

THE THEME OF SELF FULFILMENT AND ITS ARTISTIC  
SIGNIFICANCE IN THE NOVELS  
OF D. H. LAWRENCE

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of English  
University of Manitoba

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In Partial Fulfilment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Meredith Robinson  
May 1950



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
I. THE SPIRITUAL WOMAN.....	8
The White Peacock.....	9
The Trespasser.....	17
Sons and Lovers.....	23
Notes to Chapter I.....	34
II. THE SUPREMACY OF WOMAN.....	38
The Rainbow.....	38
Notes to Chapter II.....	59
III. THE NEW RELATIONSHIP.....	63
Women in Love.....	63
Notes to Chapter 3.....	79
IV. THE IDEAL OF THE SINGLE SELF.....	82
Aaron's Rod.....	82
Kangaroo.....	89
The Boy in the Bush.....	96
Notes to Chapter IV.....	100
V. THE REJECTION OF CHRISTIANITY.....	103
The Plumed Serpent.....	103
The Man Who Died.....	112
Notes to Chapter V.....	117

## CHAPTER

	PAGE
VI. THE FIRST AND THE LAST.....	120
Lady Chatterley's Lover.....	120
Notes to Chapter VI.....	124
CONCLUSION.....	125
Notes to Conclusion.....	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	132

## INTRODUCTION

D. H. Lawrence was born, a miner's son, in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, in 1885. He died in Italy in March, 1930. His life, which has been revealed to the public with a startling thoroughness through his own novels, poems and essays, and through the writings of others about him, was a strange and tortured one. His restless spirit led him to a nomad existence, his wanderings taking him all around the world, to Italy, to Australia, to Mexico. Everywhere he faced the same struggle, the struggle against ill-health, money difficulties, <sup>and</sup> public persecution. The persecution he suffered was the world's retaliation <sup>upon</sup> ~~at~~ a man who chose to think and act as he did. For Lawrence was first and foremost an individual, and the individual he was made him an 'outsider.'

Disapproving strongly of the course which the modern world was following, he uttered his disapproval loudly. So vehement was his condemnation of the first World War that he aroused the suspicion of the local authorities of the Cornwall district in which he was living. He and his German wife were spied upon by constables, questioned by officials, and finally ordered to leave their sea-side cottage for a less vulnerable spot in England. The same fearless, unrestrained expression of his beliefs which aroused the hostility of a nation at war produced a similar reaction from society even when quite different



subjects were under consideration, and many of his books were banned.

It is unlikely, however, that the hostility of the world towards him was a matter of prime concern to Lawrence. Indeed, there appears to be in the life of Lawrence almost a conscious wooing of that hostility. He preferred the enmity of the world. Aaron, the hero of Aaron's Rod, writing in a letter to a friend "perhaps his greatest or his innermost truth" expresses this preference:

I don't want my Fate or my Providence to treat me well.  
I don't want kindness or love. I don't believe in harmony  
and people loving one another. I believe in the fight  
and in nothing else. I believe in the fight which is in  
everything...I want the world to hate me, because I can't  
bear the thought that it might love me. For of all things  
love is the most deadly to me, and especially from such a  
repulsive world as I think this is....(1)

Love from the world would have been a burden to Lawrence. It would have placed a restraint upon the fullest expression of his opinions. The persecution of the world left him free to utter his bitterest criticisms of those aspects of society which he believed must be destroyed before a better life could arise.

Lawrence did hate the world. And at the same time he loved it. He rejected the world, and yet he was deeply concerned for the fate of the world. He loved the world of nature, untouched by the hand of man. No artist is more sensitive to the beauties of a landscape or more receptive to nature in all her moods. But he hated the unclean world which man has super-imposed upon the world of nature. He hated the world of war and poison gas, the world of industrialism and mechanization. He hated the world of mass production in which even man was turned off the assembly-line with a ready-made individuality and a

set of impulses and reactions which followed a few great laws, a few great principles. When the laws were known, the principles categorized,<sup>(2)</sup> "people were no longer mystically interesting" to him.

Lawrence craved for beauty and mystery in life and saw about him only the dry monotony and the ever-same patterns of a machine-ridden world. "No flowers grow upon busy machinery, there is no sky to a routine, there is no space to a rotary motion," thinks Ursula in Women in Love,<sup>(3)</sup> and all life appears to her as a rotary motion.

Lawrence had little sympathy for man, whom, as he conceived him, had to scurry through the filth and defilement of the modern world like an insect. Man, he believed, was responsible for the world he had created, for if he had been capable of something better he would have achieved something better. At times Lawrence's disgust with humanity reaches the point at which he desires the extinction of mankind. Birkin, Lawrence's spokesman in Women in Love says at one point: "Man is a mistake, he must go. There is the grass, and hares and adders, and the unseen hosts, actual angels that go about freely when a dirty humanity doesn't interrupt them...."<sup>(4)</sup>

Because he believed there was a fundamental falsity in the very foundation of modern existence, Lawrence could find nothing throughout the entire structure of society which he could affirm. To him, the core of society was rotten and hence the out-growths of society were equally rotten. In one breath, Lilly, one of the principal characters in Aaron's Rod, dispenses with all the values which the modern world claims as its own:

The ideal of love, the ideal that it is better to give than to receive, the ideal of liberty, the ideal of the brotherhood of man, the ideal of the sanctity of human life, the

ideal of what we call goodness, charity, benevolence, public spiritedness, the ideal of sacrifice for a cause, the ideal of unity and unanimity - all the lot - all the whole beehive of ideals - has all got the modern bee-disease, and gone putrid, stinking. And when the ideal is dead and putrid, the logical sequence is only stink.(5)

Despite the rejection of the world and its ideals and despite the harsh appraisal of mankind which are found in the writings of D. H. Lawrence, the novels are not by any means ~~pure~~ <sup>PURE</sup> works of negation. Lawrence was not concerned primarily with negation but with affirmation, affirmation of life, not as it was, but as he saw it might be. Whether the beliefs he held had their birth when he looked at the world and found it bad, or whether he found the world bad because he held the beliefs he did, cannot be determined. What is certain, however, is that the affirmation of the one is the negation of the other, the acceptance of Lawrence's ideals leads to a rejection of the ideals to which the world pays homage.

Birkin, in Women in Love, declares that humanity is "less, far less than the individual because the individual may sometimes be capable of truth and humanity is a tree of lies."<sup>(6)</sup> Despairing as he did of mankind in the mass, Lawrence turned away in his novels from a consideration of man in society and concentrated fiercely on the individual, the individual who lived his life without regard for the opinion of society, and the individual whose life suffered a minimum of interference from the outside, impersonal world. The ideal he set forth for the individual was the old one of self-fulfilment. But the significance which he attached to this ideal and the means of achieving it which he proclaimed, constituted Lawrence's unique vision. Moreover, while Lawrence placed his emphasis on the individual and the individual's

struggle for self-fulfilment, the nature of that struggle was such that it had significance for the whole of humanity. The pathway to individual self-fulfilment became the road to the regeneration of the world.

Lawrence believed that a man did not receive a soul at birth but rather achieved a soul in life, achieved it through fulfilment of himself. At the same time as a man gained a soul in life, he gained his immortality. However, the majority of men, Lawrence stated, adopting the pattern of the world as their own, never did win through to the attainment of a soul, never did gain immortality. The vast majority of men were encased within the womb of their era, begotten but not brought forth. They died and disappeared from the earth "unconsummated, un-  
(7)  
achieved," their life a nothingness. Lawrence sought to rescue man from this predicament in which he conceived him to be enmeshed. Lawrence sought to give birth to mankind, birth into wholeness and completeness.

The way of attaining to wholeness and completeness, he declared, was in "utter satisfaction of the Self, in complete fulfilment of  
(8)  
desire." Man must yield himself utterly to the call of the blood. The path to consummate being was the path down the senses into the darkness of the pre-mental world. It was a way of terrible suffering and of terrible enjoyment, but it was a way which if pursued to the end brought man into contact with the Source of all creation, the Womb of the Universe, "the Almighty God Who was in the beginning, is now,  
(9)  
and ever shall be." From his journey down the path of the senses, a man returned, after a moment's annihilation, reborn, "new-issued from  
(10)  
the womb of creation." He opened his eyes in knowledge of "the goal, the end, the light which stands over the end of the journey, the

everlasting day, the oneness of the spirit." (11) Then he could say  
truly: "I am not, and at last I am." (12)

This knowledge of "I am" is the knowledge of self-fulfilment. It is the achievement of the soul in life, the attainment of wholeness and completeness. But it is a state not easily won. And the struggle to achieve self-fulfilment with its attendant difficulties and complications and failures provides the content for all of Lawrence's novels. It is this theme in the novels and its artistic significance with which this present work is concerned.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

- (1) D. H. Lawrence, Aaron's Rod (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935), p. 275.
- (2) D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935), p. 321.
- (3) Ibid., p. 201
- (4) Ibid., p. 132
- (5) D. H. Lawrence, Aaron's Rod, p. 293.
- (6) D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love, p. 130.
- (7) D. H. Lawrence, "The Crown!" Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1937), p. 90.
- (8) Ibid., p. 91.
- (9) Ibid., pp. 24-25.
- (10) Ibid., p. 26.
- (11) Loc. cit.
- (12) Loc. cit.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SPIRITUAL WOMAN

In the first three novels of Lawrence the philosophical beliefs which occupy such a large portion of the later novels have not yet been completely realized. The attitudes which lead to the later philosophy are present, but they are attitudes not yet crystallized into convictions which must be pummelled into the reader at all costs. With one or two exceptions, it is difficult for a reader to enjoy a later novel of D. H. Lawrence unless he is prepared to accept the burden of philosophy which goes with it. And the nature of the philosophy expounded is such that much of the experience recorded in these novels is utterly foreign to the majority of readers. In the first three novels, however, we are in a more familiar world and what philosophy there is does not tyrannize over the subject matter. Rather, it flows naturally from the dramatic situations treated.

The ideal of self-fulfilment and the means of achieving it are not given explicit statement in the first three novels. Indeed, the theme of self-fulfilment is treated in a negative rather than a positive manner in as much as Lawrence, for the most part, presents situations in which fulfilment has not been achieved. The anguish which arises from this lack of fulfilment reveals its importance and makes more meaningful the struggle for self-fulfilment in the later novels. But in the early novels there is less of a struggle for self-fulfilment and

more of an acceptance of the pain that comes from lack of fulfilment. The ideal of self-fulfilment has not yet been clearly set forth as the only goal in life worth achieving.

However, in The White Peacock a very positive attitude to life and to what man makes of life is taken. With one exception, this attitude is not impressed artificially on the content but emerges naturally from the subject matter of the novel. For The White Peacock is a story about five young people, working, playing, loving, against a background of rural England. Enthusiasm for life and desire to live fully is natural to youth.

The five young people come from different stations in life. Leslie is the son of a wealthy mine-owner. Cyril and Lettie, brother and sister, live in quiet refinement with their widowed mother. George and Emily, also brother and sister, live on their father's farm. Life on the farm is warm and vital, for Lawrence was always at his best when describing life close to nature. George, the farm boy, is a flesh-and-blood creation in contrast to the colorless portrait of Leslie, the aristocrat. Cyril, the narrator of the story, seldom holds the centre of attention. He remains in the background, shadowy and indistinct.

Lettie and Emily are striking contrasts to one another. Lettie, positively, and Emily, negatively, suggest the approach to life which Lawrence approved. Lettie is the gayest of the young group, a delightful if unsubstantial creation, dancing in carefree fashion across the pages of the novel. It is she who utters the joy of life and the determination to face squarely all it has to offer. "I'd rather 'dance and sing' round 'wrinkled care' than carefully shut the door on



him, while I slept in the chimney seat - wouldn't you?" she cries to George.<sup>(1)</sup> And turning to him she reproves him for not being fully awake to life: "You are blind; you are only half-born; you are gross with good living and heavy sleeping....Sunset is nothing to you - it merely happens anywhere."<sup>(2)</sup>

The light-hearted Lettie, who is so determined to partake of life to the full, is described as trailing "clouds of glory," while Emily, the serious one trails "clouds of sorrow."<sup>(3)</sup> The portrait of Emily illustrates Lawrence's disapproval of a spiritual approach to life. To Emily, life is painful because she cannot accept its basic realities. The cruelty inherent in nature is a continual shock to her soul, and though she lives on a farm, she shrinks from the physical facts of existence around her. She throws an imaginary veil over all life, looking upon the world not as it is but as she would like it to be. She does not react naturally to life about her. Rather, she refers all experience to her mind. Hence, she is brooding, self-conscious and self-mistrustful, and when she is called upon to perform an action before others she is gripped with terror.

One night Lettie tries to teach her a few dance steps. As long as Lettie attempts to instruct her in the steps so that she has to think about what she is doing, Emily is a hopeless failure. It is not until Lettie ceases to talk and simply swings her through the actions that Emily learns the steps. Lawrence comments thusly: "So long as Emily need not think about her actions, she had a large, free grace; and the swing and rhythm and time were imparted through her senses rather than through her intelligence."<sup>(4)</sup> His belief in

the superiority of the senses over the intellect is nicely illustrated in this simple incident. He wanted man to live instinctively, for he believed that the blood was wiser than the brain. Emily's life is a denial of this belief. Instead of reacting spontaneously to her experience she seeks the spiritual element in it. Cyril, driven to rebellion by this aspect of Emily's character, utters Lawrence's own protest at her approach to life: "You think the flesh of the apple is nothing, nothing. You only care for the eternal pips. Why don't you snatch your apple and eat it, and throw the core away?"<sup>(5)</sup>

The plea for full living, for complete absorption in life which the young people make is pleasing rather than alarming. Even the healthy paganism of Leslie who thinks "there's more in the warm touch of a soft body than in a prayer," is innocent enough coming as it does from a high-spirited youth.<sup>(6)</sup> The attitudes expressed contain within them the seeds of the later convictions, convictions which when elevated to a philosophical plane involved the denial of Christianity, the rejection of the spiritual values of western civilization. But in this novel, expressed by Lettie or Cyril or Leslie, they carry with them no such ominous import. They lend only a very positive note to the novel and the early pages are brimming over with vitality and youthful enthusiasm for life. They present a charming picture of the young people working in the fields, busy with the homely chores of the farm, taking long walks in the wood or breaking into spontaneous dancing and singing.

Even the descriptions are vitalized in the novel. Nature is constantly described in human terms and it is made to reflect the changing

moods of the characters. If the mood is a happy one then the day is bright, "the water laughing, and the leaves tittering and giggling like young girls...." (7) If the mood is a sombre one then the lake is described as "black like the open eyes of a corpse; the woods... black like the beard on the face of a corpse." (8) There is perfect unity of setting and action in the novel.

But even in this first novel, Lawrence was not content to let his philosophy emerge simply from the treatment of his material. Nor did he trust the capacity of Lettie and Cyril and Leslie to utter the full significance of his life worship. Instead, he went outside the main lines of his story and introduced a character into the novel whose sole function was to express his beliefs. The philosopher in Lawrence overpowered the artist. Annable, the game keeper, and the incidents in which he appears bear only a slight organic relation to the rest of the story.

Annable's philosophy is the antithesis of Emily's way of life. An absolute materialist, he despises a spiritual approach to the world. "Be a good animal, true to your animal instinct," is his often repeated advice. (9) It is advice which he himself has followed. He has married for a second time with the sole intention of producing children. His cottage is crawling with youngsters of all ages and descriptions. He takes no responsibility <sup>for</sup> ~~in~~ their up-bringing but lets them grow as they will while he looks on with pride:

Aren't they a lovely little litter? - aren't they a pretty bag o' ferrets? - natural as weasels - that's what I said they should be - bred up like a bunch o' young foxes, to run as they would. (10)

The passages depicting the bedlam in Annable's cottage, a bedlam which drives his over-worked wife into a frenzy, are the most memorable passages in the book. They reveal once again Lawrence's ability to portray in vivid fashion natural, uninhibited living.

However, in spite of Annable's pride in his family, he is not happy. He is bitter because he has failed to achieve the fulfilment of himself in life, and he pours his bitterness into the sympathetic ear of Cyril. The cause of his failure to achieve his true fulfilment is his first wife. She had been attracted <sup>by</sup> ~~to~~ Annable's manly physique before their marriage (for he is a marvellous figure of a man), but after their marriage she refused to have children. She turned "souly," he says, a word which to him is the heaviest condemnation he can make. <sup>(11)</sup> For in turning "souly" and rejecting his physical nature, she destroyed the very core of his being. As he expresses it: "...if you don't know the pride of my body you'd never know my humiliation." <sup>(12)</sup> He left his first wife, married again, had children. But his bitterness never left him, a bitterness that was extended to the whole of womanhood. One day an incident occurs which is the source of the title of the novel. He and Cyril are talking in a cemetery when a white peacock dirties the decayed statue of an angel on one of the tombstones. "That's the soul of a woman - or - it's the devil," Annable snarls, "A woman to the end, I tell you, all vanity and screech and defilement." <sup>(13)</sup> A short time after this incident, Annable hears of his first wife's death. Her death spells the end for him, too. He has needed fulfilment of himself through the woman of his choice. She had adopted a spiritual outlook to their relationship and denied the physical element. This left Annable, as

he describes himself, "like a good house, built and finished, and  
(14)  
left to tumble down again with nobody to live in it." A few  
days later he is killed in a fall, his physical death being only the  
outward sign of a more important kind of death that had already  
occurred within him.

Annable's death foreshadows the fate of George. For as the  
novel develops, the joy in life which gives it its vitality is  
darkened by the shadow of failure. Lettie calls upon George to come  
awake in his senses and open the doors of his being to all life. He,  
loving her, responds to the call. But a fundamental weakness in his  
own character prevents him from reaching out and claiming as his own  
that which is **needful** to him. He fails to entwine the threads of  
Lettie's life with his own, and she is caught up instead by Leslie.  
Cyril reproaches George for his failure, speaking Lawrence's own  
belief that if man is to reach his fulfilment through satisfaction of  
his desire he must plunge fearlessly into life:

You should have had the courage to risk yourself - you're  
always too careful of yourself and your own poor feelings -  
you never could brace yourself up to a shower-bath of con-  
tempt and hard usage, so you've saved your feelings and  
lost....(15)

George loses Lettie, but not before he is awakened to a new  
consciousness by her. Pathetically, he explains how she fanned the  
spark of life within him:

You played with me, and showed me heaps of things - and  
those mornings - when I was binding corn, and when I was  
gathering the apples, and when I was finishing the straw-  
stack - you came then - I can never forget those mornings -  
things will never be the same. You have awakened my life -  
I imagine things that I couldn't have done.(16)

The awakening of a person to a new consciousness is, in a

Lawrence novel, a mile-stone along the path to fulfilment, and it is an awakening that always comes through woman. But, in George's case, the awakening is disastrous, because Lettie who is responsible for it withdraws from him and leaves him no area in which to make his newly-awakened consciousness meaningful. He marries another girl, Meg, and has children, but, as with Annable, the woman of his choice rejects him and without her he cannot find himself. In a letter to Cyril he reveals the discontentment with all of life which arises when personal fulfilment is not achieved, although he himself does not quite understand his situation:

Somehow at the bottom I feel miserable and heavy, yet there is no need. I am making pretty good money, and I've got all I want. But when I've been ploughing...I've felt as if I didn't care whether I got on or not....I'm as restless and discontented as I can be, and I seem eager for something, but I don't know what it is. Sometimes I wonder where I am going....I don't seem to have hold on anything, do I?(17)

And, in a conversation with Cyril, he states more definitely the cause of his discontentment: "You see I built on Lettie....you and Lettie (18) have made me conscious, and now I'm at a dead loss."

Lonely, unfulfilled, with the woman who could have fulfilled him married to another man, George turns to drink. He ends his days in shame, a physical wreck, the marvellous virility and health of his youth only a mocking memory. His physical decay and death, like Annable's, is the outward sign of the inner death which occurs when there is no fulfilment in life. George's fate is, however, more the result of his own weakness than is Annable's. George might have found fulfilment if he had asserted himself strongly and had the courage to win Lettie. Annable's fate was wholly the fault of the woman.

George's failure is only the most tragic example of the general

failure in the book to ~~fully~~<sup>FULLY</sup> partake of life and to come to the fullest realization of the self. Lettie, too, abandons her early joy in life and sinks into apathy. She ignores her own self and seeks to live at second-hand through her children. In doing this, Lawrence claims she is shirking the responsibility for her own development in life, shirking it because responsibility "for the good progress of one's life is terrifying. It is the most insufferable form of loneliness, and the heaviest of responsibilities." (19) True fulfilment of the self in life is not gained without courage and struggle. Cyril, too, fades into the mists of London. Emily marries. None of the young people achieve the vital fulfilment of their souls which Lawrence later idealizes. Nor do they struggle fiercely for that vital fulfilment. They are aware of discontent and dissatisfaction with life but they are not too certain of the cause. The ideal of self-fulfilment as something to be fought for in life to the exclusion of all else is not yet perfectly realized.

Annable makes the most explicit statement in the novel of Lawrence's beliefs when he praises the natural life in which man is true to his animal instincts. His condemnation of the spiritual woman, which is implicit in his bitterness at his first wife, springs from this glorification of the physical element in human experience. His wife does not appear in the novel. The closest approach that is made to her is in the character of Emily. The full significance of the spiritual approach to life is not, however, revealed in the portrait of Emily. That significance is developed further in the next two novels, The Trespassers and Sons and Lovers.

The Trespasser like The White Peacock ends in failure. But in this second novel of Lawrence, there is not as well the vitality and joyful exuberance that lent such a positive note to The White Peacock. An unhappy air pervades its pages. ~~as~~ The restless, unhappy spirit which crept into the final pages of his first novel is ever present in the second, and the attraction to death now is stronger than the pull towards life. Indeed, the story is told with the fact of death always before the reader, for Siegmund, the hero, is already dead when the story begins and the experience recorded is only a memory in the mind of Helena.

Siegmund, at 38, married and a father, is in love with another woman, Helena. Deeply dissatisfied with his life at home, he abandons his family and <sup>spends</sup> ~~vacations for~~ a week with Helena. The manner in which Lawrence treats this basic situation reveals his unusual preoccupations as an artist. The conventional concern of an artist with an extra-marital love affair is the moral problem involved. He may take any one of a number of different approaches to this problem, but he will likely view it in the light of the individual versus society, and his main emphasis will be on the struggle of the couple against a disapproving world. Not so with Lawrence. The conflict within the souls of his characters arises not from qualms of conscience concerning the course of their actions but from their dissatisfaction with the imperfect contact in their personal relations and their striving to make that contact perfect.

This gives rise to some confusion. If the main source of conflict in the novel does not arise from the fact that Siegmund is



married, why is it necessary that he be married? The main substance of the novel exists apart from this fact. The love affair of Helena and Siegmund could be treated as it is treated even if Siegmund were not married. It is true that after the vacation with Helena, Siegmund returns to his home and, unable to bear his life there, ~~suicide~~ <sup>kills himself</sup>. His death resolves the situation, but the marriage theme seems to be mainly a convenience without any real significance for the principal conflict in the novel - the struggle of Helena and Siegmund to ~~perfectly~~ <sup>physically</sup> contact one another.

The anguish which characterizes the love affair of Helena and Siegmund is an anguish born of one aspect of Helena's character - her romantic nature which elevates the ideal and excludes the real. She, like Emily, lives too much in the mind, preferring the dream world she has created to crude actuality: "The value of all things was in the fancy they evoked. She did not care for people; they were vulgar, (20) ugly, and stupid, as a rule." And with Siegmund, as with others, she has constructed a dream-image which is more to her than Siegmund himself. This dream-image is shattered by physical contact with the man who is the source of it, and so she shrinks from that contact. In doing this, Helena illustrates the significance of the spiritual approach to life which she and Emily take. The significance was not developed in the treatment of Emily in The White Peacock but it was suggested in that novel by the experience of Annable and his first wife. Lawrence disapproves of the spiritual woman because she is a bar to that fulfilment through the senses to which he attaches such significance. Addressing the reader directly, he states his criticism thusly:

For centuries a certain type of woman has been rejecting the "animal" in humanity, till now her dreams are abstract, and full of fantasy, and her blood runs in bondage, and her kindness is full of cruelty. (21)

Helena is cruel to Siegmund, though not consciously so. He is unable to compete with the god in her mind and is left bewildered and confused. "What is it? Won't you tell me what is the matter?" he asks her pathetically when she withdraws from him. (22) And when he realizes that it is himself in the flesh that is the source of her antipathy he is pricked with the thorn of humiliation. His self-esteem runs from him like blood from a wound. He is thrown into a frenzy of grief. The significance of Helena's rejection of his physical nature is revealed by the wild emotional state into which is he thrown:

He lay down flat on the ground, pressing his face into the wiry turf, trying to hide. Quite stunned, with a death taking place in his soul, he lay still, pressed against the earth. He held his breath for a long time before letting it go, then again he held it. He could scarcely bear even by breathing, to betray himself. His consciousness was dark. (23)

Helena, seeing how her repulsion has affected Siegmund, nurses him back to peace:

...with Madonna love she clasped his head upon her shoulder, covering her hands over his hair. Twice, she kissed him softly in the nape of the neck, with fond, reassuring kisses. All the while, delicately, she fondled and soothed him, till he was child to her Madonna. (24)

And when Siegmund gets up he stands "with his head on her shoulder for sometime, till at last he raised himself to lay his lips on hers in a long kiss of healing and renewal - long, pale kisses of after suffering." (25) The extreme emotional state of Siegmund is destructive of him as a hero, and the too-intimate glimpse of the lovers following it deprives them of dignity in the reader's eye. But the scene does convey the importance Lawrence attaches to sensual fulfilment and the

anguish which comes from the rejection by the woman of the physical element in a personal relationship.

Helena and Siegmund, although they love one another, are not happy together. Pain is the fruit of a relationship which does not bring with it fulfilment of the self. And neither Helena or Siegmund find fulfilment. The failure to find fulfilment is treated in many of the other novels, too, and yet this novel is negative in a way the others are not. For here, there seems no clear, definite goal to struggle towards, no ideal, which, even if not attained, by its very existence lends a positive value to many of the other novels. Helena and Siegmund accept the hopelessness of their position, and their weakness lends a faint, sick atmosphere to the story. There is a great yearning towards 'something', but that 'something' is never realized, never even defined.

Siegmund, however, sees in nature the same ache outwards towards that 'something' as he knows himself and he feels a vast sympathy with nature. In his loneliness he attempts to personalize the natural world looking upon the darkness as "a sort of mother, and the moon a sister, and the stars children...." (26) In his aching desire for human contact he lies on "the warm body of the shore." (27) Or he takes "the sea in his arms." (28) Or he walks in the fields where "a very soft wind, shy as a girl puts its arms around him...." (29) (30) He talks to nature, saying: "We have been very happy together." And nature responds:

The morning was exceeding fair, and it looked at him so gently that his blue eyes trembled with self-pity. A fragment of scarlet geranium glanced up at him as he passed... he could see the eyes of the flower, wistful, offering him love... Everything looked at him with the same eyes of tenderness, offering him, timidly, a little love. (31)

This very sentimental approach to nature which springs from Lawrence's portrayal of the lonely man yearning for fulfilment receives a set-back when Siegmund is in swimming one day. He has taken the sea in his arms and is enjoying the sympathy of nature when suddenly he is swept against a rock and cut rather badly. At first he can not "believe the the lovely, smooth side of the rock...could have hurt him."<sup>(32)</sup> And then he is jolted back to reality. He calls himself a fool for having thought that nature had any sympathy for the individual, or any cognizance of him. "I was mistaken," he tells himself,<sup>(33)</sup> "It was an illusion."

The yearning for fulfilment which provoked this sentimental approach to nature is not, however, an illusion. It is a yearning, which, when frustrated in life seeks out death. The shadow of death is never far away at any time in the novel. The idea that life must be lived intensely which found expression in The White Peacock is negated here, for the craving after an intense life is described as deadly, and Siegmund denies the philosophy of realizing life to the full: "I am always so sorry...that the human race is urged inevitably into a deeper and deeper realization of life."<sup>(34)</sup> And he resents it that Helena goads "him deeper and deeper into life", because he has "a preference for death."<sup>(35)</sup> After his moment of passion in the arms of Helena he seeks to lose himself in the shadow of a pine copse: "Let me get under cover...Let me hide in it; it is good, the sudden intense darkness."<sup>(36)</sup> He sees death all about him, "death urging itself into life, the shadow supporting the substance", and he looks forward to giving himself up to its embrace.<sup>(37)</sup>

Having failed in life, Siegmund hopes to find fulfilment in death.

He looks forward to death as a time of comfort, rest, reassurance and renewal. When he returns to his home he finds his situation intolerable.

He thinks of himself as a finger out of joint:

The body of life for him meant Beatrice, his children, Helena, the Comic Opera, his friends of the orchestra. How could he set himself again into joint with these? It was impossible. Towards his family he would henceforward have to bear himself with humility. That was a cynicism. He would have to leave Helena, which he could not do. He would have to play strenuously night after night, the music of "The Saucy Little Switzer", which was absurd. Very well, then, that being so, what remained possible? Why, to depart. "If thine hand offend thee, cut it off." (38)

Siegmund lacks the strength of character to make a decision one way or the other. He cannot accept a life at home which is death to his soul, and he has not the courage to live with Helena with whom he might find fulfilment. And so he hangs himself.

In these early novels, Lawrence has not expounded the full significance of his belief in fulfilment through intense sensual experience. But he is concerned that man fulfil himself in life, and Lettie's calling upon George to be fully alive in the senses, or Annable's expounding<sup>of</sup> his belief in the animal side of man, is Lawrence's way of expressing this concern. At the same time that he is giving voice to the value of living intensely, however, there is a strong pull in the other direction, a fear of living intensely and a realization that full awakening to life carries with it profound responsibilities and dangers. On the one<sup>h</sup>and there is the attraction towards life and on the other hand the pull towards death. Both George and Siegmund die when, having been awakened to a consciousness of what full living is, they are unable to achieve it. This same drift between life and death is noticeable in Sons and Lovers.

In a letter to Edward Garnett, Lawrence outlines the plot of

Sons and Lovers thusly:

...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....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 realizes 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.(39)

Clearly, too, this novel, like its predecessor, is a story in which fulfilment is not achieved. But what a vast gulf in power of conception separates the two. "I do loathe cowardice, and sloppy emotions," said Lawrence once. (40) Yet cowardice and sloppy emotions were what he wrote of in The Trespasser. Perhaps Sons and Lovers was a product of the dislike he himself felt for that previous piece of writing. Because there is nothing "sloppy" about Sons and Lovers. Painful, yes, but painful because of the violence and unnaturalness of the emotions portrayed, not because of their weakness. It is an ugly story, beautifully told.

The early portion of the book is a masterly presentation of the evil effects of a wrong marriage on the Morel household. The significance for Paul, the son, of the dissatisfaction in marriage of husband and wife,

is the source of the later boy-and-girl conflict in the book. In his treatment of both of these central issues, Lawrence reveals his concern for the importance of the physical element in personal relationships and his antagonism towards the spiritual woman.

Although his sympathy is undeniably with Mrs. Morel, in treating the history of her marriage he does not overlook the part she contributed to its unhappy course. Her husband, on the purely physical level, is a man whom Lawrence heartily admires. Bearded, with coal-black hair and ruddy cheeks, capable of rich laughter, he is a picture of glowing health. It is his vitality and spontaneous, animal aliveness which first draws Mrs. Morel to him. She is attracted when she sees him dancing one night. Their meeting is beautifully described:

...The dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her. (41)

Their is an attraction of opposites, for in contrast to Morel's purely sensuous nature, Mrs. Morel has a Puritan <sup>sex /</sup> background.

After the marriage when she seeks something more in her husband than sheer animal attractiveness she fails to find it. Then it is that she sets out to refine him spiritually, "to make him moral, religious." (42)

For "she could not be content with the little he might be; she would have him the much that he ought to be." (43) Then begins the fight (44) between them, a fight which can end "only with the death of one."

The death of only one perhaps, but not the triumph of the other.

The battle between husband and wife is fierce and sordid and degrading, but unlike the battles in most of Lawrence's books, it is one which can be dramatized. It does not occur purely below the surface,

deep within the person, without external manifestation as is the case in so many of his other books to their detriment as novels. Although the deepest bruises here, as elsewhere, are the bruises on the soul, the fight is brought into the open and realized in dramatic action on the objective plane. In a series of ugly scenes, the awful, impossible split of husband and wife is revealed. The situations are mutually degrading and mutually destructive for the persons involved. Many of them are childish, for Morel is a child and can only find a child's expression for the spite within him. One time he sneaks a sixpence from his wife's purse. When accused of the act he violently denies it. Indignantly, he goes to his room only to reappear in a few minutes with a little bundle tied up in a blue handkerchief. He is going to run away. However, he doesn't get beyond the garden gate with the bundle and a short time later creeps shame-facedly and <sup>surly</sup>~~surely~~ into the house again. Another time, after a heated quarrel, he locks his wife out of the house. It is autumn and a cool night. Mrs. Morel is with child. She wanders about the garden for hours before Morel, who has fallen asleep, awakens and re-admits her. There is shame for both of them at the pettiness of their relationship.

In other scenes the action degenerates from the childish to the brutal. A tight knot of tension binds the household. Emotions are pitched to the breaking point. Always, there is a waiting, waiting, for the dreaded violence. The children lie awake upstairs listening to the quarrel below, straining to hear if their father is abusing their mother. Outside, the ash tree blows in the wind, shutting off the sounds from the lower part of the house. The fear of the unknown is added to their terror. One night Morel staggers home drunk from the pub. His



wife objects. He throws a drawer at her. Her head is cut. Another night, son challenges father to battle.

The tragedy of the marriage is a tragedy for all concerned, husband, wife and children. Like Annable in The White Peacock, Morel has married a woman who turns her back on the very core of him, his physical, sensuous nature, and who tries to make him something he is not. Like Annable, he is destroyed by the rejection: "...his physique seemed to contract along with his pride and moral strength." (45) He stands against his family, knowing the hate of his children, the scorn of his wife. He lives in shame, shame of his own actions, shame which eats away his spirit. He never comes to real manhood. This is his failure and his tragedy. And it is his own failure. His wife contributes to his destruction by her attempts to make him nobler than he is, but essentially the lack is within himself. In spite of his physical virility, he is a coward. He cannot face the situation with his wife, honestly: "He always ran away from the battle within himself saying, 'If she hadn't said so-and-so, it would never have happened. She asked for what she got.'" (46) And he slides away from the unpleasant things in life. That is perhaps the root of his wife's grievance. He would not assume the responsibilities of a husband and a father. (Yet, neither would Annable in The White Peacock and he is Lawrence's spokesman.) During the long period that she is sick, he avoids his wife's bed-room. And, at her death he is afraid to view the body. But at the funeral he breaks down and weeps, as much in self pity as in sorrow. Despite his cowardness and his lack of true manhood, however, he is pathetic at times when in loneliness and bewilderment his soul reaches out blindly for his wife only to find her gone.

Husband, and wife are irreconcilable. With acute sensitivity,

Lawrence has portrayed their dreadful situation. It is a situation which he reveals not only in their disagreements and fights but in their relations at times of comparative peace. Even though they may try to be agreeable, the very presence of the two of them in the same room creates a tight atmosphere that neither one can endure: "Both felt an oppression on their breathing when they were left together for some time." (47)

The husband is destroyed in the marriage, the wife unfulfilled. That vital realization in life<sup>for</sup> which Lawrence argues so strongly ~~for~~ cannot easily be achieved. Too often, "life takes hold of one, carries the body along, accomplishes one's history, and yet is not real, but leaves oneself as it were slurred over." (48) This is what has happened to Mrs. Morel. She is waiting for something that can never come, for, as she says to Paul: "...I've never - you know, Paul - I've never had a husband - not really - " (49)

This knowledge that his mother has never had her life's fulfillment hurts Paul deeply. He determines to make it up to her, and in the effort to do so nearly destroys himself. In treating the mother-son relationship, Lawrence has tried to communicate as clearly as he could the depths of the affection which bound the two. He is not content to reveal that affection indirectly, to suggest it by various subtle means. He chooses rather to state it directly, emphatically. They are likened to lovers. When they walk down Station Street on a shopping expedition they feel "the excitement of lovers having an adventure together," and Mrs. Morel is described as "gay, like a sweetheart." (50) When they take a walk to Willey Farm the mother and son are "in ecstasy together." (51)

The ser<sup>v</sup>ices they perform, one for the other, are a consecration of their love. Paul reveals his devotion when he cleans

his mother's shoes: "They were kid boots at eight shillings a pair. He, however, thought them the most dainty boots in the world, and he cleaned them with as much reverence as if they had been flowers." (52)

There is something inherent in the situation itself which Lawrence is treating that causes a slight withdrawal in the reader. Lawrence has not selected his details so as to make his people only noble, or heroic. His aim is truth, and in the pursuit of it he has not hesitated to reveal his characters at their most intimate and most vulnerable moments. The reader feels a slight disgust at these times, a turning away as from any sign of affection too personal, too delicate for the outside world to look upon. In one scene Paul watches Miriam, his friend, stifle her younger brother in a flood of passionate love. He is rendered uneasy by this and he cries out: "What do you make such a fuss for...Why (52) can't you be ordinary with him?" Just as Paul feels about what is unnatural and excessive in Miriam's emotion, so the reader feels about his own and Mrs. Morel's.

The excessive, over-tender relationship of the mother and son unfits Paul for partaking in a full relationship with a woman when he comes of age. The mother holds the son's soul. He cannot give it to another woman. And so there is a split of body and soul. His love affairs are failures. This is the situation treated in the later portion of the book in the relationship of Paul and Miriam. However, the source of the conflict which characterizes this relationship is not so clearly presented as Lawrence would lead us to believe in his outline of the plot of Sons and Lovers in the letter to Garnett. If the conflict arose solely out of Paul's inability to enter into a full relationship with a woman because his mother held his soul, then Paul would be to blame

for the failure of the affair. But as the story is written the largest responsibility for the failure is placed upon Miriam.

In his portrayal of Miriam, Lawrence reveals the limitations which his philosophical prejudices are imposing on his artistic creation. At this point in his career, he can conceive of only one kind of woman - spiritual woman. She is Emily, she is Helena, she is Mrs. Morel, she is Miriam. But while Mrs. Morel, though bearing a general similarity to the others in her emphasis on the moral and religious side of life, is distinct as a character from them, Miriam is not. There is no development of characterization here. Miriam is indeed Emily of The White Peacock. The characteristics of the one are the characteristics of the other. There is no distinction between them. And Miriam's home is Emily's home, a home where the women "treasure religion inside them, breathe it in their nostrils," lending to the simplest household chore, a religious significance that baffles and irritates their men and finally drives them in reaction to answer with brutality. (54)

Miriam, like Emily, scarcely lives in this world, so romantic and imaginative is she. Her spirit wanders away to the fairy-land world of a Walter Scott tale. She dreams of maidens being loved by "men with helmets or with plumes in their caps." (55) And this is the kind of relationship she wants with Paul, a relationship in which the material, physical facts of existence would not enter. Her attitude cuts the ground from under Paul's feet. "You make me so spiritual!" he protests; "And I don't want to be spiritual." (56) He recognizes in her nature the strength to stand up to the big things in life, to face tragedy and sorrow, but it is not tragedy and sorrow that he wants as a bond of union between them. He wants to be united in the every-day, trivial, inconsiderable things of life. And it is in these respects

that the brooding, intense Miriam is most deficient. She has no capacity for careless day-to-day living.

When the two are together, they must always be on a high, exalted plane of existence, looking at life through a mystic haze. Even the simplest pastimes are invested with a spiritual significance. One night Miriam takes Paul to see a rose-bush. They stand before it as before something divine and Miriam's soul quivers in the sense of sacred communion she believes exists between herself and Paul. The roses are described in terms of religious imagery:

They were white, some incurved and holy, others expanded in an ecstasy. The tree was dark as a shadow. She lifted her hand impulsively to the flowers; she went forward and touched them in worship....There was a cool scent of ivory roses - a white, virgin scent.(57)

"A white, virgin scent" - this is the atmosphere which Miriam trails behind her. Another night when she and Paul stand at the side of the sea in the moonlight, she thinks the great beauty of the scene before them will inspire him with religious devotion. Actually, he feels the desire for love, a desire which he quells instantly, so ashamed is he of the thought in connection with Miriam. The introduction of the physical into their relationship would be a sacrilege. Their "purity" keeps them  
(58)  
from their first kiss.

And their purity in the end destroys their relationship. Their delicacy is excessive and destructive. Paul cannot be easy or natural in company with Miriam because she will not recognize him for the male he is. When she does come to him it is in the spirit of self-sacrifice. This revolts him. This is the grossest insult and the most pernicious form of destruction of a man, Lawrence believes.

Paul reacts away from Miriam. He feels she wants the soul out of

his body and not him. And he is particularly afraid of her desire for his soul. For Miriam is conceived as a kind of leech who seeks to absorb the soul of a man into herself. Extravagantly emotional, she cannot appreciate an object or person without wanting to stifle it with her love. So it is with her affection for her younger brother, so it is with her feeling for flowers. She touches them, fondles them, kisses them, until Paul looking on cries out in alarm: "Can you never like things without clutching them as if you wanted to pull the heart out of them?"<sup>(59)</sup>

He cries out in alarm because he fears that just as she approaches the flowers, she approaches him. She wants "to draw all of him into her."<sup>(60)</sup> "She is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul till he has none of his own left," says Mrs. Morel of her.<sup>(61)</sup>

Miriam, in her desire to absorb all of a man into herself, is a threat to a man's very being. She seeks to dominate the man, dominate him so completely that there would be no part of himself left to himself. This alone, is sufficient reason for the failure of the relationship between Paul and Miriam. As the story is written, Miriam must bear a large part of the blame. The other aspect of the situation, which Lawrence in his letter to Garnett emphasizes, Paul's inability to love fully because his mother holds his soul, is certainly important. But Paul's own difficulties are aggravated by Miriam's excessive spirituality and, in a letter to her breaking off their friendship, he clearly blames her for the unhappy course it has taken: "In all our relations no body enters. I do not talk to you through the senses - rather through the spirit....With you I cannot long be trivial, and you know, to be always beyond this mortal state would be to lose it. If people marry, they must

live together as affectionate humans...not as two souls."

This statement is so very intelligent that one wonders if Lawrence has not out-done himself. He provokes too much sympathy for Paul in the Paul-Miriam relationship, and in his portrayal of Miriam's excessive spirituality provides too great motivation for Paul's rejection of

Miriam apart from that motivation which is the core of the situation - Paul's love for his mother. Through his treatment of the character of Miriam, Lawrence obscures the central issue.

That central issue - the inability of Paul to love another woman than his mother - comes out more clearly in Paul's second love affair. This time he turns to a married woman. The reasons are obvious. A married woman is safe for one in Paul's situation. She is no threat to his soul which is not his to give, because she has no real claim to him. Neither of them <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ free to give all of <sup>himself</sup> ~~themselves~~ to the other, and so both must be content with what the other is prepared to give.

The mother holds the son's soul while she lives. And she very nearly takes it with her into death. After her burial Paul endures weeks of agony. In Lawrence's novels, particularly the early ones, the men have a desperate need for woman. Without woman they are destroyed. It was so with George without Lettie, it was so with Annable without his first wife, it was so with Siegmund without Helena. It is almost the case with Paul without his mother. Without the woman no self-fulfilment is possible, and lacking self-fulfilment, a man is nothing. This is Paul's grievance. He feels that without his mother he is "nothing himself." (63) And one night he wanders out into the open fields under the sky thinking himself in a void:

Where was he? - one tiny upright speck of flesh, less than an ear of wheat lost in the field. He could not bear it. On every side the immense dark silence pressing him, so tiny a spark, into extinction, and yet, almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night, in which everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror, and holding each other in embrace, there in a darkness that outpassed them all, and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness, and yet not nothing. (64)

He very nearly follows his mother into death, but at the last moment he stops:

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. (65)

Paul, unlike George and Siegmund and Annable, defeats the urge towards death and chooses life.



NOTES TO CHAPTER I

- (1) D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1935), p. 19.
- (2) Ibid., p. 33.
- (3) Ibid., p. 78.
- (4) Ibid., p. 109.
- (5) Ibid., p. 77.
- (6) Ibid., p. 96.
- (7) Ibid., p. 50.
- (8) Ibid., p. 115.
- (9) Ibid., p. 163.
- (10) Ibid., p. 146.
- (11) Ibid., p. 167.
- (12) Loc. cit.
- (13) Ibid., p. 165.
- (14) Ibid., pp. 165-66.
- (15) Ibid., p. 217.
- (16) Ibid., p. 130.
- (17) Ibid., p. 293.

- (18) Ibid., p. 266.
- (19) Ibid., p. 317.
- (20) D. H. Lawrence, The Trespasser (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935), p.51.
- (21) Ibid., p. 35.
- (22) Ibid., p. 129.
- (23) Ibid., p. 131.
- (24) Ibid., p. 135.
- (25) Loc. cit.
- (26) Ibid., p. 44.
- (27) Ibid., p. 57.
- (28) Ibid., p. 144.
- (29) Ibid., p. 143.
- (30) Loc. cit.
- (31) Ibid., p. 142.
- (32) Ibid., p. 145.
- (33) Loc. cit.
- (34) Ibid., p. 180.
- (35) Ibid., p. 138.

- (36) Ibid., p. 101.
- (37) Ibid., p. 179.
- (38) Ibid., p. 246.
- (39) The letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1932), p. 76.
- (40) Ibid., p. 653.
- (41) D. H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers (New York: The Modern Library, 1922), p. 14.
- (42) Ibid., p. 19.
- (43) Ibid., pp. 21-22.
- (44) Ibid., p. 19.
- (45) Ibid., p. 35.
- (46) Ibid., p. 54.
- (47) Ibid., p. 61.
- (48) Ibid., p. 9.
- (49) Ibid., p. 262.
- (50) Ibid., p. 116.
- (51) Ibid., p. 157.
- (52) Ibid., p. 152.

(53) Ibid., p. 190.

(54) Ibid., p. 177.

(55) Loc. cit.

(56) Ibid., p. 233.

(57) Ibid., pp. 198-99

(58) Ibid., p. 222.

(59) Ibid., p. 269.

(60) Ibid., p. 240.

(61) Ibid., p. 199.

(62) Ibid., pp. 309-10

(63) Ibid., p. 507.

(64) Ibid., p. 517.

(65) Loc. cit.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SUPREMACY OF WOMAN

In The Rainbow there is a character whose flame of life, like Paul's, was nearly quenched by experience too rending for the soul. This is Lydia who has come to England from Poland. Her past is one of revolution, horror, death. Her first husband, Lensky, a young doctor, an intellectual and a rebel, had immersed himself utterly in his work of emancipation, straining himself "till nothing lived in him but his eyes."<sup>(1)</sup> He sacrificed everything for his cause, even his child, and when failure was his reward he wasted away to death. Lydia remains behind in life, but like Paul is drawn to the darkness: "She walked always in a shadow, silenced, with a strange, deep terror having hold of her, her desire was to seek satisfaction in dread, to enter a nunnery, to satisfy the instincts of dread in her, through service of a dark religion."<sup>(2)</sup> In England, she is only an echo of her husband, passive, blank, a silent shadow. She prefers to meet the misery of her fate by complete submission to that misery, by enveloping herself in dread. She fights any spark that would kindle the flame of life within her again. She shuts away the English spring which calls for an awakening answer in her soul. But, in the end, she is won back to life, just as Paul was won back to life.

The pull towards death was a strong one but the imminence of

annihilation renders life all the more wonderful when it is affirmed. The Rainbow is the record of that affirmation. Self-fulfilment is still afar, but self-fulfilment as an ideal is the accompaniment of the affirmation of life. For that is what life is to Lawrence, the realization of the self to the fullest degree. The struggle for self-fulfilment becomes then the source of the conflict in this, the fourth published novel of Lawrence. The first three novels are stories in which lack of fulfilment is the main theme. The Rainbow too, in part, treats of failure. But it is distinct from the others in the intensity of the struggle for self-fulfilment which it depicts.

Woman occupies a central position in the struggle of a man for the vital realization of his being. In the early part of his career, Lawrence bore a great reverence for womanhood. He recognized woman, first of all, as the source of all productive power in the world. From woman, be it mother or wife, man received the energy and the prime motivation for creative effort, he believed. Paul expressed the idea in Sons and Lovers:  
"From his mother he drew the life-warmth, the strength to produce;  
(3)  
Miriam urged this warmth into intensity like a white-light." More  
is  
important than this, woman to Lawrence the door through which man may pass to a mystical awareness of the Source of the universe, the creator's power: "And God the Father, the Inscrutable, the Unknowable, we know in the Flesh, in Woman. She is the door for our in-going and our out-coming.  
(4)  
In her we go back to the Father...."

A physical and passionate meeting of man and woman was to Lawrence a deeply religious experience, the means of communication with the great Unknown. That is why he urged so strongly the satisfying of strong

desire if a man would develop his consciousness to the fullest extent. Purity lay in pure fulfilment. Suppression was unclean. And the hope for the world, he believed, lay in a 'rapprochement' of man and woman:

I think the one thing to do, is for men to have courage to draw nearer to women, expose themselves to them, and be altered by them: and for women to accept and admit men. That is the start - by bringing themselves together, men and women - revealing themselves each to the other, gaining great blind knowledge and suffering and joy, which it will take a big further lapse of civilisation to exploit and work out. Because the source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and the meeting and mingling of these two: man-life and woman-life, man-knowledge and woman-knowledge, man-being and woman-being. (5)

This explains Lawrence's portrayal of the spiritual woman in his first three novels. They are a hindrance to the meeting and mingling of man and woman which is the source of all living. Their shrinking from the physical, is a denial to man of his means of mystical communion with the Source of the universe whereby he can gain true realization of his self, rebirth into wholeness and completeness. In The Rainbow, Lawrence is concerned almost solely with that meeting and mingling of man and woman which he believed would point a new direction for humanity to take. Whatever else The Rainbow is, he wrote, "it is the voyage of discovery towards the real and eternal and unknown land. We are like Columbus, we have our backs upon Europe, till we come to the new world." (6)

As with Columbus, the search for a new world results in a departure from the known, familiar world and a voyaging on strange, untrammelled seas. The means of conveyance to the new world is the whole meeting of man and woman, intimate contact of two alien natures. Hence, the overwhelming emphasis in The Rainbow is on this intimate contact of man and woman. The novel spans three generations of the Brangwen family, but it

is not a novel about the Brangwen family. It is a novel about three couples, Tom and Lydia, Will and Anna, Anton and Ursula, who happen to be successive generations of the same family but whose stories bear no necessary relation to their family heritage. For their stories are in each case the record of their struggle to make satisfying, whole, and perfect contact with their mates. Their individual stories are in the broadest sense also the story of Man and Woman.

Lawrence's interpretation of that story is an interpretation that had not as yet been attempted in fictional form. He was trying to express something new and hence he had to find a new mode of expression. He was not interested in the inter-relationships of people in the social world, nor with action on the objective plane. Hence he was not concerned with plot or incident. He was concerned rather with plunging to the core of existence and ~~in~~ revealing "the hidden waves that come from the depths of life."<sup>(7)</sup> The flow of these waves below the consciousness and below the will was the reality he wished to explore. It was a reality not of the surface glitter but of the subterranean depths beneath the glitter:

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.<sup>(8)</sup>

Consequently, in The Rainbow, Lawrence does not illuminate<sup>a</sup>/broad level of surface living, but plays a penetrating beam on the inner life of his characters. For scores of pages at a time there is no external action or incident, but only the terrible flow of forces within the souls of his protagonists. The outside, impersonal world seems scarcely to exist for them so intent are they on their own personal struggles. The outside, impersonal world has no bearing on their struggles and except





with Ursula, the characters are utterly enveloped in a strange private world of their own. This lends an overpowering intensity to the novel, but the elimination of action, plot, incident, <sup>is an</sup> ~~has~~ obvious detriment<sup>to</sup> ~~for~~ The Rainbow as a readable story. The vivid scenes of Sons and Lovers are not here. Only occasionally, as in the death of Tom during the flood scene, does Lawrence portray dramatic action. The power he exhibits on these occasions causes the reader<sup>to</sup> regret that they are not more frequent.

The early episodes of The Rainbow are enacted at Marsh Farm, the home of the Brangwen Family. The Brangwens are a family who live close to the soil, but as is usual in a Lawrence novel, the men are more satisfied in intimate contact with the physical, elemental life than are the women. There is a powerful unity between man and nature in The Rainbow; not a sentimental bond as in The Trespassers, but a strong, virile connection. The men live ever under the heavens, drawing the sunshine into their bodies, sucking up the rain, "feeling the pulse and body of the soil, - that opened to their furrow for the grain...and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire...." (9) In the fields:

The young corn waved and was silken, and the lustre slid along the limbs of the men who saw it. 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. They mounted their horses, and held life between the grips of their knees....(10)

(11)

But while the men live "full and surcharged" by all the warmth and generation and life about them, the women look out "from the heated, blind intercourse of farm-life, to the spoken world beyond." (12) The

distinction between the Brangwen men and the Brangwen women is the distinction between all men and women as Lawrence conceives them in his early novels. The nature of the men is physical, animal; the nature of

the women is moral, religious. The Brangwen men look to their women for guidance in all matters pertaining to religion, love and morality. (13)  
Their women are the "anchor and the security" in their lives. They depend on them for their stability. Without them they are straws in the wind.

Will is a typical Brangwen in this respect. Without a woman, he knows himself to be fragmentary and incomplete. Alone on the farm he is a straw in the wind, filled with a deep dissatisfaction <sup>at</sup> for life. He drowns this dissatisfaction in brandy and is on the road to the destruction rather than the realization of himself when Lydia enters his life. The meeting of the two is significant. They pass one another on the road one day. No word is spoken, no gesture made, but a contact is established, and a short time later they are married. This is representative of the meetings of two people in the novels of D. H. Lawrence. Such meetings are not dependent on outward signs. They are not made through the outward senses. They occur deep within the person, (14)  
"in some subtler communication direct from being to being."

Tom takes Lydia to Marsh Farm and there, with the elemental, physical life of the farm as a back drop, they enact their own elemental drama.

When Tom approaches Lydia, he comes to a "terrible painful unknown." (15) And he wonders how he can "embrace it and fathom it," wonders how he can "close his arms round all this darkness and hold it to his breast and give himself to it." (16) This sense of the mystery of the other person is constantly experienced by Lawrence's characters. It is not restricted to Tom and Lydia but it is emphasized in Tom and Lydia's case because of Lydia's foreign birth. When Lydia tells Tom of

her early days in Poland, of the peasants' madness when gripped with religious fervor, of her father's debaucheries, of the 'cattle' by whom she means the serfs, Tom is left bewildered and uncomprehending. There is so much about Lydia that he cannot understand, cannot even fathom. Yet this in itself is not a serious bar to the union of Tom and Lydia. The union of two people in a Lawrence novel is not dependent upon intellectual understanding, the one of the other, but upon something far harder to define, upon the flow of attraction and repulsion between the beings of the two people involved.

The struggle of Tom and Lydia for union is a long and tortured one. They cannot definitely get in touch with one another. They cannot reach one another in final embrace. At times Lydia is receptive to Tom but he fails to meet her. She reaches <sup>to</sup> ~~for~~ his failure by closing up like a bud. Then Tom knows "what it was to have been in communication with her, and to be cut off again." (17) He is filled with a deep misery until "gradually she became aware of him, aware of herself with regard to him, her blood stirred to life, she began to open towards him, to flow towards him again." (18) Then there are moments of deep fulfilment for both, but the moments do not last. They pass away again and torment replaces them: "...There was severance between them, and rage and misery and bereavement for her, and deposition and toiling at the mill with slaves for him." (19) And so their cycle is enacted. They know times of sacred communion, and they know times of agonizing apartness. They know the terrible suffering and terrible joy which lies only along the path to fulfilment. But never, in their first two years is their contact settled or permanent.

The perfect contact is so very important to make and so agonizingly difficult to achieve, in a Lawrence novel. Tom strains after that experience which will bring him to the brink of annihilation, but return him again to life renewed, recreated:

Blind and destroyed, he pressed forward, nearer, nearer, to receive the consummation of himself, he received within the darkness which should swallow him and yield him up to himself. If he could come really within the blazing kernel of darkness, if really he could be destroyed, burnt away till he lit with her in one consummation, that were supreme, supreme. (20)

The supreme experience is achieved by Tom and Lydia. After two years of married life and the agony and torment that has filled those two years, their struggle is crowned with success. They know that "entry into another circle of existence," "the baptism to another life," which is the goal of Lawrence's men and women and the reason why the sexual experience is elevated to such a high plane of importance. (21) Their entry into the new world is described in ecstatic terms:

At last they had thrown open the doors, each to the other, and had stood in the doorways facing each other, whilst the light flooded out from behind on to each of their faces, it was the transfiguration, the glorification, the admission. (22)

Tom and Lydia now meet "to the span of the heavens." (23) They form a perfect curved arch, the rainbow ~~is~~ symbol. The curved arch, which stands in contrast to the Gothic pointed arch expressing the broken desire of mankind, symbolises the fulfilled desire of mankind. Fulfilment comes from the unity of body and spirit, from the clash of darkness (the physical) upon light (the spiritual):

...The rainbow, the yellow and rose and blue and purple of dawn and sunset, which leaps out of the breaking of light upon darkness, of darkness upon light, absolutely beyond day or night; the rainbow, the iridescence which is darkness at once and light, the two-in-one; the crown that binds them both. (24)

As soon as Tom and Lydia win through to successful union in marriage,

Lawrence leaves them and hurries on to the next generation. He is interested in his characters only as long as their struggle for fulfilment through intimate contact can be exploited. He is not interested in their lives apart from this aspect. That is why one hesitates to say this is a novel about the Brangwen family. The focus of attention is so consistently directed to the private struggle of two people that the surrounding family group falls into insignificance. There is little treatment of a character's life beyond the sexual aspect, and when that is resolved in one way or another, the character is forgotten. Thus Lydia, whose personal life was so intimately revealed in the early pages of the novel, is only mentioned once or twice after she and Tom win through to success, and towards the end of the novel, we are told casually through Ursula's thoughts that she is dead and has been dead for two years.

The novel, then, does not grow organically out of its characters' lives. Those lives are shut off suddenly at a certain stage in their growth and they are replaced by others who in turn hold the stage for a while and then themselves are replaced. The emphasis in the novel is not so much on the individual characters as on the life forces which flow mightily from the core of existence, and the characters are in the novel mainly so that those forces may be embodied within them and through them. This preoccupation is destructive to neat form and well-defined construction in the novel. And it also leads to the extinction of distinct personality in the characters, a matter which will be investigated shortly. Lawrence, however, had his own ideas about the form and structure of the novel.

Tell Arnold Bennett that all rules of construction hold good only for novels which are copies of other novels. A book which

is not a copy of other books has its own construction, and what he calls faults, he being an old imitator, I call characteristics.(25)

One of the most impressive aspects of a Lawrence novel is the acute sensitivity of his characters, a sensitivity so fine and delicately tuned that one character knows the experience of another character almost as keenly as though it were his own experience. This comes out clearly in the relationship of Tom and Lydia and reaches its highest expression in Tom's emotions during the birth of his first child:

Elsewhere, fundamentally, he was with his wife in labor, the child was being brought forth out of their one flesh. He and she, one flesh, out of which life must be ~~put~~ forth. The rent was not in his body, but it was of his body. On her the blows fell, but the quiver ran through to him, to his last fibre. She must be torn asunder for life to come forth, yet ~~still~~ they were one flesh, and still, from further back, the life came out of him to her, and still he was the unbroken rock that has the broken rock in its arms, their flesh was one rock from which the life gushed, out of her who was smitten and rent from him who quivered and yielded.(26)

This keen receptivity of his characters renders them more vulnerable to the joys and sufferings of a personal relationship. If their sensibilities were blunter they would not feel so deeply those times when perfect harmony does not exist. But as it is, they know only too well when their mate is not perfectly with them. This intense awareness of Lawrence's characters permits him to delve into the most exhaustive analysis of the intricacies and subtleties of a close, personal relationship. He reveals his extraordinary talents for such analysis in his treatment of the marriage of Will and Anna.

Anna is the daughter of Lydia by her first husband, Lensky. Will is a Brangwen, Anna's cousin by virtue of her mother's second marriage. The two meet and fall in love. They decide to marry although Will has

no real means of supporting her. That however is incidental:

He felt he could not alter from what he was fixed upon,  
his will was set. To alter it he must be destroyed.  
And he would not be destroyed. He had no money. But he  
would get some from somewhere, it did not matter. (27)

And the reader feels that somehow, regardless of what he must do for it, he will obtain the money. This passage reveals that intense concentration of Lawrence's characters on that part of their life pertaining to union with a mate. All the other aspects of life fade away from their consciousness. They become obsessed with their one goal - union - and nothing else matters. To fail to achieve their goal would mean their destruction, and so they are prepared to go to any lengths to achieve it. This is what T. S. Eliot means when he says that Lawrence's characters have no social or moral sense. (28)

The love-emotion grips them completely, shutting out the rest of the world. For the rest of the world has no significance for a man whose true fulfilment can come only from the love-bond. So Will feels, after his marriage as well as before. While he and Anna are still honeymooning in their cottage, she invites a few friends into tea. He is furious at even this interference from the outside world <sup>in</sup> upon his private life.

For the most part, the early days of their intimate relationship are satisfying days. Will is united to Anna by that deep bond which is not dependent upon external factors: "In himself he knew her. But his outward faculties seemed suspended. He did not see her with his eyes nor hear her with his voice." (29) And in their early embraces they find that experience which is so important to Lawrence in the union of two people. From those embraces Will returns as to another world, a world, fresh and newly-begun.

However, this experience is not a lasting or permanent one. It passes quickly, and as Anna and Will's relationship deepens, anguish comes more and more to characterize it. The fault lies principally with Will. There is a fatal disproportion within him which unfits him to achieve the <sup>true</sup> time consummation of his being with Anna. Lawrence spoke of the possibility of this situation arising, in "The Crown," a long essay in which he states in prose many of the beliefs he illustrates in his novels. (30)

There, he pointed out that where this disproportion exists within the person (a disproportion in which the person knows only one of the two Eternities of Darkness and Light, that is, in which the person's nature is physical to the exclusion of the spiritual element, or spiritual to the exclusion of the physical element), the person seeks consummation of himself by devouring his partner. He becomes a bird of prey, seeking a power over the other which would mean the other's annihilation.

This was the situation which arose between Paul and Miriam. Miriam's nature was excessively spiritual. The necessary physical aspect was lacking in her. To fill the void which this created, she sought to absorb the other into herself. And so it is with Will. He wants a strange absorption with Anna. He wants her "to be part of himself, the extension of his will." (31) Anna draws back from him in horror, just as Paul shrank from Miriam. She feels he wants her in some way "to be dark, unnatural." (32) She wants to keep "her own, old, sharp self, detached, detached, active but not absorbed, active for her own part, taking and giving, but never absorbed." (33) Anna sets herself in opposition to Will. She resists his domination, and this is the source of conflict between them.

Their fight is a cruel one, and though both repent their cruelties,



their moods of tenderness never correspond. They love one another, but they cannot meet one another. In the battle between them it is Will who is defeated. Anna resists him successfully. She maintains her own separate, detached self. But Will has no separate, detached self. That is his grievance. There is a void within him, a void which he looks to Anna to fill: "It was as if he ended uncompleted, as yet uncreated on the darkness, and he wanted her to come and liberate him into the whole."<sup>(34)</sup> He must be liberated into the whole, for while the void is within him he is always on the brink of a terrible extinction:

He felt as if he were suspended in space, held there by the grip of his will. If he relaxed his will he would fall, fall through endless space, into the bottomless pit, always falling, will-less, helpless, non-existent, just dropping to extinction, falling till the fire of friction had burned out, like a falling star, then nothing, nothing, complete nothing.<sup>(35)</sup>

This fear of nothingness against which Anna is the strongest bulwark puts Will in a position of dependency on Anna which causes him to cry out in despair: "Why was she the all, the everything, why must he live only through her, why must he sink if he were detached from her?"<sup>(36)</sup> Why must he cleave to her in a frenzy as for his very life?"

The answer is obvious. It has already been indicated. Will has no isolated self within him from which he can draw sustenance. This in itself would not be fatal, for the way to attain an isolated self is through sensuality. But Will does not approach Anna in the proper fashion to achieve a true union in sensuality. He tries to dominate her. She resists him and no satisfying contact is established.

Because Will is so dependent upon Anna, his whole being is at her mercy. He can take no pleasure in any activity of which she does not approve. An artist, he has worked with loving care upon a wood carving of Adam and Eve. Anna criticizes it one day. Her criticism destroys its wonder for him, and shortly after he throws it in the fire.

He is troubled because he feels that Anna has no respect for his life beyond her, for his public, work-a-day self. But his worst grievance against Anna arises from her attitude to his religious emotions. His nature is deeply religious, although it is an emotional connection he has with the church rather than an intellectual one. He does not care about the dogma or the teachings of the church. The sermon passes him by unheeded. It is the mystery of religion that draws him:

...his real being lay in his dark emotional experience of the Infinite, of the Absolute. And the great mysterious, illuminated captials to the text, were his feelings with the Church.(37)

Anna hates this religious impulse within him and seeks to destroy it. Their relations are significantly displayed one day when they visit a cathedral together. As Will passes through the door he is caught in a mystical rapture:

His soul leapt, soared up into the great church. His body stood still, absorbed by the height. His soul leapt up into the gloom, into possession, it reeled, it swooned with a great escape, it quivered in the womb, in the hush and the gloom of fecundity, like seed of procreation in ecstasy.(38)

Anna, too, feels the mystical attraction of the church, but she resists it. She turns away from the great, soaring heights and concentrates upon a detail of carving. The wicked, odd little faces carved into the stone amuse her. She calls Will's attention to them, saying that the artist has put his wife into his work. She laughs profanely, and destroys as she had intended, the essence of the cathedral for him. This violence she does to his religious emotions, this jeering at his soul, sends Will away from her "dark and destroyed, his soul running its blood."<sup>(39)</sup>

He knows himself to be not a man, not a whole, complete man, vul-

nerable as he is before her. He <sup>has</sup> ~~knows~~ no inner core of being that will permit him to stand alone, beyond Anna's criticism. He knows she is right when she flares at him in contempt of his attempt to be master of her: "Fool! I've known my own father, who could put a dozen of you  
(40)  
in his pipe and push them down with his finger-end."

Eventually, he gives up the struggle to dominate her, "to have the spiritual superiority and control, or even her respect for his conscious  
(41)  
or public life." It is then that he comes closest to achieving the transformation through union with another being that Lawrence idealizes:

He had just learned what it was to be able to be alone. It was right and peaceful. She had given him a new deeper freedom.... He had come into his own existence. He was born for a second time, born at last unto himself, out of the vast body of humanity. Now at last he had a separate identity, he existed alone...Before he had only existed in so far as he had relations with another being. Now he had an absolute self - as well as a relative self.(42)

The transformation occurs when he relaxes his attempt to dominate Anna. That attempt had been a sign of the disproportion within him. It had caused Anna to shrink from him in horror and thus a true union between the two had been impossible. When he ~~relaxes~~ the proper equilibrium is established, and Will knows his most satisfying contact with Anna.

However, the self into which he is reborn is not a very satisfactory self. It is indeed "a very dumb, weak, helpless self, a crawling  
(43)  
nursling." And though Will has gained something in his marriage even in this, he doesn't achieve the most complete fulfilment possible. He misses true wholeness. In the final analysis Will is aware of:

...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. Something undeveloped in him limited him, there was a darkness in him which he could not unfold, which would never unfold in him.(44)

True fulfilment is an ideal not easily won.

Anna, too, misses complete fulfilment in her marriage. She looks out from her home, beyond, to "a faint, gleaming horizon, a long way off, and a rainbow like an archway, a shadow-door with faintly coloured coping above it." (45) The rainbow then is beyond Anna, not above her, and the door which was opened wide to Tom and Lydia is only half-opened to Anna, leaving her with a slight expectant feeling. She knows a vague discontent, and strains forward towards the rainbow. But when her second child is born she relinquishes the journey into the unknown. Now she is satisfied. She is a rich woman, but her riches lie in her children rather than in her husband.

The marriage of Will and Anna, unlike that of Tom and Lydia, is resolved in only partial fulfilment for man and wife. But it is resolved. And Lawrence, leaving Will and Anna to produce a large family, then focusses his attention on their eldest daughter, Ursula.

Ursula emerges from the pages of the novel, a well-defined character. This is not true of the others. It is true in Ursula's case because she has an existence beyond her sex-life. She does not exist solely as the woman in the man-woman struggle for fulfilment through the sexual experience. She is unlike Lydia in this respect, and unlike Lydia, Ursula comes alive in the novel. Lydia tends to be as shadowy, remote, and unknown to the reader as she was to her husband.

This is the danger of Lawrence's preoccupation with the significance of sex in the lives of his characters. T. S. Eliot has pointed out that man when he is most intense emotionally, tends to be least differentiated from his fellows (46) Lawrence's characters are most often seen in states of intense emotion, emotion deriving directly or indirectly from physical contact. And in these states they are least differentiated, the one from

the other. Their individuality is shed, and they become symbols of the whole of humanity, not Anna or Tom or Will, but Man and Woman.

Lawrence was aware of this factor in his characterization. It was consciously planned, for, it was intimately involved in the exploration of the life forces, the hidden waves that flow beneath the surface, which he wanted to make. He wanted with people, as with life, to strike to the very core of their being. In a letter to Garnett, he wrote,

...that which is physis - non-human in humanity, is more interesting to me than the old fashioned human element - which causes one to conceive a character in a certain moral scheme and make him consistent....it is the inhuman will, call it physiology of matter, that fascinates me. I don't so much care about what the woman feels - in the ordinary usage of the word. That presumes an ego to feel with. I only care about what the woman is - what she IS - inhumanly, physiologically - materially - according to the use of the word: but for me, what she is as phenomenon (or as representing some greater, inhuman will), instead of what she feels according to the human conception. (47)

Frequently then, this interest of Lawrence causes him to work towards the extinction of distinct personality in his characters. Tom feels this way about Lydia: "...her head revealed itself to him in all its subtle, intrinsic beauty, and he knew she was his woman, he knew her essence, that it was his to possess. And he seemed to live thus in contact with her, in contact with the unknown, the unaccountable and incalculable." (48) "The unknown," "the unaccountable," "the incalculable" - there is not much individuality expressed in these words, but only the mystery of woman. Will, too, thinks <sup>of</sup> Anna as a flame and he conceives his own relation to her thusly: "The flame flowed up his limbs, flowed through him, till he was consumed, till he existed only as an unconscious, dark transit of flame, deriving from her." (49) At other times, a character in intimate embrace with another is described as darkness cleaving to darkness, or as a "powerful vibration." (50) Such

descriptions of his characters - as flames, as darkness, as vibrations - deprive them of separate identities and render them one with all humanity in whom flows the same forces as move within them.

Ursula, however, is more firmly realized as a person because Lawrence has revealed her public life as well as her intimate love-life. Ursula, unlike the other characters takes an active role on the social plane. She is a teacher. The portions of the book dealing with her experiences as a teacher are magnificently conceived. And Lawrence's attitude to her experiences are important for an understanding of his thought.

Ursula approaches the first day of her first job with high hopes and high ideals. She is determined to be a wonderful teacher, loved by all her pupils. She intends to be very personal, to give herself, "give, give, give all her great stores of wealth to her children." (51) She quickly discovers, however, that she has brought her generosity and her kindly feelings to the wrong place. The school is not run on a personal basis. Lawrence's description of that first day at school - of the way one teacher ignores another, of the marching children, of the dominating principal, of the harsh methods used to drum lessons into the heads of the pupils - is masterfully done. Ursula is horrified, but she bravely tries to carry out her youthful ideals. The class watches her, "hostile, ready to jeer." (52) They interpret her kindness as weakness, and take every advantage of her inexperience.

As the days pass their work becomes progressively worse, their impudence more open. Ursula's class becomes the most troublesome in the school, a hindrance to the work of the others. Mr. Harby, the principal, is furious with Ursula for her incompetency and openly humiliates her

before her pupils. The horror deepens inside of Ursula. The hours of school when she must expose herself before the block of fifty watchful children are hours of misery. Even in her off-time the school haunts her, looming behind her like a shadow, and on Sunday night she <sup>is</sup> tenses inside at the thought of the coming Monday and another week. Finally, something snaps within her. She endures the insults of pupils and colleagues as long as she can, and then one day the breaking point comes. One of her pupils, William, acts up badly, urged on by the class. When Ursula turns from the class to the blackboard she hears her pupils whispering behind her. She is gripped with fear. When she faces them again she is aware that they are hiding something from her. Suddenly her fear vanishes and she is filled with a white fury. She <sup>grabs</sup> William and thrashes him. Her action wins her the respect she has desired but not without heavy cost to herself. She has had to brutalize herself to make her way in the world, and the experience marks her soul for life.

Lawrence's attitude to Ursula's experience is interesting. Ursula's early failure in the teaching profession, he points out, was the result of her approaching it from an individual stand-point. She was determined to love her children and to give her personal self to them. This, however, he believes, cannot be done by a successful teacher. He accepts the necessity for a teacher to compel the children to accept knowledge. The will of the class must be brought under the control of the will of the teacher. If it is not, the will of the class will master the teacher. One or the other situations must exist for - "in school it was  
(53)  
power, and power alone that mattered."

The teacher who will master the class cannot approach it as

Ursula approaches it, opening herself wide to its taunts. The teacher who will master his class will do so only by "an abnegation of his personal self." (54) This is the crux of Lawrence's grievance against the teaching profession. It involves the abnegation of the personal self of the teacher, and Lawrence hated anything for which the personal self must be sacrificed. His great belief was in the personal self, and this belief led him to reject the social world. For the situation which exists in the teaching profession is only one example of the situation which exists everywhere on the social plane. Action on the social plane involves the abnegation of the personal self.

Those of Lawrence's characters who act on the social plane, pay dearly for it. Mr. Brant, the teacher, has a voice that is "jarring, harsh, full of hate" because "the personal man was in subdued friction all the time." (55) Lensky, Lydia's first husband, the Polish doctor who worked so hard forwarding the cause of science, nationalism, liberty, died when his work failed because he failed to admit the importance of the personal life. He had been unaware of the "human joy" that exists though individual effort fails. (56)

And Lydia, thinking of him after his death, feels that he had never lived. Anton, too, Ursula's lover is a soldier who believes it is right for him to sacrifice himself for his country. He holds social values rather than individual ones, believing that the individual "was important in so far as he represented all humanity." (57)

Because he believes this, he is described as being "strangely nothing," a spectator of life, not a participator. (58) And he loses Ursula. His loss deprives him of hope for the true realization of his self, even as he himself acknowledges: "No highest good of the community...would give him the vital fulfilment of his soul." (59)



The vital fulfilment of the soul - that is the prime ideal (one is tempted to say the only ideal) which Lawrence holds. It is an ideal which he stated over and over again. In writing The Rainbow, he presented the struggle of his characters to achieve the ideal. The struggle is a fierce one. But it is not always successful. Tom and Lydia find true fulfilment, but Will and Anna and Anton and Ursula fail. For both Will and Anton their struggle brought humiliation. Both were too dependent on the woman and their dependency deprived them of their freedom. Because of this, Lawrence in his next novel modified the means to fulfilment of the self, which, in The Rainbow, is held to be the complete meeting and mingling of two people in the love-bond.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

- (1) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow (London: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 51.
- (2) Ibid., p. 52.
- (3) D. H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers, p. 196.
- (4) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 100.
- (5) Ibid., p. 196.
- (6) Ibid., p. 240.
- (7) Ibid., p. 232.
- (8) Ibid., p. 198.
- (9) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, p. 8.
- (10) Ibid., p. 8.
- (11) Ibid., p. 9.
- (12) Ibid., p. 8.
- (13) Ibid., p. 19.
- (14) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 446.
- (15) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, p. 59.
- (16) Ibid., p. 59.
- (17) Ibid., p. 57.

- (18) Ibid., p. 57.
- (19) Ibid., p. 64.
- (20) Ibid., p. 96.
- (21) Ibid., p. 96.
- (22) Ibid., p. 97.
- (23) Ibid., p. 98.
- (24) D. H. Lawrence, "The Crown," Reflections on The Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays, p. 16.
- (25) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 295.
- (26) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, p. 76.
- (27) Ibid., p. 128.
- (28) T. S. Eliot, After Strange Gods, p. 39.
- (29) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, p. 131.
- (30) D. H. Lawrence, "The Crown," Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays, p. 27-28.
- (31) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, p. 172.
- (32) Ibid., p. 172.
- (33) Ibid., p. 203.
- (34) Ibid., p. 181.

- (35) Ibid., p. 190-191
- (36) Ibid., p. 189.
- (37) Ibid., p. 161.
- (38) Ibid., p. 204.
- (39) Ibid., p. 174.
- (40) Ibid., p. 176.
- (41) Ibid., p. 211.
- (42) Ibid., p. 192-193.
- (43) Ibid., p. 193.
- (44) Ibid., p. 213.
- (45) Ibid., p. 197.
- (46) T. S. Eliot, After Strange Gods, p. 60.
- (47) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, pp. 197-198
- (48) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, p. 61.
- (49) Ibid., p. 131.
- (50) Ibid., p. 456.
- (51) Ibid., p. 372.
- (52) Ibid., p. 381.
- (53) Ibid., p. 382.

(54) Ibid., p. 388.

(55) Ibid., p. 389.

(56) Ibid., p. 26.

(57) Ibid., p. 332.

(58) Ibid., p. 334.

(59) Ibid., p. 332.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NEW RELATIONSHIP

Lawrence looked upon his two novels, The Rainbow and Women in Love, as an organic whole. He considered publishing them as volumes one and two of the same work. Ursula and Gudrun, the daughters of Will and Anna, are the heroines of Women in Love, and the treatment of their love stories is a continuation of the process followed in The Rainbow. Lawrence also reaffirms his faith in sensuality in Women in Love, but he goes beyond a mere affirmation, and reveals more clearly the significance of this faith. He reaffirms, too, the necessity of intimate contact between man and woman if fulfilment is to be achieved, but he sets forth a different kind of relation for man and woman. In many ways, Women in Love is linked closely to The Rainbow, and yet in its thought it is a development beyond The Rainbow.

The setting of Women in Love is a mining district of England. As in a mining district there is a good deal of subterranean activity, so in Women in Love, most of the important happenings occur far below the surface, and the parade on top is insignificant. This is <sup>true</sup> ~~true~~ of many of Lawrence's novels. The excursions to the depths of life are themselves fascinating, but too often Lawrence demands that the reader remain below the surface for a period of time beyond which it is comfortable for him to do so. His indifferent attitude to plot and action and incident is a

denial to the reader of those breaths of air which would give him sustenance for the deep explorations he is called upon to make. The first chapter of Women in Love reveals this, not because in it Lawrence has rejected the objective plane completely, but because in it he has achieved a neat balance between the surface world and the under-world. He passes quickly back and forth from objective description of his characters' appearances and actions to analysis of their innermost feelings, and both description and analysis gain from the presence of the other. The recognition of both the outer and the inner world, rather than the exclusive concentration on one or the other, is more satisfying artistically.

In this first chapter, Lawrence pictures a small group of people gathered on a sidewalk watching the arrival of guests and attendants at a society wedding. Among those present, he singles out a few whose inter-relationships will form the substance of the novel. There <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ Gudrun and Ursula among the spectators on the sidewalk. There is Gerald, the bride's brother. There is Birkin, the groom's man. There is Hermione, the bride's attendant.

When Gudrun first sees Gerald, although she does not know him, she experiences a "knowledge of him in her essence," a "powerful apprehension of him."<sup>(1)</sup> Clearly then, this is a meeting similar to that of Tom and Lydia, a meeting in the blood. The way is prepared for the later intimacy of the two. Ursula, too, is attracted to Birkin, and Hermione's relation to Birkin is indicated. But in indicating Hermione's relation to Birkin, Lawrence strikes a false note. As Hermione enters the church, she looks forward to seeing Birkin at the altar. But he has not yet

arrived, and when Hermione observes this she is seized with panic:

A terrible storm came over her, as if she were drowning. She was possessed by a devastating hopelessness. And she approached mechanically to the altar. Never had she known such a pang of utter and final hopelessness. It was beyond death, so utterly null, desert. (2)

The emotional state of Hermione is far beyond the situation which gives rise to it. Lawrence is trying to indicate the utter dependency of Hermione on Birkin. He has already suggested it in his slight treatment of her as she arrives at the wedding, but he has not had time to explain a relationship between them the nature of which is such that Birkin's tardiness in arriving at a wedding, would produce this emotional upheaval in Hermione. Consequently, the emotional state of Hermione mystifies, or worse, irritates the reader. Too often Lawrence fills his characters with similar charged emotional states for which there is no obvious explanation. The descriptions of the emotions are wonderful, but how much more conviction they would carry if Lawrence would provide dramatic situations that could reasonably give rise to them.

In his later treatment of Hermione, however, Lawrence does make this early glimpse of her more comprehensible. Hermione is the horrible extreme of that kind of woman who emphasized the mind over the body in the early novels.

(3)

To Hermione, "knowing is everything." She has sought knowledge and culture all her life, sought to enter the man's world, be a man's woman. She has weighted herself down with a heavy load of intellectuality, referred everything to her brain, denied everything emotional and spontaneous. She has turned her back upon her instinctive, passionate self and in doing so has cut herself off from half of life:



She stared out all the time on the narrow, but to her, complete world of the extant consciousness. In the darkness, she did not exist. Like the moon, one half of her was lost to life. Her self was all in her head, she did not know what it was spontaneously to run or move, like a fish in the water, or a weasel on the grass. She must always know. (4)

The cult of knowledge proves a barren one for her. At bottom, she does not believe in it. But she has gone too far along its path to save herself. Ironically enough, she it is who voices many of Lawrence's objections to the cult of knowledge. In doing so, she voices her own dissatisfaction at herself: "When we have knowledge, don't we lose everything but knowledge...If I know about the flower, don't I lose the flower and have only the knowledge? Aren't we exchanging the substance for the shadow, aren't we forfeiting life for this dead quality of knowledge?" (5)

And in an argument about the value of education she questions the value of developing the minds of children to the point at which they can never get away from themselves, but must always be conscious, "always self-conscious, always aware of themselves....Better be animals, mere animals with no mind at all, than this, this nothingness -" (6)

Hermione can well express the nothingness that comes from a cultivation of the mind, for she experiences it within herself. By cutting off her physical, passionate self she has left herself with no material sufficiency: "...there was a terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being within her." (7) To atone for this lack, to close up the void in her, she turns to Birkin. With Birkin "she was sufficient, whole." (8) Thus she is utterly dependent on Birkin, but like Miriam with Paul, and like Will with Anna, because Hermione has a fatal disproportion within her, she seeks to dominate Birkin, to close up her own insufficiency by the absorption of Birkin into herself. He, like Paul and like Anna, recoils from her and lashes out bitterly at the creature she is:

But your passion is a lie...It isn't passion at all, it is your will. It's your bullying will. You want to clutch things and have them in your power. You want to have things in your power. You want to have things in your power. And why? Because you haven't got any real body, any dark sensual body of life. You have no sensuality. You have only your will and your conceit of consciousness, and your lust for power, to know."(9)

The crisis in the relationship of Birkin and Hermione comes when she attempts to murder him. Lawrence's description of her emotions at this time reveals his ability to convey to the reader the very texture of a feeling, to ~~almost~~<sup>a/most</sup> make the reader experience the feeling himself, and fortunately here he has provided a dramatic situation which is powerful enough to produce powerful emotions:

Terrible shocks ran over her body, like shocks of electricity, as if many volts of electricity suddenly struck her down. She was aware of him sitting silently there, an unthinkable evil obstruction. Only this blotted out her mind, pressed out her very breathing....

A terrible voluptuous thrill ran down her arms - she was going to know her voluptuous consummation. Her arms quivered and were strong, immeasurably and irresistibly strong. What delight, what delight in strength, what delirium of pleasure! She was going to have her consummation of voluptuous ecstasy at last.(10)

In presenting the character of Hermione, Lawrence expresses his hatred of intellectuality. He sought to express the same thing in a milder fashion through his portraits of the spiritual women in the earlier novels. But there, he approached his subjects with some measure of sympathy and recognized the human qualities within them. Emily, Helena, Miriam emerged from the pages as true-to-life people. In drawing Hermione, however, Lawrence has let his hatred get the better of him. Hermione is an enemy to life, and so he has denied her life. His treatment of her is so unsympathetic and cold that not a woman emerges here but only a symbol, a symbol of the dry rot of in-

tellectuality.

Oddly enough, the ideal woman who stands in contrast to Hermione is also inhuman. She is a wood-carving, a wood-carving of a West African woman in the throes of child-labor. When Birkin looks at the carving he sees behind it hundreds of centuries of development in a straight line, development of "pure culture in sensation, culture in the physical consciousness...mindless, utterly sensual."<sup>(11)</sup> This woman of the

carving, Birkin feels, knows what he cannot know, because she has "thousands of years of purely sensual, purely unspiritual knowledge behind her."<sup>(12)</sup> Her race, thousands of years ago, has broken "the

relation between the senses and the outspoken mind" leaving their experience of one kind only, purely sensual experience. Thousands of years ago with this race:<sup>(13)</sup>

...the goodness, the holiness, the desire for creation and productive happiness must have lapsed, leaving the single impulse for knowledge in one sort, mindless progressive knowledge through the senses, knowledge arrested and ending in the senses, mystic knowledge in disintegration and dissolution....<sup>(14)</sup>

This culture of the West Africans, this culture which is mindless and seeks knowledge only through the senses is an ideal culture, Lawrence declares. And the process which the West Africans have completed, is a process which the northern world must follow. But the northern world will carry out the process in a different way:

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. Whereas the West Africans, controlled by the burning death abstraction of the Sahara, had been fulfilled in sun-destruction, the putrescent mystery of sun-rays.<sup>(15)</sup>

The carrying out of this process by the northern races will reveal

"sensual, mindless, dreadful mysteries, far beyond the phallic cult,"

mysteries which as the wood carving reveals to Birkin have already been  
(16)  
investigated by the Africans.

This, then, embodies Lawrence's prophetic vision. On the simplest level, Lawrence's anti-intellectualism involved only a craving for mystery in life, a dislike of that destructive attitude which seeks to tear open the bud to see what the flower will be like. On the most profound level, Lawrence's anti-intellectualism involved a complete break with the culture of his world, a culture which was founded on spiritual, mental values, and a turning to a new culture, a culture based on mindless, sensual knowledge which would take thousands of centuries to develop. The development of this culture would be the means of the regeneration of the world, he believed.

It should be clearly understood that Lawrence was not in any way advocating profligacy. Profligacy was to him an approach to the senses directed from the will. He hated any intrusion of the mental in matters of the sensual. The sensuality he advocated was purely un-mental. It involved the giving up of one's volition, the forsaking of one's will  
(17)  
and the yielding "to the darker, older unknown." His path of sensuality was not then something that could lightly be approached or frivolously journeyed. To journey that path was to leave the known,  
(18)  
familiar world and to enter "a new, deeper, lower one."

Birkin voices Lawrence's vision in Women in Love and seeks in his own life to attain fulfilment through sensuality. But he wants something  
(19)  
"deeper, darker" than ordinary life can give him. He wants a true sensual experience, and he rejects flatly the kind of mentally directed profligacy which he believes the world indulges in. In one strange scene he stands on the edge of a pool throwing rocks into it and breaking up the reflection of the moon on its surface. This scene only becomes

clear in relation to a passage from "Twilight in Italy"; a long essay <sup>by</sup> of Lawrence: "Aphrodite, the queen of the senses, she, born of the sea foam, is the luminousness of the gleaming senses, the phosphorescence of the sea, the senses become a conscious aim to themselves; she is the gleaming darkness, she is the luminous night, she is goddess of destruction, her white cold fire consumes and does not create...." (20)

Aphrodite is the senses become conscious of themselves. Lawrence hated this. And Aphrodite is described as the luminous night, gleaming darkness, having a white cold fire. It is <sup>she</sup> ~~her~~, Aphrodite, the senses become conscious, the old way of love, that Birkin is destroying, in breaking up the reflection of the moon upon the water. (21)

For Birkin wants a new relation with a woman, and to achieve this new relation he turns, not to Hermione, but to Ursula. Quite obviously the new relation Birkin wants is a reaction against the kind of relation between man and woman described in the section of The Rainbow dealing with Will and Anna. It is a reaction against the terrible dependency of the man on the woman described there, a reaction against man's need for woman to achieve wholeness. Birkin still admits the vital importance of the contact of two people: "I do think...that the world is only held together by the mystic conjunction, the ultimate unison between people - a bond. And the immediate bond is between man and woman" (22) But he reacts against the old kind of bond which involved a fusion of two people, a fusion in which the man had to give himself up to the woman. The ideal, as set forth in The Rainbow, was the achievement of wholeness and completeness, the achievement of a single, isolated being, through physical union with a woman. The achievement of a single, isolated being is still the ideal in Women in Love, and sensuality is

further endorsed. But a new relation of man and woman in sensuality is affirmed.

"What I want," says Birkin to Ursula, "is a strange conjunction with you...not meeting and mingling...but an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings: - as the stars balance each other." (23) He sets this up in contrast to the old kind of relation which turned a man into "a broken half of a couple, the woman into the other broken half." (24)

The new relation would permit the man to be single in himself, the woman to be single in herself, each free from contamination of the other, each with his or her own pure freedom, while yet the two were united like "two poles of one force" balancing each other. (25)

The desire expressed here for a man and woman to establish an intimate contact and yet maintain complete possession of their own souls is noble enough when considered in contrast to the degrading position of Will, who so lacked possession of his own soul that he was utterly at the mercy of his wife, Anna. But the means of achieving the relationship are not clear. Certainly, "the horrible merging, mingling, self abnegation of love" is not the way. (26)

The new relationship must occur beyond "the emotional loving plane," says Birkin, some place "where there is <sup>no</sup> ~~one~~ speech and no terms of agreement. There <sup>we</sup> are two stark, unknown beings, two utterly strange creatures....It is quite inhuman...outside the pale of all that is accepted, and nothing known applies." (27)

In these words lie the criticism of this new relationship as far as its adaptability to the novel form is concerned. It is quite inhuman, occurring on a plane beyond the reader's experience. It cannot be dramatized, it can only be talked about, and since it is a new and distinct relationship, it needs a lot of talking about. Lawrence recognized

and accepted the limitations on his art which his interest in philosophy was imposing. In 1917, he wrote:

Philosophy interests me most now, not novels or stories. I find people ultimately boring: and you can't have fiction without people. So fiction does not, at the bottom, interest me any more. I am weary of humanity and human things. One is happy in the thoughts only that transcend humanity. (28)

Because of the strangeness of the new relationship he wants, Birkin has a difficult time persuading Ursula to enter into it with him. However, her resistance permits Lawrence to explain as explicitly as possible the new ideal through Birkin's repeated arguments. Unfortunately this involves a great deal of pure talking in the novel which at times brings the action to a full stop. And the talk is often very difficult to understand. Lawrence, in trying to give expression to this new relationship, occasionally falls into absurdity and produces this sort of statement: "I don't want to know you. I want to be gone out of myself, and you to be lost to yourself, so we are found different." (29)

At other times he attempts to illustrate his ideas by reference to the animal kingdom. After a long discussion between Birkin and Ursula, Birkin's cat, Mino, engages in a little escapade with a stray female cat from the woods. The latter submits to being cuffed rather soundly by the lordly Mino, much to Ursula's annoyance. She calls it bullying, but Birkin, drawing the moral says: "But with the Mino, it is the desire to bring this female cat into a pure stable equilibrium, a transcendent and abiding rapport with the single male. Whereas without him, as you see, she is a mere stray, a fluffly sporadic bit of chaos." (30)

A much more impressive illustration of Lawrence's ideas <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ given in the scene in which Gerald forces his terrified mare to remain near

the railroad track while a train passes. The whole scene is masterfully presented by Lawrence. He describes the screeching and grating of the train as it applies its brakes. He describes the horse's terror as it rears and throws back its head and tries desperately to bolt. He describes Gerald's intent mastering of the horse. He describes Gudrun's reaction to it all:

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.(31)

This scene vividly portrays Lawrence's attraction to physical contact; here it is contact between man and beast. And it also portrays his belief in the establishment of a relationship between two creatures based on a recognition of difference in their respective natures. How much more powerful is this dramatic rendering of his ideas than is the endless talk of Birkin and Ursula.

Birkin does convince Ursula by his arguments of the validity of the new relationship he seeks. And together the two of them plunge to those depths of sensual knowledge of which Birkin caught a glimpse from the carving of the West African woman. Together, they come to know:

...a mystery, the reality of that which can never be known, vital, sensual reality that can never be transmitted 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.(32)

And both of them, as the result of their experience, undergo an internal transformation, a transformation that takes them out of the person they were and the way of life they knew. Birkin, exalting in the new experience thinks:



It was something beyond love, such a gladness of having surpassed oneself, of having transcended the old existence. How could he say 'I' when he was something new and unknown, not himself at all? This I, this old formula of the age, was a dead letter.(33)

Ursula, too, sheds her past life. She wants to have no memory, no father, no mother, no previous connections:

...she belonged only to the oneness with Birkin, a oneness that struck deeper notes, sounding into the heart of the universe, the heart of reality where she had never existed before.(34)

She tells her sister Gudrun that one has a sort of other self, that belongs to a new planet, not to this. You've got to hop off."(35)

And she and Birkin leave Gerald and Gudrun with whom they have been holidaying in a European ski lodge and hop off into their new existence. Their departure from the novel is obviously indicated when they have achieved their entry into the new existence, for their experience on the new plane, being inhuman, of a reality which can never be known, cannot be dramatized or illustrated through the novel form.

~~Their~~  
~~The~~ departure from the novel leaves the way open for concentration on the Gudrun-Gerald relationship. This relationship ends in disaster because it is a relationship of the old kind, a relationship similar to those described in The Rainbow, and Lawrence has now gone beyond that kind of relationship towards a new ideal. Gerald stands on the brink between the old and new relationship, for he recognizes the value of the single self-sufficient soul Birkin idealizes:

It seemed to him that Gudrun was sufficient unto herself, closed round and completed, like a thing in a case. In the calm, static reason of his soul, he recognized this, and admitted it was her right, to be closed round upon herself, self-complete, without desire. He realized it, he admitted it, it only needed one last effort on his own part, to win for himself the same completeness. (36)

That last effort, however, he is not capable of making. And hence his contact with Gudrun fills him with anguish because she is complete in

herself and he is not. He cannot feel necessary to ~~him~~<sup>her</sup> as she is to him. He must approach her in the old way, the way of mingling and merging, rather than in the new way, the way of balance between two single beings.

When they arrive at the ski-lodge, Gudrun's soul~~s~~ departs from Gerald. At first it is the landscape to which she offers herself up for her consummation, shutting out Gerald:

She felt that there, over the strange blind, terrible wall of rocky snow, there in the navel of the mystic world, among the final cluster of peaks, there, in the infolded navel of it all, was her consummation. If she could but come there, alone, and pass into the infolded navel of eternal snow and of uprising, immortal peaks of snow and rock, she would be a oneness with all, she would be herself the eternal, infinite silence, the sleeping, timeless frozen centre of the All."(37)

And next it is to Loerke, an artist and a fellow-guest at the lodge, to whom she looks for consummation.

This turning of Gudrun to Loerke for consummation is very interesting as an illustration of the strange and awful nature of Lawrence's vision. Loerke has a background of degradation and poverty. He is

described as a "mud-child,"<sup>(38)</sup> as a "rat" swimming in the "river of corruption," as an "obscene monster of the darkness."<sup>(39)</sup> Yet, he is elevated above Gerald, the northern, blond giant, the cultured

industrial magnate, with pride and riches to offer a woman. He is elevated above Gerald because he is developed along certain lines beyond Gerald. He is "stages further in social hatred....He hates the ideal more acutely. He hates the ideal utterly...."<sup>(40)</sup> The ideal

which he hates is the whole structure of the modern world. To hate this ideal, to hate the values which are the foundation of this ideal, is to be farther advanced towards the realization of Lawrence's vision.

Lawrence expressed the same idea in a letter in which he was discussing the relative position <sup>of England and America</sup> of England and America. He wrote that:

...America, being so much worse, falser, further gone than England, is nearer to freedom. England has a long and awful process of corruption and death to go through. America has dry-rotted to a point where the final seed of the new is almost left ready to sprout. (41)

It was a necessary first step in the direction of the new ideal to become completely cynical about the social world, to pass through a process of dissolution and corruption. Gudrun is completely cynical about the social world and its activities. She scoffs at the great industry Gerald has built up. What is that to her? Only "bad money". (42)

Gerald, being so much attached to the old world which is dead and done for cannot have any meaning for her. He is not capable "of the last series of subtleties." (43) Loerke, in his comprehension of the underworld, is. In contrast to Gerald's attachment to the old world is Loerke's complete detachment from it and everything: "... for him there was neither heaven nor earth nor hell. He admitted no allegiance, he gave no adherence anywhere. He was single and, by abstraction from the rest, absolute in himself." (44)

Gudrun turns to Loerke, rejects Gerald. Gerald, without that singleness of soul to stand alone, dependent upon woman for his wholeness, is driven to a frenzy by his rejection. He tries to murder Gudrun, just as earlier in the book, Hermione had tried to murder Birkin when she felt him slipping away from her. Like Hermione, he fails, and himself perishes in the snow of the mountains under the light of a pale, cold moon.

Gerald's death can be interpreted on a number of different levels. The pale, cold moon under which he perishes is Aphrodite again, the Aphrodite Birkin destroyed, and Gerald is a victim of Aphrodite, the old way of love. But he dies also in the snow, frozen by bitter cold. And

so his death is the symbol of the death of the old culture and the inauguration of the new vision of life whereby the white race following the path of the African will "fulfill a mystery of ice-destructive knowledge, snow-abstract annihilation."<sup>(45)</sup> Gerald's death is the "omen of the universal dissolution into whiteness and snow" out of which will come a new existence for mankind.<sup>(46)</sup>

Gerald is one of the great mass of men whom Lawrence mentioned in his essay "The Crown" as perishing "unconsummated and unachieved."<sup>(47)</sup> He has failed to gain his immortality because he has failed to achieve a soul. And Birkin sitting by his friend's frozen body sadly reflects that his dead body is really dead. It is really and finally dead because Gerald has not in his life made the kind of contact with another being which would permit his spirit to live on in that being after his physical death. Such a contact might have been achieved with a woman, as Birkin has achieved it with Ursula. Or the contact might have been achieved with another man, might have been achieved with <sup>him</sup> ~~he~~, Birkin. Earlier in the book, Birkin had offered Gerald a deep friendship. He had proposed that they swear an oath of eternal union. But Gerald had held back from the bond. Birkin sadly reflects on Gerald's refusal because he has wanted for the truest consummation of himself, in addition to his love for Ursula, external union with a man, "another kind of love."<sup>(48)</sup> Ursula tells him this is impossible, but Birkin's last words which bring the novel to a close are: "I don't believe that...."<sup>(49)</sup>

The last pages of Women in Love indicate the new direction Lawrence is to take in his dealing with the problem of self-fulfilment. Indeed, that new direction is indicated in Birkin's desire for a relationship between man and woman which will leave a man in possession of his own soul. There is a movement away from woman and a concentration on other

problems which are related to the fulfilment of the self. The place of friendship and the function of power, two themes closely linked in Lawrence's mind, are carefully studied. But above all, the ideal of achieving a single, isolated self, a self which is able to stand apart from all others, is upheld.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

- (1) D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935), p. 15.
- (2) Ibid., p. 18.
- (3) Ibid., p. 41.
- (4) Ibid., p. 307.
- (5) Ibid., p. 42.
- (6) Loc. cit.
- (7) Ibid., p. 17.
- (8) Loc. cit.
- (9) Ibid., p. 43.
- (10) Ibid., p. 108.
- (11) Ibid., p. 81.
- (12) Ibid., p. 265.
- (13) Loc. cit.
- (14) Ibid., pp. 265-66.
- (15) Ibid., p. 266.
- (16) Loc. cit.
- (17) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 605.
- (18) Ibid., p. 423.

- (19) D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love, p. 265.
- (20) Quoted in J. M. Murry, Son of Woman (London & Toronto: Jonathan Cape, 1931), p. 94.
- (21) For the clarification of this passage, I am indebted to J. M. Murry, Son of Woman, p. 118.
- (22) D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love, p. 157
- (23) Ibid., p. 153.
- (24) Ibid., p. 208.
- (25) Loc. cit.
- (26) Ibid., p. 210.
- (27) Ibid., p. 151
- (28) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 409
- (29) D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love, p. 194
- (30) Ibid., p. 156.
- (31) Ibid., pp. 116-117.
- (32) Ibid., p. 337.
- (33) Ibid., p. 390.
- (34) Ibid., p. 432.
- (35) Ibid., p. 462
- (36) Ibid., p. 470

- (37) Ibid., pp. 432-33.
- (38) Ibid., p. 450.
- (39) Ibid., p. 451.
- (40) Loc. cit.
- (41) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 376
- (42) D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love, p. 441.
- (43) Ibid., p. 477.
- (44) Ibid., p. 478.
- (45) Ibid., p. 266.
- (46) Loc. cit.
- (47) D. H. Lawrence, "The Crown", Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays, p. 90.
- (48) D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love, p. 507.
- (49) Ibid., p. 508.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE IDEAL OF THE SINGLE SELF

In Aaron's Rod, Aaron, a married man with several children, suddenly gives up his job as a collier and abandons his family. The situation is reminiscent of that in The Trespasser where Siegmund left his family while he vacationed with another woman. But there is one very important distinction between the two books. Aaron does not leave his wife for another woman. There is a vast difference in outlook between The Trespasser and Aaron's Rod, a difference easily accounted for by reference to the experience recorded in the novels in between. The motivating force in Aaron's Rod is not the search for woman, but the escape from woman.

Siegmund's dependency on Helena which caused his suicide, Will's dependency on Anna which consumed his manhood, Gerald's dependency on Gudrun which resulted in his death - these are the recorded experiences which lead to the resentment of woman expressed in Aaron's Rod. The resentment is directed against woman to whom man is delivered as a gift, (1) eternal woman who "receives the sacramental body and spirit of the man." It is a resentment of the whole current of belief which yields to woman the sacred priority in life, which worships the "life centrality of woman" (2) and makes a man only "the instrument and the finisher."

The book is a protest against woman who has won the mastery in the

love-battle of man and woman and who, having won, will never yield up that mastery again. It is a protest against man's domination by woman. Aaron, remembering his wife thinks:

Her will, her will, her terrible, implacable, cunning will!  
What was there in the female will so diabolical...that it could  
press like a flat sheet of iron against a man all the time?(3)

Aaron, abandoning his family, is a symbol of the protest against a world in which woman stands victorious and dominant, a world from which "the  
(4)

man's spirit has gone." And in this novel, unlike the preceding ones, woman plays no active part. Aaron leaves his wife; Lilly's wife is sent off to Norway to visit her family; the one love affair in the book, that between Aaron and the Marchese del Torre, is insignificant and colorless. The emphasis in the novel is purely on man.

Aaron is a flute player - the flute is Aaron's rod - and it is as a musician that he makes his living after he leaves his mining job, at first in London, later in Italy. His flute is the symbol of his newly declared independence. It is also the symbol of creative energy. It flowers in strange ways. In Italy it recalls the voice of the Marchesa del Torre who has not sung since the war. The flute is Aaron's means of introduction into many different societies. In Lond<sup>on</sup>, he is picked up at the opera by a Bohemian group; in Italy he is patronised by two young English 'swells'; in Florence, the homes of many odd and sundry persons are opened to him and his music.

Aaron's experiences in his wanderings provide more incident in this novel than there is in most of the others, and the absence of women cuts out the dwelling on sensual experience which leads to the explorations of the hidden forces of life in the other novels. Consequently Aaron's Rod deals much more with the surface world than does The Rainbow or Women in

Love.

The post-war atmosphere pervading Europe in the first few years after 1918 is in the novel. There is Herbertson, the army officer, whose experience in the war, like so many of his kind, was too intense for his soul to bear. To ease the burn of his memories he brings them into the open and talks them over and over again far into the night. There is the Marchesa del Torre who has never sung since the war. There are the rowdy soldiers who rob Aaron in Florence. There are the communist street riots in Italy. And a money-consciousness is also in the novel, further revealing Lawrence's awakened interest in the outside world. The two young Englishmen who patronize Aaron are representatives of the monied class. They ride in the first class coach while Aaron rides, like their servant, in the third class. Sir William Franks is another representative of high society. Strangely enough, he is a very human figure in the novel. It is strange because Lawrence as a rule was not successful when portraying people from the upper levels of society. The bloodless Leslie of The White Peacock is illustrative of this truth.

Aside from Sir William Franks, very few of the numerous persons whom Aaron meets in his wanderings are flesh and blood people. Lawrence had slight capacity for characterizing with a few strokes of his pen. His people in this novel are not of much interest for what they are themselves; they are only of interest as symbols or types - symbols of post-war dislocation, types of various levels of society.

The most significant person whom Aaron meets in his journeying is Lilly. Lilly is obviously Lawrence himself, reiterating the ideal of the singleness of the individual self put forth by Birkin in Women in Love:

Passion or no passion, ecstasy or no ecstasy, urge or no urge, there's no goal outside you, where you can consummate like an eagle flying into the sun, or a moth into a candle. There's a goal outside you - and there's no God outside you....

There is only one thing, your own very self....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. Your own single oneness is your destiny....you can only stick to your own very self, and never betray it.(5)

Consummation of the self will only come from awareness of the self within you and development of that self in its uniqueness from one stage to another.

But consummation of the self is a state not easily attained. To be aware of the self within you is to be aware of your responsibility for that self. The assumption of responsibility for one's own "lonely soul," for one's own action is a burden which the mass of men refuse (6) It is a burden which Aaron would like to refuse: "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 (7) unwilling to undertake the new business." From sleep to waking - this is the passage from unawareness of the self to responsibility for the self, from incompleteness of one's being to consummation of one's being.

Lilly has assumed the responsibility for his own self, and he can say with finality: "...I am inevitably and eternally alone, and it is my last blessedness to know it, and to accept it, and to live with this (8) as the core of my self-knowledge." He has achieved this state without denying that vital contact with another being so important in the novels of D. H. Lawrence. It is possible to "possess your own soul in

isolation - and at the same time, to be perfectly with someone else." (9)

Indeed the true awareness of the self can only come by its being defined in difference by its opposite. Male knows itself male in contradistinction to female, as female knows itself female in contradistinction to male. And the arrival at a state of singleness of the self is the completion of the love process: "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...." (10)

Lilly argues his belief in the sole value of the individual soul to justify his non-participation in the war. He refrained from taking an active part in the war, not because he did not hate the enemy, not because he was a conscientious objector to killing the enemy, but because the war was a vast mechanism and he, as an individual soul, could not become a unit in any mechanism. He calls the war a dream, a dream that came when all humanity was asleep. All humanity must have been asleep, he says, for only a man who is drugged or inert could participate in a mass activity. Mass activity, he believes, is a kind of sleep and because Lilly wants man to be alive, awake to the responsibility for his own being, he denounces all mass activity:

Damn all leagues, Damn all masses and groups, anyhow. All I want is to get myself out of their horrible heap: to get out of the swarm. The swarm to me is nightmare and nullity - horrible helpless writhing in a dream. I want to get myself awake, out of it all - all that mass-consciousness, all that mass activity - it's the most horrible nightmare to me. No man is awake and himself. No man who was awake and in possession of himself would use poison gases; no man. His own awake self would scorn such a thing. It's only when the ghastly mob-sleep, the dream helplessness of the mass-psyche overcomes him that he becomes completely base and obscene. (11)

Lilly, in putting forth his ideal of the singleness of the individual self, is repeating the ideas stated by Birkin, and as with Birkin,

the ideal is a reaction against the dependency of man on woman in the love-bond. A man aware of his individual self and in possession of his self would never be placed in the position that Will was placed by Anna. Underlining, by contrast, the validity of Lilly's statement is the character of Jim Bricknell. Bricknell is one of the group of Bohemians Aaron meets early in his wanderings. He wants love. He is forever crying out for love. He wants to prostrate himself on a woman's lap and offer himself up as a sacrifice to the abstract principle of love.

Because he must ~~have~~ a woman with him all the time, he is constantly sending off telegrams to arrange meetings with them. The telegrams help to convince him that he is not just "a void in the atmosphere" (12)

Bricknell needs assurance that he is not a void because essentially he is one. He lacks that awareness of the self which Lilly advocates. He has a morbid fear that he is losing life. To counteract this fear, he stuffs himself with bread. He even takes bread up to bed with him to be eaten in the middle of the night. Lawrence is only interested in Bricknell in as much as he can illustrate the insufficiency of a man who has no single self. Consequently, the portrait of Bricknell in the novel is not a rounded characterization. Lawrence is very severe with his characters. If their way of life is not to his liking, he seldom bothers to give them life with his pen. He punishes them by overlooking the fact that they are people.

It is quite consistent that the belief in the value of a man being awake to the responsibility for his own being coupled with the awareness that the mass of men are asleep, would lead to a sharp discrimination between the quality of the few who are in possession of their own souls

and the many who are "<sup>unconsummated</sup>~~unconsummated~~, unachieved." (13) Birkin recognized the difference between men:

We are all different and unequal in spirit - it is only the social differences that are based on accidental material conditions....But spiritually, there is pure difference and neither quality nor inequality counts. It is upon these two bits of knowledge that you must found a state. Your democracy is an absolute lie - your brotherhood of man is a pure falsity.... The minute you begin to compare, one man is seen to be far better than another, all the inequality you can imagine is there by nature. (14)

Gerald, in Women in Love, recognized the same principle in building up his father's mining industry. He recognized that in running an industry as in riding a horse success was achieved only through the natural submission of one part to another. And he organized his industry without sentimentality, founding his empire on order, discipline, and authority. The men at first resented it, but they accepted it because at bottom they too wanted order, discipline and authority.

Lilly, of Aaron's Rod, believes also that men are naturally unequal and that only through a recognition of their inequality will they be able to fulfill themselves. He ~~wants there to be~~ "a real committal of the life-issue of inferior beings to the responsibility of a superior being" (15)

He conceives himself, of course, as a superior being and he seeks recognition of this fact in his personal relationships. He wants his wife to submit herself to him "in a measure natural to our two selves. (16) Somewhere she ought to submit to me."

And he wants Aaron to submit to him too. This would be the nature of the man-to-man relationship which Birkin spoke of at the end of Women in Love, a submission of one man to the other, a master-disciple relationship.

In the last chapter of Aaron's Rod, Lilly speaks of the two great urges in life, the love urge and the power urge. He rejects the love urge because he says it is exhausted for the moment. But he affirms the power urge. The satisfaction of the power urge is the next step in the

fulfilment of the self. It is not an intellectual power which Lilly affirms but a "dark, living, fructifying power,"<sup>(17)</sup> a power that<sup>(18)</sup> "urges from within, darkly." He says that there must be one who urges and one who is urged. Woman must submit to man, deeply, darkly, freely, submit because she fulfils herself in yielding. And some men<sup>(19)</sup> too must submit, must yield "to the heroic soul in a greater man."

Lilly calls upon Aaron to submit to him. Aaron ponders the problem. His flute has been destroyed in a cafe bomb explosion. It's destruction symbolises the end of this interlude in his life. He must now decide his future. Is he to return to his wife? Or is he to take a new direction? Is he to try for success in life? Or is he to fulfil himself by yielding to Lilly, "yielding to the peculiar mastery of one man's nature rather than to the quicksands of woman or the stinking bog of society...yielding in a new direction now, to<sup>(20)</sup> one strange and incalculable little individual...." The book ends on a note of doubt. But, in Kangaroo, the questions of friendship between men and of the exercise of power in the world raised in Aaron's Rod are picked up and further investigated.

In a letter to a friend, Lawrence said about Kangaroo that it was a "funny sort of novel where nothing happens and such a lot of things<sup>(21)</sup> should happen...." His comment is a fair summary of the book. The novel begins hopefully with the arrival of Richard Lovat Somers and his wife in the new country, Australia. Somers is obviously Lawrence himself. Their arrival stirs considerable interest among the higher political aspirants in the country, and Somers is approached separately by the heads of two rival parties who urge him to join them in the struggle for the realization of their ideals.



Possibilities for action on the social plane are inherent in the basic situation. The novel might have developed into a story of the struggle to realize a new concept of life in a new country - if anyone but Somers had been the man approached. As it is, the plot development is halted shortly after it has been begun and the book becomes the record of Somers' mental dilemma now that he is faced with the possibility of acting in the social world. The leads<sup>es</sup> of the political parties, Struthers of the Socialists, Kangaroo of the Diggers, talk over their beliefs and plans with Somers and he considers the relative merits of the ideas they put forth. But the beliefs and plans never get past the talking stage and while Somers is coming to a decision there is no effective action in the book. When he does definitely make up his mind, his decision is a negative one. He will not join with either Struthers or Kangaroo and instead, he and his wife sail away to another country.

The book has a very loose structure. One chapter entitled "The Nightmare" is a recollection of Somers' war experiences. It's significance in terms of the general theme of Kangaroo, the problems of action on the social plane, is that the experience recorded was of a nature to make Somers forever distrustful of the masses and of mass authority. This significance could have been stated in a paragraph - even a sentence. It did not require a 50 page flashback to another country, another time, and a complete break with the immediate situation under treatment in Kangaroo. Lawrence obviously took advantage of the barest pretext to write about this experience, and he did so without regard to the problem of unity in his novel. However, the chapter is exceedingly interesting in itself. Another

chapter entitled "At Sea in Marriage" is an essay on marriage. It begins with generalizations on the possible types of marriages and moves on to a consideration of the particular marriage of Somers and his wife. But it is non-dramatic, being treated in terms of no concrete situation. Similarly ~~non-dramatic~~ is the chapter outlining the organization, activities and plans of the Diggers. None of these chapters, in any way, advance the action of the novel. But then, unfortunately, as we have stated, there is very little action in the novel to be advanced.

The chief interest in the novel is in the intellectual problems raised, problems which are not dramatized but talked about, each of the central figures in the book putting forth his separate point-of-view. There is a different approach to the problem of action on the social plane from that in The Rainbow or Women in Love. In those earlier novels, such action was scorned. Here, it is considered seriously as a possibility. Somers, the hero, is a writer who regrets the separation from the world which his solitary occupation leads to. He wants to bridge the gap between himself and humanity because he feels he has something to fight out with mankind. And so he refuses his wife's advice to retire with her and his work to a lonely cottage away from the world of men: "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." (22) And he believes, at first, that the "new shoot in the life of mankind" will be sent out by a man working among men, not by a writer working solely on the theoretical plane.

Accompanying this changed attitude to action on the social plane is a different approach to the problem of self-fulfilment. In The Rainbow and Women in Love, the problem was treated in terms of a few

isolated individuals. There was a fierce concentration on their personal struggle for self-fulfilment. The outside world was blotted out of the picture. But in Kangaroo, the problem is not treated specifically in terms of a few individuals but generally in terms of the problem of the organization of a society which will permit humanity at large to find its truest fulfilment. Thus, the emphasis in Kangaroo is not on the personal marital relations of Somers and his wife, but on the political ideals of the politicians of the country and Somers' reaction to these ideals.

These political ideals embody the themes under consideration in Aaron's Rod - the theme of power and the theme of friendship between men. Many of the ideas put forth are not finally endorsed by Somers but the serious attention given to them in the novel indicates the direction which Lawrence's mind was taking at this point in his dealing with the problem of self-fulfilment.

There is a strong leaning in the novel towards the need for order, discipline and ~~an~~ authority in life, both on the social and on the personal level. Somers is critical of Australia and the Australians because of the lack of discipline in the country. The freedom of life there impresses him as anarchy, and he senses a vacancy in the very atmosphere of the new land. This vacancy is a quality of the Australian people too: "...they're awfully nice, but they've got no inside to (23) them. They're hollow....When they're quite alone, they don't exist." That is, the Australian people have not that inner self, that inner core of being which Lawrence states as the goal of the process of fulfilment. Partly the cause of this is their anarchical freedom.

Kangaroo, leader of the Diggers, would correct this situation by

strong, just power from above. He believes that man:

...needs to be relieved from this terrible responsibility of governing himself when he doesn't know what he wants, and has no aim towards which to govern himself.... Man needs a quiet, gentle father who uses his authority in the name of living life, and who is absolutely stern against anti-life."(24)

Anti-life, which is resistance to the life force, is to Kangaroo the principle of evil.

In personal relationships there is the same need for domination and submission. Somers is made an offer of true friendship in Australia. This offer is important to him because "all his life he had cherished a beloved ideal of friendship - David and Jonathon." (25) But when it is offered to him he finds that he cannot accept it. He discovers that the only possible form of contact which he might establish is one in which he knew "the mystery of lordship," one in which there was "mystic recognition of difference and innate priority, the joy of obedience and the sacred responsibility of authority." (26)

This renunciation of simple friendship on the personal level and the desire to go beyond it to a more complex relationship involving lordship and submission is linked to Somers' later rejection of the political ideals of Struthers, the Socialist leader. Struthers wants to create a new society in which the bond will be "the bond of real brotherhood." (27) He wants to establish "Christ's democracy" on earth. In the society he visualises, Whitman's comrade-love would be a reality. Men would be tied to one another in absolute love, absolute trust. The tie would be so strong that it would surpass all other bonds, even that of the family:

Our society is based on the family, the love of a man for his wife and his children, or for his mother and brothers. The family is our social bedrock and limit. Whitman said the next, broader, more unselfish rock should be the Love of Comrades. The sacred relation of a man to his mate, his fellow man. (29)

Somers agrees that if society is to develop, this new relationship between men must be accepted. However, though he is attracted to much else that Struther's says, he does not accept it finally and his attitude reveals Lawrence's own position with regard to these problems he is investigating. Somers cannot believe with Struthers in a society based on the absolute trust and absolute love of a man for his mate. The reason he cannot believe in it, is that absolute love and absolute trust between man and woman has already been proven impossible:

N.B. | Human love, human trust, are always perilous, because they break down. The greater the love, the greater the trust, and the greater the peril, the greater the disaster. Because to place absolute trust on another human being is in itself a disaster, both ways, since each human being is a ship that must sail its own course, even if it go in company with another ship. Two ships may sail together to the world's end. But lock them together in mid-ocean and try to steer both with one rudder, and they will smash one another to bits. So it is when one individual seeks absolutely to love, or trust, another. Absolute lovers always smash one another, absolute trusters the same. Since man has been trying absolutely 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. (30)

In short, Lawrence is remembering the experience of The Rainbow and is putting forth a rational argument for the ideal of the singleness of the self.

And in finally rejecting the offers of Struthers and Kangaroo to join with them in political action, Lawrence through Somers reaffirms the beliefs he has already stated, in his previous novels, beliefs which were put slightly to the side for a moment while he investigated other possible approaches to his problems.

He affirms his belief in man's submission to the dark God who

urges him from within. That is, he affirms his faith in instinctive living. Absolute love and absolute trust between man and woman or man and man have been proved impossible to achieve. The absolute which the human soul craves for will be found instead in submission to the dark God. The dark God is the source of all passions and only before him do "human passions take their right rhythm."<sup>(31)</sup> The ideals which Struthers and Kangaroo put forth are incompatible with submission to the dark God. Kangaroo exhibited the will to love, directing his emotions from the mind, which is contrary to the true flow of the emotions deep from within as dictated by the dark God. Struthers advocated Christ's democracy, spiritual love, that shuts out the dark God who "gives a man passion, and the dark, unexplained blood-tenderness that is deeper than love, but so much more obscure, im-<sup>(32)</sup>personal."

In Kangaroo, Lawrence affirms again his faith in sensuality. And he affirms too the ideal of the single self: "the purest lesson one era has taught is that man, at his highest, is an individual,<sup>(33)</sup> single, isolate, alone...." Because the political ideals of Struthers and Kangaroo are not compatible with either of these beliefs which Somers holds, he rejects their political ideals and sails away from Australia, an individual, guided wisely by "the God who<sup>(34)</sup> fulfills one from the dark."

In The Plumed Serpent, a novel set in Mexico, Lawrence describes an attempt to realize a new concept of society based, not on the political ideals of men like Struthers or Kangaroo, but on a recognition of the dark God, a recognition which Lawrence believed essential if man

was to be liberated from the womb of his era and brought to his true fulfilment. Before discussing this novel, however, a consideration of the character of the central figure of The Boy in the Bush will indicate the nature of the kind of man Lawrence idealized and the nature of the dark God who urges such a man.

The Boy in the Bush is a re-writing by Lawrence of a story by M. L. Skinner. It appears that Lawrence treated the original manuscript with considerable liberty, for the novel as it stands most decidedly bears his own unique stamp. The novel traces the fortunes of its hero, Jack, a young Englishman, in the new land, Australia. It is superior as a novel to Kangaroo in that there is more attention directed to the dramatization of ideas than there was in Kangaroo, and its unity is not disrupted by odd chapters barely related to the main theme.

Jack, the hero, is a man who stands alone. He is described as a man who has never given himself to any other being, not to his mother, his father, his friend, Tom, his wife, Monica. Essentially, he has always "kept himself a stranger to everybody." (35) At the back of his eyes is a "sombre aloofness, that could never come forward and meet and mingle, but held back, apart, waiting." (36) When he first feels pangs of love for Monica he resents them, for desire enslaves a man, leading him even against his will towards the satisfaction of his yearning. Jack conquers desire, hardens himself from all craving, hardens "himself into pride." (37)

His ability to do this makes him one of those superior beings whom Lawrence admires:

He belonged to the blood of masters, not servants. He belonged<sup>9</sup> to the class of those that are sought, not those that seek. He was no seeker. He was not desirous. He would never be desirous. Desire should not lead him humbly by the nose....He was of the few that are masters. He was to be desired. He was master.(38)

Jack is master because he believes that "a man's own true self is God in him."<sup>(39)</sup> He is faithful to the God in him, faithful to his self.

The God in Jack is an old, dark God prompting him to lead a wild, untamed life. Historically, Jacks feels a tie not with the old saints but with "the old heroes, the old fathers of red earth, like Abraham in the Bible, like David even."<sup>(40)</sup> And in the immediate present he is sympathetic, not with gentlemen, but with gypsies, grooms and pugilists because with them he feels a kinship which lies in "the deep, burning life-anger....an anger of the old blood."<sup>(41)</sup>

The God within him prompts him to live for the immediate moment and to experience that moment with no reference to past or future.

There is no past or future:

...there is nothing but the moment, the instantaneous moment. If you are working your guts out, you are working your guts out. If you are rolling across for a drink, you are rolling across for a drink. If you are just getting into a fight with some lump of a brute, you are just getting into a fight with some lump of a brute....(42)

This is real living, says Lawrence. It is not pretty, or easy, or comfortable or happy because "real living hurts as well as fulfils."<sup>(43)</sup>

But the important thing is that it does fulfil, fulfils deeply, satisfyingly: "The life-long happiness lies in being used by life; hurt by life, driven and goaded by life, replenished and overjoyed with life, fighting for life's sake."<sup>(44)</sup>

The dark God within Jack is at odds with any conventional conception of the spirit. Jack prefers "his body solid."<sup>(45)</sup> He has no use for the immaterial, for gossamer stuff, for Shelley, vegetarians or socialists. He repudiates the whole "emotional, spiritual, ethical



(46)

and intellectual trend" in modern life. But he does come in Australia to an awareness of the spiritual body. He finds it in the glory of the sun and the glory of the moon. He finds it in his love for Monica, his fight with Esau. He knows it when he is eating and drinking, when he is fetching the cows, or holding his horse tight between his knees. He finds the true spirit in the stuff of life.

This conception of life as dictated by the dark God within a person is dramatized in The Boy in the Bush. Jack does not only talk about the promptings of the dark God as did Somers, he obeys that God. Consequently the novel is lent a peculiar force by the wild, primitive life it describes, and the violent actions and emotions which characterize that life. Jack's fight with Esau who makes love to his girl, Monica, is an example of how the nature of the dark God which Lawrence upholds emerges from a dramatic situation rather than from an abstract discussion about the dark God.

In childhood, Jack has been taught the Christian ideal of love of one's enemy. But he cannot love Esau. He hates him. To deny this hate would be "cowardice towards his own blood." (47) It would be a betrayal of the God within him. And so he rejects this Christian ideal, obeys his own God and allows his hate to flow freely and unhampered within him. This full yielding to the emotions, be they hate or love, which is demanded by the dark God, is the means of fulfillment of the self. Jack, giving himself up to hate finds that:

In the long run, hate was an even keener ecstasy than love, and the battle of hate, the fight with blood in the eyes, an orgasm of deadly gratification keener than any passionate orgasm of love. (48)

(49)

In the battle with Esau, he knows a "living anger." It is 'living' anger because his submission to the dark God has made him

fully alive. Even when he is felled by Esau, and one part in him  
(50)  
is killed, another part becomes "super-awake." This extension of  
consciousness which Jack knows in battle is of the greatest importance  
to Lawrence. He says that when man is broken:

...killed at one level of consciousness, his very death leaves  
him on a higher level. And this is the soul in its entirety,  
being conscious, super-conscious, far beyond mentality....  
And man's divinity, and his ultimate power, is in this super-  
consciousness of the whole soul. Not in brute force, not in  
skill or intelligence alone. But in the soul's extreme power  
of knowing and then willing. On this alone hangs the destiny  
of mankind.(51)

Jack, in battle, develops his soul to that divine level of consciousness  
far beyond mentality. Later, when he has killed Esau, Jack knows not  
regret, but a sense of fulfilment. He has obeyed the God within.  
The outside world is not important. "The reality and the assurance"  
(52)  
is inside himself.

The nature of the dark God is then clearly illustrated in The  
Boy in the Bush. The dark God is the call of the blood. Obedience  
to the call of the blood leaves a man clean and fulfilled. "My  
great religion," Lawrence wrote, "is a belief in the blood, the flesh,  
as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds."  
(53)  
But what our blood feels and believes and says is always true."  
In The Boy in the Bush, one individual realized the necessity of  
following the call of the blood. In The Plumed Serpent, Lawrence  
visualizes a whole country answering its call.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

- (1) D. H. Lawrence, Aaron's Rod (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935), p. 176.
- (2) Ibid., p. 169.
- (3) Ibid., p. 168.
- (4) Ibid., p. 106.
- (5) Ibid., p. 308.
- (6) Ibid., p. 309.
- (7) Ibid., p. 161.
- (8) Ibid., p. 258.
- (9) Ibid., p. 111.
- (10) Loc. cit.
- (11) Ibid., p. 126.
- (12) Ibid., p. 79.
- (13) D. H. Lawrence, "The Crown," Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays, p. 90.
- (14) D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love, p. 106.
- (15) D. H. Lawrence, Aaron's Rod, pp. 293-94.
- (16) Ibid., p. 102.
- (17) Ibid., p. 310.

- (18) Ibid., p. 311.
- (19) Ibid., p. 312.
- (20) Ibid., p. 302.
- (21) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 549.
- (22) D. H. Lawrence, Kangaroo (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1939), p. 72.
- (23) Ibid., pp. 142-43.
- (24) Ibid., p. 121.
- (25) Ibid., p. 114.
- (26) Ibid., p. 115.
- (27) Ibid., p. 220.
- (28) Ibid., p. 224.
- (29) Ibid., p. 221.
- (30) Ibid., <sup>22/</sup>pp. 222.
- (31) Loc. cit.
- (32) Ibid., p. 367.
- (33) Ibid., p. 338.
- (34) Ibid., p. 368.
- (35) D. H. Lawrence and M. L. Skinner, The Boy in the Bush (London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1936), p. 258.

- (36) Ibid., p. 323.
- (37) Ibid., p. 239.
- (38) Ibid., p. 219.
- (39) Ibid., p. 334.
- (40) Ibid., p. 350.
- (41) Ibid., p. 203.
- (42) Ibid., pp. 241-42.
- (43) Ibid., p. 93.
- (44) Loc. cit.
- (45) Ibid., p. 183.
- (46) Ibid., p. 361.
- (47) Ibid., p. 180.
- (48) Ibid., p. 165.
- (49) Ibid., p. 132.
- (50) Ibid., p. 169.
- (51) Loc. cit.
- (52) Ibid., p. 296.
- (53) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 94.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REJECTION OF CHRISTIANITY

The Plumed Serpent represents an attempt by Lawrence to dramatize in the novel form an idea which he had stated in one way or another in nearly all his preceding novels - the idea that man must rediscover the wisdom of the very distant past to fulfil himself in the present. In his first novel, The White Peacock, Lettie hesitantly expressed the idea when she and her brother came upon a cluster of snow drops in the woods. To Lettie the snow drops symbolized "something out of an old religion, that we have lost," a wisdom long departed from the earth,<sup>(1)</sup> a wisdom which she felt she needed. Aaron too, in Aaron's Rod had a flash of insight one morning in Italy when:

As in clairvoyance he perceived it: that our life is only a fragment of the shell of life. That there has been and will be life, human life such as we do not begin to conceive. Much that is life has passed away from men, leaving us all mere bits. In the dark, mindful silence and inflection of the cypress trees, lost races, lost language, lost human ways of feeling and of knowing. Men have known as we can no more know, have felt as we can no more feel. Great life-realities gone into the darkness.<sup>(2)</sup>

In The Plumed Serpent, there is an attempt to find again those "lost human ways of feeling and of knowing."

The recovery of the lost wisdom will be the means of creating whole men and whole women, Lawrence believes. For he asserts again in this novel that men and women are not yet whole. They are only half-created, half-arrived. Kate, the heroine, comes to a realisation of this fact

in Mexico:

She had thought that each individual had a complete self, a complete soul, an accomplished I. And now she realized as plainly as if she had turned into a new being, that this was not so. Men and women had incomplete selves, made up of bits assembled together loosely and somewhat haphazard. Man was not created ready-made. Men today were half-made, and women were half-made.(3)

The Mexicans "who squat helpless outside their own unbuilt selves, unable to win their souls out of the chaos" are only representative of the plight of all humanity. (4) But the attempt to find a way of life that will permit man to find his own soul deep within him and abide by that soul, is carried out in Mexico because the Mexicans have not yet hidden their incompleteness by assertions of righteousness.

Just as Somers repudiated the political ideals of Struthers in Kangaroo because they were based on Christian concepts of righteousness, so Don Ramon, the hero of The Plumed Serpent, acknowledges the limitations of the Christian ideals in the further development of man. The world, he says, has gone as far as it can in "the good, gentle, and loving direction." (5) And he echoes the distrust of charity, benevolence, pity, self-sacrifice, <sup>and</sup> spiritual love which is implicit in everyone of Lawrence's novels. Don Ramon's wife, Carlota, represents the Christian element in modern life. She loves with her will. She is full of charity. When Don Ramon reproves her for her "cruel kindness" (6) she goes to the Catholic Church for strength to fight him. She returns in victory over him, "in frail, pure triumph, like a flower that blooms on a grave: his grave" (7) And Lawrence's comment revealing his attitude to Christianity and his belief in its destructive impact on man, is: "Life had done its work on one more human being, quenched the spontaneous life and left only the will, killed the god (8) in the woman, or the goddess, and left only charity, with a will."

Christianity has failed to help the Mexican people, Don Ramon asserts. It is a religion of the spirit and hence must be understood. Therein lies the reason for its failure -- that it must be interpreted by the mind. The old hatred of the intellect, of the probing, analytical mind finds its extremest statement in this book. Both Kate and Don Ramon are nauseated by the mechanical, cog-wheel world and its smart, interesting people. They feel that the magic has departed from life, the mystery has departed from people. Kate longs to be delivered "from the dry-rot of the world's sterility."<sup>(9)</sup>

"Give me the mystery and let the world live again for me!" she cries,<sup>(10)</sup>  
"And deliver me from man's automatism."

The Plumed Serpent depicts the attempt to infuse mystery into life again, to bring back magic into the world. Don Ramon, who is the central figure in the great happenings, scorns political action. No political movement will solve man's problems, he believes. No surface action can bring any important change. The only way to produce a real transformation in life is "to shut our eyes and sink down, sink away from the surface, away, like shadows, down to the bottom."<sup>(11)</sup> And so the old Gods of Mexico are resurrected. For only by a recognition of the old Gods will man be able "to open the oyster of the cosmos" and find his own manhood in it.<sup>(12)</sup>

The resurrection of the old Gods of Mexico is the external manifestation of the dark God which urged Jack in The Boy in the Bush. The Gods represent the call of the blood, calling man back to the old wisdom which once walked the earth. They symbolize "the old mode of consciousness, the old, dark will, the unconcern for death, the subtle, dark consciousness, non-cerebral, but vertebrate."<sup>(13)</sup> It is this non-cerebral vertebrate consciousness which lapsed when the "mental-



spiritual life of white people" <sup>CAME</sup> ~~comes~~ into being. (14) But this mental-spiritual life of the white people cannot last, Lawrence believes. It must wither, and when it does a new conception of life will arise "from the fusion of the old blood-and-vertebrate consciousness with the white man's present mental-spiritual consciousness. (15) The sinking of both beings, into a new being." The fusion of the spirit and the blood in a man is the object of the new religion in Mexico. Christianity is rejected in as much as the necessary fusion cannot come about from the Christian way of life. Christianity denies the call of the blood, Lawrence believes.

The inauguration of the new religion in Mexico is witnessed in the novel, not through the eyes of the Mexicans, but through the eyes of an Irish woman, Kate. Kate has been married twice and has borne two children. Her first husband she divorced, the second whom she loved very much, died. When we first see her she is a woman who has finished with love. She no longer desires either the love of man or of children. She is content to be by herself, in silence, watching the unfolding of her own soul. However, after she meets Don Ramon and Cipriano, prime movers in the new religion, she finds herself attracted and repelled by the new thing they are trying to do. Kate, with her mental-spiritual cultural inheritance, symbolizes the divided emotions of the European when confronted with the demand to submit to the old dark Gods.

The demand for Kate's submission to the dark God manifested in Cipriano symbolizes something other than a general demand for man to yield to the call of his blood, however. It symbolises the demand Lawrence made of all women to yield to man. In The Plumed Serpent, woman, who has played an insignificant role in the three preceding novels, again

comes to the fore. But now her function is not to dominate the male, but to submit to the male. The submission is not easily given. Kate, in her past life has been like a great cat, enjoying the contacts she made, devouring them, going on to new ones, ever purring upon her own isolated individuality. She wants Cipriano to admit her isolated individuality but he will not: "the tiny star of her very self he would never see. To him she was but the answer to his call, the sheath for his blade...the fuel to his fire." (16) And he demands submission <sup>from</sup> ~~for~~ her, his demand representing the demand Lawrence made of all women to submit to men. The submission he wanted was a natural one, a free one, a submission in which the woman fulfilled herself. For in submitting to the man, the woman limited her own ego, but saved herself from nothingness.

Don Ramon's first wife, Carlota, did not submit herself to her husband. When ~~she~~ found that he was not what she wanted him to be she sought to change him. Instead of giving him the wine of her ~~body~~ and the secret oil of her soul she gave him only the water of her charity. (17) And so she did not fulfil him. His second wife, Teresa, however, does fulfil him. She does give him her soul and counsels Kate to do likewise with Cipriano. To give anything less than the whole of one's soul, says Teresa, is a betrayal of marriage. And Kate, the modern, intellectual, sophisticated woman, though she is annoyed at the little Teresa teaching her anything, nevertheless envies Teresa, and admires her pride in her own womanhood.

It appears then, that Lawrence who has heretofore praised the maintenance of a single, isolated soul in the love-bond, is modifying his ideal with regard to woman. The woman is to give her whole soul to the man, yield herself completely to her husband. By yielding herself to her husband she obeys her dark God and so finds

fulfilment. Her submission is her natural function, and her reward is true marriage with her husband. If the woman withholds her soul, there is "no true coming together of man and woman, into a wholeness, (18) there is no marriage."

Marriage is once again asserted as the means whereby man and woman gain a soul in life: "It takes a man and a woman together to make a soul. The soul is the Morning Star, emerging from the two. (19)

One alone cannot have a soul." In the coming together of Kate and Cipriano, this mutual dependence of man and woman is recognized. Kate feels that by herself, "she was nothing. Only as the pure (20) female corresponding to the pure male did she signify." But Cipriano needs Kate too. She gives him the power to achieve his manhood. Without her "he would never make his ultimate achievement, (21) he would never be whole." This mutual dependence of man and woman caused Lawrence despair in The Rainbow, for there it was woman who was dominant. But in The Plumed Serpent, which follows three novels in which the man's spirit is brought back into the world, woman is submissive.

Kate is obeying the call of the dark God when she draws nigh to Cipriano, the ancient call of woman to man. Cipriano symbolises "the bygone mystery, that has indeed gone by, but has not passed away." (22) In succumbing to his power she is succumbing to the (23)

dominant male in him, the Pan male, "undefined and unconfined."

And her yielding is a yielding to "the sheer solid mystery of (24) passivity."

With Cipriano, Kate is taken out of the modern world in which she may play an active dominant role, asserting her will over others, retaining her own individuality, back "to the

twilight of the ancient Pan world, where the soul of woman was dumb  
(25)  
to be forever unspoken."

Lawrence focusses attention on a few individuals in The Plumed Serpent in order to illustrate through them the general transformation he wants through all Mexico, indeed through all the world. Thus the marriage of Don Ramon and his first wife, Carlota, illustrates the wrong kind of relationship between man and woman. It is a relationship in which the Christian ideals of charity and pity and spiritual love shut off the dark wisdom of the old Gods of the blood. The marriage of Don Ramon and Carlota, in Lawrence's eyes, is indeed no true marriage at all. And Carlota dies so that Don Ramon may take a second wife and so come to his fulfilment. Teresa, his second wife, yields her whole soul to her husband and advises Kate to do likewise with Cipriano. Kate, in her vacillation between staying on in Mexico with Cipriano and returning to her old ties in Europe embodies the struggle between the ethical-spiritual-mental modern world and the dark, non-cerebral Pan world. Her decision to stay in Mexico and yield to her blood-call by yielding to Cipriano represents the direction modern woman must take, in Lawrence's opinion, if she desires true fulfilment of her self.

The relationship of Don Ramon and Cipriano also illustrates the kind of man-to-man relationship Lawrence upheld. Don Ramon is the leader, Cipriano is the follower. The natural heirarchy, the recognition of the innate superiority of one man over another, which Lawrence called for in his previous novels, is here achieved. Cipriano submits to Don Ramon unquestioningly. He bears no malice, nor has he any thoughts of rebellion. He is perfectly loyal, for

in his submission he achieves his fullest being: "To me Ramon is  
(26)  
more than life" he says. Although Cipriano submits to Don Ramon,  
others submit to him. The natural order, the natural aristocracy  
is established in Mexico. And through the natural order men come to  
their true fulfilment. In submission to Cipriano, his men are  
described as being supreme: "They got their splendour from his power  
and their greatest consciousness was his consciousness diffusing  
(27)  
them."

While Lawrence wisely illustrates the principles and aims of his  
new religion in terms of their meaning for a few specific individuals,  
he does not forget that he is depicting the birth of a new religion  
throughout the whole of Mexico. He describes the manner in which  
this new religion is launched. Meetings are held at which Don Ramon  
preaches. Don Ramon announces the aim of the new religion when he  
calls upon the people to realize a unity between their body and their  
spirit:

And save I take the wine of my spirit and the red of my heart,  
the strength of my belly and the power of my loins, and mingle  
them all together, and kindle them to the Morning Star, I  
betray my body, I betray my soul, I betray my spirit and my  
God who is unknown. (28)

Hymns are distributed through the country informing the people of  
the coming of the Gods and of the new life the Gods will bring with  
them:

So tell the men I am coming to,  
To make themselves clean, inside and out,  
To roll the grave-stone off their souls,  
from the cave of their bellies,  
To prepare to be men. (29)

Strange rites are performed. When Cipriano is inducted as the living  
God Huitzilopochtli, his reign is ushered in with the blood of six  
traitors to the cause. The importance of providing a spectacle to

attract the masses is not overlooked by the new leaders. And the religion begins to infuse itself into the life of the country. Hours are done away with. Day and night are divided into watches. Drum beats sound over the land at the change of watches. Men cease their labor and lift their hands in prayer.

Sex, the greatest of mysteries to Lawrence, before which the individual is insignificant, takes its proper rhythm. The mystery of sex is revealed in the dances which are part of the rites of the new religion. And, in the revelation, the Mexicans are drawn on to their true manhood and womanhood. One night, in Layula, Kate watches as:

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 greater womanhood. It was sex, but the greater, not the lesser sex. (30)

Throughout Mexico the transformation occurs. Throughout Mexico, the people open their hearts to the new religion, and a new world unfolds "as softly and subtly as twilight falling and removing the clutter of day." (31)

Middleton Murry calls The Plumed Serpent Lawrence's greatest work of 'art' (32) He says it is a great work of the imagination. It is <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ that great imaginative qualities are displayed in the novel. But it is in no sense a convincing piece of writing. Its theme, the resurrection of the old Gods in Mexico, is in itself a very difficult one for any artist to present in convincing fashion. But Lawrence has added to this initial difficulty by not being himself quite convinced of the theme he wished to treat. Consequently he stopped short of presenting a <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ resurrection of the old Gods and contented himself with portraying a manifestation of the old Gods in two Mexican men,

Don Ramon and Cipriano, who first appear in the novel as fairly ordinary individuals. The reader finds it a little difficult <sup>suddenly</sup> to ~~suddenly~~ <sup>men</sup> accept the elevation of these to the status of Gods. However, despite this difficulty, there is a certain fascination in the novel which comes from the portrayal of the strange religious rites and their impact on Mexico at large, and particularly from the descriptions of the atmosphere of the country and of the Mexicans themselves. In describing the setting of his religious experiment, Lawrence reveals again that power of his to unify setting and theme in his novels. He did it in The White Peacock, he did it in The Rainbow, he does it in The Plumed Serpent.

But artistically, Lawrence is far more successful in The Man Who Died where he is treating an equally difficult theme as that in his Mexican novel. The Man Who Died is a beautiful rendering of Lawrence's belief that the salvation of mankind is to be found, not in Christian spirituality, but in the pagan worship of the body.

The story is an imaginative telling of the resurrection of Christ. In Lawrence's tale, Christ comes back again into the world, this time seeking the fulfilment of Himself in the flesh. He never refers to Him as Christ but always ~~as~~ the man who died. The first awakening in the grave of the man who died is dreadful for him, filled as he is with the pain of his wounds and "the sickness of unspeakable disillusion."<sup>(33)</sup> But he finds <sup>d</sup> refuge in a peasant's cottage and there, lying in the yard, feeling the touch of the sun upon him, morning after morning, he slowly returns to life.

A cock which belongs to the peasant becomes a symbol of the life spirit to him. The cock is a splendid bird, saucy and flamboyant,

crowling his lordship to the hens of the yard with a shrill, fiery cry. But the peasant, who is described as dirty and stupid, is proud of his noble bird and ties a string about his leg in fear that he will fly away. His action symbolises to Lawrence the restraint lesser spirits always impose on the creature who is moved by the true life force. The cock knows that his body, spirit and soul <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ tied by the string about his leg. His voice loses its golden clangour. But underneath the life in him is unbroken. He cries out in defiance with a voice that is diminished but which has in it the knowledge of "the necessity to live, and even to cry out the triumph of life." <sup>(34)</sup> The man who died takes courage from the brave bird "crowling triumph and assertion" <sup>(35)</sup> and himself makes a strong affirmation of life: "the doom of death was a shadow compared to the raging destiny of life, the determined surge of life." <sup>(36)</sup>

In The Man Who Died then, Lawrence once again affirms as good the struggle and fight of life. The man who died rejects his former way of life and the ideals on which he had built that life. He meets Madeleine again, the prostitute who had washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. He sees that she wants him as he was before, "the unphysical exalter of her soul." <sup>(37)</sup> She wants him to be again "the man of his youth and his mission, of his chastity and his fear, of his little life, his giving without taking." <sup>(38)</sup> But he is disillusioned with all that was, and he tells her that the saviour and the leader in him is dead. He now wants no part of the greater body of humanity. He desires only his own "single life." <sup>(39)</sup>

His former chastity he denounces as a form of greed. His resurrection is a true resurrection of the body, and he returns to life to seek out woman: "Now he knew that he had risen for the woman, or



women, who knew the greater life of the body, not greedy to give, not greedy to take, and with whom he could mingle his body." (40) In his wanderings he finds the woman he seeks.

She is a girl who lives with her mother and her slaves on a great estate beside the Mediterranean. The girl serves the goddess Isis and has been waiting for her Osiris. She has been waiting for the man, as the man who died has been seeking the woman. Both are proud spirits who have looked with indifference and awareness of inadequacy upon all they have met. In each other their search is rewarded. The man who died acknowledges the mystery and the female difference of the Lady of Isis and determines neither "to fail her, or to trespass on her!" (41)

The woman is to him a tender ~~plane~~ <sup>FLAME</sup> of life, filling him with dismay at his former mode of existence: "How could I have been blind to the healing and the bliss in the crocus-like body of a tender woman?" (42) he asks himself. And he thinks how wrong he was formerly to deny the body. For the denial of the body, he feels, was the denial of love. Those who have served him with spiritual love, served him with the corpse of their love. And he too offered them only the corpse of his love: "This is my body - take and eat - my corpse -" (43) With the lady of Isis he is urged back into life. She massages his wounds with ointment and he thinks joyfully:

I am going to be warm again, and I am going to be whole!  
I shall be warm like the morning. I shall be a man. It doesn't need understanding. It needs newness. She brings me newness - (44)

The man who died then, comes to wholeness, achieves manhood, not through the exercise of charity, benevolence, pity, not through chastity, but through union with a woman of his choice. With her, he

(45)

can truly say: "I am risen."

The attitude in The Man Who Died is rigidly aristocratic.

There is a sharp discrimination between the lesser life and the greater life, the lesser people and the greater people. The man who died returns to life with pride in his superiority: "Reborn, he was in the other life, the greater day of the human ~~consciousness~~ <sup>CONSCIOUSNESS</sup>. And he was alone and apart from the little day, and out of contact with the daily people." (46)

The Woman of Isis with whom he mates is similarly prideful. When she addressed a servant she did so coldly, "for she found slaves invariably repellent, a little repulsive. They were so embedded in the lesser life...." (47)

As Lawrence approached the end of his career he came more and more to assert the superiority of the few, the inferiority of the many. And more and more he tended to limit the joys of self-fulfilment to the superior few who were aware of the life force within them and who had the courage to obey their dark God. He consoled the inferior masses with the advice that their fulfilment would come through submission to the few who had had the strength and courage to struggle through to wholeness and completeness. But the submission he advised was not one he was convinced would be given.

In The Man Who Died, he is bitter at the little people whom he conceives as ever seeking to repress the few superior beings. Throughout the world, in the cities and the towns, people are always wanting "to put a compulsion" on a man and to "violate his intrinsic solitude." (48) He symbolized that compulsion in the string tied around the leg of the proud cock. And later in the story, he illustrates it in the coming together of the man who died and the Lady of Isis. The mother of the girl opposes their union, and gives instructions to the slaves to

capture the man. He overhears the plans and escapes. Once again men, with their "egoistic fear of their own nothingness"; seek to destroy what is better than themselves. (49) But in this case the attempt is useless. For though the man who died and the Lady of Isis are separated, their union has already been consummated, and it is a union in which no betrayal can occur. There can be no Judas in a love that is a love of two whole beings.

The Man Who Died is distinct from the other novels of Lawrence, in its simplicity. Here, there is no feverish out-pourings of his convictions. Here, there is no strident preaching. Yet, in the few, short, beautiful pages that tell the story of the man who died, all the beliefs which Lawrence expounded are to be found. They emerge naturally from the story, and because of the nature of the story, they are given added force and emphasis. How better express a faith in sensuality as the means of the regeneration of mankind than to have the dead Christ rise from His grave, renouncing His former ideals, and finding fulfilment of Himself in Woman? How better suggest the existence of greater and of lesser men in the world than to have the dead Christ, with the knowledge of the grave behind Him, again moving among men on earth? How better state a disillusionment with the world than to picture the resurrected Christ, weary of His past existence, affirming a desire to possess His own soul in isolation from the world? In The Man Who Died, Lawrence has given the finest artistic expression to his beliefs that is to be found among his longer writings. The theme he chose was a perfect one for the use to which he put it. It is a bold theme, one that had to be treated with great delicacy and sensitivity. Lawrence treated it with great delicacy and sensitivity.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

- (1) D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock, p. 144.
- (2) D. H. Lawrence, Aaron's Rod, p. 277.
- (3) D. H. Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1926), p. 114.
- (4) Ibid., p. 149.
- (5) Ibid., p. 221.
- (6) Ibid., p. 222.
- (7) Ibid., p. 223.
- (8) Loc. cit.
- (9) Ibid., p. 111.
- (10) Ibid., p. 113.
- (11) Ibid., pp 205-06.
- (12) Ibid., p. 206.
- (13) Ibid., p. 444.
- (14) Loc. cit.
- (15) Loc. cit.
- (16) Ibid., p. 414
- (17) Ibid., p. 330.

- (18) Ibid., p. 354.
- (19) Ibid., p. 415.
- (20) Ibid., p. 414.
- (21) Ibid., p. 415.
- (22) Ibid., p. 332.
- (23) Loc. cit.
- (24) Ibid., p. 333.
- (25) Loc. cit.
- (26) Ibid., p. 331.
- (27) Ibid., p. 390.
- (28) Ibid., p. 365.
- (29) Ibid., p. 260.
- (30) Ibid., p. 140.
- (31) Ibid., p. 384.
- (32) J. M. Murry, Son of Woman, p. 518.
- (33) D. H. Lawrence, The Man Who Died (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935), p. 13.
- (34) Ibid., p. 26.
- (35) Ibid., p. 26.

- (36) Ibid., p. 30.
- (37) Ibid., p. 42.
- (38) Ibid., p. 51.
- (39) Ibid., p. 36.
- (40) Ibid., p. 47.
- (41) Ibid., p. 122.
- (42) Ibid., pp. 101-02.
- (43) Ibid., p. 127.
- (44) Ibid., p. 130.
- (45) Ibid., p. 133.
- (46) Ibid., pp. 95-96
- (47) Ibid., p. 93.
- (48) Ibid., p. 65.
- (49) Ibid., p. 65.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FIRST AND THE LAST

The end of Lawrence's journey brings him back to his staring<sup>t</sup>-point. Mellors, the hero of Lady Chatterley's Lover, is Annable brought back to life. He, too, is a game-keeper. He, too, is filled with bitterness towards woman. He, too, glorifies the natural life led in obedience to the animal instincts. But, unlike Annable, Mellors lives to establish the contact he desires with the lady of the Hall.

The story tells of the return of Clifford Chatterley from the war. He has been severely wounded and is permanently paralyzed below the waist. To compensate for his disability he cultivates his mind. He becomes one of the noted young intellectuals of his day, and his home is filled with brilliant young men who believe in the purity and integrity of the life of the mind and who dismiss sex as something irrelevant.

But in their dismissal of sex they themselves are not quite satisfied. Lawrence, who bitterly hates the intellectuals, makes them turn upon themselves in the novel and damn their own way of life. "We're not men," says one of them, "and the women aren't women. We're only cerebrating makeshifts, mechanical and in-  
(1)  
tellectual experiments." And another explains that when "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 (2) you yourself are a plucked apple...you've fallen off the tree."

Connie finds herself "a plucked apple" in her marriage. Surrounded as she is with intellectuals in whom all human warmth (3) is dead, she loses touch with "the substantial and vital world." A great void is her life: "Whatever happened, nothing happened.... Time went on as the clock does, half-past eight instead of half-past (4) seven." And as the years pass she is filled with fear at the vacuum which is her life:

Clifford's mental life and hers gradually began to feel like nothingness. Their marriage, their integrated life based on a habit of intimacy, that he talked about: there were days when it all became utterly blank and nothing. It was words, just so many words. The only reality was nothingness, and over it a hypocrisy of words. (5)

This nothingness which creeps into Connie's life is the outcome of the mental life, Lawrence says. The mental life is sterile and bloodless. To save herself from the sterility and nothingness of her marriage with Clifford, a marriage in which there is no hope in Lawrence's scale of values for fulfilment, Connie flees to Mellors, the game keeper. He is no intellectual. He hates the mental life and the world that is the product of too much intellectuality. He stands as Annable did for the elemental, physical nature of man, a nature which the modern mechanical world is destroying. Passing comment on modern man, he says:

Their spunk is gone dead. Motor cars and cinemas and aeroplanes suck the last bit out of them. I tell you, every generation breeds a more rabby generation, with india-rubber tubing for guts and tin legs and tin faces. Tin people! It's all a steady sort of bolshevism just killing off the human thing, and worshipping the mechanical thing. Money, money, money! All the modern lot get their



real kick out of killing the old human feeling out of man, making mincemeat of the old Adam and the old Eve.(6)

The destruction of the vital spark in mankind, the killing of 'the old human feeling' - this is the real tragedy of the complicated mechanical world run by the cold intellectuals. It is a tragedy which produces the kind of men Connie sees when the miners pass her on the street:

Underground grey faces, whites of eyes rolling, necks cringing from the pit roof, shoulders out of shape. Men! Men! Alas, in some ways patient and good men; In other ways, non-existent. Something that men should have been bred and killed out of them....They were good and kindly. But they were only half, only the grey half of a human being.(7)

The old cry that humanity is not whole! Beauty and mystery cannot be found in the pits. To restore beauty and mystery to life was Lawrence's object, an object that could be achieved, he believed, by an adjustment of the sexual relationship.

Lady Chatterley's Lover is an attempt to educate the world to his way of thinking. Writing to <sup>L</sup>Mad~~y~~ Morrell about this novel he said:

...you mustn't think I advocate perpetual sex. Far from it. Nothing nauseates me more than promiscuous sex in and out of season. But I want, with Lady C., to make an adjustment in consciousness to the basic physical realities.(8)

He goes on to argue that the reason the lower classes have been able to cling to the healthy glow of life longer than the educated classes is that they have been able to use plain language such as Mellors uses without shrinking from it. The shrinking from the basic realities is, he believes, bad:

It's a question of conscious acceptance and adjustment - only that, God forbid that I should be taken as urging loose sex activity. There is a brief time for sex, and a long time when sex is out of place.(9)

Lawrence glorified the sexual relation because he placed such faith in it in the regeneration of mankind. He went out of his way to make use of crude language because he wanted nothing shameful to be attached to a relation which he called "valid and precious."<sup>(10)</sup>

He was careful, however, to point out that the sexual relation he had faith in was one that bore no likeness to the "cocktail term for an excitement"<sup>(11)</sup> which the modern world indulged in: "I believe in the phallic consciousness, as against the irritable cerebral consciousness we're affected with....Sex is a thing that exists in the head, its reactions are <sup>e</sup>crebral, and its processes mental.<sup>(12)</sup> Whereas the phallic reality is warm and spontaneous...."

It was the phallic consciousness he wrote about in the relation of Mellors and Lady Chatterley, the phallic consciousness which he believed to be "the root of poetry, lived or sung."<sup>(13)</sup>

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

- (1) D. H. Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover (Paris: The Odyssey Press, 1934), p. 84.
- (2) Ibid., pp. 40-41
- (3) Ibid., p. 20.
- (4) Ibid., p. 19.
- (5) Ibid., p. 56.
- (6) Ibid., p. 256.
- (7) Ibid., p. 187.
- (8) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 773.
- (9) Loc. cit.
- (10) Ibid., p. 682
- (11) D. H. Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover, p. 69.
- (12) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, p. 710.
- (13) Ibid., p. 708.

### CONCLUSION

Inconsistencies are present in the thought of D. H. Lawrence. They are to be expected from a man who hated what was fixed and definite in life, and who, in his search for fulfilment, had the courage to follow new paths of experience whither they would lead. But essentially, Lawrence was never untrue to his two basic convictions - his hatred of the mental life and his belief in the blood as being wiser than the intellect. He believed that the cold, scientific, mechanical world which was the product of an over-emphasis on the intellect was stamping out the spark of vital life in humanity. He conceived man as being only half-created, half-achieved. And to render man whole and complete, the goal of self-fulfilment, he preached his religion of the blood.

The simplest expression of this religion was to be found in his first novel in the words of Annable: "Be a good animal, true to your animal instinct."<sup>(1)</sup> In later novels the attempt to follow this advice led to many complications. Lawrence was drawn to an investigation of the barriers in the way of fulfilment through the senses, an investigation of personal relationships. In his delineation of the subtleties of a personal relationship, he is supreme. He found that true fulfilment of the self could only be realized by a new adjustment between man and woman, man and man. In attempting to give expression to his vision, he had to seek out new symbols, new modes of expression. Words like 'dark Gods,' 'Morning Star,' 'nothingness' 'darkness' have a particular Lawrencian

significance which at times makes it difficult to apprehend his thought. Indeed, one sometimes feels that the most amazing thing about a Lawrence novel is that one character understands what another is saying. However, at the end of his career, in Lady Chatterley's Lover, Lawrence returned to as simple a statement of his beliefs as was found in The White Peacock. Indeed, in his last novel his vocabulary is so far removed from the mystical language of such a work as The Plumed Serpent as to have resulted in its banning.

It cannot be denied that Lawrence was obsessed with sex. He was. And his obsession had great significance for his art. In Lady Chatterley's Lover he said that the novel properly handled:

...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. (2)

Lawrence used the novel to reveal those "passional secret places of life" to which he wanted to direct the sympathetic consciousness of mankind. In doing so, he frequently abandoned such conventional devices of the novel as plot, action, incident. He was not interested in the external world. Often, when his characters are engaged in the simplest activities on the surface level, momentous happenings are taking place within their souls, happenings which have no manifestation on the objective plane. Nor did Lawrence create his characters from the outside. He was concerned rather with the flow of forces deep inside of them, and this concern, particularly in The Rainbow, tended to the extinction of distinct personality in his characters. However, with his unique preoccupations he did illuminate hitherto unplumbed depths of general human experience. He helped us to understand ourselves better, no

small achievement.

Middleton Murry says that we are not to judge Lawrence as an artist. (3) He claims that the necessary conditions for great art are lacking in our age because there is no universally accepted authority which gives society an organic unity and permits the artist "undisturbed concentration of his artistic faculty upon the created object." (4) Hence, Murry says, the artist sets out to discover his own authority and so becomes a philosopher. This is what Lawrence did, and to charge him with lack of form or other qualities necessary to art is to be guilty of irrelevance, states Murry. Much is valid in Murry's point-of-view. But the fact remains that Lawrence was using the novel form to communicate his "thought-adventures" and he must be judged as a novelist as well as a philosopher. (5)

One can regret that he did not pay more attention to form. One can regret that the promise of a story which is present in many of his first chapters too often is only a bait to lure the reader on to exposure to his philosophical beliefs. One can regret that he did not more frequently provide dramatic situations which could give rise to the strange states of soul of his characters which were his chief interest. The times he does provide dramatic action proves the power he had in this direction. One can regret too, that his philosophical prejudices made him impatient with many of his characters. He wrote in Lady Chatterley's Lover that one may witness "the most private affairs of other people, but only in a spirit of respect for the struggling, battered thing which any human soul is, and in a spirit of fine, discriminating sympathy." (6) This is advice which he himself did not always observe. He has no sympathy with a great many of his characters because he heartily disapproved of them. He insisted upon the importance

of the sexual aspect of human experience, and he recognized no other virtues in those persons who failed to reach his standard in this respect. His harsh attitude towards many of his characters was necessary if he was to convey the full significance of his philosophical convictions. And so, paradoxically enough, Lawrence whose greatness lies in his affirmation of the human spirit in a world becoming increasingly mechanized, reveals little tolerance or charity towards humanity in his novels.

Artistically, Lawrence's great strength lay in the power of his prose. He sweeps the reader along in a golden flood of rich, poetic language. The words flow from his pen as he piles phrase upon phrase, image upon image, in his effort to convince the reader (sometimes of absurdities) by the strength of his own conviction. Behind his writing, one feels there was a man passionately sincere about what he was saying. Writing was to him the fruit of religious yearning. He wrote from the depths of his religious experience:

I often think one ought to be able to pray, before one works - and then leave it to the Lord. 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.(7)

His early non-conformist background was always with Lawrence. Both as a philosopher and as an artist, he obeyed his inner God. He uttered his own beliefs in his own way. We can criticize those beliefs and we can criticize the means of expression of those beliefs. But we would not be without the best that Lawrence gave us. His great message, the affirmation of the individual spirit against the forces which seek to degrade that spirit, becomes more and more meaningful with each passing year. And the heights of power to which he rose at

times in giving voice to that message make us accept his imperfections  
(8)  
and bow before his own credo: "Art for my sake."



NOTES TO CONCLUSION

- (1) D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock, p. 163.
- (2) D. H. Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover, p. 115.
- (3) J. M. Murry, Son of Woman, p. 173.
- (4) Ibid., p. 172.
- (5) Ibid., p. 183.
- (6) D. H. Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover, p. 115.
- (7) The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Huxley, pp. 108-09.
- (8) Ibid., p. 86.

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