immeasurably hard and strong, like blades. He waited there beside her like a shadow which she wanted to dissipate, destroy as the moonlight destroys a darkness, annihilate, have done with. She looked at him and her face gleamed bright and inspired. She tempted him.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> She took him in the kiss, hard her kiss seized upon him, hard and fierce and burning corrosive as the moonlight. She seemed to be destroying him. (116)

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(115) The Rainbow, pp.123-5
(116) Ibid. pp.324-25

Years later, when Ursula inflicts on Skrebensky that terrifying sexual experience, it is under the influence of the moon that she does so:

> Suddenly, cresting the heavy, sandy pass, Ursula lifted her head, and shrank back, momentarily frightened. There was a great whiteness confronting her, the moon was incandescent as a round furnace door, out of which came the high blast of moonlight, over the seaward half of the world, a dazzling, terrifying glare of white light. They shrank back for a moment into shadow, uttering a cry. He felt his chest laid bare, where the secret was heavily hidden. He felt himself fusing down to nothingness, like a bead that rapidly disappears in an incandescent flame.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> .... He led her to a dark hollow.
>
> "No, here," she said, going out to the slope full under the moonshine. (117)

Then, soon after Gerald declares his love to Gudrun "the golden swim of light overhead died out, the moon gained brightness, and seemed to begin to smile forth her ascendancy. The dark woods on the opposite shore melted into universal shadow.... (118)

Having sustained this moon symbolism throughout his portrayal of each relationship, Lawrence most effectively underlines his theme in that vivid description where Birkin stones the reflection of the moon:

> He stood staring at the water. Then he stooped and picked up a stone, which he threw sharply at the pond. Ursula was aware of the bright moon leaping and swaying, all distorted in her eyes. It seemed to shoot out arms of fire like a cuttle-fish, like a luminous polyp, palpitating strongly before her.
>
> And his shadow on the border of the pond, was watching for a few moments, then he stooped and groped on the ground. Then again there was a burst of sound, and a burst of brilliant light, the moon had exploded on the water, and was flying asunder in flakes of white and dangerous fire. Rapidly, like white birds, the fires all broken rose across the pond, fleeing in clamorous confusion, battling with the flock of dark waves that were forcing their way in. The furthest waves of light, fleeing out, seemed to be clamouring against the shore for escape, the waves of darkness came in heavily, running under towards the centre. But at the centre, the heart of all, was still a vivid, incandescent quivering of a white moon not quite destroyed, a white body of fire writhing and striving and not even now broken open, not yet violated. It seemed to

(117) The Rainbow, pp.484-85
(118) Women in Love, p.181

> be drawing itself together with strange, violent pangs, in blind effort. It was getting stronger, it was re-asserting itself, the inviolable moon. And the rays were hastening in in thin lines of light, to return to the strengthened moon, that shook upon the water in triumphant reassumption. (119)

As Birkin continues to stone the moon it is clear that he is symbolically attempting the elimination of strong sexual passion and conflict; and shortly afterwards he starts on the new relationship with Ursula:

> For a long time she nestled to him, and he kissed her softly, her hair, her face, her ears, gently, softly, like dew falling. But this warm breath on her ears disturbed her again, kindled the old destructive fires. She cleaved to him, and he could feel his blood changing like quicksilver.
>
> "But we'll be still, shall we?" he said.
>
> "Yes," she said, as if submissively. (120)

It is interesting, too, to note the effect of a recurrent image which Lawrence uses to distinguish the new relationship of Ursula and Birkin. Lydia is at first described as being "as new as a flower that unsheathes itself and stands always ready, waiting, receptive." But the ultimate failure of Tom and Lydia to achieve a full, harmonious relationship is anticipated by "after a few days gradually she closed again, away from him, was sheathed over, impervious to him, oblivious." (121)

In the early days of the marriage of Will and Anna the fruitful possibilities of their relationship are indicated by: "Suddenly, like a chestnut falling out of a bur, he was shed naked and glistening on to a soft, fecund earth, leaving behind him the hard rind of worldly knowledge and experience." (122) Eventually, however, Will becomes aware "of some limit to himself, of something unformed in his very being, of some buds which were not ripe in him, some folded centres of darkness which would never develop and unfold whilst he was alive in the body. He was unready for fulfilment." (123)

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(119) Women in Love, pp.258-9
(120) Ibid. p.264
(121) The Rainbow, p.57
(122) Ibid. p.147
(123) Ibid. p.213

At the end of The Rainbow, after her experience with Skrebensky, Ursula can only look forward to fulfilment:

> Repeatedly, in an ache of utter weariness she repeated: "I have no father nor mother nor lover. I have no allocated place in the world of things, I do not belong to Beldover nor to Nottingham nor to England nor to this world, they none of them exist, I am trammelled and entangled in them, but they are all unreal. I must break out of it, like a nut from its shell which is an unreality." (124)

The devastating nature of the relationship between Gerald and Gudrun is indicated by a similar image:

> She felt, with horror, as if he tore at the bud of her heart, tore it open, like an irreverent persistent being. Like a boy who pulls off a fly's wings, or tears open a bud to see what is in the flower, he would destroy her as an immature bud, torn open, is destroyed. (125)

Finally the achieved newness of the relationship of Ursula and Birkin (for this image is not later cancelled by another, as in the case of Will) is suggested by:

> She could not consider any more, what anybody would say of her or think about her. People had passed out of her range, she was absolved. She had fallen strange and dim, out of the sheath of the material life, as a berry falls from the only world it has ever known, down out of the sheath on to the real unknown. (126)

Lawrence's use, both of the moon symbolism and of the above images, is in marked contrast to the laboured rainbow symbol. It is noteworthy that this symbol is confined to the first volume of the work only - it is not fused into the complete conception - and, even then, it is artificially introduced. Representing the tranquillity after storm which Tom and Lydia and Will and Anna attain, and of which Ursula has a vision, the symbol is a clumsy one of explicit statement:

> Anna's soul was put at peace between them [Tom and Lydia]. She looked from one to the other, and saw them established to her safety, and she was free. She played between the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud in confidence, having the assurance on her right hand and the assurance on her left. She was no longer called upon to uphold with her childish might the broken end of the arch. Her father and her mother now met to the span of the heavens, and she, the child, was free to play in the space beneath, between. (127)

(124) The Rainbow, p.499
(125) Women in Love, p.471
(126) Ibid, p.149
(127) The Rainbow, p.98

> There was another child coming, and Anna lapsed into vague content. If she were not the wayfarer to the unknown, if she were arrived now, settled in her builded house, a rich woman, still her doors opened under the arch of the rainbow, her threshold reflected the passing of the sun and moon, the great travellers, her house was full of the echo of journeying. (128)

> And the rainbow stood on the earth. [Ursula] knew that the sordid people who crept hard-scaled and separate on the face of the world's corruption were living still, that the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to life in their spirit, that they would cast off their horny covering of disintegration, that new, clean, naked bodies would issue to a new germination, to a new growth, rising to the light and the wind and the clear rain of heaven. She saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven. (129)

The quality of Lawrence's writing, apart from lapses in Women in Love, is of a high standard throughout the work. Once again the rhythm of his prose perfectly matches the rhythm of the action he is describing. One thinks, for instance, of the scene where Anna and Will gather the sheaves of corn by moonlight; or of the well-known opening of The Rainbow (to which Mr. Potter and Father Tiverton draw attention) - "They took the udder of the cows, the cows yielded milk and pulse against the hands of the men, the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men." - or of the following passage:

> So that she caught at little things, which saved her from being swept forward headlong in the tide of passion that leaps on into the Infinite in a great mass, triumphant and flinging its own course. She wanted to get out of this fixed, leaping, forward-travelling movement, to rise from it as a bird rises with wet limp feet from the sea, to lift herself as a bird lifts its breast and thrusts its body from the pulse and heave of a sea that bears it forward to an unwilling conclusion, tear herself away like a bird on wings, and in the open space where there is clarity, rise up from the fixed, surcharged motion, a separate speck that hangs suspended, moves this way and that, seeing and answering before it sinks again, having chosen or found the direction in which it shall be carried forward. (130)

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(128) The Rainbow, p.199
(129) Ibid. p.501
(130) Ibid. pp.206-7

Finally, Lawrence's handling of the childhood scenes of the book is reminiscent of Dickens. He shows the same penetrating ability to indicate in a word or a phrase the world of the child:

> "Why aren't you fond of Tilly?" [Tom asks the young Anna].
>
> "Because - because - because she loooks at me with her eyes bent." (131)

> Then at last [Tom and Anna] turned and went out through the gate. He was always hailing one man or another, always stopping to gossip about land and cattle and horses and other things she did not understand, standing in the filth and the smell, among the legs and great boots of men. (132)

How neatly, in the following passages for example, does he convey at once the seriousness of a child, its keen powers of observation, its instinctive appreciation of the force of an incisive word and respect for the pronouncements of adults:

> [Anna] was very angry because Marriott, a gentleman-farmer from Ambergate, called her a little pole-cat.
>
> "Why you're a pole-cat," he said to her.
>
> "I'm not," she flashed.
>
> "You are. That's just how a pole-cat goes."
>
> She thought about it.
>
> "Well you're - you're -" she began.
>
> "I'm what?"
>
> She looked him up and down.
>
> "You're a bow-leg man."
>
> Which he was. There was a roar of laughter. They loved her that she was indomitable.
>
> "Ah," said Marriott. "Only a pole-cat says that."
>
> "Well I am a pole-cat," she flamed.
>
> There was another roar of laughter from the men. They loved to tease her.
>
> "Well me little maid," Braithwaite would say to her, "an' how's th' lamb's wool?"
>
> He gave a tug at a glistening, pale piece of her hair.
>
> "It's not lamb's wool," said Anna, indignantly putting back her offended lock.
>
> "Why, what'st ca' it then?"
>
> "It's hair."
>
> "Hair! Wheriver dun they rear that sort?"
>
> "Wheriver dun they?" she asked, in dialect, her curiosity overcoming her. (133)

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(131) The Rainbow, p.71
(132) Ibid. p.88
(133) Ibid. pp.89-90

"Go away." [Anna shouts at Tom]
"I'm not going away," he shouted, irritated at last. "Go yourself - hustle - stir thysen - hop." And he pointed to the door. The child backed away from him, pale with fear. Then she gathered up courage, seeing him become patient.
"We don't live with you," she said, thrusting forward her little head at him. "You - you're - you're a bomakle."
"A what?" he shouted.
Her voice wavered - but it came.
"A bomakle."
"Ay, an' you're a comakle."
She meditated. Then she hissed forwards her head.
"I'm not."
"Not what?"
"A comakle."
"No more am I a bomakle."
He was really cross. (134)

------oOo------oOo------oOo------oOo------

The whole work cannot, I feel, be regarded as a success; for Lawrence, in his effort to express something complex and new, was not able to subdue his vision to the necessary limitations of the novel - with the results already indicated. But it is a failure which, nevertheless, retains a compelling power and which only narrowly falls short of Lawrence's own claim for it of greatness - "I think it's great - so new, so really a stratum deeper than I think anybody has ever gone in a novel." (135) And though one may dispute Dr. Leavis' estimate that Women in Love, alone, is "as astonishing a work of genius as can be found among novels," his judgment of The Rainbow (contained in a radio talk) might, with justice, be fittingly applied to the whole work: "I do not myself think it a complete success; I do not think that, in dealing with its three generations, it builds up sufficiently into the significance, the whole, intended. It is all the same a work of profound originality; immensely rich in interest." (136)

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(134) The Rainbow, p.71
(135) Letter to Edward Garnett, Letters, pp.111-12
(136) F. R. Leavis: D. H. Lawrence - the Novelist - The Listener, Sept.29, 1949.

VI

THE LOST GIRL

If one reads Lawrence's novels in chronological order a reading of The Lost Girl is a disappointing experience. In this book there is no progression either in technique or in ideas, and it is difficult to reconcile its superficiality with the fact that it was completed after such important work as Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow and Women in Love. The reason for this apparent deterioration is bound up with Lawrence's personal circumstances at the time the book was written.

Although The Lost Girl was published in 1920, Lawrence started it in 1912 and had written some 200 pages by April 1913. (1) But he startedto write this book in a very different spirit from that in which his more serious work was conceived. At this time he had eloped with Frieda to Italy and was very poor. A friend sent him a copy of a current English best-seller (Arnold Bennett's Anna of the Five Towns) and, having read it, Lawrence determined to write a light popular novel which he hoped would enable him to earn some ready money and so allow him to continue with his work on The Rainbow:

> I put [The Rainbow] aside to do a pot-boiler - it was too improper. The pot-boiler is at page 110 and has developed into an earnest and painful work - God help it and me. (2)

In the event, the first 200 pages of The Lost Girl were left with Frieda's family in Germany throughout the War and Lawrence first completed The Rainbow and Women in Love. Then, in 1920, he turned once more to the "pot-boiler" (provisionally called The Insurrection of Miss Houghton) and rewrote it as The Lost Girl. It is ironic that for this book, "the worst he

(1) Letters, p.118
(2) Ibid. p.115

ever wrote," (3) he received the James Tait Black Memorial Prize of one hundred pounds for the best novel of the year.

The circumstances of its writing tend to complicate one's judgment of The Lost Girl. Viewed as a popular novel it is certainly as good as most books in this genre'. Mr. West, indeed, finds that this "off-hand and lazy production ..... is invested with a very real distinction," and although he, too, describes it as "the worst of Lawrence's books," he says "it is bad only relatively." (4) But Lawrence was not a "popular novelist", and The Lost Girl must be judged by those standards which one applies to the rest of his work.

The book falls into three more or less separate sections. In the first, a section of social realism, Lawrence is concerned in particular with the commercial adventures of James Houghton and with his daughter Alvina; and, by implication, with lower middle-class life in Woodhouse, "a small industrial town in the Midlands of England." The second, which deals with the love relationship of Alvina and Cicio, is marked by an attempted return, in something like the Lawrence manner of the two previous books, to the treatment of personal relationships. The third section, which describes the journey of Alvina and Cicio to Italy and their settlement there in a remote village, is like a travel epilogue.

One's initial disappointment in the first section stems largely from Lawrence's failure to provide the picture of Woodhouse society which the opening paragraphs of the book lead one to expect:

> A well established society in Woodhouse, full of fine shades, ranging from the dark of coal-dust to grit of stone-mason and sawdust of timber-merchant, through the lustre of lard and butter and meat, to the perfume of the chemist and the disinfectant of the doctor, on to the serene gold-tarnish of bank-managers, cashiers

(3) Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But.... p.244
(4) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, pp.131-32

> for the firm, clergymen and such-like, as far as the automobile refulgence of the general-manager of all the collieries. Here the 'ne plus ultra'. The general manager lives in the shrubberied seclusion of the so-called Manor. The genuine Hall, abandoned by the 'County', has been taken over as offices by the firm.
>
> Here we are then: a vast substratum of colliers; a thick sprinkling of tradespeople intermingled with small employers of labour and diversified by elementary schoolmasters and nonconformist clergy; a higher layer of bank-managers, rich millers and well-to-do ironmasters, episcopal clergy and the managers of collieries: then the rich and sticky cherry of the local coal-owner glistening over all. (5)

Instead of "fine shades", however, we are faced with dull monotone. We hardly meet, and certainly do not get to know, the "vast substratum" or the intermediate layers or the "rich and sticky cherry" of Woodhouse society. Instead we are left somewhere about the middle, fixed in contemplation of the Houghton household, which is very much a closed circle, and of the Houghton enterprises which only slightly impinge on the "dark of coal-dust". Indeed it is surprising to notice the distance from which the colliers are seen in this novel. The warm detailed descriptions of mining life which abound in Sons and Lovers give way here to abrupt generalised accounts of the miners and their *families*. *For the most* part, too, they are seen in an indiscriminate mass: the colliers' wives grudgingly making their purchases during one of James' periodic sales; the collier youths ridiculing James' display in his shop-windows or raucously indicating their approval of, or displeasure at, one of the turns in James' "cinema"; or the miners themselves trudging home from work: "they streamed in a grimy stream home from pit [and] diverged like some magic dark river from off the pavement into the horse-way, to give her room as she approached." (6) The presence of an undifferentiated mass of miners is more than once evoked by this characteristic image of

(5) The Lost Girl, p.11
(6) Ibid. p.33

a stream: "So they streamed past her, home from work - grey from head to foot, distorted in shape, cramped, with curious faces that came out pallid from under their dirt. Their walk was heavy-footed and slurring, their bearing stiff and grotesque. A stream they were - yet they seemed to her to loom like strange, valid figures of fairy-lore, unrealised and as yet unexperienced. The miners, the iron-workers, those who fashion the stuff of the underworld." (7) Only once, after Alvina visits her father's diggings where she is fascinated by a miner - "a smallish, semi-grotesque, grey-obscure figure with a naked brandished forearm," - do we come closer to the miners, does Lawrence evince that intuitive apprehension which cuts through the external appearance:

> Slaves of the underworld! She watched the swing of the grey colliers along the pavements with a new fascination, hypnotised by a new vision. Slaves - the underground trolls and iron-workers, magic, mischievous, and enslaved, of the ancient stories. But tall - the miners seemed to her to loom tall and grey, in their enslaved magic. Slaves who would cause the superimposed day-order to fall. Not because, individually, they wanted to. But because, collectively, something bubbled up in them, the force of darkness which had no master and no control. It would bubble and stir in them as earthquakes stir the earth. It would be simply disastrous, because it had no master. There was no dark master in the world. The puerile world went on crying out for a new Jesus, another Saviour from the sky, another heavenly superman. When what was wanted was a Dark Master from the underworld. (8)

The narrowness of Lawrence's social range in this section is not offset, as one might have expected, by a detailed portrayal of those characters with whom he does deal. The tendency to see a whole group of people purely from the outside - as in the case of the colliers, for instance - is even more strongly pronounced in Lawrence's handling of individual character, which is strangely flat and external. No doubt Lawrence deliberately avoided the complex in order to satisfy popular demand, but this tendency may as well be due to the fact that, when he cast around for a likely story, the material lay all too readily to hand. Ada Lawrence tells us that James Houghton

(7) The Lost Girl, pp.65-6
(8) Ibid. p.65

is based directly on George Cullen of Eastwood (Lawrence's home town) and that Houghton's commercial adventures are a replica of those of his prototype. Cullen similarly filled his shop with beautiful and expensive clothes and was eventually forced to sell out at ridiculous prices. He, too, speculated in a coal-mine which was actually called Throttle-Ha'penny, and then in a cinema. In the same way Miss Frost is based on a Miss Wright and Alvina on Cullen's daughter Florence. (9) Lawrence seems to have made facile use of this material without troubling to get to grips with it imaginatively. In this section of The Lost Girl there is not that feel of life itself (though the characters and incidents are taken from life) which is so marked a quality of Sons and Lovers.

The result of this sort of handling is inevitably caricature. Only in the portrayal of Alvina is some attempt made to reveal character from the inside; for the rest we have to be contented with a static external impression. Nor is Lawrence able to infuse a caricature with vitality - as Dickens is, for instance. There is essentially no great difference between Mrs. Houghton and Mrs. Gradgrind of Hard Times. Both are shadowy figures and both may be labelled "invalid", for it is in this role that both characters are depicted. Yet, whereas Mrs. Houghton remains wholly insubstantial, Mrs. Gradgrind occasionally flashes into life. Mrs. Houghton is almost summarily dismissed from the scene:

> But Mrs. Houghton had pains in her heart. If, during her walk, she saw two little boys having a scrimmage, she had to run to them with pence and entreaty, leaving them dumbfounded, while she leaned blue at the lips against a wall. If she saw a carter crack his whip over the ears of the horse, as the horse laboured uphill, she had to cover her eyes and avert her face, and all her strength left her.
>
> So she stayed more and more in her room, and the child was given to the charge of a governess. (10)

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(9) Ada Lawrence and G. Stuart Gelder: Young Lorenzo, p.14, p.54
(10) The Lost Girl, p.17

Thereafter she remains in her room and we hear little or nothing more from her beyond "the fretful murmur: 'Vina!'" as she lies in bed during her last illness. When, however, in response to the query "Are you in pain, dear mother?" Mrs. Gradgrind replies: "I think there's a pain somewhere in the room, but I couldn't positively say that I have got it," Dickens so vividly epitomizes not only Mrs. Gradgrind's illness but also her habitual state of submission to her husband's exactness, that we begin to believe in her as a person - we feel we know Mrs. Gradgrind.

Lawrence, of course, realised the value of a distinctive mannerism, or attitude, or mode of expression in the handling of caricature, and not all the characters in the book are as ill-defined as Mrs. Houghton. But where, with a writer such as Dickens, the tell-tale tag is itself a permanent summing-up of a character ("I am umble," says Uriah Heep and we are not allowed to forget this) and a means of breathing some sort of life into the abstracted idea which constitutes the character, Lawrence tends to use the tag prosaically as an additional means of identification only. Miss Frost, who is a good woman and who is usually seen in a state of dull goodness, carries over from her music lessons the habit of beating time when she is disturbed:

> Miss Frost gave a slight gesture with her right hand of helpless impatience. It was so characteristic, that Alvina almost laughed. (11)

> Miss Frost's right hand beat like a wounded bird. It was reminiscent of the way she beat time, insistently, when she was giving music lessons, sitting close beside her pupils at the piano. Now it beat without time or reason. (12)

Lawrence is more successful with Mr. May, the manager of James' cinema. This forlorn and frightened man,

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(11) The Lost Girl, p.42
(12) Ibid. p.43

separated from his family, vainly trying to earn a living and craving for whisky, has an assumed air of gaiety and of decision which is well rendered in his speech. May's tag is an habitual use of the words "of course" and a propensity to undue emphasis in his talk:

> "Of course," he said - he used the two words very often, and pronounced the second, rather mincingly, to rhyme with sauce: "Of course," said Mr. May, "it's a disgusting place - disgusting! I never was in a worse, in all the cauce of my travels. But then - that isn't the point -" (13)

> "Of cauce," he said later to Alvina, "I can't possibly stop on if we are nothing but a picture show!" And he arched his blanched and dismal eyelids with ghastly finality.

> "Why?" cried Alvina.

> "Oh - why!" He was rather ironic. "Well, it's not my line at all. I'm not a film-operator." And he put his head on one side with a grimace of contempt and superiority.

> "But you are, as well," said Alvina.

> "Yes, as well. But not only! You may wash the dishes in the scullery. But you're not only the chaw, are you?"

> "But is it the same?" cried Alvina.

> "Of cauce!" cried Mr. May. "Of cauce it's the same." (14)

> "No but, really," said Mr. May, "drinking and card-playing with strange men in the drawing-room on Sunday evening, of cauce it's scandalous! It's terrible! I don't know how ever you'll be saved, after such a sin. And in Manchester House, too - ..... Oh, I love it, I love it! You lost girl! Why of cauce she's lost! And Miss Pinnegar has only just found it out. Who wouldn't be lost? Why even Miss Pinnegar would be lost if she could. Of cauce she would! Quite natch'ral!" (15)

But this device, which is initially effective, becomes wearisome the more constantly it is employed; and where we are enchanted by Mr. Micawber's sustained eloquence we tire of the repeated italics which punctuate Mr. May's speech. In the same way Lawrence does not make of Miss Pinnegar, a hard-

(13) The Lost Girl, p.112
(14) Ibid. p.208
(15) Ibid. p.270

working puritanical soul, a sufficiently vivid caricature to bear the weight of the platitudes she is called upon to utter; for Miss Pinnegar, though generally silent, comes out "now and then with defiant platitudes and truisms - for almost defiantly she took the commonplace, vulgarian point of view." (16) The dullness of her remarks - "'Personally,' said Miss Pinnegar, speaking of Alexander, 'I don't care for him. But everyone has their own taste;'" (17) and "'I suppose,' said Miss Pinnegar, 'it takes his sort to make all sorts.'" (18) - helps to maintain the prevailing gloom of Manchester House but prevents Miss Pinnegar from emerging from its shadow.

This manner of approach to character typifies Lawrence's handling of most of the people in the book, who are similarly abstractions of one or at most two ideas. James Houghton, stubborn and impulsive in business, is utterly selfish in his personal relationships; Madame, who has a genuine vitality, is marked by her sharp-witted effervescence; the Witham brothers are smug and self-righteous; Dr. Mitchell is an autocrat. If one excludes the two major characters, then the rest of the people in the novel are at best remembered as images caught in a fixed posture. At worst there is a sort of group caricature, so that one is unable to distinguish or to remember the individual members of the group, and the doctors whom Alvina meets while training as a nurse, for instance, or the young men (apart from Cicio) who comprise the Natcha-Kee-Tawara Troupe remain wholly indistinct. Then, too, the caricature deteriorates on occasion into grotesque parody: the reader's credulity is strained when called on to visualise Dr. Mitchell on his knees before Alvina, holding onto the bottom of her dress and saying, "Forgive me! Don't remember! Forgive me! Love me! Love me! Forgive me and love me! Forgive me and love me!" (19) - or when called on

(16) The Lost Girl, p.35
(17) Ibid. p.38
(18) Ibid. p.62
(19) Ibid. p.318

to visualise the following scene which, when it is remembered that Louis and Max are hearty young men and that *Madame* is only suffering from a cold, is hardly qualified by the fact that it is witnessed by Alvina "with some amazement":

> Max watched [Madame] for some moments. Then suddenly he straightened himself, pushed back his brown hair that was brushed up in the German fashion, and crossed himself, dropping his knee as before an altar; crossed himself and dropped his knee once more; and then a third time crossed himself and inclined before the altar. Then he straightened himself again, and turned aside.
>
> Louis also crossed himself. His tears burst out. He bowed and took the edge of a blanket to his lips, kissing it reverently. Then he covered his face with his hand.
>
> Meanwhile Madame slept lightly and innocently on.
>
> Alvina turned to go. Max silently followed, leading Louis by the arm. When they got downstairs, Max and Louis threw themselves in each other's arms, and kissed each other on either cheek, gravely, in Continental fashion.
>
> "She is better," said Max gravely, in French.
>
> "Thanks to God," replied Louis. (20)

In the first section (which fails because the characters depicted even in the restricted social view do not come to life) it is noticeable that Lawrence uses the technique of caricature in his portrayal of relationships. There is a tendency to use a recurring image not only to epitomize but altogether to convey the quality of a relationship between two people. And although, in the following instances, the images employed are vivid, the relationships described are made static and become over-simplified as a result of their use - the image becomes the relationship. Thus with James Houghton and his wife. This is the first description of their relationship:

> He courted a small, dark woman, older than himself, daughter of a Derbyshire squire. He expected to get at least ten thousand pounds with her. In which he was disappointed, for he got only eight hundred. Being of a romantic-commercial nature, he never forgave her, but always treated her with the most elegant courtesy. To see him peel and prepare an apple for her was an exquisite sight. But that peeled and quartered apple was her portion. This elegant Adam of commerce gave Eve her own back, nicely cored, and had no more to do with her. (21)

(20) The Lost Girl, pp.159-60
(21) Ibid. p.13

This passage is incisive and the image of the "peeled apple" is effective but, when (shortly before Mrs. Houghton's death) we come across the following passage, it is as if we are confronted with a flashback still in the cinema:

> [James] was becoming an old man: his daughter was a young woman: but in his own mind he was just the same, and his daughter was a little child, his wife a young invalid whom he must charm by some few delicate attentions - such as the peeled apple. (22)

Similarly with Alvina and Albert Witham. Alvina's first impression of Albert is that "... he was not ordinary. Really an odd fish: quite interesting, if one could get over the feeling that one was looking at him through the glass wall of an aquarium: that most horrifying of all boundaries between two worlds." (23) Albert's courting of Alvina is brusquely described, and when she finally breaks with him we know little more of the relationship than that "she could never get over the feeling that he was mouthing and smiling at her through the glass wall of an aquarium, he being on the watery side." (24)

The second and central section of the book, which deals with the love relationship of Alvina and Cicio, is no more successful than the first section in which Lawrence seeks to provide the setting against which this relationship is to be viewed. His theme is a variation on the conception of being true to oneself which held his attention in the first three novels. Brought up within the severely conventional confines of a commercial-middle class society, Alvina, who through an instinctive cherishing of her independence is unmarried at thirty, is confronted with the choice of continuing alone in dreary respectability or of marrying a strange and lower class Italian to whom she is physically attracted. In the end she incurs the opprobium of Woodhouse and marries Cicio, but though she is thus ostensibly true to herself in despite of convention, we are by no means convinced of the fulfilment she supposedly achieves,

(22) The Lost Girl, p.30
(23) Ibid. p.83
(24) Ibid. pp.104-5

This seems firstly to be due to the fact that neither of the main protagonists is described in sufficient detail. As a result neither fully comes to life and it is only rarely that our sympathy is actively engaged. This applies especially to Cicio. Were he not singled out by Alvina it would be difficult to distinguish him from the other members of the theatrical troupe, and it is noticeable that Lawrence finds it necessary to provide him with a special mannerism in his dress as an aid in the process of identification: - Cicio always wears "his black hat a little over his left eye." But he remains, nevertheless, a shadowy generalised figure: more an "Italian" than an individual:

> His hands flickered, his eyes rested on her with a profound look of knowledge. And it seemed in spite of all, one state was very much the same to him as another, poverty was as much life as affluence. Only he had a sort of jealous idea that it was humiliating to be poor, and so, for vanity's sake, he would have possessions. The countless generations of civilisation behind him had left him an instinct of the world's meaninglessness. Only his little modern education made money and independence an idée fixe. Old instinct told him the world was nothing. But modern education, so shallow, was much more efficacious than instinct. It drove him to make a show of himself to the world. Alvina watching him, as if hypnotised, saw his old beauty, formed through civilisation after civilisation; and at the same time she saw his modern vulgarianism, and decadence. (25)

Moreover it is rarely that Cicio talks. For the most part, and certainly while he is in England, he is evoked as a physical presence only. He has a decided physical aura (it is this which attracts Alvina) and though Lawrence, as in the following passage, occasionally succeeds in suggesting this even outside his sexual relationships, we are finally as little satisfied with Cicio as a person as we were with Helena, his female equivalent in manner of presentation:

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(25) The Lost Girl, p.265

> They [the troupe in procession] carried bows and spears. Cicio was without his blanket, naked to the waist, in war-paint, and brandishing a long spear. He dashed up from the rear, saluted the chieftain with his arm and his spear on high as he swept past, suddenly drew up his rearing steed, and trotted slowly back again, making his horse perform its paces. He was extraordinarily velvety and alive on horseback ..... Women shrieked as Cicio, in his war-paint, wheeled near the pavement. Children screamed and ran. The colliers shouted. Cicio smiled in his terrifying war-paint, brandished his spear and trotted softly, like a flower on its stem, round to the procession. (26)

Although Alvina is presented in greater detail than Cicio, Lawrence's characterisation of *her seems* largely to be subordinated to the demands of his plot. Alvina is handled as an object too patently designed to fit into a pattern. As a result certain aspects of her character are clearly defined, but our view is limited to these aspects - we are too carefully prepared for Alvina's transition from a girl to a "lost woman". In all, some three aspects of her character are particularly stressed - her dissatisfaction with the life in which she finds *herself*; *her detachment*, her inability to be moved by those with whom she is in contact; and her potential profligacy- and it is noticeable that Lawrence resorts largely to statement in his portrayal.

Her dissatisfaction with life in Woodhouse should be implicit in the description of Woodhouse which Lawrence presents but since, as has been suggested, he is not successful here, her dissatisfaction which materialises in her determination to be a nurse ("'I can't stay here all my life,' she declared, stretching her eyes in a way that irritated the other inmates of Manchester House extremely. 'I know I can't. I can't bear it. I simply can't bear it, and there's an end of it. I can't, I tell you. I can't bear it. I'm buried alive - simply buried alive. And it's *more* than I can stand. It is, really.'") (27) has again to be enforced by a direct (and jarring) comment by Lawrence:

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(26) The Lost Girl, pp.173-74
(27) Ibid. p.41

> And so the slow years crept round, and the completed coil of each one was a further heavy, strangling noose. Alvina had passed her twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth and even her twenty-ninth year. She was in her thirtieth. It ought to be a laughing matter. But it isn't. (28)

Her detachment from the life around her is wholly explicit but, if the point be well made, it has the effect of keeping us at too great a distance from Alvina. We are scarcely moved by so remote a person who, "hidden like a mole in the dark chambers of Manchester House," is herself never moved by anyone:

> So the time passed, and [Alexander Graham] sailed. Alvina missed him, missed the extreme excitement of him rather than the human being he was. (29)

> Early in the year her mother died. Her father came and wept self-conscious tears. Miss Frost cried a little, painfully. And Alvina cried also: she did not quite know why or wherefore.. Her poor mother! Alvina had the old-fashioned wisdom to let be, and not to think. After all, it was not for her to reconstruct her parents' lives. She came after them. Her day was not their day, their life was not hers..... So Alvina refrained from pondering on her mother's life and fate. Whatever the fate of the mother, the fate of the daughter will be otherwise. That is organically inevitable. The business of the daughter is with her own fate, not with her mother's. (30)

> Alvina had taken up a piece of sewing. She sat under the light, brooding a little. What had all this to do with her? The man [Albert Witham] talked on, and beamed in her direction. And she felt a little important. But moved or touched? - not the least in the world. (31)

Her potential profligacy is also revealed in the same dull manner. We are told that "though she was unable to venture on indecencies herself, yet she had an amazing faculty for looking knowing and indecent beyond words, rolling her eyes and pitching her eyebrows in a certain way," (32) and that "she remained for twenty years the demure, refined creature of her governess' desire. But there was an odd, derisive look at the back of her eyes, a look of old knowledge and deliberate derision." (33) Then, finally, the tendency is introspectively

(28) The Lost Girl, p.108
(29) Ibid. p.37
(30) Ibid. p.59
(31) Ibid. p.94
(32) Ibid. p.46
(33) Ibid. p.34

clarified:

> Sometimes she wondered to herself, over her own virginity. Was it worth much, after all, *behaving* as she did? Did she care about it, anyhow? Didn't she rather despise it? To sin in thought was as bad as to sin in act. If the thought was the same as the act, how much more was her behaviour equivalent to a whole committal? She wished she were wholly committed. She wished she had gone the whole length. (34)

If Alvina remained a stiff, unrealised figure we should perhaps accept her as we found her, but, unfortunately, even this slender illusion of reality is on occasion disturbed when Lawrence slips himself into Alvina's place. We are too rudely shocked ever really to believe in Alvina again when, following Miss Pinnegar's remark, she reflects:

> It took every sort to make all sorts. Why have standards and a regulation pattern? Why have a human criterion? There's the point! Why, in the name of all the free heavens, have human criteria? Why? Simply for bullying and narrowness. (35)

The tone and the turn of phrase are so characteristically Lawrencean that plodding Alvina is altogether forgotten. We are also jolted when Alvina, (who is not generally shown as possessing a lively intelligence) in a discussion with Mr. May on the colliers' preference for cinema to live "turns", flashes, with Lawrencean insight, to the root of the matter:

> "I believe they're jealous [of the things which the artistes do].... I'm sure that these common people here are jealous if anybody *does anything or has anything* they can't have themselves."
>
> "I can't believe it," protested Mr. May. "Could they be so silly! And then why aren't they jealous of the extraordinary things which are done on the film?"
>
> "Because they don't see the flesh-and-blood people. I'm sure that's it. The film is only pictures, like pictures in the Daily Mirror ..... Pictures don't have any life except in the people who watch them. And that's why they like them. Because they make them feel that they are everything..... It's because they can spread themselves over a film, and they can't over a living performer. They're up against the performer himself. And they hate it." (36)

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(34) The Lost Girl, p. 54.
(35) Ibid. p.83
(36) Ibid. p.144

Finally, when the locale of the book shifts to Italy and when we are, in fact, presented with Lawrence's own reactions to the village in which Alvina finds herself, it is a pity that he should attempt to camouflage his fine rendering of the "spirit of place" as an emanation from Alvina's "mediumistic soul" - the change from mole to medium is too startling.

Cicio is the first person who moves Alvina and who appeals to the profligate streak in her but, since we do not wholly believe in either character, we are only theoretically prepared for the likelihood of an enduring relationship between them. Nor is the portrayal of the relationship itself satisfactory. In the first place it remains, to the end, a purely physical relationship and, though Lawrence obscurely suggests that Alvina accepts this limitation, her resentment is obvious:

> She felt extinguished. Cicio talked to her: but only ordinary things. There was no wonderful intimacy of speech, such as she had always imagined, and always *craved for*. No. He loved her - but it was in a dark, mesmeric way, which did not let her be herself. His love did not stimulate her or excite her. It extinguished her. She had to be the quiescent, obscure woman: she felt as if she were veiled. Her thoughts were dim, in the dim *back regions of consciousness - yet, somewhere*, she almost exulted. Atavism! Mrs. Tuke's word would play in her mind. Was it atavism, this sinking into extinction under the spell of Cicio? Was it ataviam, this strange, sleep-like submission to his being? Perhaps it was. Perhaps it was. But it *was also heavy and sweet* and rich. Somewhere, she was content. Somewhere even she was vastly proud of the dark veiled eternal loneliness she felt, under his shadow. (37)

> When the true Italian came out in him, his veriest home was the piazza of Pescocalascio, the little sort of market-place where the roads met in the village, under the castle, and where the men stood in groups and talked, talked, talked. This was where Cicio *belonged*: *his active, mindful self*. His active, mindful self was none of hers. She only had his passive self, and his family passion..... Somewhere in her soul, she knew the finality of his refusal to hold discussion with a woman. So, though at times her heart hardened with indignant anger, she let *herself remain* outside. The more so, as she felt that in matters intellectual he was rather stupid. Let him go to the piazza or to the wine-shop, and talk. (38)

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(37) The Lost Girl, p.341
(38) Ibid. pp.389-90

Then, too, even the degree of physical attraction between the two is itself in question as far as Cicio is concerned. It is clear (and it is left to Madame to underline this point) that Cicio is at least as interested in the wealth which he supposes Alvina to possess as in Alvina herself, and when it becomes evident that James Houghton has left his daughter virtually penniless, Cicio's ardour cools to such an extent that the lovers part. Nor does Cicio make any attempt to controvert the apparent finality of Alvina's farewell note to him:

> I am glad I have got this post as nurse here. Everyone is most kind and I feel at home already. I feel quite happy here. I shall think of my days with the Natcha-kee-Tawaras, and of you, who were such a stranger to me. Good-bye. - A.H. (39)

When he later seeks Alvina out he does so without explanation or qualification of his previous attitude, and, though Alvina at once accepts his protestations of love and agrees to marry him, our doubts as to his sincerity are not entirely dispelled.

In order to convince us of Alvina's supposed sexual fulfilment, on which her happiness is exclusively based, Lawrence would have needed (with such a background to the relationship) to detail her fulfilment in much the same way as, in Lady Chatterley's Lover, he later made vividly tangible Connie's happiness with Mellors. Instead, Alvina's sexual relationship with Cicio is seldom mentioned and it is described only in terms of her involuntary submission to Cicio's "dark" power. For Lawrence, however, the word "dark" had a special significance and, before one attempts to analyse the effect of its continued use in this book, it is first necessary to understand what he intended to convey by it.

Mr. Aldington, I think, rightly traces its special significance for Lawrence back to the mining associations of his youth - though he strains in relating Lawrence's preoccupation with darkness to his relationship with his mother:

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(39) The Lost Girl, p.299

> Lawrence never freed himself from the dark mystery and fascination of the mine. For him it remained a symbol of the unconscious, the Unbewusst, and in his own somewhat baffling symbolism how large a part is played by "darkness", "the dark unconscious" and all that is hidden, underground as it were, mysteriously working out of sight. It gave an added mystery to the darkness of sleep, and he identified with it, not so much the father whose life the mine had taken, as the mother who tried to monopolise his love in an ambiguous relationship to whose implications both necessarily had to be blind and dark. (40)

Lawrence's preoccupation with the darkness of the mines arose rather from his awareness of the "physical, instinct- and intuitional contact" which it developed in the miners - as the following passage from an essay entitled Nottingham and the Mining Countryside makes clear:

> Under the butty system, the miners worked underground as a sort of intimate community, they knew each other practically naked, and with curious close intimacy, and the darkness and the underground remoteness of the pit "stall", and the constant presence of danger, made the physical, instinctive and intuitional contact between men very highly developed, a contact almost as close as touch, very real and very powerful. This physical awareness and intimate "togetherness" was at its strongest down pit. When the men came up into the light, they blinked. They had, in a measure, to change their flow. Nevertheless, they brought with them above ground the curious dark intimacy of the mine, the naked sort of contact, and if I think of my childhood, it is always as if there was a lustrous sort of inner darkness, like the gloss of coal, in which we moved and had our real being. (41)

It was this "physical awareness and intimate 'togetherness'", this spontaneous natural flow, which Lawrence wished to see extended to personal relationships at large instead of a self-conscious, deliberately mental approach which he felt characterised relationships above ground, "in the light". For him the darkness became a symbol not only of this sort of naked intimacy but also of the wonder and reality of life beyond the known: "I don't know why on earth I say these things to you: why you sort of ask me," he wrote to Lady Cynthia Asquith. "But the conscious life - which you adhere to - is no more than a

(40) Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But.... p.27
(41) Phoenix, pp.135-36

masquerade of death: there is a living unconscious life. If only we would shut our eyes; if only we were all struck blind, and things vanished from our sight, we should marvel that we had fought and lived for shallow, visionary, peripheral nothingnesses. We should find reality in the darkness." (42)

From there it was but a short step for Lawrence to feel that it was the sex act which epitomised a dark non-mental intimacy and the dark wonder of the unknown. Or as Mr. Huxley so strikingly puts it:

> For Lawrence, the significance of the sexual experience was this: that, in it, the immediate, non-mental knowledge of divine otherness is brought, so to speak, to a focus - a focus of darkness. Parodying Matthew Arnold's famous formula, we may say that sex is something not ourselves that makes for - not righteousness, for the essence of religion is not righteousness; there is a spiritual world, as Kierkegaard insists, beyond the ethical - rather, that makes for life, for divineness, for union with the mystery. (43)

In The Rainbow "darkness" has this force and, though it is essentially a personal symbol, its use within the wider implications of the relationships described, is effective. It will be remembered, for instance, how Tom "turned and looked for a chair, and keeping [Lydia] still in his arms, sat down with her close to him, to his breast. Then, for a few seconds, he went utterly to sleep, asleep and sealed in the darkest sleep, utter, extreme oblivion. From which he came to gradually, always holding her warm and close upon him, and she as utterly silent as he, involved in the same oblivion, the fecund darkness." (44) In the same way Anna learns "to give herself to [Will's] black, sensual power," and they remain "separate in the light, and in the thick darkness, married." (45) And, when Ursula kisses Skrebensky, she "responded.... completely, her mind, her soul gone out. Darkness cleaving to darkness, she hung close to him, pressed herself into the soft flow of his kiss, pressed herself down, down to the source and core of his kiss, herself covered and enveloped in the

(42) Letters, p.379
(43) Aldous Huxley: Introduction to Selected Letters, p.8
(44) The Rainbow, p.46
(45) Ibid. p.219

warm fecund flow of his kiss, that travelled over her, flowed over her, covered her, flowed over the last fibre of her, so they were one stream, one dark fecundity, and she clung at the core of him, with her lips holding open the very bottommost source of him." (46)

In Women in Love, however, there is already noticeable a deterioration in Lawrence's use of the concept of darkness. One feels that, at best, the symbol has become so enmeshed in the writer's personal associations that it is unintelligible to the reader - or, at worst, that it is being used gratuitously to cover up the inherent meaninglessness of what Lawrence is saying: "He [Birkin] had taken her [Ursula] at the roots of her darkness and shame - like a demon, laughing over the fountain of mystic corruption which was one of the sources of her being..." (47) And: "It was a dark flood of electric passion she released from him, drew into herself. She had established a rich new circuit, a new current of passional electric energy, between the two of them, released from the darkest poles of the body and established in perfect circuit. It was a dark fire of electricity that rushed from him to her, and flooded them both with rich peace, satisfaction." (48)

In The Rainbow and Women in Love though, that element of darkness which does enter into the relationships there described is subsidiary to other aspects which are widely and fully developed. In The Lost Girl, for the first time, a relationship is made wholly to depend on the force supposedly wielded by a "dark" person. And apparent in the darkness in this book is a strange new facet, a preoccupation with the inhuman, cruel indifference of the dark. Lawrence's wonder at the darkness gives way to a sinister fascination with the compulsive force of a dark power. A passage in The Rainbow throws some light on this change:

(46) The Rainbow, p.452
(47) Women in Love, p.321
(48) Ibid. p.330

That which Ursula was, positively, was dark and unrevealed, it could not come forth. It was like a seed buried in dry ash. This world in which she lived was like a circle lighted by a lamp. This lighted area, lit up by man's completest consciousness, she thought was all the world: that here all was disclosed for ever. Yet all the time, within the darkness she had been aware of points of light, like the eyes of wild beasts, gleaming, penetrating, vanishing. And her soul had acknowledged in a great heave of terror only the outer darkness. This inner circle of light in which she moved, wherein the trains rushed and the factories ground out their machine-produce and the plants and the animals worked by the light of science and knowledge, suddenly it seemed like the area under an arc-lamp, wherein the moths and children played in the security of blinding light, not even knowing there was any darkness, because they stayed in the light.

But she could see the glimmer of dark movement just out of range. She saw the eyes of the wild beast gleaming from the darkness, watching the vanity of the camp fire and the sleepers; she felt the strange, foolish vanity of the camp, which said "Beyond our light and our order there is nothing," turning their faces always inward towards the sinking fire of illuminating consciousness, which comprised sun and stars, and the Creator, and the System of Righteousness, ignoring always the vast darkness that wheeled round about, with half-revealed shapes lurking on the edge.

Yea, and no man dared even throw a firebrand into the darkness. For if he did he was jeered to death by the others, who cried "Fool, anti-social knave, why would you disturb us with bogeys? There is no darkness. We move and live and have our being within the light, and unto us is given the eternal light of knowledge, we comprise and comprehend the innermost core and issue of knowledge. Fool and knave, how dare you belittle us with the darkness?"

Nevertheless the darkness wheeled round about, with grey shadow-shapes of wild beasts, and also with dark shadow-shapes of the angels, whom the light fenced out, as it fenced out the more familiar beasts of darkness: And some, having for a moment seen the darkness, saw it bristling with the tufts of the hyaena and the wolf; and some, having given up their vanity of the light, having died in their own conceit, saw the gleam in the eyes of the wolf and the hyaena, that it was the flash of the sword of angels, flashing at the door to come in, that the angels in the darkness were lordly and terrible and not to be denied, like the flash of fangs. (49)

In this passage Lawrence makes a vivid appeal for recognition of life beyond the known and, although wonder at the unknown is tempered by an interest in the possible savagery to be found in the area without the camp, it is the dark shadow-shape of the angel which predominates. By the time he wrote The Lost Girl, however, only wild beasts loom up out of the darkness:

(49) The Rainbow, pp.442-43

That which Ursula was, positively, was dark and unrevealed, it could not come forth. It was like a seed buried in dry ash. This world in which she lived was like a circle lighted by a lamp. This lighted area, lit up by man's completest consciousness, she thought was all the world: that here all was disclosed for ever. Yet all the time, within the darkness she had been aware of points of light, like the eyes of wild beasts, gleaming, penetrating, vanishing. And her soul had acknowledged in a great heave of terror only the outer darkness. This inner circle of light in which she moved, wherein the trains rushed and the factories ground out their machine-produce and the plants and the animals worked by the light of science and knowledge, suddenly it seemed like the area under an arc-lamp, wherein the moths and children played in the security of blinding light, not even knowing there was any darkness, because they stayed in the light.

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(49) The Rainbow, pp.442-43

> Sometimes, however, Alvina would have fits of boisterous hilarity, not quite natural, with a strange note half pathetic, half jeering.... This made Miss Frost uneasy. She would watch the girl's strange face, that could take on a gargoyle look. She would see the eyes rolling strangely under the sardonic eyelids, and then Miss Frost would feel that she never, never had she known anything so utterly alien and incomprehensible and unsympathetic as her own beloved Vina. For twenty years the strong, protective governess reared and tended her lamb, her dove, only to see the lamb open a wolf's mouth, to hear the dove utter the wild cackle of a daw or a magpie, a strange sound of derision. (50)

It is not surprising that Alvina should be attracted to the barely concealed animal in a certain type of man; and when, at the behest of her family, she breaks with Alexander (whose "dark passionate receptivity... overwhelmed her") she often gazes at his photograph, at his "dark and impertinent muzzle", and reflects:

> Love? - not, it was not love! It was something more primitive still. It was curiosity, deep, radical, burning curiosity. How she looked and looked at his dark, impertinent-seeming face. A flicker of derision came into her eyes. Yet still she looked. (51)

And she contrasts unfavourably with Alexander the "curious pale surface-look in the faces of the young men of Woodhouse."

Nor are we surprised when Alvina is later fascinated by Cicio, for he, too, suggests darkness:

> Alvina noticed the brown, slender Mediterranean hand, as he put his fingers to his lips. It was a hand such as she did not know, prehensile and tender and dusky. (52)

> His eyes kept hers. Curious how dark they seemed, with only a yellow ring of pupil. He was looking right into her, beyond her usual self, impersonal. (53)

> She clung to Cicio's dark, despised foreign nature. She loved it, she worshipped it, she defied all the other world. Dark, he sat beside her, drawn in to himself, overcast by his presumed inferiority among these northern industrial people. And she was with him, on his side, outside the pale of her own people. (54)

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(50) The Lost Girl, p.34
(51) Ibid. p.41
(52) Ibid. p.157
(53) Ibid. p.173
(54) Ibid. p.258

But when they finally come together in darkness, in the sexual experience, (and the following is the only full description of their sexual relations) there is no wonder but only a cold inhumanity:

> He gave an odd, half-gay, half-mocking twitch of his thick dark brows, and began to laugh silently. Then he nodded again, laughing at her boldly, carelessly, triumphantly, like the dark Southerner he was. Her instinct was to defend herself. When suddenly she found herself in the dark.
>
> She gasped. And as she gasped, he quite gently put her inside her room, and closed the door, keeping one arm round her all the time. She felt his heavy, muscular predominance. So he took her in both arms, powerful, mysterious, horrible in the pitch dark. Yet the sense of the unknown beauty of him weighed her down li[illegible] some force. If for one moment she could have escap[illegible]rom that black spell of his beauty, she would have been f[illegible]. If only she could, for one second, have seen him ugly, he would not have killed her and made her his slave as he did. But the spell was on her, of his darkness and unfathomed handsomeness. And he killed her. He simply took her and assassinated her. How she suffered no one can tell. Yet all the time, this lustrous dark beauty, unbearable.
>
> When later she pressed her face on his chest and cried, he held her gently as if she was a child, but took no notice, and she felt in the darkness that he smiled. It was utterly dark, and she knew he smiled, and she began to get hysterical. But he only kissed her, his smiling deepening to a heavy laughter, silent and invisible but sensible, as he carried her away once more. He intended her to be his slave, she knew. And he seemed to throw her down and suffocate her like a wave. And she could have fought, if only the sense of his dark, rich handsomeness had not numbed her like a venom. So she washed suffocated in his passion.
>
> In the morning when it was light he turned and looked at her from under his long black lashes, a long, steady, cruel, faintly-smiling look from his tawny eyes, searching her as if to see whether she were still alive. And she looked back at him, heavy-eyed and half subjected. He smiled slightly at her, rose, and left her. (55)

At first sight certain parts of this passage - "And he killed her. He simply took her and assassinated her. ... Yet all the time, this lustrous dark beauty, unbearable." - recall the sort of language, the overstatement and the jargon, which marked portions of the two previous books. It is only after reconsideration that one realises that Lawrence's language here is, in fact, precise. But the precision of the language hardly compensates for the barrenness of the experience described, which

(55) The Lost Girl, pp.243-44

is held out as an ideal to be aimed at. For the "divine otherness" and the "mystery" are here replaced by a savage clash of animals in which the one does actually seek to kill and the other submits masochistically to the slaughter. The firebrand thrown into the darkness reveals only the shapes of animals, and, if there be an animal beauty in the attacker, it is perceived only by the one who waits to be attacked, fatally fascinated.

It is hard for us to believe that Alvina finds fulfilment in this sort of experience. The lack of intimacy which characterises her everyday life with Cicio is not even counter-balanced by a physical intimacy. Lawrence tries hard to convince us, but he can do no more than assert her happiness: "She was alone, and she did not mind being alone. It was what she wanted. In allthe passion of her lover she had found a loneliness, beautiful, cool, like a shadow she wrapped round herself and which gave her a sweetness of perfection." (56) For when, in the remote Italian village where she is cut off from all outside interests, Alvina is wholly thrown back on her physical relationship with Cicio, it is not sufficient:

> At moments she hated him. He seemed to want to crush her altogether. She was always making little plans in her mind - how she could get out of that great cruel valley and escape to Rome, to English people. (57)

We begin to feel that she is, in fact, a "lost girl" - a feeling which is heightened when, with Cicio going off to war, she is left alone in Italy with but the promise of his return.

The concluding section of some fifty pages is alone of permanent value in the book, though it emphasises the formless, picaresque construction of the novel. Lawrence's description of the countryside and of life in an inaccessible Italian village is of a high quality and captures unforgettably

(56) The Lost Girl, p.379
(57) Ibid. p.397

the "spirit of place". The brief outline of his own initial impressions of "Pescocalascio", contained in a letter to a Mrs. R. P., (58) is here vividly expanded. It is difficult to select any one passage as evidence of the quality of Lawrence's writing, for the section is closely knit and its effect is cumulative- above all it is an atmosphere which is gradually evoked. But the following passage does show how effortlessly Lawrence suggests the contrast between the countryside and the life of the people, which is so noticeable a feature of parts of Italy. Moreover how precise is his language. The warmth and colour of the first paragraph, flowing along the flame of the burning crocus image, is matched with the sharpness of the second, with the hammer-blows of the leprosy comparison and of the last sentence:

> In February, as the days opened, the first almond trees flowered among grey olives, in warm, level corners between the hills. But it was March before the real flowering began. And then she had continual bowl-fuls of white and blue violets, she had sprays of almond blossom, silver-warm and lustrous, then sprays of peach and apricot, pink and fluttering. It was a great joy to wander looking for flowers. She came upon a bankside all wide with lavender crocuses. The sun was on them for the moment, and they were opened flat, great five-pointed lilac stars, with burning centres, burning with a strange lavender flame, as she had seen some metal burn in the laboratory of the hospital at Islington. All down the oak-dry bankside they burned their great exposed stars. And she felt like going down on her knees and bending her forehead to the earth in an oriental submission, they were so royal, so lovely, so supreme. She came again to them in the morning, when the sky was grey, and they were closed, sharp clubs, wonderfully fragile on their stems of sap, among leaves and old grass and wild periwinkle. They had wonderful dark stripes running up their cheeks, the crocuses, like the clear proud stripes on a badger's face, or on some proud cat. She took a handful of the sappy, shut, striped flames. In her room they opened into a grand bowl of lilac fire.
>
> March was a lovely month. The men were busy in the hills, she wandered, extending her range. Sometimes with a strange fear. But it was a fear of the elements rather than of man. One day she went along the highroad

(58) Letters, pp.485-6

with her letters, towards the village of Casa Latina. The highroad was depressing, wherever there were houses. For the houses had that sordid, ramshackle, slummy look almost invariable on an Italian highroad. They were patched with a hideous greenish mould-colour, blotched, as if with leprosy. It frightened her, till Pancrazio told her it was only the copper sulphate that had sprayed the vines hitched on to the walls. But none the less the houses were sordid, unkempt, slummy. One house by itself could make a complete slum. (59)

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(59) The Lost Girl, pp.392-93

VII

AARON'S ROD

In an essay entitled We Need One Another Lawrence wrote:

> There are two great relationships possible to human beings: the relationship of man to woman, and the relationship of man to man. As regards both, we are in a hopeless mess. (1)

In his work Lawrence devoted himself to the task of "clearing up the mess", of attempting to find and to portray the possibility of a lasting relationship, both between man and woman and man and man. And if, in the novels before Aaron's Rod, our attention is concentrated on relationships between men and women, it is also drawn - in the relationships of George and Cyril of The White Peacock and of Birkin and Gerald of Women in Love - to the question of male friendship. But in these novels this question is, for the male protagonists, subsidiary and additional to their relationships with women. In Aaron's Rod, for the first time, Lawrence describes a male relationship which not only takes precedence over the man to woman relationship, but which altogether excludes the woman.

Aaron's friendship with Lilly is a direct result of the failure of his marriage, and for him it becomes an absolute alternative to marriage with Lottie. But for the reader to believe in an enduring relationship between Aaron and Lilly he has first to accept the complete failure of Aaron's marriage. Lawrence's inability to convince us of the irrevocable nature of this failure is a basic weakness in the book. Where Aaron's abandonment of Lottie should appear inevitable, it seems rather to be the result of a capricious whim.

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(1) Phoenix, p.193

This feeling of uncertainty which the reader has stems largely from an all too hasty outline of the relationship between Aaron and Lottie. It is true that Lottie is from the beginning revealed as a carping wife, but then her nagging is caricatured and (in the first short chapter) her behaviour does not seem to warrant Aaron's decision. Lawrence implies that Lottie's attitude to Aaron on the particular night described is typical of her relationship with him, but this is not sufficient - for the reader to be convinced of this and fully to sympathise with Aaron's revolt, Lawrence would have needed to detail the everyday life of the couple, as he did so vividly with Mr. and Mrs. Morel in Sons and Lovers. As it is, when Aaron leaves home for what would appear to be his daily sally to the "Royal Oak", the reader is as ill-prepared for his desertion of his wife and children as Lottie is.

To accept this desertion one has to magnify the hints of its likelihood which Lawrence does provide. The blue ball, for instance, the "little globe of hardened glass, of a magnificent full dark blue colour," which Aaron has long treasured and which his daughter breaks when she is about to place it on the Christmas tree, is made to assume undue proportions and its breaking an overcharged significance - especially since The Blue Ball is the title of the first chapter:

> "You must mind the bits," [Aaron] said, "and pick 'em all up." He took one of the pieces to examine it. It was fine and thin and hard, lined with pure silver, brilliant. He looked at it closely. So - this was what it was. And this was the end of it. He felt the curious soft explosion of its breaking still in his ears. He threw his piece in the fire. (2)

In the same way what might ordinarily be a feeling of exasperation on Aaron's part is here pregnantly stressed. Aaron is playing his flute shortly after the breaking of the blue ball:

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(2) Aaron's Rod, p.18

> The pure, mindless, exquisite motion and fluidity of the music delighted him with a strange exasperation. There was something tense, exasperated to the point of intolerable anger, in his good-humoured breast, as he played the finely-spun peace-music. The more exquisite the music, the more perfectly he produced it, in sheer bliss; and at the same time, the more intense was the maddened exasperation within him. (3)

Finally, Aaron's exasperation with his life at home is extended, in the convivial inner room of the "Royal Oak", to exasperation with his life at work, with the economic system of the country:

> "Ay," said Aaron. "But there's soon a limit to what I can earn. It's like this. When you work it out, everything comes to money. Reckon it as you like, it's money on both sides. It's money we live for, and money is what our lives is worth - nothing else. Money we live for, and money we are when we're dead: that or nothing. An' it's money as is between the masters and us. There's a few educated ones got hold of one end of the rope, and all the lot of us hanging on to th' other end, an' we s'll go on pulling our guts out, time in, time out - " (4)

It is with such scant preparation that we are asked to accept Aaron's desertion of his wife and children (after twelve years of marriage) and his abandonment of his work as a miner for an uncertain musical career. (It may be noticed that Aaron has, conveniently, sufficient money to provide his wife with a monthly allowance). Lawrence must have been aware that this was hardly convincing for, at intervals throughout the book, he provides further justification for Aaron's decision.

When, after being away for some time, Aaron on an impulse returns home with "a craving for a violent emotional reconciliation", his wife fails to meet him half-way. Instead she tries to force him to beg forgiveness and, when he refuses to, shows a hatred of him which confirms him in his intention to leave her for ever. But Aaron's reflections after this scene now reveal a more fundamental reason for the cleavage - the issue is no longer the superficial one of a nagging wife and an exasperated husband: it now involves the individual's revolt against domination in marriage and his struggle for the preservation of his individuality:

(3) Aaron's Rod, p.20.
(4) Ibid. p.29

> The illusion of love was gone for ever. Love was a battle in which each party strove for the mastery of the other's soul. So far, man had yielded the mastery to woman. Now he was fighting for it back again. And too late, for the woman would never yield. But whether the woman yielded or not, he would keep the mastery of his own soul and conscience and actions. He would never yield himself up to her judgment again. He would hold himself for ever beyond her jurisdiction.
> Henceforth, life single, not life double. (5)

Later, when Aaron is in Italy, Lawrence returns again to this aspect of the struggle between Aaron and Lottie:

> Rather tired and dispirited in this alien place, [Aaron] wondered if he wished himself back. But the moment he actually realised himself at home, and felt the tension of barrenness which it meant, felt the curious and deadly opposition of his wife's will against his own nature, the almost nauseating ache which it amounted to, he pulled himself together and rejoiced again in his new surroundings. Her will, her will, her terrible, implacable, cunning will! What was there in the female will so diabolical, he asked himself, that it could press like a flat sheet of iron against a man all the time? The female will! He realised now that he had a horror of it. It was flat and inflexible as a sheet of iron. But also it was cunning as a snake that could sing treacherous songs. (6)

And then, elaborating on the comparisons suggested to Aaron in the above passage, Lawrence emphasises Aaron's plight with two simple but vivid images:

> ..... there was her terrible will, like a flat cold snake coiled round his soul and squeezing him to death. (7)

> Her fixed female soul, her wound-up female will would solidify into stone - whereas his must break ..... His will flew loose in a recoil away from her. He left her, as inevitably as a broken spring flies out from its hold. (8)

Finally the suggestion is made that there was also sexual conflict between Aaron and Lottie. At first it seems that it is Aaron who, despite himself, is to blame:

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(5) Aaron's Rod, p.155
(6) Ibid. p.191
(7) Ibid. p.195
(8) Ibid. p.196

> He never gave himself. He never came to her, really. He withheld himself. Yes, in those supreme and sacred times which for her were the whole culmination of life and being, the ecstasy of unspeakable passional conjunction, he was not really hers. He was withheld. He withheld the central core of himself, like the devil and hell-fiend he was. He cheated and made play with her tremendous passional soul, her sacred sex passion, most sacred of all things for a woman. All the time, some central part of him stood apart from her, aside, looking on. (9)

But then, uncertainly and ambiguously, Lawrence implies (in the tone of Aaron's "Ay!" in the following passage) that Lottie too is at fault. It is the Marchese who is speaking about his wife:

> "Shall I say what I think? Yes? And you can tell me if it is foolish to you. Shall I tell you? Well. Because a woman, she now first wants the man, and he must go to her because he is wanted. Do you understand? You know - supposing I go to a woman - supposing she is my wife - and I go to her, yes, with my blood all ready, because it is I who want. Then she puts me off. Then she says, not now, not now, I am tired, I am not well. I do not feel like it. She puts me off - till I am angry or sorry or whatever I am - but till my blood has gone down again, you understand, and I don't want her any more. And then she puts her arms round me, and caresses me, and makes love to me - till she rouses me once more. So, and so she rouses me - and so I come to her. And I love her, it is very good, very good. But it was she who began, it was her initiative, you know. I do not think, in all my life, my wife has loved me from my initiative, you know. She will yield to me .... But ah, what is it, you know? What is it, a woman who allows me, and who has no answer? It is something worse than nothing - worse than nothing ....."
>
> "But does it matter?" said Lilly slowly, "in which of them the desire initiates? Isn't the result the same?"
>
> "It matters. It matters - " cried the Marchese.
>
> "Oh, my dear fellow, how much it matters - " interrupted Argyle sagely.
>
> "Ay!" said Aaron. (10)

The provision of this additional background to the dissolution of the marriage of Aaron and Lottie does much to explain the stand taken by Aaron, but Lawrence is not quite able to counteract our initial disbelief. The additional information has to be pieced together and the effect on the reader is similar to that of a second-hand report - we do not actually witness the conflict.

(9) Aaron's Rod, p.194
(10) Ibid. pp.284-85

At the same time, and this refers especially to the information concerning the sexual problem in the marriage (which is sandwiched into the narrative by statement and implication) the provision of this additional detail tends to throw doubt on a very important part of the book. Aaron's pilgrimage is obviously intended to be more than just a search for another woman. He is rebelling against the whole concept of an intimate relationship with a woman (which seems to involve a submission of his individuality) and under Lilly's guidance (or pressure) he is seeking rather to find himself; for a way of safeguarding and preserving his own individuality. Yet he cannot but suspect, as the process of self-determination continues, that his quest might be for another woman. He has sexual desire and Lawrence indicates how, against his instinctive judgment, he allows himself to be led into sexual relationships with two women - with Josephine and with the Marchesa. (There is a rich irony, incidentally, in the way the Marchese talks of his wife shortly before she has relations with Aaron - "I admire her, I trust her, I believe her"). But in both cases Aaron is disappointed and bitterly regrets his experience:

> "I gave in to her - and afterwards I cried, thinking of Lottie and the children. I felt my heart break, you know. And that's what did it. I should have been all right if I hadn't given in to her - "
>
> "To whom?" said Lilly.
>
> "Josephine. I felt, the minute I was loving her, I'd done myself. And I had. Everything came back on me. If I hadn't given in to her, I should ha' kept all right."(11)

> [The Marchesa] had been generous, and the other thing, that he felt blasted afterwards, which was his experience, that was fate, and not her fault. So he must see her again. He must not act like a churl. But he would tell her - he would tell her that he was a married man, and that though he had left his wife, and though he had no dogma of fidelity, still, the years of marriage had made a married man of him, and any other woman than his wife was a strange woman to him,

(11) Aaron's Rod, p.110

> a violation. "I will tell her," he said to himself, "that at the bottom of my heart I love Lottie still, and that I can't help it. I believe that is true. It isn't love, perhaps. But it is marriage. I am married to Lottie. And that means I can't be married to another woman." (12)

Aaron's reactions are psychologically sound and his withdrawal from both women lends a great force to his abandonment of his wife. This is no commonplace desertion. But just as the reader is in this way compelled to attempt to understand what Aaron is really searching for, remembrance of the revelations of his sexual relationship with his wife comes to mind. Then one either has to accept what Lawrence implies about this relationship and reject the reasons advanced by Aaron for his withdrawal from Josephine and the Marchesa, (in which case one has to view his "affairs" with these two women in a different light); or one has to reject the information supplied about his relationship with his wife and conclude that it was needlessly added by Lawrence to lend more ostensible justification for his desertion. In either event the result is unsatisfactory.

Just what Aaron is looking for is only slowly revealed, for it is his search which is the crux of the book. At first he himself does not know what he wants and he is unable really to explain why he has left his wife. When he is asked (early on by Josephine and then later by Sir William Marks) to account for his decision, he can only reply that he felt impelled to, that he is seeking some undefined freedom:

> "Why I left her?" he said. "For no particular reason. They're all right without me."....
>
> "But you couldn't leave your little girls for no reason at all -" [said Josephine].
>
> "Yes, I did. For no reason - except I wanted to have a bit of free room round me - to loose myself." (13)

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(12) Aaron's Rod, p.310
(13) Ibid. p.83

"And you couldn't get back?" [said Sir William].

Aaron shook his head.

"Yet you can give no reasons?"

"Not any reasons that would be any good. It wasn't a question of reasons. *It was a question of her and me* and what must be. What makes a child be born out of its mother, to the pain and trouble of both of them? I don't know ..... I didn't even leave off loving her - not as far as I know. I left her as I shall leave the earth when I die - because it has to be." (14)

But Aaron is all the time engaged in a process of inward discovery. Untrammelled, and stimulated by his changed surroundings and the new people whom he meets, he is slowly finding himself:

> To open his darkest eyes and wake up to a new responsibility. Wake up and enter on the responsibility of a new self in himself. Ach, the horror of responsibility! He had all his life slept and shelved the burden. And he wanted to go on sleeping. It was so hateful to have to get a new grip on his own bowels, a new hard recklessness into his heart, a new and responsible consciousness into his mind and soul. He felt some finger prodding, prodding, prodding him awake out of the sleep of pathos and tragedy and spasmodic passion, and he wriggled, unwilling, oh most unwilling to undertake the new business. (15)

At length he succeeds in his quest and it is significant that his achievement should be expressed in terms of the chestnut-image, the image which runs through The Rainbow and Women in Love (see pp. 144-45 above). It is the same quest:

> Well now, and what next? Having in some curious manner tumbled from the tree of modern knowledge, and cracked and rolled out from the shell of the preconceived idea of himself like some dark night-lustrous chestnut from the green ostensibility of the bur, he lay as it were exposed but invisible on the floor, knowing but making no conceptions: knowing, but having no idea. Now that he was finally unmasked and exposed, the accepted idea of himself cracked and rolled aside like a broken chestnut-bur, the mask split and shattered, he was at last quiet and free. (16)

His natural inclination, thereafter, is to remain alone and unentangled, safe in the possession of his individuality:

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(14) Aaron's Rod, p.177
(15) Ibid. p.183
(16) Ibid. pp.198-99

> No - he was not moving towards anything: he was moving almost violently away from everything .... Let no new connection be made between himself and anything on earth. Let all old connections break. This was his craving. (17)

But Aaron finds it difficult to be absolutely alone, to have no vital connection with anyone, and he soon becomes intimate with Lilly, the writer. The two rapidly become friendly, especially when Lilly befriends Aaron while he is ill; for then, after Lilly rubs Aaron's body with oil, it is as if some sort of physical bond exists between them. Paradoxically it is during this period of close connection that Aaron first hears from Lilly his doctrine of the importance of the separate individuality:

> [Lilly says] "You learn to be quite alone, and possess your own soul in isolation - and at the same time, to be perfectly with someone else - that's all I ask ..... It's what you get to after a lot of fighting and a lot of sensual fulfilment. And it never does away with the fighting and with the sensual passion. It flowers on top of them, and it would never flower save on top of them." (18)

This doctrine is, theoretically, the same as Birkin's "unison in separateness", and is perhaps most succinctly expressed by Lawrence in Fantasia of the Unconscious:

> Half of our fulfilment comes through love, through strong, sensual love. But the central fulfilment for a man is that he possess his own soul in strength within him, deep and alone. The deep, rich aloneness, reached and perfected through love. (19)

Aaron is strongly attracted by Lilly's ideas and Lilly clearly inspires Aaron in his own quest. It is here that I find the thematic implications of the book most unsatisfactory. As far as Lilly is concerned the doctrine is capable of immediate application - he is still married to Tanny; though it may be remarked in passing that we see so little of Lilly and Tanny together that it is impossible to judge whether Lilly's aim is achieved or not: what little we do see of them, as during

(17) Aaron's Rod, pp.214-15
(18) Ibid. p.128
(19) Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.111

Jim Bricknell's visit to their house, is not suggestive of harmony. But for Aaron, who has left his wife and who is unable to enter into another close relationship with a woman, the position is vastly different.

On the one hand he has the choice of struggling alone to "possess his soul in isolation". This he hesitantly does, but then he has Lilly's assurance that his new possession will only "flower on top of sensual passion" and, without that possibility, the choice is one of continuing altogether alone with the sole hope of developing his new-found personality to the utmost. In a striking passage (remarkable for its combination of forceful colloquialism and abstruse thought) Lilly puts this to him:

> There is only one thing, your own very self. So you'd better stick to it. You can't be any bigger than just yourself, so you needn't drag God in. You've got one job, and no more. There inside you lies your own very self, like a germinating egg, your precious Easter egg of your own soul. There it is, developing bit by bit, from one single egg-cell which you were at your conception in your mother's womb, on and on to the strange and peculiar combination in unity which never stops till you die - if then. You've got an innermost, integral, unique self, and since it's the only thing you have got or ever will have, don't go trying to lose it. You've got to develop it, from the egg into the chicken, and from the chicken into the one-and-only phoenix, of which there can only be one at a time in the universe. There can only be one of you at a time in the universe - and one of me. So don't forget it. Your own single oneness is your destiny. Your destiny comes from within, from your own self-form. And you can't know it beforehand, neither your destiny nor your self-form. You can only develop it. You can only stick to your own very self, and never betray it. And by so sticking, you develop the one and only phoenix of your own self, and you unfold your own destiny, as a dandelion unfolds itself into a dandelion, and not into a stick of celery. (20)

But Aaron is not prepared always to be alone. "You talk," he says to Lilly, "as if we were like trees, alone by ourselves in the world. We aren't. If we love it needs another person than ourselves. And if we hate, and even if we talk." (21) And so he is faced with another alternative -

(20) Aaron's Rod, p.343
(21) Ibid. p.345

that of the substitution of a vital connection with a man for that of a woman, of a vital connection with Lilly. In some strange way Aaron seems to draw his strength from Lilly:

> One fact remained unbroken in the debris of his consciousness: that in the town was Lilly: and that when he needed, he could go to Lilly. (22)

> Therefore next day he gathered up his courage. He would not have had courage unless he had known that he was not alone. The other man was in the town, and from this fact he derived his strength: the fact that Lilly was there. (23)

I find this strange because there is apparently so little ground for intimacy between the two men. The slow, dogged, uninspired Aaron is not the sort of man, one would imagine, who would be likely to appeal to Lilly. And it is difficult to understand what attracts Aaron to Lilly, because Lilly is so insubstantial a figure. It is only occasionally that Lilly flashes into life for the reader - when he tells the visiting Jim Bricknell that he would prefer him to go home soon, for instance, (24) or when, after Jim has punched him, he sits "motionless as a statue, his face like paper ..... he was almost winded and could not breathe. He sat rigid, paralysed as a winded man is. But he wouldn't let it be seen. With all his will he prevented himself from gasping." (25) For the most part, though, he is impassive and appears in the role of a self-assured, dogmatic theorist. And when he is with Aaron, especially after their stay together in his flat, it is rarely that he gives the impression of being a human being. The reader views him rather as an impersonal commentator.

Quite apart [illegible] likelihood of such an intimacy developing bet[illegible]o men, however, it is Lawrence's final twist to this relatio[illegible], which gives most cause for dissatisfaction. The alternative with which Aaron is confronted

(22) Aaron's Rod, p.308
(23) Ibid. p.311
(24) Ibid. p.97
(25) Ibid. p.102.

is not merely the substitution of a vital connection with a man for that of a woman - it involves unquestioning submission to the man. And Aaron, in despair after his flute is smashed, realises this:

> Driven to bay, and forced to choose. Forced to choose, not between life and death, but between the world and the uncertain, assertive Lilly. Forced to choose, and yet, in the world, having nothing left to choose. For in the world there was nothing left to choose, unless he would give in and try for success. Aaron knew well enough that if he liked to do a bit of buttering, people would gladly *make a success of him, and give him money and success.* He could become quite a favourite.
>
> But no! If he had to give in to something: if he really had to give in, and it seemed he had: then he would rather give in to the devilish little Lilly than to the beastly people of the world. If he had to give in, then it would be to no woman, and to no social ideal, and to no social institution. No! - if he had to yield his wilful independence, and give himself, then he would rather give himself to the little, individual man than to any of the rest. For to tell the truth, in the man was something incomprehensible, which had dominion over him, if he chose to allow it. (26)

Exactly what is involved in "giving in" to Lilly is made clear in the strangely inconclusive passage with which the book closes:

> "All men say, they want a leader," [said Lilly]. "Then let them in their souls submit to some greater soul than theirs. At present, when they say they want a leader, they mean they want an instrument, like Lloyd George. A mere instrument for their use. But it's more than that. It's the reverse. It's the deep, fathomless submission to the heroic soul in a greater man. You, Aaron, you too have the need to submit. You, too, have the need livingly to yield to a more heroic soul, to give yourself. You know you have. And you know it isn't love. It is life-submission. And you know it. But you kick against the pricks. And perhaps you'd rather die than yield. And so, die you must. It is your affair."
>
> There was a long pause. Then Aaron looked up into Lilly's face. It was dark and remote-seeming. It was like a Byzantine eikon at the moment.
>
> "And whom shall I submit to?" he said.
>
> "Your soul will tell you," replied the other (27)

The issue is left open, but whether Aaron rejects or accepts Lilly's proposal, he would seem to be faced with a

(26) Aaron's Rod, pp.336-37
(27) Ibid. p.347

cheerless future. His pilgrimage will not bring him fulfilment - though Lawrence suggests it will. If he turns away from Lilly he either has to face life alone or "give in to the world." If he submits to Lilly the struggle to find and to preserve his individuality will have been in vain and the position from which he started on his quest will merely be reversed: he will exchange submission to a woman for submission to a man. As he asks his last question Aaron appears, unintentionally, a pitiful figure. His magic rod, his flute, is broken and just as the smashing of the blue ball symbolises the break-up of his home, so the broken flute is symbolic of the end of his new-found happiness - despite Lilly's assurance that the rod will "grow again".

Lawrence's failure in the handling of his theme is emphasised by the haphazard construction of the book. Aaron's Rod has not the cohesion of a book like Sons and Lovers: far from feeling that every incident contributes to the gradual development of the theme whose resolution strikes one as inevitable, one is only conscious in this book of being continually distracted from the working out of the theme - which, in any event, is handled unsatisfactorily. One can only surmise that this formlessness was the result of Lawrence's inability to curb his urge to "settle accounts" with people who had annoyed him in real life; a failing previously evident in his handling of Halliday in Women in Love (see p.139 above). But it is in Aaron's Rod, more than in any of his other books, that this tendency quite disproportionately manifests itself. Aaron fortuitously meets, and as fortuitously leaves, whole groups of people whose presence in the book contributes nothing to its development, and whose inclusion can only tenuously be justified on the ground of their indirectly stimulating or fortifying him in his quest. In the picaresque tradition they are not heard of again once Aaron takes his farewell from them, and loose ends remain scattered throughout the book. The real reason for

their inclusion is to afford Lawrence the man an opportunity to satirize personal acquaintances.

Perhaps the most glaring example of this failing is the comparatively long section (some sixty pages) which deals with Aaron's stay at the home of Sir William Marks, a section which is only linked to the main narrative by an indefinite arrangement which Aaron has with Lilly for a rendezvous at the baronet's house. If one excludes Aaron's reasoning with himself while on a solitary walk in the neighbouring countryside - a situation which could as satisfactorily have been contrived anywhere else - this section does not in any way advance the action of the book. Its inclusion, it would appear, was solely the result of Lawrence's encounter with the original of Sir William Marks, as can be seen from the following extract from a letter which Lawrence wrote to Lady Cynthia Asquith in November 1919:

> Well, I've got so far - travelling now is the devil, if you can't afford a sleeper. The train sits half the time to hatch out her ideas for the next kilometre - Paris is a nasty city, and the French are not sympathetic to me. I stayed two nights on the way with rich English people - O.B.M. or O.B. something - parvenu, etc. - great luxury - rather nice people, really - but my stomach, my stomach, it has a bad habit of turning a complete somersault when it finds itself in the wrong element, like a dolphin in the air. The old Knight and I had a sincere half-mocking argument, he for security and bank-balance and power, and I for naked liberty. In the end he rested safe on his bank-balance, I in my nakedness; we hated each other - but with respect. But c'est lui qui mourra. He is going to die - moi, non. He knows that, the impotent old wolf, so he is ready in one half to murder me. I don't want to murder him - merely leave him to his death. (28)

Unfortunately for the unity of Aaron's Rod Lawrence was not content to allow the baronet to die a natural death: in its pages he attempted to slaughter him. But it must be admitted that Lawrence's satire is itself most effective. The portraits of Sir William and his sycophantic circle are very good - one remembers especially the description of Sir William trying on his orders. And perhaps the measure of Lawrence's success is to be found in the reaction of the original Sir William. He complained bitterly of a "breach of hospitality"

(28) Letters, p.484

and wrote to Norman Douglas: "I appear in his pages as a kind of physically decrepit and vulgarly ostentatious plutocrat." (29)

Indeed Lawrence's eye for the revealing detail makes him a master of satire, a fact to which Mr. Aldington bears witness:

> Since "little Algy Constable" is now dead, alas, there is no harm in revealing that the original was that faithful friend of Oscar Wilde, Reggy Turner, and the cruel phrase about his "flapping his eyelids like some crazy owl" is magically exact. Poor Reggy did have that habit of screwing up and unscrewing his eyes with disconcerting speed and for no apparent reason - it was only Lawrence who could catch it perfectly in a jeering phrase. (30)

And Mr. Aldington describes the portrait of James Argyle (Norman Douglas) as "masterly and irresistibly funny to anyone who knew the original."

Where Lawrence's satire is good-humoured one once again comes across delightfully humorous passages reminiscent of an earlier vein, of the description of the "eleven young pigs" in The White Peacock, for instance. (see p.36 above). In the following passage, too, it may be noted how once again his humour springs effortlessly from the happy incongruity of his imagery, from the choice Buddha comparison. Angus is making tea for Aaron and Francis in the carriage of an Italian train:

> [They left] Angus like a busy old wizard manipulating his arrangements on the floor of his carriage, his monocle beaming with bliss. The one fat fellow-passenger with a lurid striped rug over his knees watched with acute interest. Everybody who passed the doorway stood to contemplate the scene with pleasure. Officials came and studied the situation with appreciation. Then Francis and Aaron returned with a large supply of roast chestnuts, piping hot, and hard dried plums, and good dried figs, and rather stale rusks. They found the water just boiling, Angus just throwing in the tea-egg, and the fellow-passenger just poking his nose right in, he was so thrilled.

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(29) Norman Douglas: Looking Back, p.348
(30) Richard Aldington: Introduction to Penguin Edition of Aaron's Rod, p.10.

> Nothing pleased Angus so much as thus pitching camp in the midst of civilisation. The scrubby newspaper packets of chestnuts, plums, figs and rusks were spread out: Francis flew for salt to the man at the bar, and came back with a little paper of rock-salt: the brown tea was dispensed in the silver-fitted glasses from the immortal luncheon-case: and the picnic was in full swing. Angus, being in the height of his happiness, now sat on the seat cross-legged, with his feet under him, in the authentic Buddha fashion, and on his face the queer rapt alert look, half a smile, also somewhat Buddhistic, holding his glass of brown tea in his hand. He was as rapt and immobile as if he really were in a mystic state. Yet it was only his delight in the tea-party. The fellow-passenger peered at the tea, and said in broken French, was it good? In equally fragmentary French Francis said very good, and offered the fat passenger some. He, however, held up his hand in protest, as if to say not for any money would he swallow the hot-watery stuff. And he pulled out a flask of wine. But a handful of chestnuts he accepted.
>
> The train-conductor, ticket-collector, and the heavy green soldier who protected them, swung open the door and stared attentively. The fellow passenger addressed himself to these new-comers, and they all began to smile good-naturedly. Then the fellow-passenger - he was stout and fifty and had a brilliant striped rug always over his knees - pointed out the Buddha-like position of Angus, and the three in-starers smiled again. And so the fellow passenger thought he must try too. So he put aside his rug, and lifted his feet from the floor, and took his toes in his hands, and tried to bring his legs up and his feet under him. But his knees were fat, his trousers in the direst extreme of peril, and he could no more manage it than if he had tried to swallow himself. So he desisted suddenly, rather scared, whilst the three bunched and official heads in the doorway laughed and jested at him, showing their teeth and teasing him. But on our gypsy party they turned their eyes with admiration. They loved the novelty and the fun. And on the thin, elegant Angus in his new London clothes they looked really puzzled, as he sat there immobile, gleaming through his monocle like some Buddha going wicked, perched cross-legged and ecstatic on the red velvet seat. They marvelled that the lower half of him could so double up, like a foot-rule. So they stared till they had seen enough. When they suddenly said "Buon' appetito," withdrew their heads and shoulders, slammed the door, and departed. (31)

The charm of this passage cannot prevent one from realising, however, that Angus and Francis have no real connection with Aaron. They, like most of the characters in Aaron's Rod, are simply introduced at random - whether they be the Bricknell circle or the Italian English. Lawrence's handling of incident is similarly inconsequential. The description of Bricknell's punching of Lilly, for example, seems, to judge from Mr. Aldington's biography, to have been introduced

(31) Aaron's Rod, pp.244-45

for no better reason than that Lawrence was actually punched by the man on whom Bricknell is based. (32) In the same way the very fine description of rioting in Florence has as little to do with Aaron's Rod as Julia's lover Scott has to do with Aaron.

A more serious charge against Lawrence's construction, though, is that a most important action by a main character is not sufficiently motivated. The book hinges on Aaron's journey to Italy and yet, as Mr. West points out (33) there is no satisfactory reason for his doing so. Penniless and with no contact in Italy other than Lilly, it is hardly likely that he would leave England because "London got on his nerves".

It is interesting to notice that it is only in his badly constructed books that Lawrence has recourse to intrusion in the first person. The first instances of such intrusion are to be found in The Lost Girl where one comes across comments such as: "The heroine of this story is Alvina Houghton. If we leave her out of the first chapter of her own story it is because, during the first twenty-five years of her life, she really was left out of count, or so overshadowed as to be negligible;" (34) and: "Was Alvina her own real self all this time? The mighty question arises upon us, what is one's own real self? It certainly is not what we think we are and ought to be." (35) In Aaron's Rod there are similar instances of "the mechanics of the tale rattling badly in places." (36) Chapter Four opens with: "Our story will not yet see daylight," and, more damagingly, some involved thought by Aaron is followed by:

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(32) Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius But... p.224
(33) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.119
(34) The Lost Girl, p.32
(35) Ibid. p.48
(36) Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p.46

> Don't grumble at me then, gentle reader, and swear at me that this damned fellow wasn't half clever enough to think all these smart things, and realise all these fine-drawn-out subtleties. You are quite right, he wasn't, yet it all resolved itself in him as I say, and it is for you to prove that it didn't. (37)

Mr. Murry, strangely enough, is impressed by this interruption. "It takes a big man to do that nowadays without breaking the spell. Mr. Lawrence's spell is not broken: he is a big man." (38) I feel that Lawrence's intrusion not only "breaks the spell" but also unnecessarily draws attention to a fault which, without this comment, would not be especially noticeable - since Aaron's "fine-drawn-out subtleties" are described in the third person. Moreover, Lawrence's use of the phrase "gentle reader" only invites adverse comparison with Thackeray. Thackeray's delightful comments, if they disrupt the flow of the narrative, have a charm of their own:

> And who on earth after the daily experience we have, can question the probability of a gentleman marrying anybody? How many of the wise and learned have married their cooks? Did not Lord Eldon himself, the most prudent of men, make a runaway match? ... If people only made prudent marriages, what a stop to population there would be! (39)

Lawrence's intrusions are self-conscious admissions of failure.

------oOo------oOo------oOo------

Aaron's Rod, though enjoyable reading, is not a good book because Lawrence is so personally involved in it. It is Lawrence's personal animus which in large measure accounts for its slack construction; and it is his personal preoccupation with the conception of a "power-urge", with the submission of one man to "the heroic soul in a greater man", that is responsible for his unsatisfactory handling of Aaron. Lawrence-Lilly forgets that it is Aaron who is the main character in the book and that, while the proposed relationship may suit Lilly, it is hardly likely to satisfy Aaron.

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(37) Aaron's Rod, p.199
(38) J. Middleton Murry: Review of Aaron's Rod in Nation and Athenaeum, August 1922, quoted in Reminiscences of D.H.Lawrence, p.233
(39) W.M.Thackeray: Vanity Fair.

VIII

KANGAROO.

> [Yet] men being themselves made new after the act of coition wish to make the world new .... It is now daytime, and time to forget sex, time to be busy making a new world .... And I am sure that the ultimate greatest desire in men is this desire for great purposive activity. When man loses this deep sense of purposive, creative activity, he feels lost, and is lost. When he makes the sexual consummation the supreme consummation, even in his secret soul, he falls into the beginnings of despair. When he makes woman, or the woman and child, the great centre of life and of life-significance, he falls into the beginnings of despair ....
>
> But when the sex passion submits to the great purposive passion, then you have fullness. And no great purposive passion can endure long unless it is established upon the fulfilment in the vast majority of individuals of the true sexual passion. (1)

This [illegible], written shortly before Lawrence began work on Kangaroo, broad outline of the theme of the novel - which hardly [illegible]its dismissal as "the story of an Australian Messiah who couldn't save anything or anybody." (2) In Kangaroo Lawrence tests and elaborates this idea, and his integrity as a novelist forces him to face the question of the woman's reaction to such male activity, a question which he ignores in Fantasia of the Unconscious. And if his failure to deal with this aspect satisfactorily depreciates the value of the novel, it must nevertheless be regarded as an important book from the point of view of Lawrence's development: in it, for the first time, the man aspires to something beyond a complete and achieved relationship with the woman.

Indeed the initial portrayal of the relationship between Somers and Harriet is the immediately distinguishing feature of the book. No longer do we witness the violent conflicts of The Rainbow and Women in Love. Instead Somers and Harriet possess a calm self-sufficiency which, from the beginning, suggests an achieved relationship. Jack sees them

(1) Fantasia of the Unconscious, pp.97-99
(2) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.60

for the first time:

> His eyes immediately rested on two figures approaching from the direction of the conservatorium, across the grass-lawn. One was a mature, handsome, fresh-faced woman, who might have been Russian. Her companion was a smallish man, pale-faced, with a dark beard. Both were well-dressed, and quiet, with that quiet self-possession which is almost unnatural nowadays. (3)

And in his handling of the exchanges between the two, Lawrence not only brings each to life, but stirs the whole relationship into vivid being - this is the living give and take of an assured relationship:

> Somers [standing on top of the summer-house] felt a little uneasy because he could look down into the whole range of his neighbours' gardens and back premises. He tried not to look at them. But Harriet had come climbing after him to survey the world, and she began:
>
> "Isn't it lovely here! Do you see the harbour? - and the way we came in! Look, look, I remember looking out of the porthole and seeing that lighthouse, just as we came in - and those little brown cliffs. Oh, but it's a wonderful harbour. What it must have been when it was first discovered. And now all these little dog-kennelly houses, and everything. But this next garden is lovely; have you seen the - what are they, the lovely flowers?"
>
> "Dahlias".
>
> "But did ever you see such dahlias! Are you sure they're dahlias? They're like pink chrysanthemums - and like roses - oh, lovely! But all these little dog-kennels - awful piggling suburban place - and sort of lousy. Is this all men can do with a new country? Look at those tin cans!"
>
> "What do you expect them to do? Rome was not built in a day."
>
> "Oh, but they might make it nice. Look at all the little backs: like chicken houses with chicken runs. They call this making a new country, do they?"
>
> "Well, how would you start making a new country yourself?" asked Somers, a little impatiently.
>
> "I wouldn't have towns - and corrugated iron - and millions of little fences - and empty tins."
>
> "No, you'd have old chateaus and Tudor manors." (4)

How life-like, too, is the following passage - especially when one remembers that it was decidedly Harriet who "began it":

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(3) Kangaroo, p. 11
(4) Ibid. pp.17-18

Yet she began to suggest going away: away from Sydney. She felt humiliated in that beastly little Murdoch Street.

"What did I tell you?" he retorted. "The very look of it humiliated me. Yet you wanted it, and you said you liked it."

"I did like it - *for the fun of it*. But *now* there's all this intimacy and neighbouring. I just can't stand it. I just can't."

"But you began it."

"No, I didn't; you began it. And your beastly sweetness and gentleness with such people. I wish you kept a bit of it for me." (5)

The reader's apprehension (derived intuitively from the tone of the above passages) of a settled intimacy between the two is indirectly confirmed when Lawrence contrasts the marriage of Somers and Harriet with that of Jack and Victoria:

Perhaps [Jack] knew his wife much better than anyone else. At any rate he did not feel it necessary to keep an eye on her. If she liked to look at Somers with a strange, exposed smile, that was her affair. She could do as she liked in that direction, so far as he, Jack Callcott, was concerned. She was his wife: she knew it, and he knew it. And it was quite established and final. So long as she did not betray what was between her and him, as husband and wife, she could do as she liked with the rest of herself. And he could, quite rightly, trust her to be faithful to that undefinable relation which subsisted between them as man and wife. He didn't pretend and didn't want to occupy the whole field of her consciousness.

And in just the same way, that bond which connected himself with her, he would always keep unbroken for his part. But that did not mean that he was sworn body and soul to his wife. Oh no. There was a good deal of him which did not come into the marriage bond, and with all this part of himself *he was free to make the best he could, according* to his own idea ... Where their two personalities met and joined, they were one, and pledged to permanent fidelity. But that part in each of them which did not belong to the other was free from all enquiry or even from knowledge. Each silently consented to leave the other in large part unknown, unknown in word and deed and very being. They didn't want to know - too much knowledge would be like shackles ...

.... This [Jack] openly propounded to his mates: to William James, for example, and later to Somers. William James said yes. but thought the more. Somers was frankly disturbed, not liking the thought of applying the same prescription to his own marriage. (6)

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(5) Kangaroo, p.74
(6) Ibid. pp.39-41

The deeper intimacy which exists between Somers and Harriet is strikingly emphasised when, with Somers and Victoria left alone together, Lawrence again contrasts the respective codes of conduct of the two couples. Both Somers and Victoria feel sexually attracted to one another and there is now a dramatic irony in Jack's conviction that he could "trust [Victoria] to be faithful to that undefinable relation which subsisted between them as man and wife," for it is Victoria who looks at Somers "with her dark eyes dilated into a glow, a glow of offering." It is Somers, however, who resists the temptation - though not on the grounds of conventional morality. For that, Harriet "was too honest a female. She would know that the dishonour, as far as she felt it, lay in the desire, not in the act. For her, too, honour did not consist in a pledged word kept according to pledge, but in a genuine feeling faithfully followed." (7) Somers remains true to this deeper feeling, rejecting "these moments bred in the head and born in the eye":

> These flashes of desire for a visual object would no longer carry him into action. He had no use for them. There was a downslope into Orcus, and a vast, phallic, sacred darkness, where one was enveloped into the greater god as in an Egyptian darkness. He would meet there or nowhere. To the visual travesty he would lend himself no more. (8)

The more spontaneous, directly physical feeling between Somers and Harriet is illustrated later. Somers has been swimming, nude, in the sea:

> It was raining quite heavily as he walked out, and the skies hung low over the sea, dark over the green and white vigour of the ocean. The shore was so foam-white it almost suggested sun. The rain felt almost warm.
>
> Harriet came walking across the grass with a towel.
>
> "What a good idea!" she said. "If I'd known I'd have come. I wish I had."
>
> But he ignored the towel, and went into the little wash-place and under the shower, to wash off the sticky, strong Pacific. Harriet came along with the towel, and he put his hand to her face and nodded to her. She knew what he meant, and went wondering, and when he had rubbed the wet off himself he came to her.

(7) Kangaroo, p.168
(8) Ibid. p.160

To the end she was more wondering than anything. But when it was the end, and the night was falling outside, she laughed and said to him:

"That was done in style. That was chic. Straight from the sea, like another creature."

Style and chic seemed to him somewhat ill suited to the occasion, but he brought her a bowl of warm water and went and made the tea. (9)

Their relationship here is again in contrast to the deliberate, semi-public love making of Jack and Victoria:

"You talk all the sense, don't you, kiddie?" [Jack] said, with a strong Australian accent again. And as he spoke with his face upturned to her, his Adam's apple moved in his strong white throat as if it chuckled.

"Of course I do," she crooned in her mocking, crooning contralto. "Of course I do."

He put his arm round her hips. They continued to look into each other's faces.

"It's awfully late. We shall have simply to fly to bed. I'm so sleepy now. Good-night. Thank you so much for the singing. I enjoyed it awfully. Good-night!" [said Harriet].

Victoria looked up with a brightly-flushed face, entirely unashamed, her eyes glowing like an animal's. Jack relaxed his grip of her, but did not rise. He looked at the Somers pair with eyes gone dusky, as if unseeing, and the mask-like smile lingering on his face like the reflection from some fire, curiously natural, not even grotesque.

"Find your way across all right?" he said. "Good-night! Good-night!" But he was as unaware of them actually, as if they did not exist within his ken.

"Well," said Harriet, as they closed the door of Torestin. "I think they might have waited for just two minutes before they started their love making. After all, one doesn't want to be implicated, does one?"

"One emphatically doesn't," said Somers.

"Really, it was as if he'd got his arm round all the four of us! Horrid!" said Harriet resentfully.

"He felt he had, I'm sure," said Somers. (10)

The success of the relationship between Somers and Harriet is also explicitly indicated:

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(9) Kangaroo, p.164
(10) Ibid. pp.55-6

> When he got home, his eyes opened once more to the delicacy of Harriet's real beauty, which he knew as none else knew it, after twelve years of marriage. And once more he realised her gay, undying courage, her wonderful fresh zest in front of life. And all these other little people seemed so common in comparison, so common. He stood still with astonishment, wondering how he could have come to betray the essential reality of his life and Harriet's to the common use of these other people with their watchful, vulgar wills. That scene of last evening: what right had a fellow like Callcott to be saying these things to him? What right had he to put his arm round his Richard's, shoulder, and give him a tight hug? Somers winced to think of it. (11)

> Harriet would look at him sometimes wistfully, as he sat with his brow clouded. She had a real instinctive mistrust of other people - all other people. In her heart of hearts she said she wanted to live alone with Somers, and know nobody, all the rest of her life. In Australia, where one can be lonely, and where the land almost calls to one to be lonely - and then drives one back again on one's fellow-men in a kind of frenzy. Harriet would be quite happy, by the sea, with a house and a little garden and as much space to herself as possible, knowing nobody, but having Lovat always there. And he could write, and it would be perfect. (12)

By these means Lawrence succeeds in presenting (for the first time in the novels) a picture of a fully achieved relationship between man and woman. In full accord, sexually and socially, and having succeeded in establishing a relationship which, though close and intimate, is balanced and adjusted by the mutually accepted recognition of each other's individuality, Somers and Harriet wish to enjoy their happiness alone, finding the "essential reality" of life in their life together. In the further development of their relationship, however, there is at once a significant departure from the pattern of similar relationships previously described by Lawrence. In the previous relationships, it will be remembered, most of the couples turned their backs on the world while engaged in their own struggle to achieve satisfactory relationships. In Kangaroo, the positive achievement of his marriage does not finally satisfy Somers. For him, for the little man who sits in a car in between Jack and Victoria "like the ham in a sandwich", this achievement is but a prelude to a return to the world, and the prospect of an

(11) Kangaroo, p.75
(12) Ibid. p.76

idyllic existence alone with Harriet an alternative which he rejects:

> "And why couldn't we be happy in this wonderful new country, living to ourselves," [said Harriet]. "We could have a cow, and chickens - and then the Pacific, and this marvellous new country. Surely, that is enough for any man. Why must you have more?"
>
> "Because I feel I must fight out something with mankind yet. I haven't finished with my fellow-men. I've got a struggle with them yet." (13)

Lawrence crystallises this issue of a further activity, of a life extending outwards from the marriage relationship, with a root and branch image. And it may be noticed how neatly, in the very moment of dissension, he again indicates the firm basis of the marriage in Harriet's replies to Somers, who overstates his case in the argument:

> "You see," he said, "I have the roots of my life with you. But I want if possible to send out a new shoot in the life of mankind - the effort man makes forever, to grow into new forms ..... I want to do something with living people, somewhere, somehow, while I live on the earth. I write, but I write alone. And I live alone. Without any connection whatever with the rest of men."
>
> "Don't swank, you don't live alone. You've got me there safe enough, to support you. Don't swank to me about being alone, because it insults me, you see. I know how much alone you are, with me always there keeping you together."
>
> And again he sulked and swallowed it, and obstinately held out.
>
> "None the less," he retorted, "I do want to do something along with men. I am alone and cut off. As a man among men, I just have no place. I have my life with you, I know: et praeterea nihil."
>
> "Et praeterea nihil! And what more do you want? Besides, you liar, haven't you your writing? Isn't that all you want, isn't that doing all there is to be done? Men! Much men there is about them! Bah, when it comes to that, I have to be even the only man as well as the only woman."
>
> "That's the whole trouble," said he bitingly.
>
> "Bah, you creature, you ought to be grateful," cried Harriet. (14)

(13) Kangaroo, p.77
(14) Ibid. pp.78-9

As chance would have it Somers is soon presented with an opportunity to engage in an activity in the world of men. His neighbour, Jack Callcott, an Australian war-hero, is a high officer in the "Diggers' Clubs", a semi-underground, militantly political [illegible] of returned soldiers. Impressed by Somers' ability, he tries to draw him into the association. And because the organisation is a secret one, Somers is enjoined to silence:

> "Right you are, old man," [said Jack]. "You take your own time - I know you won't be wagging your jaw to anybody."
>
> "No. Not even to Harriet."
>
> "Oh, bless you, no. We're not having the women in, if we can help it. Don't believe in it, do you?"
>
> "Not in real politics, I don't." (15)

Thereafter Somers' determination to persist in a course of action which is not only beyond Harriet, but which, by its very nature, is exclusive of her, and her equally determined desire to share in all he does, make conflict between the two inevitable. Their old stable relationship, which was to have been the basis for further activity by Somers, is itself changed and affected by the new activity: once again there is a clash of antagonistic personalities, each striving to maintain his own individuality and to enforce his line of conduct on the other:

> She continued bright through the day. Then at evening he found her sitting on her bed with tears in her eyes and her hands in her lap. At once his heart became very troubled: because after all she was all he had in the world, and he couldn't bear her to be really disappointed or wounded. He wanted to ask her what was the matter, and to try to comfort her. But he knew it would be false. He knew that her greatest grief was when he turned away from their personal human life of intimacy to this impersonal business of male activity for which he was always craving. So he felt miserable, but went away without saying anything. Because he was determined, if possible, to go forward in this matter with Jack. He was also determined that it was not a

(15) Kangaroo, p.106

> woman's matter. Assoon as he could he would tell her about it: as much as it was necessary for her to know. But, once he had slowly and carefully weighed a course of action, he would not hold it subject to Harriet's approval or disapproval. It would be out of her sphere, outside the personal sphere of their two lives, and he would keep it there. She emphatically opposed this principle of her externality. She agreed with the necessity for impersonal activity, but oh, she insisted on being identified with the activity, impersonal or not. And he insisted that it could not and should not be: that the pure male activity should be womanless, beyond woman. No man was beyond woman. But in his one quality of ultimate maker and breaker, he was womanless. Harriet denied this, bitterly. She wanted to share, to join in, not to be left out lonely. He looked at her in distress, and did not answer. It is a knot that can never be untied; it can only, like a navel string, be broken or cut. (16)

In passing, it is worth noticing the significance of the navel string image in the above passage: severance of the string may mark the establishment of the baby's own separate life; it does not lessen its immediate dependence on the mother.

At first Harriet's reaction to the new situation is mild, a hurt within herself:

> She was happy in her new house, delighted with the sea and the being alone, she loved her Coo-ee bungalow, and loved making it look nice. She loved having Lovat alone with her, and all her desires, as it were, in the hollow of her hand. She was bright and affectionate with him. But underneath lurked this chagrin of his wanting to go away from her, for his activity. (17)

But then, as the breach between them widens, the struggle becomes more intense. I find it strange that Mr. West should assert that Lawrence "traces the success of their relationship in the end to the refusal of either to surrender anything of *what they are.* The marriage is alive because there is no submission about it, both parties have constantly to be reckoned with." (18) "In the end" (*as I hope to show*) there is a curiously ambiguous surrender on the part of one of the partners, but at this juncture the "refusal of either to surrender" *seems* rather to come close to wrecking the marriage - as Lawrence in his exposition of the anatomy of marriage, of its "blood-circuit", shows. Notice the force of Lawrence's return, under changed

(16) Kangaroo, p.108
(17) Ibid. p.110
(18) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.126

circumstances, to the tree image in the following passage:

> But Harriet was not going to be ignored: no, she was not. She was not going to sink herself to the level of a convenience. She didn't really want protestations of gratitude or love. They only puzzled her and confused her. But she wanted him inwardly to keep a connection with her. Silently, he must maintain the flow between him and her, and safeguard it carefully. It is a thing which a man cannot do with his head: it isn't remembering. And it is a thing which a woman cannot explain or understand, because it is quite irrational. But is one of the deepest realities of life. When a man and woman truly come together, when there is a marriage, then an unconscious, vital connection is established between them, like a throbbing blood-circuit. A man may forget a woman entirely with his head, and fling himself with energy and fervour into whatever job he is tackling, and all is well, all is good, if he does not break that inner vital connection which is the mystery of marriage. But let him once get out of unison, out of conjunction, let him inwardly break loose and come apart, let him fall into that worst of male vices, the vice of abstraction and mechanisation, and have a concert of working along and of himself, then he commits the breach. He hurts the woman and he hurts himself, though neither may know why. The greatest hero that ever existed was heroic only whilst he kept the throbbing inner union with something, God, or Fatherland, or woman. The most immediate is woman, the wife. But the most grovelling wife-worshippers are the foulest of traitors and renegades to the inner unison. A man must strive onward, but from the root of marriage, marriage with God, with wife, with mankind. Like a tree that is rooted, always growing and flowering away from its root, so is a vitally active man. But let him take some false direction, and there is torture through the whole organism, roots and all. The woman suffers blindly from the man's mistaken direction, and reacts blindly.
>
> Now in this revolution stunt, and his insistence on "male" activity, Somers had upturned the root flow, and Harriet was a devil to him - quite rightly - for he knew that inside himself he was devilish. She tried to keep her kindness and happiness. But no, it was false when the inner connection was betrayed. So her silent rage accumulated, and it was no good playing mental tricks of suppression with it. As for him, he was forced to recognise the devil in his own belly. He just felt devilish. (19)

Up to this point Lawrence's vivid analysis of the relationship of Harriet and Somers is most effective. Yet in his further development, and ultimate resolution, of their conflict I feel he falters badly.

The first sign of weakness in the further development of the relationship is the intrusion of Lawrence himself. Shortly after the passage quoted above Lawrence devotes a whole

(19) Kangaroo, pp.182-3

chapter (entitled Harriet and Lovat at Sea in Marriage) to a whimsical and wearyingly allegorical account of the difficulties of Somers and Harriet. After a textbook-like opening to the chapter: "When a sincere man marries a wife he has one or two courses open to him, which he can pursue with that wife. He can propose to himself to be (a) the lord and master who is honoured and obeyed, (b) the perfect lover, (c) the true friend and companion. Of these (a) is now rather out of date ...."(20)- after this opening, Lawrence ponderously plays on the conception of lovers being "at sea", talks of the "Straits of Magellan, where two fierce and opposing currents meet and there is the devil of a business trying to keep the bark of marriage, with the flag of perfect-love at the mast, from dashing on a rock or foundering in the heavy seas;" (21) goes on to the Pacific and says: "This is the course I would recommend young married women to drift into, after the first two years of 'perfect love';" and finally arrives at "the good bark Harriet and Lovat":

> I have not made up my mind whether she was a ship, or a bark, or a schooner, technically speaking. Let us imagine her as any one of them. Or perhaps she was a clipper, or a frigate, or a brig. All I insist is that she was not a steam-boat with a funnel, as most vessels are nowadays, sailing because they are stoked. (22)

There follow some dream-like exchanges between Harriet and Lovat "of the good ship Harriet and Lovat" and then, at last, the important conception of a fundamental change in their relationship which is even then facetiously masked - though with a good story:

> In short he was to be the lord and master, and she the humble slave. Thank you. Or at the very best she was to be a sort of domestic Mrs. Gladstone, the Mrs. Gladstone of that old chestnut - who, when a female friend was lamenting over the terrible state of affairs, in Ireland or somewhere, and winding up her lament with: "Terrible, terrible. But there is One above" - replied: "Yes, he's just changing his socks. He'll be down in a minute." Mr. Lovat was to be the One above, and she was to be happy downstairs thinking that this lord, this master, this

(20) Kangaroo, p.188
(21) Ibid. p.188
(22) Ibid. p.190

> Hermes cum Dionysus wonder, was comfortably changing his socks. Thank you again. The man was mad.
>
> Yet he stuck to his guns. She was to submit to the mystic man and male in him, with reverence, and even a little awe, like a woman before the altar of the great Hermes. She might remember that he was only human, that he had to change his socks if he got his feet wet, and that he would make a fool of himself nine times out of ten. But - and the but was emphatic as a thunderbolt - there was in him also the mystery and lordship of - of Hermes, if you like - but the mystery and the lordship of the forward-seeking male. That she must emphatically realise and bow down to. Yes, bow down to. You can't have two masters of one ship: neither can you have a ship without a master. The Harriet and Lovat had been an experiment of ten years' endurance. Now she was to be broken up, or burnt, so he said, and the non-existent Hermes was to take her place. (23)

Finally, when Somers doubts whether Harriet will accept her new role, he is reassured by reflecting that once he has "let in a dark Lord and Master for himself", "the rest would happen" as in the nursery rhyme which concludes the chapter:

> The fire began to burn the stick,
> The stick began to beat the dog,
> The dog began to bite the pig,
> The pig began to go over the bridge,
> And so the old woman got home that night... (24)

The result of this sort of treatment is a sudden and regrettable break in the dramatic tension of the book. Moreover, the very important issue of Somers demanding unquestioning submission from Harriet (a logical development, this) is clouded over and made to appear fanciful. Indeed Harriet and Somers themselves, in whose life-like conflict Lawrence has hitherto made the reader vitally interested, lose their substantiality and it is from a distance that the reader watches their puppet dance on board the Harriet and Lovat - wondering all the while at the all too visible strings which the master-performer is pulling.

When Lawrence again turns seriously to his theme he unfortunately adopts the technique of statement, in a manner

(23) Kangaroo, p.194
(24) Ibid. p.196

reminiscent of his handling of relationships in The Rainbow (see pp. 121-23 above). Harriet refuses to accept Somers' doctrine of "lordship" and so the struggle between them is intensified. But the reader is unable fully to judge the nature of the struggle for it is couched for him in vague, indirect terms (terms which bring to mind the conflicts of The Rainbow): Harriet's "silent rage accumulates", Somers "feels devilish" and:

> They had another ferocious battle, Somers and Harriet; they stood opposite to one another in such fury one against the other that they nearly annihilated one another. He couldn't stay near her, so he started walking off into the country. (25)

As in The Rainbow, the effect of this method of presentation is that the statement has to be taken for granted and is unconvincing. Somers and Harriet are placed at a still greater distance from the reader.

And, indeed, as Lawrence next turns his attention primarily to the "male activity" in which Somers wishes to engage, Harriet and Somers, as a couple, do fade for a time from the book. There is no further development in their conflict until it is seemingly resolved, and since its resolution depends on the outcome of Somers' further activity, it is as well first to consider that activity.

The question of Somers' male activity is a complex one and a very important secondary theme in the book. And within the unifying stream of the male activity there again run several subsidiary themes.

Firstly, Lawrence again tackles the question of male friendship which he inconclusively discussed in Aaron's Rod. It is Jack, seeking to draw Somers into the Diggers' political activity, who colloquially proposes to Somers that they be "mates": (Lawrence's skill in his handling of Jack's speech, it may be

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(25) Kangaroo, p.196

noticed, is largely responsible for the vidid impression which Jack makes).

> "Men fight better when they've got a mate. They'll stand anything when they've got a mate," he went on again after a while. "But a mate's not all that easy to strike. We've a lot of decent chaps, stick at nothing once they wanted to put a thing through, in our lodge - and in my club. But there's not one of them I feel's quite up to me - if you know what I mean. Rattling good fellows - but nary one of 'em quite my cut."
>
> "That's usually so," laughed Somers.
>
> "It is," said Jack. Then he narrowed and diminished his voice. "Now I feel," he said cautiously and intensely, "that if you and me was mates, we could put any damn mortal thing through, if we had to knock the bottom out of the blanky show to do it."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "I'm not sure that I'm a mating man ..." [Somers] said slowly.
>
> "You?" Jack eyed him. "You are and you aren't. If you'd once come over - why man, do you think I wouldn't lay my life down for you?" (26)

But something in Somers prevents him from accepting Jack's offer of close friendship, of brotherhood. He temporises and then reflects:

> He half wanted to commit himself to this whole affection with a friend, a comrade, a mate. And then, in the last issue, he didn't want it all. The affection would be deep and genuine enough: that he knew. But - when it came to the point, he didn't want any more affection. All his life he had cherished a beloved ideal of friendship - David and Jonathan. And now, when true and good friends offered, he found he simply could not commit himself, even to simple friendship... He didn't want a friend, he didn't want loving affection, he didn't want comradeship. No, his soul trembled when he tried to drive it along the way, trembled and stood still, like Balaam's Ass. It did not want friendship or comradeship, great or small, deep or shallow. (27)

What it is that Somers wants is skilfully linked with his final demand of submission from Harriet:

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(26) Kangaroo, pp.117-18
(27) Ibid. p.119

> What else? He didn't know. He only knew he was never destined to be mate or comrade or even friend with any man. Some other living relationship. But what? He did not know. Perhaps the thing that the dark races know: that one can still feel in India: the mystery of lordship. That which white men have struggled so long against, and which is the clue to the life of the Hindu. The mystery of lordship. The mystery of innate, natural, sacred priority. The other mystic relationship between men, which democracy and equality try to deny and obliterate. Not any arbitrary caste or birth aristocracy. But the mystic recognition of difference and innate priority, the joy of obedience and the sacred responsibility of authority. (28)

Somers' doctrine of lordship is closely related to Lilly's doctrine of the power-urge, but whereas Lilly suggests such a relationship to Aaron, Somers, perhaps deterred by Jack's obvious strength and independence, never attempts to propose such a relationship to Jack. If he rejects Jack's offer of friendship, Jack shows no sign of being aware of his "innate, natural, sacred priority", or of succumbing to the "mystery of lordship". Instead the two men end by differing violently and their relationship is, finally, the reverse of friendly:

> "I'm sorry I've sort of fizzled out so quickly," said Richard. "But you wouldn't have me pretend, would you? I'd better be honest at the beginning."
>
> Jack looked at him slowly, with slow, inchoate eyes, and a look of contempt on his face. The contempt on Jack's face, the contempt of the confident he-man for the shifty she-man, made Richard flush with anger, and drove him back on his deeper self once more.
>
> "What do you call honest?" said Jack, sneering.
>
> Richard became very silent, very still. He realised that Jack would like to give him a thrashing. The thought was horrible to Richard Lovat, who could never bear to be touched, physically. And the other man sitting there as if he were drunk was very repugnant to him. It was a bad moment. (29)

This break between the two men is effective because each so obviously acts in character: Jack righteously feeling contempt and anger for the man who "backs out" and Somers tenaciously remaining true to his "deeper self". But the break is also the final answer to Somers' original hope of an abiding male friendship and to his subsequent dream of exercising mystic authority.

(28) Kangaroo, p.130
(29) Ibid. p.320

The theme of remaining true to a "deeper self", of at all costs preserving one's individuality inviolate, is even more clearly expressed in the relationship of Somers and Ben Cooley, the leader of the Diggers, who is known as "Kangaroo". Somers is taken by Jack to see Kangaroo and it soon becomes obvious that the latter is exceedingly anxious to enlist his services in the Diggers' cause. But at the same time (or, one even suspects, with the ulterior motive of ensuring the enlistment) Kangaroo seeks to overwhelm Somers - not with an offer of friendship, but with a compulsive love; for love is the basis of his credo:

> "I'm going to try," shouted the lawyer, in his slightly husky roar. "You've made it my prerogative by telling me to try. I'm going to love you, and you won't get away from that. I'm the hound of heaven after you, my boy, and I'm fatal to the hell hound that's leading you. Do you know I love you? - that I loved you long before I met you?... I can see there is a beast in your eyes, Lovat, and if I can't conquer him then - then woe betide you, my dear. But I love you, you see."
>
> "Sounds like a threat," laughed Somers.
>
> Kangaroo leaned and laid his hand gently on Lovat's shoulder.
>
> "Don't say that," his voice was small now, and very gentle. "I loved you before I knew you. My soul cries for you. And you hurt me with the demon that is in you."
>
> Richard became very pale, and was silent for some moments. The hand sank heavier, nearer, on his shoulder.
>
> "You see," said Somers, trying hard to be fair, "what you call my demon is what I identify myself with. It's my best me, and I stick to it. I think love, all this love of ours, is a devilish thing now: a slow poison..."(30)

In a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell Lawrence makes clear his own attitude to the sort of relationship proposed by Kangaroo:

> I do feel the only thing to try for is a free, natural, unstrained relationship, without exclusions or enclosures. (31)

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(30) Kangaroo, pp.152-3
(31) Letters, p.343

And Somers, too, resents and rejects Kangaroo's proposal. Instead, he envisages separate individual activity with only moments of meeting - a conception which Lawrence illuminates with the striking and sustained gannet image:

> He wanted so much to get out of this lit-up cloy of humanity, and the exhaust of love, and the fretfulness of desire. Why not swing away into cold separation? Why should desire always be fretting, fretting like a tugged chain? Why not break the bond and be single, take a fierce stoop and a swing back, as when a gannet plunges like a white, metallic arrow into the sea, raising a burst of spray, disappearing, completing the downward curve of the parabola in the invisible underwater where it seizes the object of desire, then away, away with success upwards, back flashing into the air and white space? Why not? Why want to urge, urge, urge oneself down the causeways of desirous love, hard pavements of love? Even like Kangaroo. Why shouldn't meeting be a stoop as a gannet stoops into the sea, or a hawk, or a kite, in a swift rapacious parabola downwards, to touch at the lowermost turn of the curve, then up again? (32)

Somers and Kangaroo also part in anger but, when Kangaroo is lying fatally wounded in hospital, Somers goes to visit him. It is at this stage that Lawrence invents a set of circumstances which, though described with a chilling force reminiscent of the death scenes in Sons and Lovers, could hardly be bettered as a symbolical expression of what is involved in remaining true to oneself, to a "deeper self". To begin with, during Somers' first visit to the hospital, the way in which Somers is instinctively and fundamentally repelled by Kangaroo is dramatically suggested by a simple gesture:

> "Don't let me die!" murmured Kangaroo, almost inaudible, looking into Richard's muted face. The white, silent face did not change, only the blue-grey eyes were abstract with thought. He did not answer. And even Kangaroo dared not ask for an answer.
>
> At last he let go Richard's hand from his throat. Richard withdrew it, and wanted to wipe it on his handkerchief. But he refrained, knowing the sick man would notice. He pressed it very secretly, quietly, under his thigh, to wipe it on his trousers. (33)

Then, during his second visit to the hospital, Somers is strikingly confronted with the choice of maintaining

(32) Kangaroo, p.154
(33) Ibid. p.359

his integrity or of sacrificing it to the wish of a dying man:

> "Say you love me." The pleading, penetrating whisper seemed to sound inside Somers' brain. He opened his mouth to say it. The sound "I -" came out. Then he turned his face aside and remained open-mouthed, blank.
>
> Kangaroo's fingers were clutching his wrist, the corpse-face was eagerly upturned to his. Somers was brought to by a sudden convulsive gripping of the fingers around his wrist. He looked down. And when he saw the eager, alert face, yellow, long, Jewish, and somehow ghoulish, he knew he could not say it. He didn't love Kangaroo.
>
> "No," he said. "I can't say it." (34)

It says much for Lawrence's powers as a novelist that he is able to convince us that Somers is justified in his attitude. For Somers, a sentimental admission of his love for Kangaroo would be a negation of all that he is struggling for, and Lawrence's analysis of his struggle is sufficiently real to swing us away from our initial reaction - from Jack's reaction:

> "... I think you were a bit hard on him. I do love him myself, so I can say so without exaggerating the fact. But if I hated the poor man like hell, and saw him lying there in that state - why, I'd swear on red-hot iron I loved him, I would. A man like that - a big, grand man, as great a hero as ever lived. If a man can't speak two words out of pity for a man in his state, why, I think there's something wrong with that man. Sorry to have to say it. But if Old Harry himself had lain there like that and asked me to say I loved him I'd have done it. Heart-breaking, it was. But I suppose some folks is stingy about sixpence, and others is stingy about saying two words that would give another poor devil his peace of mind." (35)

Both the above-mentioned themes are closely bound up with the actual political activity in which Somers wishes to engage, and implicit in the discussion of this activity there is a third theme - the conflict between "the solitary artist and the man who wanted social responsibilities and contact with the body of mankind." (36) For Somers, it must be remembered, is a writer "of poems and essays" and it is his reputation as an original thinker which makes the rival political camps in

(34) Kangaroo, p.370
(35) Ibid. p.372
(36) Aldous Huxley: Introduction to Selected Letters, p.22

Australia so anxious to win his support.

Perhaps the most astonishing feature of this section of the book is Lawrence's inventive genius. Mr.Aldington vouches for the fact that the "political experiences" are "wholly invented," though "it is said that years afterwards something of the kind did happen in Australia." (37) Electing to deal with the two great alternatives to modern democracy, with dictatorship and communism, Lawrence most successfully contrives to present realistic political programmes for the two rival groups which advocate a change in the form of government in Australia. And in the case of the Diggers, with whom Somers is primarily concerned, he convincingly elaborates a detailed method of underground organisation. It is a tribute to his handling of this political section that one is slowly made more and more aware of powerful political forces whose gradual movement to a violent clash appears inevitable.

Somers, the artist, comes to Australia, "to this new country, the youngest country on the globe, to start a new life and flutter with a new hope;" (38) but when he is fortuitously confronted with the prospect of political activity he is at first instinctively unresponsive:

> Somers was silent, very much impressed, though his heart felt heavy. Why did his heart feel so heavy? Politics - conspiracy - political power: it was all so alien to him. Somehow, in his soul he always meant something quite different, when he thought of action along with other men. Yet Australia, the wonderful, lonely Australia, with her seven million people only - it might begin here. And the Australians, so queer, so absent, as it were, leaving themselves out all the time - they might be capable of a beautiful unselfishness and steadfastness of purpose. Only - his heart refused to respond. (39)

Yet political activity presents the most readily available possibility of "action along with other men", and, believing himself that democracy is outmoded and that a change is needed, Somers rationalises his mistrust of politics:

(37) Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But... p.266
(38) Kangaroo, p.24
(39) Ibid. p.105

> "..... I don't know what you do want," [said Harriet]. "You change so. You've always said you despise politics, and yet here you are." She tailed off as if it were hopeless.
>
> "It's not the politics. But it is a new life-form, a new social form. We're pot-bound inside democracy and the democratic feeling." (40)

Somers never really overcomes his hesitancy, but the force of his rationalisation drives him into the midst of the political intrigue of the country. Introduced by Jack to Kangaroo and by Jaz (a clever portrait, this, of a wily man with a foot in each camp) to Will Struthers, the Socialist leader, he is offered positions of responsibility in both movements. But he finally refuses to join either group, taking ideological exception to both programmes. It is important to notice Lawrence's analysis of these programmes for the third alternative, which he hesitantly propounds, is fully developed in his next book.

Kangaroo's aim is a benevolent dictatorship founded on love:

> "Man again needs a father - not a friend or a brother sufferer, a suffering Saviour. Man needs a quiet, gentle father who uses his authority in the name of living life, and who is absolutely stern against anti-life. I offer no creed. I offer myself, my heart of wisdom, strange warm cavern where the voice of the oracle streams in from the unknown; I offer my consciousness, which hears the voice; and I offer my mind and my will, for the battle against every obstacle to respond to the voice of life, and to shelter mankind from the madness and the evil of anti-life." (41)

Struthers' socialism, too, is to be founded on a brotherhood of love:

> "Now, Mr. Somers, you are no believer in capitalism, and in this industrial system as we have it. If I judge you correctly from your writings, you are no lover of the great Washed Middle Classes. They are more than washed, they are washed out. And I think in your writings you say as much. You want a new spirit in society, a new bond between men. You want a new bond between men. Well, so do I, so do we. We realise that if we are going to go ahead we need first and foremost solidarity. Where we fail in our present position is in our lack of solidarity.
>
> "And how are we to get it? You suggest us the answer in your writings. We must have a new bond between men, the bond of real brotherhood ...." (42)

(40) Kangaroo, p.111
(41) Ibid. p.126
(42) Ibid. p.278

Somers, however, cannot agree with the conception of love as a basis for further action among men:

> Since man has been absolutely trying to love women, and women to love man, the human species has almost wrecked itself. If now we start a still further campaign of men loving and absolutely trusting each other, comrades or mates, heaven knows the horror we are laying up. (43)

The riot which follows the Diggers' attempt to break up a Socialist meeting lends substance to his foreboding of future "horror". It is in the name of love that both sides resort to ferocious violence: Struthers' love is shown (in his speech at the meeting) to be no more than a demand for equal wages and Kangaroo's love to be a mask for compulsion - both meet in violence. Lawrence's description of the riot (which is, for Somers, a final disillusionment) is most dramatic. His mounting of the tension (as the Diggers begin to "count Struthers out") by interposing comment between the calling of the numbers is so effective that the reader, too, longs for the relief of the inevitable smash. Struthers is addressing the meeting:

> "... I don't know whether you prefer working in the same imperial slave-gang with Brother Brown of India, or whether you'd prefer to shake hands with him as a free worker, one of the world's workers - but -"
>
> "One!" came a loud, distinct voice, as if from nowhere, like a gun going off.
>
> "But one or the other -"
>
> "Two!" a solid block of men's voices, like a bell.
>
> "One or other other you'll -"
>
> "Three!" The voice, like a tolling bell, of men counting the speaker out. It was the diggers.
>
> A thrill went through the audience. The diggers sat mostly together, in the middle of the hall, around Jack. Their faces were lit up with a new light. And like a bell they tolled the numbers against the speaker, counting him out, by their moral unison annihilating him.
>
> Willie Struthers, his dark-yellow face gone demoniac, stood and faced them. His eyes too had suddenly leaped with a new look: big, dark, glancing eyes, like an aboriginal's, glancing strangely. Was it fear, was it a glancing, gulf-like menace? He stood there, a shabby figure of a man, with undignified legs, facing the tolling enemy.

(43) Kangaroo, p.220

"Four!" came the sonorous, perfect rhythm. It was a strange sound, heavy, hypnotic, trance-like. Willie Struthers stood as if he were fascinated, glaring spell-bound.

"Five!" The sound was unbearable, a madness, tolling out of a certain devilish cavern in the back of the men's unconscious mind, in terrible malignancy. The Socialists began to leap to their feet in fury, turning towards the block of Diggers. But the lean, naked faces of the ex-soldiers gleamed with a smiling, demonish light, and from their narrow mouths simultaneously:

"Six!"

Struthers, looking as if he were crouching to spring, glared back at them from the platform. They did not even look at him.

"Seven!" In two syllables, Sev-en!

The sonorous gloating in the sound was unbearable. It was like hammer-strokes on the back of the brain. Everybody had started up save the Diggers. Even Somers was wildly on his feet, feeling as if he could fly, swoop like some enraged bird. But his feeling wavered. At one moment he gloated with the Diggers against the black and devilish figure of the isolated man on the platform, who half-crouched as if he were going to jump, his face black and satanic. And then, as the number came, unbearable in its ghastly striking:

"Eight!" like some hammer-stroke on the back of his brain it sent him clean mad, and he jumped up into the air like a lunatic: at the same moment as Struthers sprang with a clear leap, like a cat, towards the group of static, grinning ex-soldiers.

There was a crash, and the hall was like a bomb that has exploded. Somers tried to spring forward. In the blind moment he wanted to kill - to kill the soldiers. Jaz held him back, saying something. There was a most fearful roar, and a mad whirl of men, broken chairs, pieces of chains brandished, men fighting madly with fists, claws, pieces of wood - any weapon they could lay hold of. The red flag suddenly flashing like blood, and bellowing rage at the sight of it. A Union Jack torn to fragments, stamped upon. A mob with many different centres, some fighting frenziedly round a red flag, some clutching fragments of the Union Jack, as if it were God incarnate. But the central heap a mass struggling with the Diggers, in real blood-murder passion, a tense mass with long, naked faces, gashed with blood, and hair all wild, and eyes demented, and collars burst, and arms frantically waving over the dense bunch of horrific life, hands in the air with weapons, hands clawing to drag them down, wrists bleeding, hands bleeding, arms with the sleeves ripped back, white naked arms with brownish hands, and thud! as the white flesh was struck with a chair-leg ... (44)

Later, Jack tells Somers of his own part in the riot:

He turned round to Somers, and the strangest grin in the world was on his face, all the lines curved upwards.

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(44) Kangaroo, pp.345-6

"Tell you what, boy," he said in a hoarse whisper, "I settled three of 'em - three!" There was an indescribable gloating joy in his tones, like a man telling of the good time he has had with a strange mistress. "Gawr, but I was lucky. I got one of them iron bars from the windows, and I stirred the brains of a couple of them with it, and I broke the neck of a third. Why it was as good as a sword to defend yourself with, see -" (45)

For Somers, Jack's attitude is proof of the collapse of the love-ideal: "He thought of Jack, and the strange, unforgettable uptilted grin on Jack's face as he spoke of the satisfaction of killing. This was true, too. As true as love and loving. Nay, Jack was a killer in the name of Love. That also has come to pass again. 'It is the collapse of the love-ideal,' said Richard to himself." (46) And in place of the love-ideal he proposes to himself another absolute: "The only thing is the God who is the source of all passion. Once go down before the God-passion and human passions take their right rhythm." (47) But Somers' new religion, while accepting the conception of the conventional religions of an absolute, is to be a "going down" before a different God, a "great dark God, the ithyphallic, of the first dark religions" - part of the idea which Lawrence elaborates in The Plumed Serpent.

Somers, the artist, however, has no desire to propagate his creed in the world of men as Kangaroo and Struthers had. Emotionally and ideologically driver away from his original idea of "male activity", his one longing is to find his own God himself, alone, true to his own vision:

That was now all he wanted: to get clear. Not to save humanity or to help humanity or to have anything to do with humanity. No - no. Kangaroo had been his last embrace with humanity. Now, all he wanted was to cut himself clear. To be clear of humanity altogether, to be alone. To be clear of love, and pity, and hate. To be alone from it all. To cut himself finally clear from the last encircling arm of the octopus humanity. To turn to the old dark gods, who had waited so long in the outer dark. (48)

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(45) Kangaroo, p.351
(46) Ibid. p.361
(47) Ibid. p.321
(48) Ibid. pp.293-94

Although Lawrence thus convincingly portrays Somers' withdrawal from his proposed male activity, I do not feel that he manages finally to relate this withdrawal to his main theme, to the Somers-Harriet relationship. At the stage at which Lawrence allows this relationship to drop into the background, it appears that the conflict between the couple could be resolved in one of two ways: Somers, it would seem, could either persist in his activity and exact submission from Harriet, or he could withdraw from his further activity and abandon the concept of "lordship". In fact, however, the conflict is "resolved" very differently and, from the point of view of the reader, most unsatisfactorily.

Lawrence, in his handling of Somers' political activity, seems to make it abundantly clear that Somers withdraws for his own very good reasons - except for one puzzling reference there is no suggestion that he does so because of his conflict with Harriet or because "no great purposive passion can endure long unless it is established upon the fulfilment in the vast majority of individuals of the true sexual passion." (see p.192 above). This ambiguous reference, which occurs shortly after Somers determines "to get clear", throws doubt on two important aspects of the book:

> "Ah, my soul," said Richard to himself, "you have to look more ways than one. First to the unutterable dark of God: first and foremost. Then to the unutterable and sometimes very loud dark of that woman Harriet. I must admit that only the dark god in her fighting with my white idealism has got me so clear: and that only the dark god in her answering the dark god in me has got my soul heavy and fecund with a new sort of infant. But even now I can't bring it forth. I can't bring it forth. I need something else. Some other answer." (49)

Allowing for the fact that the word "white" in the above passage characterises a deliberately intellectual attitude in contrast to the symbolical force of "dark" (see pp. 164-171 above) Lawrence seems to imply, firstly, that it is Harriet who has swung Somers away from politics - when, as has

(49) Kangaroo, p.295

been said, he withdraws for his own reasons and there is no other evidence of Harriet's opposition being effective; and, secondly, that Harriet and Somers have all along continued in a close, harmonious (and fruitful) relationship - when, as far as the reader knows, the vital difference between them remains unsettled. And this uncertainty marks Lawrence's final development of the relationship.

Though Somers does withdraw from his vaunted male activity, he does not positively abandon his concept of male *domination in marriage. Indeed this issue is not again referred* to: it is merely shelved. But Lawrence's avoidance of this central issue only serves to make the relationship of Somers and Harriet unconvincing. Judging from what we know of their relationship, Somers' continued adherence (if in theory only) to the doctrine of the Hermes should inevitably provoke in Harriet continued opposition; it would be impossible "to maintain the flow" between them. Yet Harriet, it would seem, slips back into the old relationship with him - a development which, to be dramatically convincing, should only follow some sort of recantation on Somers' part. As it is, we have either to take a recantation for granted or remain unconvinced by their renewed association.

Moreover the renewed association itself is tenuously implicit, manifesting itself rather uncertainly in Harriet's annoyance at Jack's suggestion that she stay on alone in Australia, and in the resumption of her usual tone in relation to Somers:

> Harriet brought the tea-tray on to the verandah.
>
> "It's quite nice that somebody has come to see us," she said to Jaz. "There seems such a gap, now Kangaroo is gone, and all he stood for."
>
> "You feel a gap, do you?" asked Jaz.
>
> "Awful. As if the earth had opened. As for Lovat, he's absolutely broken-hearted, and such a trial to live with."
>
> Jaz looked quickly and inquiringly at Somers.
>
> "Sort of metaphysical heart," Richard said, smiling wryly.
>
> Jaz only looked puzzled.

> "Metaphysical!" said Harriet. "You'd think to hear him he was nothing but a tea-pot brewing metaphysical tea. As a matter of fact Kangaroo went awfully deep with him, and now he's heart-broken, and that's why he's rushing to America. He's always breaking his heart over something - anything except me. To me he's a nether millstone."
>
> "Is that so!" said Jaz.
>
> "But one feels awful, you know, Kangaroo dying like that. Lovat likes to show off and be so beastly high and mighty about things. But I know how miserable he is." (50)

Then, after they remain shut up together during a great storm which lasts four days, it is as if the storm clears the air between them. The last description of the couple, before they board the boat for America, subtly recalls the first description of them. Once more they are happily together, but if they now lack the self-assurance which previously distinguished them from Australians, Lawrence's contrasting of the "full and beaming" Harriet with the "thin" Richard seems to suggest the practical abandonment of Somers' male domination:

> Richard hired a little two-wheeled trap, called in Australia a sulky, with a little pony, to drive into the bush. Sometimes they had gone in a motor-car, but they both much preferred the little, comfortable sulky. There sat Harriet full and beaming, and the thin Richard beside her, like any Australian couple in a shabby sulky behind a shabby pony, trotting lazily under the gum-trees of the high-road and up the steep, steep, jungle-dense climb of the mountain to the pass. (51)

But this is after all a very indirect suggestion and one is not satisfied that the issue is settled. Lawrence's themes are not, finally, brought into harmonious relationship with one another and the book does not become the unity one had hoped for. Instead of a whole there are bits and pieces.

Bits is, significantly, the title of Chapter XIV and indicates another severe drawback in the book. Even if Lawrence's themes were handled within a tight structure the effect, for the reasons already mentioned, would be one of looseness: the fact that the novel as a whole is encrusted with irrelevant matter makes Lawrence's failure the greater. There

(50) Kangaroo, p.383
(51) Ibid. pp.388-89

is nothing picaresque about this novel, though; the various characters are firmly and neatly handled and all play parts of some significance - the irrelevance arises from haphazard comment by Lawrence. Bits, for instance, opens with pages of anecdote from the Bulletin and, a far more serious fault, Lawrence devotes a long chapter (The Nightmare) to an account of Somers' war-time experiences in England. Of itself this is an enthralling chapter but it has nothing whatsoever to do with the novel. Lawrence's lame attempt to justify these experiences suddenly "coming back" on Somers with: "perhaps it was being again in a purely English-speaking country, and feeling again that queer revulsion from the English form of democracy," (52) cannot disguise what Norman Douglas calls "an artistic outrage". (53) The chapter is included *because it recounts Lawrence's own experiences, about which he felt* bitterly compelled to write. It cannot be justified because it "illuminates the background of Somers' thought, and elucidates the development of his attitude to the political drama" (54) - for Lawrence makes it clear that Australian democracy, with its "accomplished liberty", is very different to English democracy: Australia is an "Englishness all crumbled out into formlessness and chaos," (55) though it has an "English form of democracy."

An equally severe defect of a different kind of irrelevance is Lawrence's persistence with the conception of a novel as a "thought-adventure":

> Now a novel is supposed to be a mere record of emotion - adventures, flounderings in feelings. We insist that a novel is, or should be, also a thought-adventure, if it is to be anything at all complete. (56)

Detailed political and philosophical discussions between characters can, with skill, be satisfactorily introduced into

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(52) Kangaroo, p.288
(53) Norman Douglas: Looking Back, p.345
(54) Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence p.64
(55) Kangaroo, p.33
(56) Ibid. p.308

a novel (and these abound in Kangaroo) but equally long soliloquies of the same nature, or direct statements by the author, are not only intensely wearying but also largely irrelevant when their substance is either repeated in conversation or illustrated in action. The description of the riot, for instance, is prefaced by some fifteen pages of technical analysis of the mob-spirit, written in the manner of a psychological journal:

> So, telepathy, communication in the vertebrates. Ants and bees too have a one-conscious vibration. Even they have perfect ganglia - communication. But it is enough to consider the vertebrates.
>
> In the sperm whale ..... (57)

This discussion, tedious at any time, is all the more unnecessary because the theory is vividly implicit in the actual description of the action which follows.

Some of the long soliloquies (which also abound in the book) can only barely be justified as providing an intellectual background to subsequent action. Often they seem to be included for their own sake. And then even Lawrence becomes self-conscious about them and indicates his embarrassment by a tell-tale intrusion:

> "It has nothing to do with me," said Richard to himself. I hope, dear reader, you like plenty of conversation in a novel: it makes it so much lighter and brisker.
>
> "It has nothing to do with me," said Richard to himself. "They do as they like. But since, after all, I am a kind-hearted dear creature, I will just climb the minaret of myself and sound my meuzzin."
>
> So behold the poor dear on his pinnacle lifting his hands.
>
> "God is God and man is man; and every man by himself. Every man by himself, alone with his own soul. Alone as if he were dead. Dead to himself. He is dead and alone. He is dead; alone. His soul is alone. Alone with God, with the dark God. God is God." (58)

And:

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(57) Kangaroo, p.330
(58) Ibid. p.311

Chapter follows chapter, and nothing doing. But man is a thought-adventurer, and his falls into the Charybdis of ointment, and his shipwrecks on the rocks of ages, and his kisses across chasms, and his silhouette on a minaret: surely these are thrilling as most things.

To be brief, there was a Harriet, a Kangaroo, a Jack and a Jaz and a Vicky, let alone a number of mere Australians. But you know as well as I do that Harriet is quite happy rubbing her hair with hair-wash and brushing it over her forehead in the sun and looking at the threads of gold and gun-metal, and the few threads, alas, of silver and tin, with admiration. And Kangaroo has just got a very serious brief, with thousands and thousands of pounds at stake in it. Of course he is fully occupied keeping them at stake, till some of them wander into his pocket. And Jack and Vicky have gone down to her father's for the week-end and he's out fishing, and has already landed a rock-cod, a leather-jacket, a large schnapper, a rainbow-fish, seven black-fish and a cuttle-fish. So what's wrong with him? While she is trotting over on a pony to have a look at an old sweetheart who is much too young to be neglected. And Jaz is arguing with a man about the freight-rates. And all the scattered Australians are just having a bet on something or other. So what's wrong with Richard's climbing a mental minaret or two in the interim? Of course there isn't any interim. But you know that Harriet is brushing her hair in the sun, and Kangaroo looking at huge sums of money on paper, and Jack fishing, and Vicky flirting and Jaz bargaining, so what more do you want to know? We can't be at a stretch of tension all the time, like the E string on a fiddle. If you don't like the novel, don't read it. If the pudding doesn't please you, leave it, leave it. I don't mind your saucy plate. I know too well that you can bring an ass to water, etc.

As for gods, thought Richard .....(59)

It is perhaps characteristic of Lawrence's scattered brilliance in this book that in the above passage (of all places) he should present an entirely new view of two characters: Kangaroo's supposed preoccupation with money is not mentioned before nor referred to again, nor is Jack's passion for fishing. The effect of these interruptions is to destroy the illusion of reality which Lawrence, in different parts of the book, so strikingly creates and to make puppets of substantially imagined characters. The final result is a disruption of a potentially fine novel.

Mention must be made, though, of an accomplishment which, of the novel, is somehow beyond it. Lawrence succeeds in this book in presenting an amazingly comprehensive picture of

(59) Kangaroo, pp.312-13

Australia. His scenes of Australian life, notably the opening taxi-scene, admirably convey the temper of its inhabitants and, as Mr. Aldington says, "Nobody else gives you the sense that you yourself have actually experienced what he has written. An Australian friend, Mr. Adrian Lawlor, writes me that he has never seen that coast south of Sydney, but 'after reading Lawrence, God! I've been there.'" (60) And his descriptive passages have "the clarity and power of great poetry" (61) as can be judged from the following passage:

> Nothing is lovelier than to drive into the Australian bush in spring, on a clear day: and most days are clear and hot. Up the steep climb the tree-ferns and the cabbage-palms stood dark and unlighted as ever, among the great gums. But once at the top, away from the high-road and the sea-face, trotting on the yellow-brown sandy trail through the sunny, thinly-scattered trees of the untouched bush, it was heaven. They splashed through a clear, clear stream, and walked up a bank into the nowhere, the pony peacefully marching.
>
> The bush was in bloom, the wattles were out. Wattle, or mimosa, is the national flower of Australia. There are said to be thirty-two species. Richard found only seven as they wandered along. The little, pale, sulphur wattle with a reddish stem sends its lovely spray so aerial out of the sand of the trail, only a foot or two high, but such a delicate, spring-like thing. The thorny wattle with its fuzzy pale balls tangles on the banks. Then beautiful heath-plants with small bells, like white heather, stand in tall, straight tufts, and above them the gold sprays of the intensely gold bush mimosa, with here and there, on long, thin stalks like hairs almost, beautiful blue flowers, with gold grains, three-petalled, like reed-flowers, and blue, blue with a touch of Australian darkness. Then comes a hollow, desolate bare place with empty greyness and a few dead, charred gum-trees, where there has been a bush-fire. At the side of this bare place great flowers, twelve feet high, like sticky dark lilies in bulb-buds at the top of the shaft, dark, blood-red. Then over another stream, and scattered bush once more, and the last queer, gold red bushes of the bottle-brush tree, like soft-bristly golden bottle-brushes standing stiffly up, and the queer black-boys on one black leg with a tuft of dark-green spears, sending up the high stick of a seed-stalk, much taller than a man. And here and there the gold bushes of wattle with their narrow dark leaves. (62)

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(60) Richard Aldington: Introduction to Penguin Edition of Kangaroo, p.8
(61) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.127
(62) Kangaroo, p.389

IX

THE PLUMED SERPENT *

"The Plumed Serpent is a curious and original novel, with no affinities -" writes Mr. Aldington, (1) and though this is doubtless true as far as the main stream of English literature is concerned, it is interesting to note that this novel is constructed on the same pattern as Kangaroo. In that book, it will be remembered, the drama of personal relationships was enacted against the background of a major political activity of importance to a whole country: in this, it is against the background of a major religious activity. The connection is even stronger, though, and were it not for the fact that the locale of the one book is Mexico where the other is Australia, The Plumed Serpent might be deemed a direct sequel to Kangaroo. In it Lawrence not only proceeds to invoke "the dark gods" as a means of redeeming a people (a development anticipated in Kangaroo by the failure there of political activity for such a purpose)

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* I propose to omit from this discussion of Lawrence's novels two works published after Kangaroo (1923) and before The Plumed Serpent, (1926):-
a) The Boy in the Bush (1924). While Lawrence was in Australia a Miss M. L. Skinner submitted a novel to him for his comment and advice. In the end Lawrence re-wrote the whole novel ("I doubt if I want to re-write another book, or re-create it, as I did the Boy," he wrote to his sister Ada - Ada Lawrence and G. Stuart Gelder: Young Lorenzo, p.128) and it was published as a joint work. There is now no record of Miss Skinner's original manuscript, however, and it is impossible to determine authoritatively the exact extent of Lawrence's contribution to the novel.
b) St. Mawr (1925). Though this work is now published in book form (St. Mawr and The Virgin and the Gipsy, Penguin Books, 1950) it must more properly be regarded as a long short story than as a novel and it is, in fact, included in the collection of Lawrence's short stories (The Tales of D. H. Lawrence, William Heinemann Ltd., 1934). St. Mawr is very well written but adds nothing new to a study of the development of Lawrence's themes. For the same reason I propose to omit discussion of The Virgin and the Gipsy (1930).

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(1) Richard Aldington: Introduction to Penguin Edition of The Plumed Serpent, p.7

but also re-states the problems which he posed in the relationships of Somers and Harriet and of Somers and Jack.

But the question of personal relationships is so closely linked to the central activity that it is as well first to consider Lawrence's handling of the religious theme.

There are no irrelevances in this novel. From the opening chapter Lawrence succeeds not only in suggesting the atmosphere of Mexico but also in implying the degeneracy of the Mexican people which makes imperative a "return of the dark gods". The character of a people is reflected in its national institutions and Lawrence fits his criticism of the Mexicans into his debunking description of the Mexican national sport - the bull-fight. There is a striking suggestion of abandon and perversion in the crowd:

> They were mostly loutish men in city clothes, the mongrel men of a mongrel city. Two men stood making water against the wall, in the interval of their excitement. One father had kindly brought his little boys to the show, and stood in fat, sloppy, paternal benevolence above them. They were pale mites, the elder about ten years old, highly dressed up in Sunday clothes. And badly they needed protecting from that paternal benevolence, for they were oppressed, peaked, and a bit wan from the horrors. To those children at least bull-fights did not come natural, but would be an acquired taste. There were other children, however, and fat mammas in black satin that was greasy and grey at the edges with an overflow of face-powder. These fat mammas had a pleased, excited look in their eyes, almost sexual, and very distasteful in contrast to their soft passive bodies. (2)

The faces of other women are "powdered to look like white marshmallows" - how easily does Lawrence at once suggest their bad taste and flaccidity.

These are the people whose greatest enjoyment is the following sort of spectacle (described with such cold realism by Lawrence):

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(2) The Plumed Serpent, p.25

> Kate knew what was coming. Before she could look away, the bull had charged on the limping horse from behind, the attendants had fled, the horse was up-ended absurdly, one of the bull's horns between his hind legs and deep in his inside. Down went the horse, collapsing in front, but his rear was still heaved up, with the bull's horn working vigorously up and down inside him, while he lay on his neck all twisted. And a huge heap of bowels coming out. And a nauseous stench. And the cries of pleased amusement among the crowd.
>
> This pretty event took place on Kate's side of the ring, and not far from where she sat, below her. Most of the people were on their feet craning to look down over the edge to watch the conclusion of this delightful spectacle. (3)

Later, after discussion with non-Mexicans resident in Mexico, Kate becomes conscious of "that bitter hopelessness that comes over people who know Mexico well. A bitter barren hopelessness". But she comes to realise that political action is quite inadequate as a remedy for the hopelessness. Even among intellectuals the political impulse is destructive. Kate is talking to a university professor:

> "But after all," said Kate, "what about the twelve million poor - mostly Indians - whom Montes [the Mexican president] talks about? You can't make them all rich, whatever you do. And they don't understand the very words, capital and socialism. They are Mexico, really, and nobody ever looks at them, except to make a casus belli of them. Humanly, they never exist for you."
>
> "Humanly they can't exist, they are too ignorant!" cried Garcia. "But when we kill all the capitalists, then -" (4)

The Indians are being used as pawns in the struggle between capitalists and socialists - even by the Mexican artists. Kate is being shown modern Mexican frescoes:

> But the impulse was the impulse of the artist's hate. In the many frescoes of the Indians there was sympathy with the Indian, but always from the ideal, social point of view. Never the spontaneous answer of the blood. These flat Indians were symbols in the great script of modern socialism, they were figures of the pathos of the victims of modern industry and capitalism. That was all they were used for: symbols in the weary script of socialism and anarchy.

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(3) The Plumed Serpent, p.83
(4) Ibid. p.80

> Kate thought of the man polishing his oranges half-an-hour before: his peculiar beauty, a certain richness of physical being, a ponderous power of blood within him, and a helplessness, a profound unbelief that was fatal and demonish. And all the liberty, all the progress, all the socialism in the world would not help him. May, it would only help further to destroy him. (5)

The futility of political revolutions (so constant and violent a feature in Mexican life) has already been suggested:

> "La música! La música!" shouted the mob, [at the bull-fight] with the voice of mob authority. They were the People, and the revolutions had been their revolutions, and they had won them all. The bands were their bands, present for their amusement.
>
> But the bands were military bands, and it was the army which had won all the revolutions. So the revolutions were their revolutions, and they were present for their own glory alone.
>
> Música pagada toca mal tono.
>
> Spasmodically, the insolent yelling of the mob rose and subsided. La música! La música! The shout became brutal and violent. Kate always remembered it. La música! The band peacocked its nonchalance. The shouting was a great yell: the degenerate mob of Mexico City!
>
> At length, at its own leisure, the band in grey with dark rose facings struck up: crisp, martial, smart. (6)

Lawrence's description of Mexican life is so convincing that one fully accepts the hopelessness and powerlessness which Kate feels:

> It was not an easy country for a woman to be alone in. And she had been beating her wings in an effort to get away. She felt like a bird round whose body a snake has coiled itself. Mexico was the snake. (7)

But at the same time one realises the imperative need which there is for some sort of remedial action and, by a clever stroke, the image of Kate's hopelessness leads straight to Quetzalcoatl - the bird-snake or plumed serpent - and to the projected revival of the ancient Aztec gods as an alternative means for regenerating the people. The men behind this movement

(5) The Plumed Serpent, p.58
(6) Ibid. p.15
(7) Ibid. p.79

are the Mexican (Spanish) intellectual, Don Ramón Carrasco, and the Mexican (Indian) general, Don Cipriano Viedma, and Kate's connection with the movement is smoothly contrived first by Cipriano's "rescue" of her at the bull-fight and then by her subsequent meeting with the two *men* at *Mrs. Norris'* tea-party.

Ramón is the actual initiator of the movement and (against the background already referred to) his justification of the movement is telling. He says to the Bishop of Mexico City:

> "Why make a sad thing out of it, Father? We are in Mexico *for the most part* Indians. They cannot understand the high Christianity, Father, and the Church knows it. Christianity is a religion of the spirit, and must needs be understood if it is to have any effect. The Indians cannot understand it, any more than the rabbits of the hills."
>
> "Very good! Very good! Son of mine! But we can convey it to them. The rabbits of the hills are in the hands of God."
>
> "No, Father, it is impossible. And without a *religion* that will connect them with the universe, they will all perish. Only religion will serve; not socialism, nor education, nor anything."
>
> "Thou speakest well," said the Bishop.
>
> "The rabbits of the hills may be in the hands of God, Father. But they are at the mercy of men. The same with Mexico. The people sink *heavier* and heavier into inertia, and the Church cannot help them, because *the Church does not* possess the key-word to the Mexican soul." (8)

Determining that "one has to speak the language of one's own people" and that "God must come to Mexico in a blanket and in huaraches, else He is no God of *the Mexicans*, they cannot know *Him*," (9) *Ramón himself* becomes the living *manifestation* of Quetzalcoatl (as Christ was the living manifestation of the Christian God) and sets in motion the machinery for the re-conversion of the Mexican people to their old religion.

Lawrence's description of *the "conversion"* is *dramatic* and *his achievement* in creating a new religion is

(8) The Plumed Serpent, p.276
(9) Ibid. p.260, p.375

considerable: it is only a great writer who, with "high seriousness", could attempt such a task, or who would dare to present a detailed elaboration of a religion complete with "a liturgy, hymns, ceremonial, vestments, and even 'day-hours' - marked now, not by bells ringing the Angelus, but by drums sounding at dawn, nine, twelve, three and sunset." (10) But the achievement of this section of the book remains no more than considerable for, though Lawrence does enough to rebut Father Tiverton's charge that "the creation of a new religion, fully-fledged, in a setting where twentieth century Americans and Irish mix with primitive Mexicans, was an impossible task," (11) he is not able, finally, to sustain his vision. Nevertheless, the new religion is, up to a point, convincing - precisely because Lawrence displays such a fine understanding of the Mexican in such "a setting".

The ethical and moral basis of the religion, for instance, is admirably and indirectly propounded in terms readily understandable to the primitive Mexican, and through a simple but vivid imagery. Cipriano is talking to his soldiers:

> "We have found our way again to the secret sun behind the sun. There sat Quetzalcoatl, and at last Don Ramón found him. There sits the red Huitzilopochtli, and I have found him. For I have found the second strength.
>
> "When he comes, all you who strive shall find the second strength .....
>
> "Are we men? Cannot we not get the second strength? Can we not? Have we lost it forever?
>
> "I say no! Quetzalcoatl is among us. I have found the red Huitzilopochtli. The second strength!
>
> "When you walk or sit, when you work or lie down, when you eat or sleep, think of the second strength, that you must have it.
>
> "Be very quiet. It is shy as a bird in a dark tree.
>
> "Be very clean, clean in your bodies and your clothes. It is like a star, that will not shine in dirt.

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(10) Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p.71

(11) Ibid. p.72

"Be very brave, and do not drink till you are drunk, nor soil yourself with bad women, nor steal. Because a drunken man has lost his second strength, and a man loses his strength in bad woman, and a thief is a coward, and the red Huitzilopochtli hates a coward.

"Try! Try for the second strength ....." (12)

And how tangible is the emotional and physical appeal of the new religion which revives an old joy in religious dancing and singing. Lawrence's prose makes it so with a rhythm which expertly expresses the actions described:

The one singer had finished, and only the drum kept on, touching the sensitive membrane of the night subtly and knowingly. Then a voice in the circle rose again on the song, and like birds flying from a tree, one after the other, the individual voices arose, till there was a strong, intense, curiously weighty soaring and sweeping of male voices, like a dark flock of birds flying and dipping in unison. And all the dark birds seemed to have launched out of the heart, in the inner forest of the masculine chest.

And one by one, voices in the crowd broke free, like birds launching and coming in from a distance, caught by the spell. The words did not matter. Any verse, any words, no words, the song remained the same: a strong, deep wind rushing from the caverns of the breast, from the everlasting soul! Kate herself was too shy and wincing to sing: too blenched with disillusion. But she heard the answer away back in her soul, like a far-off mocking-bird at night. And Juana was singing in spite of herself, in a crooning feminine voice, making up the words unconsciously .....

Then the drum started again, with a new strong pulse. One of the seated men, in his white poncho with the dark blackish-and-blue border, got up, taking off his sandals as he did so, and began softly to dance the dance step. Mindless, dancing heavily and with a curious bird-like sensitiveness of the feet, he began to tread the earth with his bare soles, as if treading himself deep into the earth. Alone, with a curious pendulum rhythm, leaning a little forward from a powerful backbone, he trod to the drum beat, his white knees lifting and lifting alternately against the dark fringe of his blanket, with a queer dark splash. And another man put his huaraches into the centre of the ring, near the fire, and stood up to dance. The man at the drum lifted up his voice in a wild, blind song. The men were taking off their ponchos. And soon, with the firelight on their breasts and on their darkly abstracted faces, they were all afoot, with bare torsos and bare feet, dancing the savage bird-tread .....

The song seemed to take new wild flights, after it had sunk and rustled to a last ebb. It was like waves that rise out of the invisible, and rear up into form and a flying, disappearing whiteness and a rustle of extinction: And the dancers, after dancing in a circle in a slow, deep absorption, each man changeless in his own place, treading the same dust with the soft churning of bare feet, slowly, slowly began to revolve, till the circle was slowly revolving

(12) The Plumed Serpent, p.379

round the fire, with always the same soft, down-sinking, churning tread. And the drum kept the changeless living beat, like a heart, and the song rose and soared and fell, ebbed and ebbed to a sort of extinction, then heaved up again.

Till the young peons could stand it no more. They put off their sandals and their hats and their blankets, and shyly, with inexpert feet that yet knew the old echo of the tread, they stood behind the wheeling dancers, and danced without changing place. Till soon the revolving circle had a fixed yet throbbing circle of men outside .... (13)

Apart from occasional lapses into a sort of mystical jargon - "Men and women alike danced with faces lowered and expressionless, abstract, gone in the deep absorption of men into the greater manhood, women into the great womanhood. It was sex, but the greater, not the lesser sex. The waters over the earth wheeling upon the waters under the earth, like an eagle silently wheeling above its own shadow." (14) - apart from such lapses Lawrence does successfully evoke the new religion but then, unfortunately, he overreaches himself. He does so in his description of the Huitzilopochtli ceremony (the official emergence of Cipriano as the "living Huitzilopochtli") when the occasion is marked by the public "trial" of those involved in the attack on Ramón's house:

Cipriano: "The grey dog, and the grey bitch, we kill, for their mouths are yellow with poison. Is it well, men of Huitzilopochtli?"

Guards: "It is very well, my Lord."

The guards stripped the peon Guillermo of his white clothes, leaving him naked, in a grey loin-cloth, with a grey-white cross painted on his naked breast. The woman, too, had a grey-white cross painted on her body. She stood in a short petticoat of grey wool.

Cipriano: "The grey dog and the grey bitch shall run no more about the world. We will bury their bodies in quick-lime, till their souls are eaten, and their bodies, and nothing is left. For lime is the thirsty bone that swallows even a soul and is not slaked. - Bind them with the grey cords, put ash on their heads."

The guards quickly obeyed. The risoners, ash-grey, gazed with black, glittering eyes, making not a sound. A guard stood behind each of them. Cipriano gave a sign, and quick as lightning the guards had got the throats of the two victims in a grey cloth, and with a sharp jerk had broken their necks, lifting them backwards in one movement. The grey cloths they tied hard and tight round the throats,

(13) The Plumed Serpent, pp.136-8
(14) Ibid. p.140

laying the twitching bodies on the floor .....

Then [Cipriano] turned once more, to the other, imprisoned peons .....

Cipriano: "When many men come against one, what is the name of the many?"

Guards: "Cowards, my Lord."

Cipriano: "Cowards, it is. They are less than men. Men that are less than men are not good enough for the light of the sun. If men that are men will live, men that are less than men must be put away, lest they multiply too much. Men that are more than men have the judgment of men that are less than men. Shall they die?"

Guards: "They shall surely die, my Lord".....

"The Lords of Life are Masters of Death," [Cipriano] said in a loud, clear voice.

And swift as lightning he stabbed the blindfolded man to the heart, with three swift, heavy stabs. he lifted the red dagger and threw it down.

"The Lords of Life are Masters of Death," he repeated. (15)

It is with a disconcerting suddenness that the new religion changes its form in these pages: the dominating force in the movement is seen to be not living precept but totalitarian terror, and the full implications of Lawrence's theory of leadership (perhaps most concisely expressed in Fantasia of the Unconscious) become clear:

> And what about a goal?.... Well, not the relation of love, that's one thing, nor of brotherhood, nor equality. The next relation has got to be a relationship of men towards men in a spirit of unfathomable trust and responsibility, service and leadership, obedience and pure authority. Men have got to choose their leaders, and obey them to the death. And it must be a system of culminating aristocracy, society tapering like a pyramid to the supreme leader. (16)

For the Western European reader the change in the religion is decisive. Up to this point he is able to identify himself imaginatively with the Mexican peon in his acceptance of Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli: the bare reality of the executions, however, breaks this imaginative connection and he stands aside, a revolted onlooker. But more significant than the reader's reaction is the lack of reaction on the part of the

(15) The Plumed Serpent, pp.393-6
(16) Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.164

Mexican onlookers. Up to this point the successive developments of the new religion are accompanied by detailed descriptions of the reactions of the Mexican people at whom the religion is aimed, and it is by convincingly showing their favourable reactions that Lawrence largely achieves his effect. In the description of the executions, however, the only response is that of the drilled guards - no attempt is made to convey the feelings of the vast crowd of onlookers. And it is almost as if Lawrence himself is unable finally to accept the totalitarianism, for there is no fervour in his subsequent handling of the movement. Further developments are brusquely and indirectly reported. After a "kind[illegible]e religion of Quetzalcoatl is declared the national rel[illegible]t though Lawrence asserts that "the whole [illegible]try was thrilling with a new thing, with a release of new ener[illegible] he adds: "But there was a sense of violence and crudity in it all, a touch of horror." (17) And though, when the book ends, Ramón is engaged in composing a new hymn, there is no assurance that the religion will be of permanent significance: previous references imply its speedy eclipse:

> Ramón was a good deal absent, either in Mexico City or in Guadalajara, or even away in Sonora. He was already famous and notorious throughout the country, his name was a name to conjure with. But underneath the rather ready hero-worship of the Mexicans, Kate somehow felt their latent grudging. Perhaps they took more satisfaction in ultimately destroying their heroes, than in temporarily raising them high. The real perfect moment was when the hero was downed.
>
> And to Kate, sceptic as she was, it seemed much more likely that they were sharpening the machete to stick in Ramón's heart, when he got a bit too big for them, than anything else. (18)

And later Kate reflects that if Ramón should die "then .... Cipriano would come apart, and it would be all finished." (19)

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(17) The Plumed Serpent, p.437
(18) Ibid. p.419
(19) Ibid. p.423

Kate's reflection makes one aware, incidentally, of the degree to which Cipriano is dependent on Ramón, and raises the question of the personal relationship of the two men who together work for the revival of Quetzalcoatl. Lawrence's outline of the nature of this man and man relationship recalls similar relationships in the two previous books. Kate is speaking to Cipriano:

> "....You don't believe in [Ramón] . You think it is like everything else, a sort of game. Everything is a sort of game, a put-up job, to you Mexicans. You don't *really* believe, in anything."
>
> "How not believe? I not believe in Ramón? - Well, perhaps not, in that way of kneeling before him and spreading out my arms and shedding tears on his feet. But I - I believe in him, too. Not in your way, but in mine. I tell you why. Because he has the power to compel me. If he hadn't the power to *compel* me, how should I believe?"
>
> "It is a queer sort of belief that is compelled," she said.
>
> "How else should one believe, except by being compelled? I like Ramón for that, that he can compel me. When I grew up, and my godfather could not compel me to believe, I was very unhappy. - But Ramón *compels* me, and that is very good. It makes me happy, when I know I can't escape. It would make you happy too." (30)

This is none other than the submission of one man to the "greater soul" in another man, the sort of relationship into which Lilly hoped to draw Aaron and which Somers would have liked to be able to impose on Jack. Ramón is a man who *can* command such submission:

> "Shame?" laughed Ramón. "Ah, Señora Caterina, why shame? This is a thing that *must* be done. There must be manifestations. We *must* change back to the vision of the living cosmos; we *must*. The oldest Pan is in us, and he will not be denied. In cold blood and in hot blood both, we must make the change. That is how man is made. I accept the *must* from the oldest Pan in my soul, and from the newest *me*. Once a man gathers his whole soul together and arrives at a conclusion, the time of alternatives has gone. I *must*. No more than that. I *am* the First Man of Quetzalcoatl. I am Quetzalcoatl himself, if you like. A manifestation, as well as a man. I accept myself entire, and proceed to make destiny. Why, what else can I do?"

(30) *The Plumed Serpent*, p.217

> Kate was silent. His loss of blood seemed to have washed him curiously fresh again, and he was carried again out of the range of human emotion. A strange sort of categorical imperative! She saw now his power over Cipriano. It lay in this imperative which he acknowledged in his own soul, and which really was like a messenger from the beyond. (21)

These two passages would seem to suggest that Lawrence had at last been able to portray satisfactorily the submission of one man to another within the bond of close friendship, that he had at last dispelled the uncertainty which characterised the similar relationship in Aaron's Rod, and overcome his failure in Kangaroo. But the ostensible achievement of this relationship is, in fact, only effected by the substitution of a wooden relationship for the living one, and Lawrence's failure here is, if anything, greater than his failures in the previous books. For, of all the relationships with which Lawrence deals in his books, this is the only one in which there is no development; the only one which remains static and fixed. From the beginning the reader is simply called on to accept the assertion of Cipriano's submission, whether it be in the inference of the first reference to their relationship - "Cipriano looked at Ramón with a curious intimacy, glittering, steady warrior-like, and at the same time betraying an almost maiming trust in the other man." (22) - or in the explicit statement of one of the last references: "'To me!' he said, and he pressed his hand against the buttons of his tunic. 'To me Ramón is more than life. More than life.' His eyes seemed to glare and to go sightless, as he said it, the ferocity melting in a strange blind, confiding glare, that seemed sightless, either looking inward, or out at the whole vast void of the cosmos, where no vision is left." (23) Indeed, virtually the whole relationship is based on explicit statement, and Cipriano's constant avowals of submission are not reinforced by corroboratory action: they

(21) The Plumed Serpent, p.330
(22) Ibid. p.74
(23) Ibid. p.323

are simply balanced by Ramón's explicit expression of satisfaction with the relationship:

> With Cipriano he was most sure. Cipriano and he, even when they embraced each other with passion, when they met after an absence, *embraced in the recognition of each other's eternal and abiding loneliness; like the Morning Star.* (24)

Don Ramón pondered, and shook his head.

> ".... A woman who just wants to be taken, and then to cling on, is a parasite. And a man who wants just to take, without giving, is a creature of prey."

"And I'm afraid Don Cipriano might be that," said Kate.

> "Possibly," said Ramón. "He is not so with me. But perhaps he would be, if we did not meet - perhaps it is our half-way - in some physical belief that is at the very middle of us, and which we recognise in one another...." (25)

It is only rarely that the reader has an opportunity of judging the relationship for himself, and this only occurs when Lawrence describes the physical bond between the two men. On the first of these occasions the reaction of the women is so effective a commentary that the relationship of Ramón and Cipriano for a *moment takes on depth* and reality:

> The two men embraced, breast to breast, and for a moment Cipriano laid *his little blackish hands on the* naked shoulders of the bigger man, and for a moment was perfectly still on his breast. Then very softly, he stood back and looked at him, saying not a word.
>
> Ramón abstractedly laid his hand on Cipriano's shoulder, looking down at him with a little smile.
>
> "Qué tal?" he said, from the edge of his lips. "How goes it?"
>
> "Bien! Muy bien!" said Cipriano, still gazing into the other man's face with black, wondering, child-like, searching eyes, as if he, Cipriano, were searching for himself, in Ramón's face. Ramón looked back into Cipriano's black, Indian eyes with a faint, kind smile of recognition, and Cipriano hung his head as if to hide his face, the black hair, which he wore rather long and brushed sideways, dropping over his forehead.
>
> The women watched in absolute silence. Then, as the two men began slowly to come along the terrace to the tea-table, Carlota began to pour tea. But *her hand* trembled so much, the teapot wobbled as she held it, and she had to put it down and clasp her hands in the lap of her white muslin dress. (26)

(24) The Plumed Serpent, p.265
(25) Ibid. p.284
(26) Ibid. pp.193-4

On the second occasion, however, when Ramón induces in Cipriano a mystic sleep prior to his becoming the "living Huitzilopochtli", Lawren 's description, marked by the obscure wordiness of phrases such as "the other circle of sleep", "the face of the dark waters", "the breath upon the waters was sinking into the waters" and "the womb of undisturbed creation", seems to imply an altogether different relationship between the two men whose physical movements are, at best, ambiguous:

> Ramón knelt and pressed his arms close round Cipriano's waist pressing his black head against his side. And Cipriano began to feel as if his mind, his head were melting away in the darkness; like a pearl in black wine, the other circle of sleep began to swing, vast. And he was a man without a head, moving like a dark wind over the face of the dark waters.
>
> "Is it perfect?"
>
> "It is perfect."
>
> "Who lives?"
>
> "Who -!"
>
> Cipriano no longer knew.
>
> Ramón bound him fast round the middle, then, pressing his head against the hip, folded his arms round Cipriano's loins, closing with his hands the secret places.
>
> "Cipriano?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "Is it all dark?"
>
> But Cipriano could not answer. The last circle was sweeping round, and the breath upon the waters was sinking into the waters, there was no more utterance. Ramón kneeled with pressed head and arms and hands, for some moments still. Then he bound the loins, binding the wrists to the hips ....
>
> Then Ramón bound the ankles, lifted Cipriano suddenly, with a sleep-moving softness, laid him on the skin of a big mountain-lion, which was spread upon the blankets, threw over him the red and black serape of Huitzilopochtli, and lay down at his feet, holding Cipriano's feet to his own abdomen.
>
> And both men passed into perfect unconsciousness, Cipriano within the womb of undisturbed creation, Ramón in the death sleep. (27)

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(27) The Plumed Serpent, pp.384-85

Apart, however, from this scene, witnessed as if through a hole in the wooden fence of the relationship; apart from this glimpse of the relationship as a "mess of fondling and fainting", (28) Lawrence's failure in his handling of Ramón and Cipriano is emphasised by the fact that Cipriano's "submission" is by no means certain. Ramón himself is conscious of this:

> His people would betray him, he knew that. Cipriano would betray him. Given one little vulnerable chink, they would pierce him. They would leap at the place out of nowhere, like a tarantula, and bite in the poison. (29)

Cipriano, too, knows it:

> Cipriano hung his head. He was always testing Ramón, to see if he could change him. When he found he couldn't, then he submitted, and new little fires of joy sprang up in him. But meanwhile, he had to try, and try again. (30)

Finally Kate senses it:

> "I say I am Ramón's man," replied Cipriano stubbornly.
>
> Kate looked at him, and mistrusted him. In the long run he was nobody's man. He was that old, masterless Pan-male, that could not even conceive of service; particularly the service of mankind. He saw only glory; the black mystery of glory consummated. And himself like a wind of glory. (31)

Admittedly, Cipriano's potential rebellion is expressed only in these explicit statements and is not backed by conrete action - but then so, too, is his supposed submission. In the end the contradictory assertions are destructive of the whole relationship, and there is little enough left to fill the blank left by their cancellation of one another.

Lawrence's handling of the central relationship of the book - that of Kate and Cipriano - is alive, but his attention to the development of this relationship does not

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(28) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.129
(29) The Plumed Serpent, p.206
(30) Ibid. p.204
(31) Ibid. p.327

redeem it from failure, for it is subject to so many inconsistencies and to such forcing that one cannot believe in Kate's eventual marriage to Cipriano. Nor, for the same reasons, can one believe in the submission which such a marriage enforces on her. This supposedly achieved relationship, which ostensibly marks an advance on the shelving of the issue of male domination in marriage in Kangaroo, is actually a retrogressive step in Lawrence's development, for his "success" here is purchased at the cost of his integrity as a novelist.

Kate's submission to Cipriano is, to a large extent, bound up with the great respect which she feels for him as a result of his association with Ramón in the new movement:

> Kate felt she was in the presence of men. Here were men face to face not with death and self-sacrifice, but with the life-issue. She felt, for the first time in her life, a pang almost like fear, of men who were passing beyond what she knew, beyond her depth. (32)

Just after Kate has first heard mention of Quetzalcoatl, Lawrence cleverly stresses this point with the following bird-snake image. It may be noticed, though, that the image is suggestive of a forced, and not a willing, submission:

> So that unconsciously she shrank when his black, big, glittering eyes turned on her for a moment. They were not, like Don Ramón's, dark eyes. They were black, as black as jewels into which one could not look without a sensation of fear. And her fascination was tinged with fear. She felt somewhat as the bird feels when the snake is watching it. (33)

But then, having suggested the significance which Cipriano's "impersonal male activity" has for Kate, Lawrence throws doubt on this aspect of their relationship in his development of Kate's attitude. At first, her favourable disposition towards such activity is explicitly emphasised when

(32) The Plumed Serpent, p.73
(33) Ibid. p.74

she looks back on her life with her second husband, the Irish revolutionary. Kate is speaking to Cipriano:

> "..... It took me years to understand that a woman can't love a man - at least a woman like I am can't - if he is only the sort of good, decent citizen. With Joachim I came to realize that a woman like me can only love a man who is fighting to change the world, to make it freer, more alive ...." (34)

Later in the book, however, Kate contradicts this assertion and tacitly repudiates her belief in the male activity - first in regard to Joachim, and then in regard to Ramón:

> "... [Joachim] broke his own soul and spirit in those Irish politics," [said Kate to Carlota]. "I knew it was wrong. What does Ireland matter, what does nationalism and all that rubbish matter, really! And revolutions! They are so, so stupid and vieux jeu. Ah! It would have been so much better if Joachim had been content to live his life in peace, with me. It could be so jolly, so lovely. And I tried and tried with him. But it was no good. He wanted to kill himself with that beastly Irish business, and I tried in vain to prevent him." (35)

> "How is Ramón?" said Kate.
>
> "He is sleeping," said Teresa.
>
> "Good! He seemed to me almost done up, last night."
>
> "Yes." - The black eyes looked at Kate, wide with unshed tears and courage, and a beautiful deep, remote light.
>
> "I don't believe in a man's sacrificing himself in this way," said Kate. "And I don't."
>
> Teresa still looked her full in the eyes.
>
> "Ah!" she said. "He doesn't sacrifice himself. He feels he must do as he does. And if he must, I must help him."
>
> "But then you are sacrificing yourself to him, and I don't believe in that either," said Kate. (36)

These contradictions are not resolved and one is forced to assume that Kate's remarks about Ramón exemplify her attitude towards Cipriano and the whole Quetzalcoatl movement. Her own participation in the movement is, therefore, inherently unconvincing, and it is ironic that she should bemoan Teresa's sacrifices for Ramón, when she, too, is made to submit both to

(34) The Plumed Serpent, p.77
(35) Ibid. p.177
(36) Ibid. p.424

Cipriano and to the movement.

One can sympathise, though, with Kate's initial participation in the movement for, as has been said, up to the crucial episode of the executions, the reader is able to identify himself with the Mexican peon in his reactions to Quetzalcoatl - and he is able to do so largely through identification with Kate. One feels the vital impulse of the new religion through Kate's perception of its effect both on the peon and on herself. But when Kate, at Cipriano's insistence, agrees to appear as the female manifestation of the new religion, her action is so uncharacteristic and forced that the reader ceases to identify himself with her. The first false note is struck during the "marriage ceremony" when Kate, as a preliminary to her appearance as the goddess Malintzi, agrees to a symbolical marriage with Cipriano-Huitzilopochtli. Ramón marries them:

> "... Lift your face, Caterina, and say: This man is my rain from heaven."
>
> Kate lifted her face and shut her eyes in the downpour.
>
> "This man is my rain from heaven," she said.
>
> "This woman is earth to me - say that, Cipriano," said Ramón, kneeling on one knee and laying his hand flat on the earth.
>
> Cipriano kneeled and laid his hand on the earth.
>
> "This woman is the earth to me," he said.
>
> "I, woman, kiss the feet and heels of this man, for I will be strength to him, throughout the long twilight of the Morning Star."
>
> Kate kneeled and kissed the feet and heels of Cipriano, and said her say.
>
> "I, man, kiss the brow and the breast of this woman, for I will be her peace and her increase, through the long twilight of the Morning Star."
>
> Cipriano kissed her, and said his say. (37)

When Kate, an "emancipated" Western woman, kisses Cipriano's feet, the reader cannot but feel a shock of violation. Lawrence is using the "marriage", one realises, not as an expression of Kate's identification with the movement but as a symbolical exposition of her submission to Cipriano. The reader cannot believe in this patent sacrifice of her independence and,

(37) The Plumed Serpent, pp.344-45

some sixty pages later, even Lawrence seems to have forgotten about it: Kate is then made to consider the question as if for the first time, and her reflections seem to imply a complete unawareness of her previous symbolical action - the significance of which could surely not have escaped her. It is almost as if these reflections, which are true to character, not only belie, but altogether do away with, the previous action:

> "Let the Morning Star rise between us," [Cipriano] would say. "Alone you are nothing, and I am mangue. But together we are the wings of the Morning."
>
> Was it true? Was this the final answer to man's assertion of individuality?
>
> Was it true? And was it her sacred duty to sit beside him in the green dress of Malintzi, in the church, the goddess admitting her halfness? Her halfness? Was there no star of the single soul? Was that all an illusion? .....
>
> Poor Kate, it was hard to have to reflect this. It meant a submission she had never made. It meant the death of her individual self. It meant abandoning so much, even her own very foundations. For she had believed truly that every man and every woman alike was founded on the individual. (38)

Yet, shortly afterwards, Kate nevertheless agrees to become "the bride of the living Huitzilopochtli" and actively assumes the role of Malintzi. Kate's decision is of great importance for it finally establishes the nature of the relationship between Cipriano and herself. In the church he teaches her how to salute himself as the living Huitzilopochtli and the basis of their civil marriage, which soon follows, is clearly indicated. Yet her decision, following her realisation that it would mean "abandoning ..... her own very foundations", is unconvincing - especially since it also follows shortly upon the spectacle of the executions. Kate witnesses Cipriano's part in the "trial" and one expects that, thereafter, she will find it impossible to continue to associate either with him or with the movement. Her decision, therefore, snaps the thin string of reality from which the reader's belief is suspended, and Lawrence's attempt to mend

(38) The Plumed Serpent. pp.404-5

the break is so clumsy that the string slips, finally, through his fingers. Kate is sitting with Cipriano in the Church:

> So, when she thought of him and his soldiers, tales of swift cruelty she had heard of him: when she remembered his stabbing the three helpless peons, she thought: Why should I judge him? He is of the gods. And when he comes to me he lays his pure, quick flame to mine, and every time I am a young girl again, and every time he takes the flower of my virginity, and I his. It leaves me insouciante like a young girl. What do I care if he kills people? His flame is young and clean. He is Huitzilopochtli, and I am Malintzi. What do I care, what Cipriano Viedma does or doesn't do? Or even what Kate Leslie does or doesn't do! (39)

The only positive justification which Lawrence offers for Kate's action is her fulfilled sexual relationship with Cipriano, but sexual fulfilment is made to correspond with sexual submission and once again Lawrence's manipulation of character to obtain a desired result is so much in evidence that the reader finally believes neither in Kate nor in her relationship with Cipriano.

Cipriano, it will be remembered, is an Indian and, to begin with, Lawrence faces the basic problem of Kate's instinctive sexual aversion from him:

> "You don't like brown-skinned people?" [Ramón] asked her gently.
>
> "I think it is beautiful to look at," she said. "But" - with a faint shudder - "I am glad I am white."
>
> "You feel there could be no contact?" he said, simply.
>
> "Yes," she said. "I mean that."
>
> "It is as you feel," he said. (40)

But then, in the same way that Lawrence resorts to a doctrine of insouciance to overcome Kate's difficulties in regard to the executions, he poses a theory of "another self" to surmount her sexual repugnance:

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(39) The Plumed Serpent, pp.409-10
(40) Ibid. p.200

> "Get used to it," [Cipriano says in reply to Kate's admission of the horror she feels] "Get used to it that there must be a bit of fear, and a bit of horror in your life. And marry me, and you will find many things that are not horror. The bit of horror is like the sesame seed in the nougat, it gives the sharp wild flavour. It is good to have it there."
>
> .... She was breathless with amazement, because he had made her see the physical possibility of marrying him: a thing she had never even glimpsed before. But surely, surely it would not be herself who could marry him. It would be some curious female within her, whom she did not know and did not own. (41)

Lawrence does not only try to posit the possibility of a sexual relationship between Kate and Cipriano: in addition he seeks to ensure that Kate's part in such a relationship should be unconditionally submissive. His use once more of the snake image to effect this is, under the specific circumstances, repellent; while his further sexual imagery is overcharged. The strident over-emphasis and the over-statement unerringly betray the underlying uncertainty:

> Cipriano made her a little uneasy, sitting beside him. He made her physically aware of him, of his smell but strong and assertive body, with its black currents and storms of desire. The range of him was very limited, really. The great part of his nature was just inert and heavy, unresponsive, limited as a snake or a lizard is limited. But within his own heavy, dark range he had a curious power. Almost she could see the black fume of power which he emitted, the dark, heavy vibration of his blood, which cast a spell over her ....
>
> As he sat in silence, casting the old, twilit Pan-power over her, she felt herself submitting, succumbing. He was once more the old dominant male, shadowy, intangible, looming suddenly tall, and covering the sky, making a darkness that was himself and nothing but himself, the Pan male. And she was swooned prone beneath, perfect in her proneness.
>
> It was the ancient phallic mystery, the ancient god-devil of the male Pan. Cipriano unyielding forever, in the ancient twilight, keeping the ancient twilight around him. She understood now his power with his soldiers. He had the old gift of demon-power.
>
> He would never woo; she saw this. When the power of his blood rose in him, the dark aura streamed from him like a cloud pregnant with power, like thunder, and rose like a whirlwind that rises suddenly in the twilight and raises a great pliant column, swaying and leaning with power, clear between heaven and earth.

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(41) The Plumed Serpent, p. 249

> Ah! and what a mystery of prone submission, on her part, this huge erection would imply! Submission absolute, like the earth under the sky. Beneath an over-arching absolute. (42)

Nor is Lawrence content with a partial and compelled submission on Kate's part: "When Cipriano was away, Kate was her old individual self. Only when Cipriano was present, and then only sometimes, did the connection overwhelm her." (43) The reader is asked to believe that Kate comes to enjoy her submission, a submission which, it is seen, involves the abandonment of reciprocal intercourse, sexually, and of personal intimacy, socially. But Lawrence's description of Kate's new-found alternative to normal sexual "satisfaction" is in some ways reminiscent of, and as unsatisfactory as, the "loin-fulfilment" of Birkin and Ursula in Women in Love (see pp.130-133 above). The reader is unable to grasp what is meant by such fulfilment for, though Lawrence is at pains to emphasise its difference from conventional sexual fulfilment, he is strangely inexpressive when he attempts to describe the new experience. The experience is generally "dark and untellable" and "curiously beyond ... knowing": where he does attempt direct description a fountain is made to gush "noiseless and with urgent softness from volcanic deeps". In addition he resorts to a deliberate inversion of his own characteristic symbolism: the word "white" here is applied to "normal" sexual intercourse and it is a "dark" Cipriano who "by a dark and powerful instinct" withdraws from "the white ecstasy of frictional satisfaction". Lawrence is, in fact, forcing the experience on Kate and his consequent ineffectiveness only confirms the reader in his scepticism:

> She realized, almost with wonder, the death in her of the Aphrodite of the foam: the seething, frictional, ecstatic Aphrodite. By a swift dark instinct, Cipriano drew away from this in her. When, in their love, it came back on her, the seething electric female ecstasy, which knows such spasms of delirium, he recoiled from her. It was what she used to call her "satisfaction". She had loved Joachim for this, that again and again, and again he could give her this orgiastic "satisfaction", in spasms that

(42) The Plumed Serpent, pp.324-25
(43) Ibid. p.427

made her cry aloud.

But Cipriano would not. By a dark and powerful instinct he drew away from her as soon as this desire rose again in her, for the white ecstasy of frictional satisfaction, the throes of Aphrodite of the foam. She could see that to him, it was repulsive. He just removed himself, dark and unchangeable, away from her.

And she, as she lay, would realize the worthlessness of this foam-effervescence, its strange externality to her. It seemed to come upon her from without, not from within. And succeeding the first moment of disappointment, when this sort of "satisfaction" was denied her, came the knowledge that she did not really want it, that it was really nauseous to her.

And he, in his dark, hot silence would bring her back to the new, soft, heavy, hot flow, when she was like a fountain gushing noiseless and with urgent softness from the volcanic deeps. Then she was open to him soft and hot, yet gushing with a noiseless soft power. And there was no such thing as conscious "satisfaction". What happened was dark and untellable. So different from the beak-like friction of Aphrodite of the foam, the friction which flares out in circles of phosphorescent ecstasy, to the last wild spasm which utters the involuntary cry, like a death-cry, the final love-cry. This she had known, and known to the end, with Joachim. And now this too was removed from her. What she had with Cipriano was curiously beyond her knowing: so deep and hot and flowing, as it were subterranean. She had to yield before it. She could not grip it into one final spasm of white ecstasy which was like sheer knowing.

And as it was in the love-act, so it was with him. She could not <u>know</u> him. When she tried to know him, something went slack in her, and she had to leave off. She had to let be. She had to leave him, dark and hot and potent, along with the things that <u>are</u>, but are not known. The presence. And the stranger. This he was always to her.

There was hardly anything to say to him. And there was no personal intimacy..... He accepted the fact absolutely, as if nothing else were possible. She, sometimes, felt it strange. She had so craved for intimacy, <u>insisted</u> on intimacy.

Now she found herself accepting him finally and forever as the stranger in whose presence she lived..... (44)

As [illegible]rence's handling of the relationship between Kate [illegible]o were not sufficiently uncertain, there are numerous re[illegible]s which suggest that she is, in fact, in love with Ramón: a suggestion which only further weakens the basis of the relationship by implying either the unlikelihood of its ever having materialised, or alternatively the falsity at its centre. I quote only a few of the references:

(44) <u>The Plumed Serpent</u>, pp.439-40

In her mind she thought: And perhaps Ramón is the only one I couldn't quite escape from, because he really touches me somewhere inside. But from you, you little Cipriano, I should have no need even to escape, because I could not be caught by you. (45)

Kate looked at [Ramón] in wonder, with a little fear. Why was he confessing to her? Was he going to love her? She almost suspended her breathing. He looked at her with a sort of sorrow on his brow, and in his dark eyes, anger, vexation, wisdom, and a dull pain.

"I am sorry," he went on .... (46)

Kate was accustomed to looking on other women as inferiors. But the tables were suddenly turned. Even as, in her soul, she knew Ramón to be a greater man than Cipriano, suddenly she had to question herself, whether Teresa was not a greater woman than she.

Teresa! A greater woman than Kate? What a blow! Surely it was impossible!

Yet there it was. Ramón had wanted to marry Teresa, not Kate. And the flame of his marriage with Teresa she saw both in his eyes and in Teresa's. A flame that was not in Kate's eyes. (47)

Kate is speaking to Ramón:

"You go ahead so grandly, one would not think you needed help: especially from a mere woman who - who after all is only the wife of your friend."

They were sitting on a bench under a red-flowering poinsettia whose huge scarlet petal-leaves spread out like sharp plumes.

"The wife of my friend!" he said. "What could you be better?"

"Of course," she said, more than equivocal. (48)

The following indication, which includes a reference to submission in marriage, is surely cynical on Lawrence's part:

Teresa looked at [Kate] with quick, dark eyes.

"Different men must have different wives," she said. "Cipriano would never want a wife like me."

"And different women must have different husbands," said Kate. "Ramón would always be too abstract and overbearing for me."

Teresa flushed slowly, looking down at the ground.

"Ramón needs far too much submission from a woman, to please me," Kate added. "He takes too much upon himself." (49)

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(45) The Plumed Serpent, pp.217-18
(46) Ibid. p.285
(47) Ibid. p.427
(48) Ibid. p.444
(49) Ibid. p.451

Finally Kate "recoils upon her own individuality, as a cat does," and decides to leave Cipriano and to return to London - a step, one feels, which she would have been well advised to take earlier since she so clearly foresaw what marriage to Cipriano would entail:

> "Do you think, Señora Caterina, you might marry our mutual General?" Ramón had put himself aside again.
>
> "I - I don't know!" stammered Kate. "I hardly think so."
>
> "He is not sympathetic to you at all?"
>
> "Yes, he is. He is alive, and there is even a certain fascination about him. - But one shouldn't try marrying a man of another race, do you think, even if he were more sympathetic?"
>
> "Ah!" sighed Ramón. "It's no good generalizing. It's no good marrying anybody, unless there will be a real fusion somewhere."
>
> "And I feel there wouldn't," said Kate. "I feel he just wants something of me; and perhaps I just want something of him. But he would never meet me. He would never come forward himself, to meet me. He would come to take something from me and I should have to let him. And I don't want merely that. I want a man who will come halfway, just half-way, to meet me." (50)

But then she as suddenly changes her mind and decides to remain. Again one notices the distortion to which Lawrence resorts in order to justify Kate's decision: the alternative, which he forces her to contemplate, is surely not the only one open to her:

> And then what! To sit in a London drawing-room, and add another to all the grimalkins? To let the peculiar grimalkin-grimace come on her face, the most weird grimalkin-twang come into her voice? Horror! Of all the horrors, perhaps the grimalkin women, her contemporaries, were the most repellent to her. Even the horrid old tom-cat men of the civilised kind of gutters, did not fill her with such sickly dread.
>
> "No!" she said to herself. "My ego and my individuality are not worth that ghastly price. I'd better abandon some of my ego, and sink some of my individuality, rather than go like that ..... Rather than become elderly and a bit grisly, I will make my submission; as far as I need, and no further." (51)

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(50) The Plumed Serpent, p.384
(51) Ibid. pp.456-57

This is so unconvincing that one is not unprepared for the bathetic note on which the book ends:

"You don't want me to go, do you?" she pleaded.

A slow, almost foolish smile came over his face, and his body was slightly convulsed. Then came his soft-tongued Indian speech, as if all his mouth were sof "Yo! Yo!" - his eyebrows lifted with queer mock los surprise, and a little convulsion went through his body again. "Te quiero mucho! Mucho te quiero! Mucho! sur Mucho! I like you very much! Very much!" again. "Te quiero mucho! Mucho te quiero! Mucho! Mucho! I like you very much! Very much!"

It sounded so soft, so soft-tongued, of the soft, wet, hot blood, that she shivered a little.

"You won't let me go!" she said to him. (52)

Mrs. Carswell calls The Plumed Serpent "the most ambitious and the most impressive novel of our generation," (53) but most of the critics seem to agree that it is a failure: whether they label the book "an outrage"; (54) "a grotesque mixture of Rider Haggard's She and Also Sprach Zarathustra"; (55) or Lawrence's "greatest failure". (56) But though Lawrence's handling of personal relationships makes it one of his worst novels, his failure marks the end of his preoccupation with the theory of leadership, with the domination of a whole people by a single man and, on the personal level, with the submission of individual men and women to "the hero". Developed in three successive books, the theory, it is seen, implies totalitarian rule, mistrust and even perversion among men, and the sexual abnegation of women. It is as if Lawrence had driven himself to a conclusion which disgusted him, for his abandonment of the theory followed his own recognition of his failure - as the following passage from a letter to Witter Bynner shows:

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(52) The Plumed Serpent, p.462
(53) Catherine Carswell: The Savage Pilgrimage, p.192
(54) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.127
(55) Hugh Kingsmill, D. H. Lawrence, p.216
(56) Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p.71

> I sniffed the red herring in your last letter a long time: then at last decided it's a live sprat. I mean about The Plumed Serpent and "the hero". On the whole, I think you're right. The hero is obsolete, and the leader of men is a back number. After all, at the back of the hero is the militant ideal: and the militant ideal, or the ideal militant seems to me also a cold egg. We're sort of sick of all forms of militarism and militantism, and Miles is a name no more, for a man. On the whole I agree with you, the leader-cum-follower relationship is a bore. And the new relationship will be some sort of tenderness, sensitive, between men and men and men and women, and not the one up one down, lead on I follow, ich dien sort of business .... (57)

This belief finds expression in Lawrence's next, and last, novel.

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(57) Letters, p.711

X

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER

"Most evil outpouring - sewers of French pornography - beastliness - muddy-minded pervert - diseased mind - literary cesspool - shameful inspiration - this bearded satyr - book snapped up by degenerate booksellers and British decadents - the foulest book in English literature - poisoned genius" - these were the sort of self-righteous phrases (1) which were used by English reviewers of Lady Chatterley's Lover to defame a man who had just written one of the most courageous books in English literature. And the plaints of these gentlemen have proved to be so effective that even today (nearly twenty-five years after its first publication) there is a ban on Lady Chatterley's Lover in English speaking countries and there is officially available only a hopelessly inadequate, mutilated, "expurgated" edition of the book. It is as well, therefore, to define Lawrence's attitude to those parts of the book to which objection was (and is) taken.

The first major objection of the reviewers was Lawrence's use of what he himself describes as "the so-called obscene words", (2) and what present-day writers judiciously term "the Anglo-Saxon monosyllables" (3) and "the ancient Saxon words". (4) It is startling to find words which one is accustomed to seeing scribbled on lavatory walls or to hearing as terms of abuse used seriously and innocently in a novel to describe the act of intercourse or the sexual organs. But, as the novel progresses, one finds it easy to accept the further use of these words. Then one realises how successful Lawrence is in this part of his purpose: the shocking of the reader out of a conventional attitude:

(1) Quoted by Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But.... p.338
(2) Pornography and Obscenity, p.9
(3) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.132
(4) Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But... p.328

> When it comes to the so-called obscene words, I should say that hardly one person in a million escapes mob-reaction. The first reaction is almost sure to be mob-reaction, mob-indignation, mob-condemnation. And the mob gets no further. But the real individual has second thoughts and says: Am I really shocked? Do I really feel outraged and indignant? And the answer of any individual is bound to be: No, I am not shocked, not outraged, nor indignant. I know the word and take it for what it is, and I am not going to be jockeyed into making a mountain out of a mole-hill, not for all the law in the world.
>
> Now if the use of a few so-called obscene words will startle man or woman out of a mob-habit into an individual state, well and good. And word prudery is so universal a mob-habit that it is time we were startled out of it. (5)

But Lawrence was not merely revolting against prudery: his use of the "obscene words" was a result of his desire to reinaugurate in his readers a healthy, natural attitude towards sex for, as long as these words remain debased, there will always be an associated taint of debasement about sex itself - as he implies in the following passage:

> Myself, I write in all honesty and in the sincere belief that the human consciousness needs badly now to have the doors freely opened into the dark chamber of horrors of "sex" - it is no chamber of horrors really, of course - and I feel the language needs to be freed of various artificial taboos on words and expressions. All these taboos and shut doors only make for social insanity ..... (6)

Lawrence's use of the words has therefore to be distinguished from their use by a writer such as James Joyce. Joyce is equally courageous in defying convention for the sake of a full and truthful picture of life but, where Lawrence seeks to efface, Joyce in fact perpetuates, their debasement. (7) Lawrence's attitude is more a return to the original tradition of English literature as exemplified by Chaucer:

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(5) Pornography and Obscenity, p.9
(6) Letters, pp.804-5
(7) Cf. Ulysses, p.739; Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.209

She was a prymerole, a pigges-nye
For any lord to leggen in his bedde,
Or yet for any good yeman to wedde.
Now sire, and eft sire, so bifel the cas,
That on a day this hende Nicholas
Fil with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye,
Whyl that hir housbond was at Osneye,
As clerkes ben ful subtile and ful quenyte;
And prively he caughte hir by the queynte,
And seyde, "I-wis, but if ich have my wille,
For derne love of thee, lemman, I spille."
And heeld hir harde by the haunche-bones,
And seyde, "lemman, love me al at-ones,
Or I wol dyen, also god me save!" (8)

These lines, which do not shock or startle, make clear the word-debasement of six centuries, and though it would be idle to pretend that Lawrence is able fully to achieve a return to their wholesome freshness, the fault is ours - not his. I do not feel that it was a "hopeless task" to attempt "to rescue ... degraded words from the gutter": (9) Lawrence's attempt is rather the first hopeful sign of a return to "social sanity".

Prudish exception has also been taken to Lawrence's free and detailed descriptions of the sex act, yet Lady Chatterley's Lover without sex descriptions would be like Sons and Lovers without Paul Morel. In not shirking such descriptions Lawrence was only being true to the dictum he had enunciated years before: "Sex without the consummating act of coition is never quite sex in human relationships: just as a eunuch is never quite a man." (10) Nor do his descriptions of the sex act savour of "sewers of French pornography". To my mind no charge could be more unjust: there is nothing licentious about the "tender" sex scenes and there is certainly no evidence of pornographic intention on Lawrence's part. "Pornography," he said, and this seems so penetrating a definition, "is an attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it." (11) Lawrence, manifestly, was trying to cleanse the sex relationship of that dirt which attached to it:

(8) Geoffrey Chaucer: The Milleres Tale - The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p.460
(9) Cynthia Asquith: D. H. Lawrence As I Knew Him - The Listener, Sept. 15, 1942, p.14
(10) Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.14
(11) Pornography and Obscenity, p.13

> I am in a quandary about my new novel, Lady Chatterley's Lover. It's what the world would call very improper. But you know it's not really improper - I always labour at the same thing, to make the sex relation valid and precious, instead of shameful. And this novel is the furthest I've gone. To me it is beautiful and tender and frail as the naked self is, and I shrink very much even from having it typed. (12)

It is indeed unfortunate that the book should have been so callously misinterpreted, and it is strange that the process of misinterpretation should have been continued by modern critics. It is instructive to note the implications of the following two statements:

> Only wherein [Lady Chatterley's Lover] is obscene is it magnificent; in its obscenity lies its great purity, its miraculous, its sacred quality. The rest, that padding, that cotton-wool in which all his visions were wrapped, is dead weight, the humus of decomposing bodies which he has not successfully sloughed off. (13)

> This is the only way in which Lady Chatterley's Lover is really bearable [when it is regarded from the "religious view" as a "gr[illegible]m[illegible]lic drama with a vast religious theme"]. As [illegible] in the "realist" tradition it is merely dull, [illegible]m such excitation as the pornographic passages may [illegible] this or that reader. ("How dull, the standard, expur[illegible] edition reveals). (14)

Though the opinions of these critics are radically different, both accept the fact that the book is obscene and pornographic and both, it seems to me, misinterpret Lawrence's intention. There is no "obscenity" and no "pornography" and, more important, there is no "rest" or section "apart from" the controversial passages in the book. Lady Chatterley's Lover is a closely constructed unity of which the sexual scenes are an integral part. It is profitless to lament the "padding" or the "dull realism" in isolation: to grasp Lawrence's purpose "the rest" has to be related to the sexual scenes, for without such a relation either "section" is meaningless. It is Lawrence's purpose which is so important, for in this book

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(12) Letters, pp.682-83

(13) Henry Miller: Shadowy Monomania, from Sunday After the War, p.235

(14) Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p.87

he does not deal with sex for its own sake but with the vital problem of the individual in an industrial society. And the book is not only an advance on The Rainbow and Women in Love (the books in which Lawrence first dealt with this theme) but a work of art of great significance.

There is a little known passage in an essay called Nottingham and the Mining Countryside which, I feel, throws a great deal of light on Lawrence's thought just prior to the writing of this novel. It reveals his attitude to the England to which he returned for a short time after his travels, and Lady Chatterley's Lover : the only book set wholly in England after Women in Love:

> The real tragedy of England, as I see it, is the tragedy of ugliness. The country is so lovely: the man-made England is so vile ... The great crime which the moneyed classes and promoters of industry committed in the palmy Victorian days was the condemning of the workers to ugliness, ugliness, ugliness: meanness and formless and ugly surroundings, ugly ideals, ugly religion, ugly hope, ugly love, ugly clothes, ugly furniture, ugly houses, ugly relationships between workers and employers. The human soul needs actual beauty even more than bread. (15)

The ugliness of Tevershall is stressed from the moment Connie returns with Clifford to Wragby - but not as baldly as in the above passage. Lawrence's imagery makes the point unobtrusively, the word "lids", for instance, quietly suggesting the bin-like houses and the dirt, and the "black manna" image the hopeless cost to the miners of their bread:

> [Wragby] stood on an eminence in a rather fine old park of oak trees, but alas, one could see in the near distance the chimney of Tevershall pit, with its clouds of steam and smoke, and on the damp, hazy distance of the hill the raw straggle of Tevershall village, a village which began almost at the park gates, and trailed in utter hopeless ugliness for a long and gruesome mile: houses, rows of wretched, small, begrimed, brick houses, with black slate roofs for lids, sharp angles and wilful blank dreariness.

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(15) Phoenix, pp.137-38

> Connie was accustomed to Kensington or the Scotch hills or the Sussex downs: that was her England. With the stoicism of the young she took in the utter, soulless ugliness of the coal-and-iron Midlands at a glance, and left it at what it was: unbelievable and not to be thought about. From the rather dismal rooms at Wragby she heard the rattle-rattle of the screens at the pit, the puff of the winding-engine, the clink-clink of shunting trucks, and the hoarse little whistle of the colliery locomotives. Tevershall pit-bank was burning, had been burning for years, and it would cost thousands to put it out. So it had to burn. And when the wind was that way, which was often, the house was full of the stench of this sulphureous combustion of the earth's excrement. But even on windless days the air always smelt of something under-earth: sulphur, iron, coal, or acid. And even on the Christmas roses the smuts settled persistently, incredible, like black manna from skies of doom. (16)

There are further references to the ugliness of Tevershall (and to the continuation of the industrial process, evidenced in the conversion of Squire Winter's home into Shipley Hall Estate) but this is most forcibly stressed in the description of Connie's drive to Uthwaite. Lawrence's indictment of the industrial system is here explicitly clarified: the mechanisation of industry has resulted not only in a general ugliness but in a deadly paralysis of life itself:

> The car ploughed uphill through the long squalid straggle of Tevershall, the blackened brick dwellings, the black slate roofs glistening their sharp edges, the mud black with coal-dust, the pavements wet and black. It was as if dismalness had soaked through and through everything. The utter negation of natural beauty, the utter negation of the gladness of life, the utter absence of the instinct for shapely beauty which every bird and beast has, the utter death of the human intuitive faculty was appalling. The stacks of soap in the grocers' shops, the rhubarb and lemons in the greengrocers'! the awful hats in the milliners'! all went by ugly, ugly, ugly, followed by the plaster-and- gilt horror of the cinema with its wet picture announcements, "A Woman's Love!", and the new big Primitive chapel, primitive enough in its stark brick and big panes of greenish and raspberry glass in the windows. The Wesleyan chapel, higher up, was of blackened brick and stood behind iron railings and blackened shrubs. The Congregational chapel, which thought itself superior, was built of rusticated sandstone and had a steeple, but not a very high one. Just beyond were the new school buildings, expensive pink brick, and gravelled playground inside iron railings, all very imposing, and mixing the suggestion of a chapel and a prison.

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(16) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.11

> Standard Five girls were having a singing lesson, just finishing the la-me-doh-la exercises and beginning a "sweet children's song". Anything more unlike song, spontaneous song, would be impossible to imagine: a strange bawling yell that followed the outlines of a tune. It was not like savages: savages have subtle rhythms. It was not like animals: animals mean something when they yell. It was like nothing on earth and it was called singing. Connie sat and listened with her heart in her boots, as Field was filling petrol. What could possibly become of such a people in whom the living intuitive faculty was dead as nails, and only queer mechanical yells and uncanny will-power remained? ....
>
> Tevershall! That was Tevershall! Merrie England! Shakespeare's England! No, but the England of to-day, as Connie had realized since she had come to live in it. It was producing a new race of mankind, over-conscious in the money and social and political side, on the spontaneous intuitive side dead, but dead. Half-corpses, *all of them:* but with a terrible insistent consciousness in the other half... How shall we understand the reactions in half-corpses? When Connie saw the great lorries full of steel-workers from Sheffield, weird, distorted smallish beings like men, off for an excursion to Matlock, her bowels fainted and she thought: Ah God, what has men done to man? What have the leaders of men been doing to their fellow men? They have reduced them to less than humanness; and now there can be no fellowship any more! It is just a nightmare. (17)

Nor is there much life in that part of the "half-corpses" which is alive. The "terrible insistent consciousness", seen at its best in the discussions of the "cronies" at Wragby, is shown after all to be a product of "cold minds". Lawrence's construction in this book is so sure that, although *these discussions take place well before* Connie's drive, the two are subtly linked. The cronies, "the young intellectuals of the day", are the elite of the industrial civilisation, but one cannot look to them to change the system for the better. They are interested only in the "life of the mind" and not at all in the fate of Tevershall, for which they tacitly disclaim responsibility. Preoccupation with the "life of the mind" results in an insidious laisser faire attitude:

> There was Charles May, an Irishman, who wrote scientifically about stars. There was Hammond, another writer. All were about the same age as Clifford; the young intellectuals of the day. They all believed in the life of the mind. What you did

(17) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.177-79

> apart from that was your private affair, and didn't much matter. No one *thinks of enquiring of another* person at what hour he retires to the privy. It isn't interesting to anyone but the person concerned.
>
> And so with most of the matters of ordinary life.... how you make your money, or whether you love your wife, or if you have "affairs". All these matters concern only the person concerned, and, like going to the privy, have no interest for anyone else. (18)

The rottenness and deadness of the "mental life" alone are suggested by the following apple image:

> "Real knowledge," [said Dukes] "comes out of the whole corpus of the consciousness; out of your belly and your *penis* as much as out of your brain and mind. The mind can only analyse and rationalize. Set the mind and the reason to cook it over the rest, and all they can do is to criticize, and make a deadness. I say all they can do. It is vastly *important*. My God, the world needs criticizing to-day .... criticizing to death. Therefore let's live the mental life, and glory in our spite, and strip the rotten old show. But, mind you, it's like this; while you live your life, you are in some way an organic whole with all life. But once you start the mental life you pluck the apple. You've severed the connection between the apple and the tree; the organic connection. And if you've got nothing in your life but the mental life, then you yourself are a plucked apple .... you've fallen off the tree. And then it's a logical necessity to be spiteful, just as it's a natural necessity for a plucked apple to go bad." (19)

It is a clever stroke of Lawrence's which makes Dukes the one to point to the weakness inherent in the "mental life", for he himself is so confirmed a "mental-lifer" that he is incapable of acting on his own precepts:

> "I'm not really intelligent," [he says] "I'm only a 'mental lifer'. It would be wonderful to be intelligent: then one would be alive in all the parts mentioned and unmentionable. The penis rouses his head and says: How do you do? to any really intelligent person. Renoir said he painted his pictures with his penis ... he did too, lovely pictures! I wish I did something with mine. God! when one can only talk! Another torture added to Hades! And Socrates started it!" (20)

It is left to Dukes, too, to propound the theme of the book:

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(18) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.33
(19) Ibid. pp.40-41
(20) Ibid. p.43

> "Our old show will come flop;" [he said] "our civilisation is going to fall. It's going down the bottomless pit, down the chasm. And believe me, the only bridge across the chasm will be the phallus! .... Give me the resurrection of the body .... But it'll come, in time, when we've shoved the cerebral stone away a bit, the money and the rest. Then we'll get a democracy of touch, instead of a democracy of pocket." (21)

Dukes himself is used as a bridge between the explicit thought and implicit action of the book. Incapable himself of broadening the basis of his life, he nevertheless realises its weakness and so stands midway between Clifford (the symbolical figure of the "mental life") and Mellors (the symbolical figure of the "spontaneous intuitive life") the two main and contracted male characters in the novel.

Clifford Chatterley is par excellence a "mental-lifer". Himself a "young intellectual", the leader of the cronies, he, too, is a writer and a firm believer in the life of the mind. But, in addition, he is also directly connected with the industrial system since he is the owner of Teverchall Colliery. And when, under Mrs. Bolton's influence, he suddenly takes an interest in the mine it is his mind which rouses to action: coldly and scientifically, paying no attention to the lives of his workers, he sets his mind to the task of making as efficient an industrial machine as possible of the mine (in a manner reminiscent of Gerald in Women in Love). Finally Clifford is in fact a "half-corpse", "with the lower half of his body, from the hips down, paralysed for ever" as a result of a war injury.

Opposed to Clifford is his gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors. A colliery worker in his youth, he is well-educated and becomes an officer in the army. But, on his return to civilian life, he rejects both the alternative courses seemingly open to him: the life of the mind as a "gentleman" or the life of an automaton as a worker in the collieries. Instead he lapses in his speech into the dialect, becomes Clifford's gamekeeper and pursues a solitary existence. His body also

(21) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.84-5

symbolically expresses his attitude to life. Connie, unknown to *Mellors, watches him while he is washing:*

> She saw the clumsy breeches slipping down over the pure, delicate, white loins, the boner showing a little, and the sense of aloneness, of a creature purely alone, overwhelmed her. Perfect, white, solitary nudity of a creature that lives alone, and inwardly alone. And beyond that, a certain beauty of a pure creature. Not the stuff of beauty, not even the body of beauty, but a lambency, the warm, white flame of a single life, re-vealing *itself in contours* that one might touch: a body! (22)

It is important, too, to *notice the cleavage* between the two men in their attitudes towards the future of the industrial system.

Clifford is speaking to Connie:

> "... And don't fall into errors: in your sense of the word, [the colliers] are not men. They are animals you don't understand, and never could. Don't thrust your illusions on other people. The masses were always the same, and will always be the same. Nero's slaves were extremely little different from our colliers or the Ford motor-car workmen. I mean Nero's mine slaves and his field slaves. It is the masses: they are the unchangeable. An individual may emerge from the masses. But *the emergence doesn't* alter the mass. The masses are unalterable. It is one of the most momentous facts of social science. Panem et circenses! Only to-day education is one of the bad substitutes for a circus. What is wrong to-day, is that *we've made a profound* hash of the circuses part of the programme, and poisoned our masses with a little education .... And what we need to take up now is whips, not swords. The masses have been ruled since time began, and till time ends, ruled they will have to be. It is sheer hypocrisy and farce to say they can rule themselves. (23)

Mellors is talking to Connie:

> "Why I've thought sometimes if one but tri l, here among th' colliers even! They workin' bad now, an' not earnin' much. If a man could say to 'em: Dunna think o' nowt but th' money. When it comes ter wants, we want but little. Let's not live for money. Let's live for summat else. Let's not live ter make money, neither for *us-selves* nor for anybody else. Now we're forced to. We're force. to make a bit for us-selves, an' a fair lot for th' bosses. Let's stop it! Bit by bit, let's stop it. We needn't rant an' rave. Bit by bit, let's drop the whole industrial life, an' go back. The least little bit o' money 'll do. For everybody, me an' you, bosses and masters, even th' king. The least little bit o'

(22) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.74
(23) Ibid. pp.314-15

money 'll really do. Just make up your mind to it, an' you've got out o' th' mess." He paused, then went on.

"An' I'd tell 'em: Look! Look at Joe! he moves lovely! Look how he moves, alive and aware. He's beautiful. An' look at Jonah! He's clumsy, he's ugly, because he's niver willin' to rouse himself. I'd tell 'em: Look! look at yourselves! one shoulder higher than t'other, legs twisted, feet all lumps! What have yer done ter yerselves, wi' the blasted work? Spoilt yerselves. No need to work that much. Take yer clothes off an' look at yourselves. Yer ought to be alive an' beautiful, an' yer ugly an' half dead. So I'd tell 'em. An' I'd get my men to wear different clothes: 'appen close red trousers, bright red, an' little short white jackets. Why, if men had red, fine legs, that alone would change them in a month. They'd begin to be men again, to be men! An' the women could dress as they liked. Because if once the men walked with legs close bright scarlet, and buttocks nice and showing scarlet under a little white jacket: then the women 'ud begin to be women. It's because the men aren't men, that th' women have to be. - An' in time pull down Tevershall and build a few beautiful buildings, that would hold us all. An' clean the country up again. An' not have many children, because the world is overcrowded.

"But I wouldn't preach to the men: only strip 'em an' say: Look at yourselves! That's workin' for money! - Hark at yourselves! That's working for money. You've been working for money! Look at Tevershall! It's horrible. That's because it was built while you was working for money. Look at your girls! They don't care about you, you don't care about them. It's because you've spent your time working an' caring for money. You can't talk nor move nor live, you can't properly be with a woman. You're not alive. Look at yourselves!....

"... It's a shame, what's been done to people these last hundred years: men turned into nothing but labour-insects, and all their manhood taken away, and all their real life. I'd wipe the machines off the face of the earth again, and end the industrial epoch absolutely, like a black mistake. But since I can't, an' nobody can, I'd better hold my peace, an' try an' live my own life: if I've got one to live, which I rather doubt." (24)

The pessimistic sobriety of Mellors' last remarks focuses attention on the personal life of the individual and this is, in fact, the way in which Lawrence treats the industrial problem: a start has first to be made with personal relationships. Clifford and Mellors are two symbolic figures caught up in an industrial civilisation (and we remain aware of their extended significance) but their values are tested in their personal relationships - their relationships with the same woman, Constance Chatterley.

(24) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.358-60

It must be admitted that, initially, Clifford's paralysis gives Mellors an advantage as far as Connie is concerned, but Lawrence's condemnation of Clifford is so damning that Connie's eventual desertion of him is convincingly acceptable to the reader.

Clifford's inability to have sexual relations with Connie, though a crucial factor in their relationship, does not weight the scales against him as unfairly as might at first sight appear. Lawrence indicates Clifford's attitude towards sex even before his injury and, subtly, makes his attitude attractive to Connie, who is going through a period of youthful intellectual fervour:

> Clifford married Connie .... and had his month's honeymoon with her. It was the terrible year 1917, and they were intimate as two people who stand together on a sinking ship. He had been virgin when he married: and the sex part did not mean much to him. They were so close, he and she, apart from that. And Connie exulted a little in this intimacy which was beyond sex, and beyond a man's "satisfaction". Clifford anyhow was not just keen on his "satisfaction", as so many men seemed to be. No, the intimacy was deeper, more personal than that. And sex was merely an accident, or an adjunct: one of the curious obsolete, organic processes which persisted in its own clumsiness, but was not really necessary. Though Connie did want children: if only to fortify her against her sister-in-law Emma. (25)

There are further indications that Clifford's paralysis is the manifestation of a symbolic paralysis of his sexual self. In the cronies' sparkling discussions on sex, for instance, Clifford's contribution is one of cliché, a grasping at accepted forms to cover a complete blankness:

> "... And what about you, Clifford?" [said Dukes]. "Do you think sex is a dynamo to help a man on to success in the world?"
>
> Clifford rarely talked much at these times. He never held forth; his ideas were really not vital enough for it, he was too confused and emotional. Now he blushed and looked uncomfortable.
>
> "Well!" he said, "being myself hors de combat, I don't see I've anything to say on the matter."

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(25) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.10

"Not at all," said Dukes; "the top of you's by no means hors de combat. You've got the life of the mind sound and intact. So let's hear your ideas."

"Well," stammered Clifford, "even then I don't suppose I have much idea .... I suppose marry-and-have-done-with-it would pretty well stand for what I think. Though of course between a man and a woman who care for one another, it is a great thing."

"What sort of great thing?" said Tommy.

"Oh ... it perfects the intimacy," said Clifford, uneasy as a woman in such talk. (26)

In his discussions with Connie about her having a child there is the same incomprehension of the significance of the sex act. One feels that Clifford's thoughts are not the result of his paralysis: they exemplify an habitual state of mind. How well does Lawrence express that state of mind - Clifford's attitude is finally concentrated into a phrase when he instinctively compares a sex relation with going to the dentist: both are occasionally necessary and slightly unpleasant:

"It would almost be a good thing if you had a child by another man," he said. "If we brought it up at Wragby, it would belong to us and to the place. I don't believe very intensely in fatherhood. If we had the child to rear, it would be our own, and it would carry on. Don't you think it's worth considering?"

Connie looked up at him at last. The child, her child, was just an "it" to him. It ... It .... It!

"But what about the other man?" she asked.

"Does it matter very much? Do these things really affect us very deeply? .... You had that lover in Germany ... what is it now? Nothing almost. It seems to me that it isn't these little acts and little connections we make in our lives that matter so very much. They pass away, and where are they? Where .... Where are the snows of yesteryear? .... It's what endures through one's life that matters; my own life matters to me in its long continuance and development. But what do the occasional connections matter? And the occasional sexual connections specially! If people don't exaggerate them ridiculously, they pass like the mating of birds. And so they should. What does it matter? It's the life-long companionship that matters. It's the living together from day to day, not the sleeping together once or twice. You and I are married, no matter what happens to us. We have the habit of each other. And habit, to my thinking, is more vital than any occasional excitement. The long, slow, enduring thing .... that's what we live by .... not the occasional spasm of any sort. Little by little, living together, two people fall into a sort of unison, they vibrate so intricately to one another.

(26) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.37

> That's the real secret of marriage, not sex; at least not the simple function of sex. You and I are interwoven in a marriage. If we stick to that we ought to be able to arrange this sex thing, as we arrange going to the dentist; since fate has given us a checkmate physically there." (27)

For Clifford sex is but a formality and his resentment at the absence of the formality merely masks his lack of real feeling:

> "Good night Clifford! Do sleep well! The Racine gets into one like a dream. Good night!" [said Connie].
>
> She had drifted to the door. She was going without kissing him good night. He watched her with sharp, cold eyes. She did not even kiss him good night, after he had spent an evening reading to her. Such depths of callousness in her! Even if the kiss was but a formality, it was on such formalities that life depends. She was a bolshevik, really. Her instincts were bolshevistic! He gazed coldly and angrily at the door whence she had gone .... She was callous, cold and callous to all that he did for her. He gave up his life for her, and she was callous to him....(28)

The reading, it might be mentioned, is a source of gratification to Clifford.

If one can suppose, therefore, that Connie's sexual relationship with Clifford (had he been a "whole man") would anyway not have been satisfactory, the fact of his paralysis does lead to an unnatural tension in their marriage - though not, at first, for sexual reasons. At first Connie's sexual attitude is the same as during their courtship and, because of Clifford's paralysis, she "sticks to him passionately", as wife, servant and literary collaborator. Her dissatisfaction is due, rather, to the fact that Clifford is so coldly self-centred. Clifford's remoteness is suggested by the microscope and telescope simile, which also aptly images his approach to his writing:

> But she could not help feeling how little connection he really had with people. The miners were, in a sense, his own men; but he saw them as objects rather than men, parts of the pit rather than parts of life, crudely raw phenomena rather than human beings along with him. He was in some way afraid of them, he could not bear to have them look at him now he was lame. And their queer, crude life seemed as unnatural as that of hedgehogs.

(27) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.47-8
(28) Ibid. pp.162-63

> He was remotely interested; but like a man looking down a microscope, or up a telescope. He was not in touch. He was not in actual touch with anybody, save, traditionally, with Wragby, and, through the close bond of family defence, with Emma. Beyond this nothing really touched him. Connie felt that she herself didn't really not really touch him; perhaps there was nothing to get at ultimately; just a negation of human contact. (29)

Lawrence implies the degree to which Clifford is self-centred in his life with Connie with a neat apposition of the words "their" and "his" in the following passage:

> Connie and Clifford had now been nearly two years at Wragby, living their vague life of absorption in Clifford and his work. Their interests had never ceased to flow together over his work. They talked and wrestled in the throes of composition, and felt as if something were happening, really happening, really in the void. (30)

There is also an implication in this passage, though, that Connie would be content to suffer the negation of her own life if Clifford were achieving something with his writing. He does achieve a popular success, but slowly Connie comes to endorse her father's verdict: "It's smart, but there's nothing in it." When she realises that the effect of Clifford's writing is "rather like puppies tearing the sofa cushions to bits; except that it was not young and playful, but curiously old, and rather obstinately conceited," (31) she becomes acutely aware of the "nothingness" of her life. It is to this that the "mental life" is reduced. "No substance to her or anything ... no touch, no contact! Only this life with Clifford, this endless spinning of webs of yarn, of the minutiae of consciousness ... " (32) "The only reality was nothingness, and over it a hypocrisy of words." (33)

Lawrence firmly connects Clifford with the nullity of the industrial Midlands:

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(29) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.14
(30) Ibid. p.17
(31) Ibid. p.56
(32) Ibid. p.18
(33) Ibid. p.56

> Clifford looked at Connie, with his pale, slightly prominent *blue eyes*, in which a certain vagueness was coming. He seemed alert in the foreground, but the background was like the Midlands atmosphere, haze, smoky mist. And the haze seemed to be creeping forward. So when he stared at Connie in his peculiar way, giving her his peculiar, precise information, she felt all the background of his mind filling up with mist, with nothingness. And it frightened her. It made him seem impersonal, almost to idiocy. (34)

There is a deep irony in Clifford's insincere assertion of his *nothingness* which is, at the same time, a revelation of the emptiness of his relationship with Connie - since he is, by then, dependent on Mrs. Bolton and not on her. Connie again raises the question of her having a child by another man:

> "... It is you who count in *these matters*," [said Clifford]. "You know that, don't you, dear? I don't enter, I am a cypher. You are the great I-am! as far *as life goes*. You know that, don't you? I mean, as far as I am concerned. I mean, but for you I am absolutely nothing. I live for your sake and your future. I am nothing to myself." ...
>
> Connie really sometimes felt she would die at this time. She felt she was being crushed to death by weird lies, and by the amazing cruelty of idiocy. Clifford's strange business efficiency in a way overawed her, and his declaration of private worship put her into a panic. There was nothing *between them*. *She never* even touched him nowadays, and he never touched her. He never even took her hand and held it kindly. No, and because they were so utterly out of touch, he tortured her with his declaration of idolatry. It was the cruelty of utter impotence. And she felt her reason would give way, or she would die. (35)

The final failure of their relationship is epitomized in the breakdown of even their intellectual intimacy:

> That evening Clifford wanted to be nice to her. He was reading one of the latest scientific-religious books; he had a streak of a spurious sort of religion in him, and was egocentrically concerned with the future of his own ego. It was like his habit to make conversation to Connie about some book, since the conversation between them had to be made, almost chemically. They had almost chemically to concoct it in their heads. (36)

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(34) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.54
(35) Ibid. pp.128-29
(36) Ibid. p.275

As Connie becomes disillusioned, so does she become more and more aware of their lack of physical contact - "Now the mental excitement had worn itself out and collapsed, and she was aware only of the physical aversion. It rose up in her from her depths: and she realized how it had been eating her life away." (37) Connie's sexual dissatisfaction, therefore, is shown as being at the core of her unhappiness - but it is only because Clifford allows the apple to fall off the tree and to rot that it is revealed:

> And yet, deep inside herself, a sense of injustice, of being defrauded, began to burn in Connie. The physical sense of injustice is a dangerous feeling, once it is awakened. It must have outlet, or it eats away the one in whom it is aroused. Poor Clifford, he was not to blame. His was the greater misfortune. It was all part of the general catastrophe.
>
> And yet was he not in a way to blame? This lack of warmth, this lack of the simple, warm, physical contact, was he not to blame for that? He was never really warm, nor even kind, only thoughtful, considerate, in a well-bred, cold sort of way! But never warm as a man can be warm to a woman, as even Connie's father could be warm to her, with the warmth of a man who did himself well, and intended to, but who still could comfort a woman with a bit of his masculine glow. (38)

Lawrence's condemnation of Clifford is, in the end, so forceful that one is fully prepared for the break in Connie's relationship with him. Her abandonment of her personal care of him to Mrs. Bolton (a step which "killed, he said to himself, the real flower of the intimacy between him and her") prepares the way for a complete revolt and for her relationship with Mellors - developments which we not only expect but observe sympathetically.

Then, when Connie, who is genuinely in love with Mellors and who is going to have a child by him, realises that the only honest course open to her is to obtain a divorce from Clifford, Clifford reveals his lack of feeling of any sort. It is the external appearance alone which counts - as the use of the words "leaving aside" makes clear:

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(37) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.110
(38) Ibid. p.80

> "For my part," [Clifford said] "since you are my wife, I should prefer that you should stay under my roof in dignity and quiet. Leaving aside personal feelings, and I assure you, on my part it is leaving aside a great deal, it is bitter as death to me to have this order of life broken up, here in Wragby, and the decent round of daily life smashed, just for some whim of yours." (39)

When Clifford discovers that it is Mellors for whom Connie wishes to divorce him, his refusal to grant her a divorce is childishly petulant:

> "And won't you divorce me?" she said. "You can use Duncan as a pretext! There'd be no need to bring in the real name. Duncan doesn't mind."
>
> "I shall never divorce you," he said, as if a nail had been driven in.
>
> "But why? Because I want you to?"
>
> "Because I follow my own inclination, and I'm not inclined to." (40)

When one relates to this, Clifford's reflections prior to his determination to throw himself into the work of his mine, the picture is complete:

> In this [industrial] activity, men were beyond any mental age calculable. But Clifford knew that when it did come to the emotional and human life, these self-made men were of a mental age of about thirteen, feeble boys. The discrepancy was enormous and appalling. But let that be .... (41)

The "mental life" is thus seen to lead to an industrial horror on the one hand and to a hopeless inadequacy in personal relationships on the other.

Clifford's personal inadequacy is contrasted with the fulfilment which Mellors is able to give Connie, but Connie's fulfilment is not easily or immediately achieved. Her fulfilment is dependent on a vital change in her own attitudes, so that the contrast between the two men is centred in her transformation.

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(39) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.351
(40) Ibid. p.354
(41) Ibid. p.134

It must be stressed that, to begin with, Connie's attitude towards sex is much the same as Clifford's:

> So [Connie and her sister] had given the gift of themselves, each to the youth with whom she had the most subtle and intimate arguments. The arguments, the discussions were the great thing: the love-making and connection were only a sort of primitive reversion and a bit of an anti-climax. One was less in love with the boy afterwards, and a little inclined to hate him, as if he had trespassed on one's privacy and inner freedom. For, of course, being a girl, one's whole dignity and meaning in life consisted in the achievement of an absolute, a perfect, a pure and noble freedom. What else did a girl's life mean? To shake off the old and sordid connections and subjections.
>
> And however one might sentimentalize it, this sex business was one of the most ancient, sordid connections and subjections. Poets who glorified it were mostly men. Women had always known there was something better, something higher. And now they knew it more definitely than ever. The beautiful pure freedom of a woman was infinitely more wonderful than any sexual love. The only unfortunate thing was that men lagged so far behind women in the matter. They insisted on the sex thing like dogs. (42)

In the same way that Clifford's attitude is concentrated in an image, Connie's is pinned to the printed page:

> And if after the roused intimacy of these vivid and soul-enlightened discussions the sex thing became more or less inevitable, then let it. It marked the end of a chapter. It had a thrill of its own too: a queer vibrating thrill inside the body, a final spasm of self-assertion, like the last word, exciting, and very like the row of asterisks that can be put to show the end of a paragraph, and a break in the theme. (43)

There is a great dramatic irony in Connie's reactions when she is presented with "the beautiful pure freedom" she desires, and a great deal of the interest of the book attaches to the eventual reversal of her attitude. This reversal marks a change not only in her attitude towards Clifford but also in her initial attitude towards Mellors, which is complicated by her scepticism. When Connie watches Mellors while he is washing himself she feels that "in some curious way it [is] a visionary experience", yet she does not allow herself to accept it as such:

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(42) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.3-4
(43) Ibid. p.5

> Connie had received the shock of vision in her womb, and she knew it; it lay inside her. But with her mind she was inclined to ridicule. A man washing himself in a backyard! No doubt with evil-smelling yellow soap! - She was rather annoyed; why should she be made to stumble on these vulgar privacies? (44)

Connie's attitude here is in direct contrast to that of Mellors towards her in an analogous situation. In that poignant scene where Connie holds in her hands the tiny chicken which Mellors passes to her and suddenly becomes bitterly aware of the barrenness and futility of her own life, Mellors responds intuitively to her - he does not attempt to scoff at what might appear to be a woman being sentimental over a chicken; and it is his genuine and freely expressed compassion which leads to their first intimacy and to their subsequent relationship:

> "There!" he said, holding out his hand to her. She took the little drab thing between her hands, and there it stood, on its impossible little stalks of legs, its atom of balancing life trembling through its almost weightless feet into Connie's hands. But it lifted its handsome, clean-shaped little head boldly, and looked sharply round, and gave a little "peep". "So adorable! So cheeky!" she said softly.
>
> The keeper squatting beside her, was also watching with an amused face the bold little bird in her hands. Suddenly he saw a tear fall on to her wrist.
>
> And he stood up, and stood away, moving to the other coop. For suddenly he was aware of the old flame shooting and leaping up in his loins, that he had hoped was quiescent for ever. He fought against it, turning his back to her. But it leapt, and leapt downwards, circling in his knees.
>
> He turned again to look at her. She was kneeling and holding her two hands slowly forward, blindly, so that the chicken should run to the mother-hen again. And there was something so mute and forlorn in her, compassion flamed in his bowels for her ...
>
> He glanced apprehensively at her. Her face was averted, and she was crying blindly, in all the anguish of her generation's forlornness. His heart melted suddenly, like a drop of fire, and he put out his hand and laid his fingers on her knee.
>
> "You shouldn't cry," he said softly.
>
> But then she put her hands over her face and felt that really her heart was broken and nothing mattered any more.
>
> He laid his hand on her shoulder, and softly, gently, it began to travel down the curve of her back, blindly, with a blind stroking motion, to the curve of her crouching

(44) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.74-5.

> loins. And there his hand softly, softly, stroked the curve of her flank, in the blind instinctive caress. (45)

But Connie's mental habits do not allow her to give herself to Mellors with equal freedom. Even after the intercourse which follows this episode "her tormented modern-woman's brain still had no rest. Was it real? And she knew, if she gave herself to the man, it was real. But if she kept herself for herself it was nothing." (46) It is long before Connie is able to "make it real" and, even then, her mind remains busy trying to assess her relationship with Mellors so that she regrets that, following intercourse, "he seemed to have nothing whatever to say. Nothing left;" (47) and Mellors charges her with a spurious romanticism:

> "You want [intercourse] to be called something grand and mysterious, just to flatter your own self-importance. Your own self-importance is more to you, fifty times more, than any man, or being together with a man." (48)

When Connie hears of the scandal which Bertha Coutts is creating in Tevershall, her first reaction is one of moral revulsion and it is with her mind that she turns against Mellors:

> This was a nasty blow to Connie. Here she was, sure as life, coming in for her share of the lowness and dirt. She felt angry with him for not having got clear of a Bertha Coutts: nay, for ever having married her. *Perhaps he had a certain hankering after lowness.* Connie remembered the last night she had spent with him, and shivered. He had known all that sensuality, even with a Bertha Coutts! It was really rather disgusting. It would be well to be rid of him, clear of him altogether. He was perhaps really common, really low.
>
> She had a revulsion against the whole affair, and almost envied the Guthrie girls their gawky inexperience and crude maidenliness. And she now dreaded the thought that anybody would know about herself and the keeper. (49)

It is only later that Connie is able to overcome her moral objections and to recognise the true value of her

(45) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.132-33
(46) Ibid. p.134
(47) Ibid. p.157
(48) Ibid. p.244
(49) Ibid. p.313

relationship with Mellors:

> Connie had a revulsion in the opposite direction now. What had he done, after all? What had he done to herself, Connie, but give her an exquisite pleasure and a sense of freedom and life? He had released her warm, natural sexual flow. And for that they would hound him down.
>
> No, no, it should not be. She saw the image of him, naked white with tanned face and hands, looking down and addressing his erect penis as if it were another being, the odd grin flickering on his face. And she heard his voice again: Tha's got the nicest woman's arse of anybody! And she felt his hand warmly and softly closing over her tail again, over her secret places, like a benediction. And the warmth ran through her womb, and the little flames flickered in her knees, and she said: Oh no! I mustn't go back on it! I must not go back on him. I must stick to him and to what I had of him, through everything. I had no warm, flamy life till he gave it me. And I won't go back on it. (50)

In making this decision Connie not only overcomes her own squeamishness but finally repudiates Clifford; a step which, as has been said, is fully convincing because of Lawrence's analysis of their relationship. But, at the same time, Connie is not merely negatively impelled to leave Clifford - she has strong and positive grounds for wishing to remain true to Mellors. Lawrence's handling of the "triangle situation" in this book is better than his handling of the Gerald-Gudrun-Loerke entanglement in Women in Love, for instance, where the break between Gerald and Gudrun is convincing but where the Gudrun-Loerke relationship is insufficiently developed.

Indeed the manner in which Lawrence is able to make vividly tangible the "warm, flamy life" which Connie has with Mellors is a major achievement, and the positive motivation of Connie's attitude is perhaps its greatest justification. Connie's fulfilment and re-awakened joy in life are made apparent in various ways. Firstly, there are Lawrence's direct descriptions of her sexual experiences with Mellors. It is with these descriptions that Lawrence tries to make the "sex relation valid and precious, instead of shameful", (see p.252 above) and his achievement, I feel, cannot be denied. These descriptions, far

(50) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.315

from being pornographic, are most sensitive and beautiful evocations of the sex act. They are Lawrence's answer to the "ugly love" of which he wrote in Nottingham and the Mining Countryside, and they set a standard of values in comparison to which the work of a writer such as Mr. Henry Miller (Tropic of Capricorn) can only appear ugly and vile - for Mr. Miller strenuously attempts to "do dirt" on sex. It is in these descriptions that Lawrence is able for the first time to picture fully an harmonious sexual relationship. Before he could write the following passage, for instance, Lawrence had to go a long way: past the frigidity of Helena and Miriam, the ferocity of Ursula and Skrebensky, the fantasy of Ursula and Birkin, the animality of Alvina and Cicio, the abnegation of Kate with Cipriano. And the mark of Lawrence's achievement is, as always, the quality of his writing. In the following passage one need only consider two images to guage that quality. How brilliantly does the "flapping overlapping of soft flames" evoke the rippling sensation which Lawrence is describing: sound and sense merge imperceptibly in an image which becomes the action. And how exact is the image of Connie's womb slowly opening till it is "open and soft, and softly clamouring, like a sea-anemone, under the tide." There is about the whole passage the quiet control and simplicity of great writing, while Lawrence's rhythmic variations, the gradual movement to a crescendo with an ever-swelling prose which is followed by a peaceful lull, not only express the rhythm of the act but give the description a subtle music:

> He too had bared the front part of his body and she felt his naked flesh against her as he came into her. For a moment he was still inside her, turgid there and quivering. Then as he began to move, in the sudden helpless orgasm, there awoke in her new strange thrills rippling inside her. Rippling, rippling, rippling, like a flapping overlapping of soft flames, soft as feathers, running to points of brilliance, exquisite, exquisite and melting her all molten inside. It was like bells rippling up and up to a culmination. She lay unconscious of the wild little cries she uttered at the last. But it was over too soon, too soon, and she could no longer force her own conclusion with her own activity. This was different, different. She could do nothing. She

could no longer harden and grip for her own satisfaction upon him. She could only wait, wait and moan in spirit as she felt him withdrawing, withdrawing and contracting, coming to the terrible moment when he would slip out of her and be gone. Whilst all her womb was open and soft, and softly clamouring, like a sea-anemone under the tide, clamouring for him to come in again and make a fulfilment for her. She clung to him unconscious in passion, and he never quite slipped from her, and she felt the soft bud of him within her stirring, and strange rhythms flushing up into her with a strange rhythmic growing motion, swelling and swelling till it filled all her cleaving consciousness, and then began again the unspeakable motion that was not really motion, but pure deepening whirlpools of sensation swirling deeper and deeper through all her tissue and consciousness, till she was one perfect concentric fluid of feeling, and she lay there crying in unconscious inarticulate cries. The voice out of the uttermost night, the life! The man heard it beneath him with a kind of awe, as his life sprang out into her. And as it subsided, he subsided too and lay utterly still, unknowing, while her grip on him slowly relaxed, and she lay inert. And they lay and knew nothing, not even of each other, both lost. Till at last he began to rouse and become aware of his defenceless nakedness, and she was aware that his body was loosening its clasp on her. He was coming apart; but in her breast she felt she could not bear him to leave her uncovered. He must cover her now for ever. (51)

In the following passage, too, Lawrence vividly evokes the sexual act with the centrally apt image of the plunger which moves through ever-widening rhythmic circles. And how neatly does he merge the general experience into the particular: in the second paragraph the mention of Connie's involuntary gesture suddenly makes clear the significance of the experience for her:

And it seemed she was like the sea, nothing but dark waves rising and heaving, heaving with a great swell, so that slowly her whole darkness was in motion, and she was ocean rolling its dark, dumb mass. Oh, and far down inside her the deeps parted and rolled asunder, in long, far-travelling billows, and ever, at the quick of her, the depths parted and rolled asunder, from the centre of soft plunging, as the plunger went deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed, and heavier the billows of her rolled away to some shore, uncovering her, and closer and closer plunged the palpable unknown, and further and further rolled the waves of herself away from herself, leaving her, till suddenly, in a soft, shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman.

Ah, too lovely, too lovely! In the ebbing she realized all the loveliness. Now all her body clung with tender love to the unknown man, and blindly to the wilting penis, as it so tenderly, frailly, unknowingly

(51) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp. 155-56

> withdrew, after the fierce thrust of its potency. As it drew out and left her body, the secret, sensitive thing, she gave an unconscious cry of pure loss, and she tried to put it back. *It had been so perfect!* And she loved it so! (52)

Lawrence does not only convey Connie's physical well-being in this way. The reader notices for himself the change in her physical appearance which follows her relationship with Mellors. To begin with, as Connie remains alone with Clifford at Wragby, she herself notices the deterioration of her body. Connie is looking at herself in a mirror:

> Her breasts were rather *small*, and dropping pear-shaped. But they were unripe, a little bitter, without meaning hanging there. And *her belly had lost the fresh*, round gleam it had had when she was young, in the days of her German boy, who really *loved her* physically. Then it was young and expectant, with a real look of its own. Now it was going *slack*, and a little flat, thinner, but with a slack thinness. Her thighs, too, that used to look so *quick* and *glimpsy* in their female roundness, somehow they too were going flat, slack, meaningless.
>
> Her body was going meaningless, going dull and opaque, so *much insignificant* substance. It made her feel immensely depressed and hopeless. What hope was there? She was old, old at twenty-seven, with no gleam and sparkle in the flesh. Old through neglect and denial, yes, denial .... The mental life! Suddenly she hated it with a rushing fury, the swindle!
>
> She looked in the other mirror's reflection at her back, her waist, her loins. She was getting thinner, but to her it was not becoming. The crumple of her waist at the back, as she bent back to look, was a little weary; and it used to be so gay-looking. And the longish slope of her haunches and her buttocks had lost its gleam and its sense of richness. Gone! *Only the German boy had loved* it, and he was ten years dead, very nearly. How time went by! Ten years dead, and she was only twenty-seven. That healthy boy with his fresh, clumsy sensuality that she had then been so scornful of! Where could she find it now? It was gone out of men. They had their pathetic two-seconds *spasms like Michaelis*; but no healthy human sensuality, that warms the blood and freshens the whole being. (53)

This deterioration is emphasised when Connie meets her sister, whom she has not seen for some time. The description of Connie "with a scraggy, yellowish neck, that stuck out of her jumper," strikingly anticipates the scene with the chicken:

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(52) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.304-5
(53) Ibid. pp.78-9

Connie had run out to the steps. Hilda pulled up her car, got out, and kissed her sister.

"But Connie!" she said. "Whatever is the matter?"

"Nothing!" said Connie, rather shamefacedly; but she knew how she had suffered in contrast to Hilda. Both sisters had the same rather golden, glowing skin, and soft brown hair, and naturally strong, warm physique. But now Connie was thin and earthy-looking, with a scraggy, yellowish neck, that stuck out of her jumper.

"But you're ill, child!" said Hilda, in the soft, rather breathless voice, that both sisters had alike ....

"No, not ill. Perhaps I'm bored," said Connie a little pathetically. (54)

Nearly two hundred pages later, when Connie, together with Mellors, runs nude in the rain, and Lawrence again describes her physical appearance, these descriptions come to mind and emphasise the extent of the change in Connie:

When she came with her flowers, panting to the hut, he had already started a fire, and the twigs were crackling. Her sharp breasts rose and fell, her hair was plastered down with rain, her face was flushed ruddy and her body glistened and trickled. Wide-eyed and breathless, with a small wet head and full, trickling, naive haunches, she looked another creature. (55)

Connie's renewed joy in life, the fullness which she feels and her consequent self-assurance, are astutely indicated. Her achievement is concentrated into one sentence - into her retort to Hilda, who has hitherto been shown as the dominant sister:

"After all, Hilda," [Connie] said, "love can be wonderful; when you feel you live, and are in the very middle of creation." It was almost like bragging on her part.

"I suppose every mosquito feels the same," said Hilda.

"Do you think it does? How nice for it!" (56)

If Lawrence thus variously shows Connie's fulfilment with Mellors, he also indicates its significance: this successful relationship between a man and a woman is not considered in isolation, but against the background of industrialism.

(54) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.86
(55) Ibid. p.252
(56) Ibid. p.285

If the industrial machine cannot be done away with, then at least an attempt can be made to avert the crushing of spontaneous life in the individual. Tenderness is placed squarely against the machine:

> "And what is the point of your existence?" [Connie said to Mellors].
>
> "I tell you, it's invisible. I don't believe in the world, not in money, nor in advancement, nor in the future of our civilisation. If there's got to be a future for humanity, there'll have to be a very big change from what now is."
>
> "And what will the real future have to be like?"
>
> "God knows! I can feel something inside me, all mixed up with a lot of rage. But what it really amounts to, I don't know."
>
> "Shall I tell you?" she said, looking into his face. "Shall I tell you what you have that other men don't have, and that will make the future? Shall I tell you?"
>
> "Tell me then," he replied.
>
> "It's the courage of your own tenderness, that's what it is, like when you put your hand on my tail and say I've got a pretty tail" .....
>
> And he realized as he went into her that this was the thing he had to do, to come into tender touch, without losing his pride or his dignity or his integrity as a man. After all, if she had money and means, and he had none, he should be too proud and honourable to hold back his tenderness from her on that account. "I stand for the touch of bodily awareness between human beings," he said to himself, "and the touch of tenderness. And she is my mate. And it is a battle against the money, and the machine, and the insentient ideal monkeyishness of the world. And she will stand behind me there. Thank God I've got a woman! Thank God I've got a woman who is with me, and tender and aware of me. Thank God she's not a bully, nor a fool. Thank God she's a tender, aware woman." And as his seed sprang in her, his soul sprang towards her too, in the creative act that is far more than procreative. (57)

In the following passage from Mellors' letter to Connie (which concludes the book) Lawrence passes his verdict on our industrial civilisation with chilling prescience. But though this passage, written twenty years before the Second World War and the Atomic Age, is reminiscent of the famous Letter from Germany, there is in the passage a quality which distinguishes it from the letter. Despite the pessimism there is the hope of preserving inviolate against the machine a valid human relationship

(57) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.329-332

which can lend significance to life. And though Mellors says that the coming of their child is but "a side issue", the fact that for the first time in the novels (if one excludes the largely worthless Lost Girl) a Lawrence couple expect a child is of significance. The hope is expressed in the new life, so that Mellorr' dread of "puttin' children i' th' world. I've such a dread o' th' future for 'em," is countered by Connie with "Be tender to it, and that will be its future already.":

> But of course what I live for now [wrote Mellors] is for me and you to live together. I'm frightened, really. I feel the devil in the air, and he'll try to get us. Or not the devil, Mammon: which I think, after all, is only the mass-will of people, wanting money and hating life. Anyhow I feel great grasping white hands in the air, wanting to get hold of the throat of anybody who tries to live, to live beyond money, and squeeze the life out. There's a bad time coming. There's a bad time coming, boys, there's a bad time coming! If things go on as they are, there's nothing lies in the future but death and destruction, for these industrial masses. I feel my inside turn to water sometimes, and there you are going to have a child by me. But never mind. All the bad times that ever have been, haven't been able to blow the crocus out: not even the love of women. So they won't be able to blow out my wanting you, nor the little glow there is between you and me. We'll be together next year. And though I'm frightened, I believe in your being with me. A man has to fend and fettle for the best, and then trust in something beyond himself. You can't insure against the future, except by really believing in the best bit of you, and in the power beyond it. So I believe in the little flame between us. For me now, it's the only thing in the world. I've got no friends, not inward friends. Only you. And now the little flame is all I care about in my life. There's the baby, but that is a side issue. It's my Pentecost, the forked flame between me and you. The old Pentecost isn't quite right. Me and God is a bit uppish, somehow. But the little forked flame between me and you: there you are! That's what I abide by, and will abide by, Cliffords and Berthas, colliery companies and governments and the money-mass of people all notwithstanding. (58)

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Lady Chatterley's Lover is a compact book. As Mr. West says: "There are no superfluous characters, and no inexplicable or irrelevant incidents; the story flows along a direct narrative line, action and description are in perfect balance, and there is little camp-meeting rhetoric." (59) But it is not merely that there are "no superfluous characters":

(58) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.358-59
(59) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, p.132

Lawrence's handling of character merits more positive appreciation, since most of the characters are of importance in the working out of his theme as well as of his plot. Mrs. Bolton is a good example of this sort of concentration.

As Clifford's nurse, who relieves Connie of the burden of looking after the invalid and whose association with him prepares the way for the break between Connie and her husband, her importance in the plot is obvious. Yet she has an even more important functional role. In much the same way as Mrs. Dean acts as a bridge between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, Mrs. Bolton links Wragby and Tevershall, and it is she who forces upon Clifford some awareness of the existence of those beneath him in the social scale, and who gives him a "new vision of Tevershall village".

In addition, Mrs. Bolton's relationship with her husband who, we are told, was killed in an accident in Tevershall Pit after they had been married for three years, acts as a commentary on the main relationships of the novel. It is clear that she had a highly successful physical relationship with her husband and she ascribes his death to the malevolence of the industrial machine: "Oh, I felt, if it hadn't been for the pit, an' them as runs the pit, there'd have been no leaving me. But they all want to separate a woman and a man, if they're together." (60) But the feeling which she had for him endures - despite his death: "I've never got over the [touch of him] to this day," she says, "and never shall," (61) and when she thinks of her husband she cannot help feeling "a great grudge against Sir Clifford and all he [stands] for." (62) She especially resents the way in which she was made humiliatingly dependent on the Company after his death; having, for years, to queue for hours for her weekly compensation payment. It is not fortuitous that Clifford is finally made dependent on her.

(60) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.192-93
(61) Ibid. p.192
(62) Ibid. p.164

It is meet, too, that motherly Mrs. Bolton should be the one to bring out the child in Clifford. At first it is she who apparently "makes a man" of Clifford by urging him into industrial activity, but Clifford shows his emotional immaturity (see p.266 above) in the way in which he behaves with Mrs. Bolton when he receives Connie's letter. This is the logical culmination of his attitude towards Mrs. Bolton for he has all the time been becoming as dependent on her as a child on its mother:

> Again the shiver went through him, like a convulsion, and she laid her arm round his shoulder. "There, there! There, there! Don't you fret, then, don't you! Don't you fret!" she moaned to him, while her own tears fell. And she drew him to her, and held her arms round his great shoulders, while he laid his face on her bosom and sobbed, shaking and hulking his huge shoulders, whilst she softly stroked his dusky-blond hair and said: "There! There! There! There then! There then! Never you mind! Never you mind, then!"
>
> And he put his arms round her and clung to her like a child, wetting the bib of her starched white apron, and the bosom of her pale-blue cotton dress, with his tears. He had let himself go altogether, at last.
>
> So at length she kissed him, and rocked him on her bosom, and in her heart she said to herself: "Oh Sir Clifford! Oh high and mighty Chatterleys! Is this what you've come down to!" And finally he even went to sleep, like a child. And she felt worn out, and went to her own room, where she laughed and cried at once, with a hysteria of her own. It was so ridiculous! It was so awful! such a come-down! so shameful! And it was so upsetting as well.
>
> After this, Clifford became like a child with Mrs. Bolton. He would hold her hand, and rest his head on her breast, and when she once lightly kissed him, he said: "Yes! Do kiss me! Do kiss me!" And when she sponged his great blond body, he would say the same: "Do kiss me!" and she would lightly kiss his body, anywhere, half in mockery.
>
> And he lay with a queer, blank face like a child, with a bit of the wonderment of a child. And he would gaze on her with wide, childish eyes, in a relaxation of madonna-worship. It was sheer relaxation on his part, letting go all his manhood, and sinking back to a childish position that was really perverse. And then he would put his hand into her bosom and feel her breasts, and kiss them in exaltation, the exaltation of perversity, of being a child when he was a man. (63)

Like Mrs. Bolton, another minor character, Duncan Forbes, is of more importance than his explicit function might at first indicate. In the plot Duncan agrees to be named as co-

(63) Lady Chatterley's Lover, pp.346-47

respondent in the divorce suit which Connie hopes Clifford will bring against her. But, in addition, his relationship with Connie is related to the sexual attitudes of the other characters in the book who believe supremely in the mental consciousness. An artist, Duncan is in love with Connie, but he only loves her "to be near him, but not to touch him", and his greatest desire is for her to sit as a model for him. Mellors is opposed not only to Clifford but to a whole intellectual-artistic circle - even Michaelis, who does respond to Connie's forlornness, seeks his own aggrandizement in doing so and proves to be entirely selfish in his sexual relations. Indeed it is strange to find that Father Tiverton should think that "we [cannot] believe that Connie, so free of her body with other lovers, would then so easily be able to achieve this perfect, stable relationship with Mellors." (64) The "other lovers" are necessary parts of the total design: it is only after Connie is able to realise the falsity, first of her own youthful intellectual attitude towards her German lovers, and then of Michaelis' relationship with her, that she can appreciate Mellors' "tenderness".

Finally, attention should be drawn to Lawrence's achievement in making Bertha Coutts a vivid character though she does not appear in the book. The cause of the delightful letters which Connie receives, the worthy Bertha is more "alive" than many a modern novelist, who has struggled with his main characters, would doubtless care to admit.

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Lady Chatterley's Lover is a strange book. Though its power cannot be denied, it still seems to leave one with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction. Critics, who have dealt honestly with the book and who have not allowed themselves to be diverted by its legendary "pornography", have tried to determine why this should be so - to my mind, without success.

Mr. West declares that there are two weaknesses in the book:

(64) Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p.20

> ..... like all Lawrence's novels Lady Chatterley's Lover is finally unacceptable as a great work of art, even if the fact is undeniable that it is the work of a great artist. The essential weakness is possibly the importance of agreement; the reader who cannot accept Lawrence's ideas cannot admire the book - it is possible to accept such a real work of art as The Idiot, or War and Peace, without accepting all the beliefs of Dostoevski or Tolstoi. A secondary weakness is that Lady Chatterley's Lover can only exist during the process of conversion; it is a miraculous book while it is bursting like a bright light on a mind to which the conceptions it deals with are altogether new, but when the conversion process is ended the whole thing is so obvious that it seems hardly worth saying. To anyone who has achieved a measure of sanity about their physical being it must seem, inevitably, as strange as a novel written to prove that regularity at the stool and a good morning motion are the foundations of mental and physical happiness ..... (65)

There are several flaws in this argument. Firstly, Mr. West does not explain why it is that a reader "who cannot accept Lawrence's ideas cannot admire the book.." It was urged early in this discussion that to judge Lawrence's ideas in isolation is profitless. If there is a weakness in the idea, that weakness should be apparent somewhere in the book and it is to this that Mr. West should point. Mr. West mentions no such weakness.

Secondly, I fail to see why Lady Chatterley's Lover "can only exist during the process of conversion". Even if Lawrence's ideas are accepted, his very fine evocation of the sexual experience remains of permanent value. And the fact is that, for many, the period of conversion is by no means over. What Lawrence said twenty five years ago is as of much significance to-day as then, and seems likely to continue to be so in the foreseeable future. Moreover, "the whole thing" is either not as "obvious" as Mr. West states or his comparison of the sexual experience with "a good morning motion" implies that his own "conversion process" is not yet ended, for even a partial understanding of Lady Chatterley's Lover should suggest the inanity of this remark. Indeed, in the book, Lawrence himself does so:

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(65) Anthony West: D. H. Lawrence, pp.133-34

"The whole point about the sexual problem," said Hammond, who was a tall thin fellow with a wife and two children, but much more closely connected with a typewriter, "is that there is no point to it. Strictly there is no problem. We don't want to follow a man into the W.C., so why should we want to follow him into bed with a woman? And therein lies the problem. If we took no more notice of the one thing than the other, there'd be no problem. It's all utterly senseless and pointless; a matter of misplaced curiosity."

"Quite, Hammond, quite! But if someone starts making love to Julia, you begin to simmer; and if he goes on, you are soon at boiling point." ... Julia was Hammond's wife. (66)

Father Tiverton writes:

Yet the gravamen still remains: that it is not really the whole man and the whole woman that Lawrence finally produces for us, though he gets nearer to it than any other novelist, except perhaps James Joyce, of his time. And the reason is, surely, his failure to resurrect the gods of man and woman. This is why as most critics feel, there is a sadness hanging around his greatest attempt to do so, Lady Chatterley's Lover. The sadness is not merely at the "failure" of the novelist, or the preacher's anti climax: it is that the little boat on which he sails this novel will not bear the weight of the world's future which is to be its cargo. (67)

There is far more truth, I feel, in Father Tiverton's verdict than in Mr. West's, yet Father Tiverton himself is not quite accurate. Though it is obvious that we are intended to attach great importance to the sort of relationship which Connie and Mellors ultimately achieve, Lawrence does not suggest that the world's problems would be solved if there were a wide-spread imitation of this relationship. Though he blames humanity's "mental consciousness" for the evils of industrialism, he is sufficiently realistic to know that nothing can stop the onward movement of the world's industrial civilisation - unless it be self-destructive. What he does in Lady Chatterley's Lover is to suggest that a strong relationship between a man and a woman may help the individual to a measure of personal sanity and happiness in a mad world. *Far from claiming to have solved the* world's problems Lawrence is, if anything, pessimistic: for

(66) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.33
(67) Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, pp. 94-5

Mellors, his relationship with Connie is "the only thing in the world", and he determines to abide by it - not in triumph- but "colliery companies and governments and the money-mass of people all notwithstanding."

Nor does Lawrence fail to create whole men and whole women. Clifford and Connie and Mellors are as "whole" as Dickens' Pip or George Eliot's Dorothea; it is merely that there is a difference of emphasis. Nevertheless it is true, I think, that in Lady Chatterley's Lover, we are too conscious of the Lawrencean emphasis. When Lawrence makes people exponents either of the "mental consciousness" or of the "spontaneous intuitive faculty" he is over-simplifying and the theoretical division is artificial. In fact, however, he does succeed in suggesting the sort of distinction he wishes to make between Clifford and Mellors. It is not only in their attitudes towards sex that the two men are different: without theorising, the more general divergence between them is shown, for instance, in Clifford's "panem et circenses" speech and in Mellors' "tenderness" to Connie at the chicken-coop. Yet the defect inherent in Lawrence's conception of the book remains - and Lawrence himself was perhaps aware of it:

> [Lady Chatterley's Lover] is a novel of the phallic consciousness ... versus the mental-spiritual consciousness: and of course you know which side I take. The versus is not my fault. There should be no versus. The two things must be reconciled in us. But now they're daggers drawn. (68)

Lawrence was unable to reconcile the two in his novel, and in trying to redress the balance he unfortunately over-emphasised the "phallic consciousness". It is to this that we can ascribe our feeling of dissatisfaction. Lady Chatterley's Lover has not, finally, the fullness of view of a masterpiece, of a Sons and Lovers. Nevertheless it is a great novel:

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(68) Letter to E. and A. Brewster, quoted by Father William Tiverton: D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p.80

After all, [Lady Chatterley's Lover] is yet another nucleus, among the many which Mr. Lawrence has flung into the world, of a new kind of consciousness, which we believe must some day come. This consciousness will be conscious of many things besides those on which Mr. Lawrence insists, but of those on which he insists it must be conscious. Without this deep "passional" awareness of which he chiefly has lit and guards the tender flame, the new consciousness can only be a sterile and intellectual thing .....

That Mr. Lawrence shrinks from completing his own doctrine, and still rejects deliberately what some of us will not and cannot reject, is ultimately of small importance. (69)

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(69) J. Middleton Murry: from Review of Lady Chatterley's Lover, Adelphi, June 1929. Quoted in Reminiscences of D.H. Lawrence, p.275

XI

CONCLUSION

> ..... One must learn to love, and go through a good deal of suffering to get to it, like any knight of the grail, and the journey is always towards the other soul, not away from it. Do you think love is an accomplished thing, the day it is recognised? It isn't. To love, you have to learn to understand the other, more than she understands herself, and to submit to her understanding of you. It is damnably difficult and painful, but it is the only thing which endures. You mustn't think that your desire or your fundamental need is to make a good career, or to fill your life with activity, or even to provide for your family materially. It isn't. Your most vital necessity in this life is that you shall love your wife completely and implicitly and in entire nakedness of body and spirit. Then you will have peace and inner security, no matter how many things go wrong. And this peace and security will leave you free to act and to produce your own work, a real independent workman.
>
> You asked me once what my message was. I haven't got any general message, because I believe a general message is a general means of side-tracking one's own personal activities: like Christ's - thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself - has given room for all the modern filthy system of society. But this that I tell you is my message as far as I've got any. (1)

Because "Lawrence's doctrine is constantly invoked by people of whom Lawrence would passionately have disapproved, in defence of a behaviour which he would have found deplorable, or even revolting," (2) and because we are so conscious of Lawrence's message while reading his work (more aware of it, that is to say, than with writers whose "message" is wholly implicit in their values) it is necessary to discuss the significance of his philosophy.

Lawrence's books are their own justification and nowhere is the importance of his message more convincingly established than in Sons and Lovers. The bitter tragedy of Mr. and Mrs. Morel and the intense suffering of Paul flow from the failure of the Morel marriage. Lawrence was certain that unhappiness such as that of the Morels was widespread (see p. 95

(1) Letters, p.803
(2) Aldous Huxley: Introduction to Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, p.9

above) and he determined to show how such needless misery could be eliminated. Daily observation can only confirm the importance of his determination.

Once he had decided on this course (the two novels which precede Sons and Lovers lead up to the completely expressed vision of the third book) Lawrence set out to depict how a successful relationship between a man and a woman could be achieved and what it would be like. With justification, he felt that the sex relations of men and women were basic to their close association and, in the novels that followed, he explored more fully than any other English novelist the nature of various relationships between men and women. That, until Lady Chatterley's Lover, he failed to picture adequately the sort of successful relationship for which he was searching is of no consequence, for his incidental revelation of the causes of violent conflict between the sexes is itself of permanent value. And then in Lady Chatterley's Lover he reached the end of his quest (was it entirely fortuitous that he died shortly after the completion of this book?) He finally made tangible a successful relationship between a man and a woman and showed how it could be achieved. This then, and satisfyingly so, was the sort of relationship which could give one "peace and inner security, no matter how many things go wrong," which could leave one "free to act and to produce [one's] own work." Diagnosis and prescription, Sons and Lovers and Lady Chatterley's Lover assert the significance of Lawrence's message.

Implicit, too, in Lawrence's message is a new set of values. His books make the sex relation "valid and precious, instead of shameful," and re-awaken a joy in the body. He fights scepticism, making one believe again in what is natural, kind and tender, and his insistence on the "phallic consciousness" is a valuable corrective to the preoccupation, characteristic of our time, with the "mental consciousness". It was necessary for him to oppose the phallic to the mental

consciousness, though he realised that the two should be reconciled, in order, by his very over-emphasis, to point the dangers of unrooted intellectualism and so to prepare the way for the "unity" of the whole man. In doing so he makes us aware of the evils of our industrial civilisation and, to use one of his own images, he plunges like a gannet on whatever is false and mechanical in twentieth century living. Imperceptibly, too, we find ourselves accepting Lawrence's moral values. Clearly no libertine, he stands by what makes for health and [illegible] living in defiance of a conventional morality which, as he [illegible], may well mask "a filthy system of society." Lawrence's [illegible] - if I may use Dr. Leavis' evaluation of the impact of T. S. Eliot - has "a disturbing force and [one] therefore capable of mir[illegible] to life." (3)

The fact that some people may misinterpret Lawrence's message in order to justify their own loose activities is no reason for a critic to misconstrue that message and, by so doing, to damn the whole body of his work:

> The sadness that many critics have felt, in reading Lady Chatterley's Lover, is, I believe, basically due to the conviction that Lawrence was there trying to do two things at once and failing. He had argued that the physical, sensual, and psychological impotence of our civilisation was due to a decline in religious belief - belief in the "dark gods". But then he tries to restore the gods by reviving the vital phallic relation of man and woman. This is like trying to cure a cancer by prescribing gymnastic exercises: the inability to do exercises may be a symptom of cancer, and cure of the cancer may restore the ability; but the cancer cannot be cured by the exercises. If this is so, then the failure, such as it is, of Lady Chatterley as a novel, is symptomatic of the failure of Lawrence himself as artist and as "prophet". (4)

I have already pointed out in what respect I think Father Tiverton errs in his estimate of Lady Chatterley's Lover (it may be added in passing that Lawrence left the "dark gods" interred in The Plumed Serpent): by the same reasoning this

(3) F. R. Leavis: Essay entitled Approaches to T. S. Eliot, in The Common Pursuit, p.292

(4) Father William Tiverton, D.H. Lawrence and [illegible]man Existence, p.96

critic's general condemnation of Lawrence is also unjustified. It is of no use finding fault with Lawrence for not doing what he never intended to do. Lawrence did not believe that a successful relationship between man and woman could change a sick civilisation: what he did hope was that men and women, were they fulfilled, would be released for the further activity necessary to make a better world. Kangaroo and The Plumed Serpent, failures though they may be, are evidence of this belief, and Lawrence says as much explicitly:

> The best thing I have known is the stillness of accomplished marriage, where one possesses one's own soul in silence, side by side with the amiable spouse, and has left off craving and raving and being only half one's self. But I must say, I know a great deal more about the craving and raving and sore ribs, than about the accomplishment. And I must confess that I feel this self-same "accomplishment" of the fulfilled being is only a preparation for new responsibilities ahead, new unison in effort and conflict, the effort to make, with other men, a little new way into the future, and to break through the hedge of the many. (5)

If our civilisation is sick, Lawrence concerned himself with a single (and indispensable) step towards health:

> .... It is characteristic of the world as it is that health cannot anywhere be found whole; and the sense in which Lawrence stands for health is an important one. He stands at any rate for something without which the preoccupation (necessary as it is) with order, forms and deliberate construction, cannot produce health. (6)

Lawrence's statement about "the effort to make.... a little new way into the future" is, incidentally, one of the finest criticisms yet made of his work and it may well stand as a commentary on the novels from The Rainbow to Lady Chatterley's Lover. In trying to be scrupulously honest about relations between men and women and men and men, at a time when most people were hostile to his ideas, Lawrence sometimes seizes upon what

(5) Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.124
(6) F. R. Leavis: Essay entitled, Mr. Eliot, Mr. Wyndham Lewis and Lawrence, in The Common Pursuit, p.247

seems to him a possible truth. No sooner does he do so than, with his wild, impatient nature, he proclaims that it is the only truth, the one truth on which salvation depends. Then, of course, he is only "half himself" and he starts "craving and raving" until he misleads himself into adopting a position that is not quite his own. This is what happens in his development of the leadership theory until he abandons it after The Plumed Serpent, and this is what happens in parts of Women in Love. And it is this element of "craving and raving" in Lawrence's work that is probably responsible for the extreme antagonism he arouses in certain readers. It is only when one examines the bulk of his work and sees its general direction that one realises what he has discovered. Then one is struck by his honesty, for if his impetuosity at times drives him to repugnant conclusions, his courage and integrity lead to a ready acknowledgment of failure - whether the acknowledgment is by way of explicit statement or is implicit in the further development of his thought. Indeed the constant development in the novels, itself a sign of genius, is an absorbing part of Lawrence's work.

It is naturally difficult to judge the effect of Lawrence's work, of his "message". I know that I find Lawrence a breath of clean air, but those who have lived through the time that Lawrence was writing are perhaps best qualified to judge. Mr. Aldington states what seems to be a reasonable view:

> ... It was an age [before Lawrence] of encrusted humbugs and hypocritical reticences, and nowhere was it more of a humbug and more terrifiedly reticent than in all matters of physical sex. The English novel of the day seemed to be written by eunuchs for vestal virgins.... So far as the expression of sex life in literature was concerned, sex qua sex was held to be unmentionable, indecent, unclean. Thomas Hardy had been so much abused for Jude the Obscure that in protest he ceased to write novels. Havelock Ellis had been prosecuted for obscenity, and his book prohibited .... G. K. Chesterton .... asserted that "any man who talks to a woman about sex is a brute"....
>
> A great change has come over the public attitude to sex since the beginning of this century, and to an indeterminate extent the change is due to the influence of Lawrence.... (7)

(7) Richard Aldington: Portrait of a Genius, But... p.76, p.78

Mr. West is not so indeterminate, but the element of truth that there is in his exaggerated claim suggests the extent of Lawrence's influence:

> Everyone who, worried by an abnormality of their own or their children's sexual behaviour, treats the thing not as a secret shame but a problem to be discussed frankly with a doctor or psychiatrist is under the influence of Lawrence. It may not be Lawrence who gave them the idea, they may have had it from the home page of a daily newspaper, or from a talk on the wireless, but it was largely because Lawrence spread his doctrines in his time that they are discussed at that level in ours. Beyond doubt the sexual behaviour of most literate people who married or reached puberty after 1925 has been profoundly affected by his writing, and beyond doubt his influence in that direction has been mainly good. For every single reader who has found in his work the justification of libertinism there must be dozens who have read more intelligently to find Lawrence a help in dispelling fears and apprehensions, and in making their sexual being the crowning enrichment of their emotional lives, instead of its shameful or sordid appendage. (8)

But Lawrence was, after all, an artist and not a propagandist; and, if he has enriched the lives of private individuals, it is also necessary to ask whether he has contributed anything to literature. He cannot, I think, be said to have added anything to the technique of the novel - in the way that Virginia Woolf and James Joyce have done, for instance. His one really experimental novel, The Rainbow, fails, in so far as it does fail, because of his innovations. And where, in Aaron's Rod and Kangaroo, he introduces into the novel the concept of a "thought-adventure" with its attendant first person intrusions, he is not successful. Indeed, it is noticeable that his two best novels, Sons and Lovers and Lady Chatterley's Lover, have a conventional form. What, then, was his contribution?

Firstly, I think, he has added to our awareness of what one can call "living" writing. What he believed in in human relationships is what emerges in his writing - the "warm, flamy life". It is when he is theorising that he fails and often lapses into jargon, but when his writing is at its

(8) Anthony West, D. H. Lawrence, pp.145-46

best (usually when he is being indirect) the delicate beautiful liveliness of his words informs everything, making all warm and breathing. Lawrence's prose is so impassioned that a serious reading of his work conditions our responses to other writers. (To read, after reading him, a writer such as Evelyn Waugh, for instance, is disastrous). Lawrence's descriptions of sea, of landscape, of people and of their motives and actions have a reality which one does not often find in other novels. He can fairly be said to achieve that quality of life which he himself wished to see in the novel:

> A thing isn't life just ɔause somebody does it. This the artist ought to knɔ ɔrfectly well. The ordinary bank clerk buying hɨ...elf a new straw hat isn't "life" at all: it is just existence, quite all right, like everyday dinners: but not "life".
>
> By life we mean something that gleams, that has the fourth-dimensional quality. If the bank clerk feels really piquant about his hat, if he establishes a lively relation with it, and goes out of the shop with the new straw on his head, a changed man, be-aureoled, then that is life. (9)

Secondly, Lawrence has brought into twentieth century literature a positiveness that is vitally needed. There have been many recorders of the doom of our civilisation: Lawrence is one of the few who has, in addition, tried to say something positive. Lawrence's work does not remind one of an autopsy; one is constantly conscious of a quest, of an exploration into the new. His is the literature of aspiration and of challenge. In this respect Lawrence has been, and should continue to be, a great formative influence - as is indicated by the following remarks of a young writer:

> It was as though the twentieth-century writer had extended the range of his material, but in so doing had made the external world an object of interior sensibility. He had cast away the husk of its outwardness in attempting to digest it in his mind, and he had often become sick in the process. The hero of this literature was inevitably the exceptionally sensitive person, that is to say he who

(9) Morality and the Novel, in Phoenix, pp.529-30

was most capable of receiving a wide range of impressions, most conscious of himself as a receiver of impressions, and most likely to make use of his impressions as a means of cultivating himself rather than of acting upon the world. Joyce, Proust, Eliot and Virginia Woolf had turned a hero or heroine into a passive spectator of a civilization falling into ruins.

One writer whom I began to read at Oxford challenged the passive sensibility which was characteristic of this literature. He was D. H. Lawrence .....

No attempt to resumé Lawrence's ideas can explain the influence he had over me. This was an immediate reaction when I read a page of his descriptive prose, or one of his poems. At once I was aware of nature as a life-and-death force, existing independently of man's existence but containing energies capable of renewing him. Lawrence's birds, beasts and flowers were marvellously themselves, marvellously outside Lawrence, even where his intuition of them had an uncanny animal or vegetable quality. They stubbornly refused to become ideas or to be coloured by his own mental preoccupations. Lawrence could not have cerebralized the sea in the manner of Joyce calling it the "snot-green sea". Nor could he, like Eliot, have described the evening sky as "a patient etherized upon a table".

Lawrence, besides opening my eyes to a world that was just not potential literature, also seemed to challenge my own existence, my mind and my body. I felt the force of his criticism of his contemporaries and did not feel that I myself was spared his condemnation of Oxford undergraduates and namby-pamby young men. Worst of all, I felt that my work must suffer from that which was lacking in my own physical and mental being. (10)

Finally, Lawrence extended the area of consciousness of the novel. He not only explored specific states of consciousness in a manner never before attempted but introduced into the novel a full treatment of the sexual experience. His novels are, in T. S. Eliot's sense of the word, part of the tradition of English novels: he has added something new, and to that extent our evaluation of all novels previous to his must be modified, and all novelists who follow him must be cognisant of his contribution. Whether those who follow Lawrence will be able to enlarge his particular vision is a matter for conjecture - certainly writers like Mr. Henry Miller (Tropic of Capricorn) and Mr. Edmund Wilson (Memoirs of Hecate County) who appear to be influenced by him have failed to do so.

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(10) Stephen Spender: World Within World, pp.96-7

According to his own definition Lawrence is an important novelist:

> It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore, the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life: for it is in the passional secret places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and freshening. (11)

It is Lawrence's achievement to have directed the flow of our sympathetic consciousness in this way and, in so doing, to have produced two significant works of art: Sons and Lovers and Lady Chatterley's Lover, the one a masterpiece and the other a very great novel. Judged by these two books alone Lawrence must rank as one of the foremost English novelists of this century.

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(11) Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.115

APPENDIX

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF D. H. LAWRENCE by HARRY T. MOORE.

Dr. Moore's book, published after the completion of this thesis, is a sign of reawakened American interest in Lawrence. As the title indicates, and as the author is at pains to state, the book purports to be the most comprehensive study of Lawrence yet made:

> This volume presents the fullest picture yet given of Lawrence's youth.... Critically, the present volume contains the fullest survey yet made of Lawrence's writings. Because he was primarily and most significantly an imaginative writer, his fiction and poetry receive the fullest treatment. The critical approach here is threefold: it provides information, interpretation, and evaluation. (1)

Dr. Moore's claim to fullness is perhaps justifiable, but one must confess to disappointment at the paucity of the reward.

Though there is some interesting speculation about Lawrence's heredity, particularly in regard to the influence of his grandfathers, the "new" facts which Dr. Moore unearths about Lawrence's youth are, for the most part, of little importance. Too often references are made to such minutiae as "Dr. James Gow was at the time headmaster at Nottingham High. The school register, now consulted for the first time in relation to Lawrence, shows that he entered three days after his thirteenth birthday:" (2) - here follows an extract from the school register - or to the unilluminating comments of people who knew Lawrence as a young man, such as those of a former pupil of Lawrence's who wrote to Dr. Moore saying that he thought Lawrence "must have changed a lot from the young man we knew. I have read Lady Chatterley's Lover and other works of that kind and cannot see any justification for his utter frankness about sex..." (3)

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(1) Harry T. Moore: The Life and Works of D.H. Lawrence, Foreword
(2) Ibid. p.30
(3) Ibid. p.37

Nor, in relation to Dr. Moore's expressed intention, is the "critical survey" of much value. Of "information", it is true, there is a surfeit, for Dr. Moore provides summaries of the plots of the novels and of all the short stories, and outlines of the "argument" of a large number of poems:

> The use of the synopsis method in discussing stories here and in other parts of the book requires a word of explanation. The value of synopsis to the interpretive critic is great: the method enables him to indicate by example the interrelational discoveries he has made about the works of an author. Synopses used in this way are not mere summaries of stories but interpretations of them through selected incidents. The critic observes those elements of stories which will illustrate his thesis about an author or which will suggest connections with other phases of the author's work, and the critic will shape such elements into his synopses. These are not a substitute for the text itself but a form of commentary upon it and an assembling of points for argument and elucidation. Nothing can take the place or equal the experience of reading importantly creative material all interpretation, all criticism, can only lead up to that. (4)

Unfortunately it is difficult to guage what Dr. Moore's thesis is. He does not enter into the critical controversy which Lawrence's work has stimulated, and his judgment of Lawrence as a "Romantic" ("Throughout the rest of this book, then, Lawrence will be regarded as a latter-day Romantic, although the matter will not be continually hammered into the reader's mind.")(5) is not substantiated by detailed application to the text. It remains a bald classification, and the synopses stubbornly refuse to be anything more than summaries.

Dr. Moore does reach a conclusion: "that Lawrence is one of the richest reading experiences of our time," (6) but this is not supported by sufficient "interpretation" and "evaluation", though these are promised in the Foreword. What interpretation there is, is often in need of interpretation:

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(4) Harry T. Moore: The Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence, p.118
(5) Ibid. p.55
(6) Ibid. p.323

> [Lettie] is the peacock. Both Lettie and the first wife of Annable are identified with the central symbol in the book. The destructive woman is, to Annable, "all vanity and screech and defilement", and when he speaks of her as the peacock, Cyril adds the adjective "vile". (7)

At times interpretation becomes haphazard speculation:

> Yet Robert [of The Lovely Lady] is never a fully sympathetic figure, and if he is doomed to emotional defeat it is, to a great extent, his own fault. Paul Morel at the end of Sons and Lovers is ready to fight his way back to the light. But Paul is a good deal younger than poor Robert Attenborough, whom Paul in time would have become. (8)

Dr. Moore's judgments are scanty. It is seldom that he passes an opinion on a whole book or story, preferring, it seems, to confine his comments to isolated sections. In the end "evaluation" is left either to Lawrence or to the reader:

> Lawrence felt [The Lost Girl] was "quite amusing: and quite moral." (9)

> Mrs. Carswell finds The Plumed Serpent the greatest novel of Lawrence's generation because it creates a life-system ..... Yet this novel cannot be classed as Lawrence's best, despite the splendor of much of its writing: philosophically, it represents a statement of doubt and division rather than one of final integration..... But at the last this is a question on which the reader must make up his own mind; the book will of course have to be weighed against all the rest of Lawrence's work. (10)

Dr. Moore's practical criticism, if more decisive, is severely self-contradictory. He quotes this passage from Love Among the Haystacks:

> Far away was the faint blue heap of Nottingham. Between, the country lay under a haze of heat, with here and there a flag of colliery smoke waving. But near at hand, at the foot of the hill, across the deep-hedged high road, was only the silence of the old church and the castle farm, among their trees.

and then says:

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(7) Harry T. Moore: The Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence, p.46
(8) Ibid. p.274
(9) Ibid.p.192
(10) Ibid. pp. 234-5

> This passage has faults, particularly the two inversions, "... was the faint blue heap" and "... was only the silence": this is an obsolescent kind of construction; it is nineteenth-century writing rather than twentieth. The inversion in the last sentence is particularly awkward because of the three sets of modifying phrases preceding the verb, but once the verb is passed the sentence becomes extremely effective; the farm and church and trees are conveyed not only by image but also by adroit blending of syllables. The first sentence, even with its "Wnglish in reverse" flaw, is extremely effective; how could it be put better than "Far away was the faint blue heap of Nottingham"? (11)

In fact the most valuable portion of this long book is an Appendix - Appendix D: The Genesis of Sons and Lovers. Dr. Moore has obtained possession of what he calls "The Miriam Papers", in which Jessie Chambers gives her version of a number of incidents described in Sons and Lovers, and among which there is "a twenty-three-page fragment of manuscript in Lawrence's hand, with Jessie's interlinear comments and protests." The comparison of these papers with the relevant sections in the final version of Sons and Lovers is highly interesting.

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(11) Harry T. Moore: The Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence, pp.119-20

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