Sexually Balanced Relationships In The Novels Of D. H. Lawrence.

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IN

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by

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Abstract

Sexually Balanced Relationships

in the Novels of D.H. Lawrence

Leo J. Dorbad

Novelist, critic, poet, essayist, D.H. Lawrence was a man of letters in every sense of the phrase. Although his literary versatility is widely recognized today by readers and critics alike, the underlying thematic unity between his discursive prose--his Phoenix essays--and his major fiction has not always been understood or appreciated fully. Only a handful of academic critics have established a direct connection between the two genres, but even these efforts do not represent full-fledged inquiries into this aspect of Lawrence's creativity. This study undertakes a detailed analysis of the thematic similarity between his posthumously published essays on moral art and his seven major works of fiction, Sons and Lovers (1913), The Rainbow (1915), Women in Love (1920), Aaron's Rod (1922), Kangaroo (1923), The Plumed Serpent (1926), and Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928). The primary finding of the study indicates that the author was preoccupied with the physical and psychological borders between individuals. He believed such measurement or demarcation was necessary for successful interaction among all individuals, and he accordingly made this concern one of the driving forces behind his voluminous literary output.

Introduction

Increasingly untenable and unused, the title "man of letters" signifies an individual who is both comfortable and fluent in most modes of literary expression. Such a person may take up poetry one day and drama the next, expressing himself with equal ability in both genres. D.H. Lawrence is certainly no exception to this literary phenomenon. Poet, essayist, dramatist, critic, novelist, he remains one of the most versatile authors of the twentieth century.

But the underlying thematic unity of his chosen modes of expression has not always been fully appreciated or analyzed, and this particular aspect of his genius remains ripe for further inquiry. Most important is the thematic relation between his posthumously published Phoenix papers on moral art and life and his seven major novels. Both genres pivot on one central concern: the need and potential for vital warmth and tenderness between men and women. Lawrence never doubts the human capacity for such feelings, but he persistently tries to heighten their power, to intensify them as much as possible. This concern echoes from his first work to his last, constantly taking on new contexts and shapes but never wavering from its humane purpose--its guiding message.

Yet his idealism, his admirable intention, seldom goes unqualified. Throughout his canon he registers vehement dissatisfaction with the modern world's misguided, even perverse, attitudes toward love and sexuality. His diagnosis of this modern malaise is usually incisive and highly serious: too many people mistake outright possessiveness or extreme willfulness for actual sensitivity and true affection. For this reason Lawrence spends considerable time on the motivations behind human desire, always questioning its validity and appropriateness. In order to discourage improper sexual practices and ideas among modern individuals, the writer devotes a large portion of his huge literary output to new ways of thinking about human feelings and passions. Taken together, his essays and novels comprise a virtual program of sexual reform, the key component of which involves the individual's ongoing sensitivity to his partner's physical and psychological borders. If such demarcation is properly acknowledged and respected, then rewarding, healthy relations would surely come about on their own.

Although Lawrence espouses his belief throughout his discursive writings, he reserves its fullest thematic exploitation, really dramatization, for his major fiction, especially such works as Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow, Women in Love, and Lady Chatterley's Lover. The

Rainbow, for example, demonstrates how Tom and Lydia Brangwen, probably Lawrence's most admirable couple, manage to keep their love alive whenever their passion lulls by simultaneously looking forward to future moments of intimacy and respecting each other's independence and privacy in the meantime. But the same idea also receives full-fledged expression in the novelist's so-called leadership books, Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo, and The Plumed Serpent, in which we see his theory in terms of the characters' intense efforts to shield themselves from outside contamination--any form of intrusive influence or cultural manipulation--as they risk involvement with others at the same time. Their ability to perform both tasks usually affords them at least tentative security.

In this manner, then, Lawrence's literary creativity receives its chief impetus from one single idea or wish: healthy interaction among all human beings. Whether we turn to his discursive writings or his major fiction, we encounter the same theme and idealism--the same hope.

This study will offer an intensive analysis of this reciprocity between the essays on moral art and life and the seven major novels from Sons and Lovers (1913) to Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928). It begins by chronologically mapping out and analyzing the essays (1914-1929) as the fundamental groundwork on which Lawrence rationalizes the motives and behavior of his

characters as they attempt self-definition within sexually demanding unions. A thorough discussion of the fiction will then follow. The characters' struggle to achieve some degree of balance which is always intuitional, learned, and ironically tentative, will be in the forefront of analysis at all times.

A word on methodology is in order. Along the way strict attention will be paid to qualifications, climaxes, resolutions, and other developments in Lawrence's thought. This procedure will be especially necessary within the context of his discursive writing, where his concept of human identity takes root among a host of sociological, political, and ethical concerns.

Chronology, too, will be an integral part of analysis in each chapter, charting the writer's intellectual growth. It is, for example, a basic premise of this study that his most serious essays from 1914-1920, comprising the first half of his body of discursive prose, were reflective conclusions drawn from the intensive composition of his first three works of major fiction, Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow, and Women in Love. Similarly, Lawrence's personal approach to characterization, his great sensitivity to his heroes' need for intuitional balance between themselves and others, did not fully mature until his middle years, 1922-1925, at which time he faithfully assimilated all he

had learned from his criticism and writing of fiction into an important series of essays on moral art and life, "Morality and the Novel," "Art and Morality," "Why the Novel Matters," and the playfully pointed "...Love Was Once a Little Boy."

Chapter 1

Lawrencean Philosophy

From 1914-1920 Lawrence composed a series of diverse essays on one loosely unified theme: the irrevocable superiority, grace, sacredness, and beauty of the individual. In his Study of Thomas Hardy (1914), "The Crown" (1915), "Love" (1918), and "Education of the People" (1918-1920), he tackles a wide array of subjects--work, World War I, the history of European painting--but always within a framework of human individuality. Lawrencean sociology adopts a handy myopia when it comes to masses; they simply blur something much more important.

A great deal of this thematic consistency can be understood by taking even the briefest glance at his earlier biography. By age 29 he had already created and published a major work of autobiographical fiction, Sons and Lovers (1913), in which we see a thinly disguised Lawrence in the character of Paul Morel, who struggles to free himself from two relationships with possessive women. Like his own hero, Lawrence too had once been the recipient of a mother's "crushing" devotion and had also suffered tremendously in a love relationship with a young girl who was "obsessed with him and wrote of him

obsessively" (Moore 42-49).

By 1914, however, all of this emotional turbulence had subsided, and we see a much fresher, more contented man. We need not look far for an explanation. His relationship with Frieda von Richthofen, which had begun in 1912, was about to culminate in marriage. A certain optimism, a certain sense of direction, enters periodically into his correspondence of the time, as in the following letter of 7 July 1914 to Sir Thomas Dacre Dunlop:

> Your most vital necessity in this life is that you shall love your wife completely and implicitly and in entire nakedness of body and spirit. Then you will have peace and inner security, no matter how many things go wrong. And this peace and security will leave you free to act and to produce your own work, a real independent workman. (Letters 1: 285)

It is no wonder that Lawrence began his Study of Thomas Hardy less than two months later, having surmounted the obstacles of his early years and achieved union with another human being. He was, we shall see, busily making himself into "a real independent workman."

I. The Business of Living

A busy craftsman during the summer of 1914, Lawrence began his Study while he was still composing the final stages of The Rainbow (Moore 224). Whereas the novel

employs a tense, dramatic psychological realism in its depiction of young Ursula Brangwen's attempt to strike a happy medium between the immediate challenges of the day, her responsibilities as daughter, teacher, lover, and her desire for personal definition, the essay explores, less intensely, this same theme wholly within Lawrence's grasp of the most pressing social issues of his day: the cataclysmic outbreak of World War I, the suffrage movement and, above all else, man's relation to work in the twentieth century. These issues and their impact on the individual ironically usurped his concern with Hardy's characters, the bulk of whose names and interests became relegated to interpolations rather than chapters in terms of the overall design and argumentative thrust of Lawrence's own essay. The completed study (most likely in December 1914; Letters 1: 298), as he himself had projected in September, was to "be about anything but Thomas Hardy, I am afraid--queer stuff--but not bad" (Letters 1: 290).

In the first half of the work, Lawrence diagnoses what might best be called a miserable misdirection of energy in modern man. He sadly notes that we have, as an ambitious and often hasty civilization, invested our vitality, our true physical and spiritual potential, into a host of misleading causes and fruitless activities, and

we are none of us the better for it:

> Why are we so rarely away on our holidays? Why do we persist in taking ourselves seriously, in counting our money and our goods and our virtues? We are down in the end. We rot and crumble away. And that without ever bursting the bud, the tight economical bud of caution and thrift and self-preservation. (401)[1]

In making this indictment of bourgeois culture, the result of centuries of burdensome "money-sickness" and "sex-perversion" (406), Lawrence was, we shall see, neither condemning nor dismissing the world of fundamental sociological realities, the proven world of honest labor and its reward. Rather, he was quite simply registering a prophetic awareness, an acute, disturbing receptiveness to gross impurity, an obvious imbalance within a materialistic framework.

His corrective impulse, one which Ursula Brangwen intuitionally learns on her own in The Rainbow, entailed a radical readjustment of priorities in the individual's approach to living. For him, this fresh agenda amounted to a new economy of being, a kind of new budgeting of human activity. Above all else, though, it involved sensitivity to a potential not presently understood yet inexplicably useful, something unlikely and virgin yet resilient and resourceful, something, in a phrase, hidden

[1]Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Lawrence's discursive prose refer to Phoenix (1936).

and quiescent yet residing majestically and gloriously within the seed of true humanity:

> The final aim of every living thing, creature, or being is the full achievement of itself. This accomplished, it will produce what it will produce, it will bear the fruit of its nature. Not the fruit, however, but the flower is the culmination and climax, the degree to be striven for. Not the work I shall produce, but the real Me I shall achieve, that is the consideration; of the complete Me will come the complete fruit of me, the work, the children. (403)

Lawrence customarily embodies such unrealized human potential--in both fiction and discursive prose--within a figurative matrix of natural phenomena, bursting nuts, virile animals, shooting trees, and examples of other fecundity. He aptly describes his Rainbow women, especially Lydia and the adult Ursula, as delicately responsive flowers, the strength of their bloom varying in accordance with misunderstood and usually mysterious internal rhythms and ephemeral nuances of feeling. Here, in chapters 1-2, however, he merely intends to unveil and lay down the fundamentals of his new economy of being as a poetic premise to further clarification in chapters 4 and 5.

In between chapters 2 and 4 occurs a brief discussion of individuality in Hardy's novels, but Lawrence clearly intends this section, this interpolation, to act as a kind of critical application

of his progressive theory to his predecessor's characterization (very much the same thing Lawrence attempts in the closing chapters on Biblical matters and European painting). It can be read, quite instructively, as a critical aside, steppingstone, or clever transition between chapters 2 and 4.

"Work is, simply," he states in chapter 4, "the activity necessary for the production of a sufficient supply of food and shelter: nothing more holy than that" (423). Any misunderstanding of this principle leads inevitably to an obsession with money and, in turn, disruption in the individual's approach to life and activity within the social sphere. History has faithfully borne this out: greed and mass consumption of material goods have flourished at the expense of the individual soul. Man has forgotten himself in such a misguided expenditure of energy. But history portrays an extreme example of man's stupidity, and Lawrence wants desperately to distinguish its sad depiction from his visionary hopefulness. Somehow, he thought, work must fit into the future; it must be related to but not a central part of man's life. Yet apparently it took on subordinate significance in his program; it was destined to become "only the making provision for that which is to follow" (423).

But we should not too hastily assign a lesser value to the role of work in Lawrence's universe. It was, he saw, simply much too easy to appreciate its financial rather than its intrinsic value to the individual. His most heroic characters are seldom guilty of this charge, and almost all of them derive at least some degree of satisfaction from honest labor. Paul Morel, Tom Brangwen, and Oliver Mellors take considerable pride in their work as independent craftsmen. Anyone who has read Lawrence's letters knows this to be true of their creator as well. Indeed, he was, as his good friend Aldous Huxley reveals, an incredibly efficient workman and tasteful homemaker who absorbingly threw himself into everything from sewing to milking his favorite New Mexican cow, Black-Eyed Susan (Selected 27). He was, spiritually and physically, extraordinarily athletic.

II. Establishing Personal Boundaries

But Lawrence's attitude toward work is not quite as simple as it seems. At its most subtle, least understood level, it holds a deeper importance than the individual realizes, and yet a large part of our day passes in ignorance of this mysterious aspect of our being. We are actually reaping an advantage without ever realizing it.

For him, this advantage was something we could appreciate, something necessary; it is something we may need to know. Once again Lawrence hopes to remind us of something we have forgotten; he hopes to remind us of ourselves.

Opening with an account of Lawrencean evolution, chapter 5 reminds us of the history of work. Long ago in some "unthinkable period" preceding "chaos" and "differentiation," a "surface of matter learned to roll on a rolling motion across another surface, as the tide rolls up the land. And long ago man saw this motion, and learned a secret, and made the wheel, and rejoiced" (430). Surfacing from this indeterminate mass, then, man observed what he saw, intuitively grasped a principle of physics, retained his wisdom, and eventually put it to use. Whether we are "only shovelling coal onto a fire, or hammering nails into a shoe-sole," or carrying out some other equally mundane task, he goes on, work remains "the repetition of some one of those rediscovered movements, the enacting of some part imitated from life, the attaining of a similar result as life attained" (430). And man, both assimilating and employing this knowledge to his own advantage, derives a considerable amount of "pleasure in doing something, the living will to work" (430).

Pleasure, in its most wholesome and spontaneous state, is always a welcome guest in Lawrence's vocabulary, but this is not by any means the most important aspect of work in his program. He has something more profound in mind, a better clarification, a better definition: "It seems as if the great aim and purpose in human life were to bring all life into the human consciousness. And this is the final meaning of work: the extension of human consciousness" (430). By engaging in work, coming in contact with objects, exercising the full spectrum of the senses (a subject discussed in "Education of the People" 1918), and retaining the wisdom gained during these activities, man separates himself from his earlier chaos, his pre-existence. In this manner, he is evolving on his way to clearer demarcation--integral being.

As Barry Ivker and others have demonstrated, Lawrence was no stranger to Schopenhauer's philosophy (22-23). Indeed, we have it on the good authority of Jessie Chambers, Lawrence's first love, that he was highly familiar with certain parts of the pessimist's writings (E.T. 111). A clearer description of the novelist's idea of chaos quite strikingly echoes Book 2 of The World as Will and Idea:

> Life starts crude and unspecified, a great Mass. And it proceeds to evolve out of that

> mass ever more distinct and definite particular forms, an ever-multiplying number of separate species and orders, as if it were working always to the production of the infinite number of perfect individuals, the individual so thorough that he should have nothing in common with any other individual. (431)

Whereas Schopenhauer's vision of evolution led inevitably to a society of egotistical entities, Lawrence's actually allows for a much fuller, clearer, more sensitive articulation of man's awareness. There is nothing inherently selfish or unfeeling in this scheme. "The further he goes, the more extended his consciousness, the more he realizes the things that are not himself" (432). In what might be called a kind of psychological process of subtraction or reduction, discounting what he is not, man finds what he is. A wider array of contacts makes for a more finely demarcated identity:

> I see a flower, because it is not me. I know a melody, because it is not me. I feel cold, because it is not me. I feel joy when I kiss, because it is not me, the kiss, but rather one of the bounds or limits where I end. But the kiss is a closer division of me from the mass than a sense of cold or heat. It whittles the more keenly naked from the gross. (432)

Not denying the importance of other physical phenomena here, Lawrence gives precedence to the kiss as an instructive aid in the establishment of the self's finitude. Relying as it does on mutual sensitivity, the kiss affords a much greater active assessment, a greater possibility of judgment than do other forms and

activities. A confirmation of outline, achieved form, is a logical outcome of this interaction, both parties reaching a medium, a point of boundary in this living exchange, this shared warmth.

What needs special attention here, however, is the ethical or aesthetic implication of this view and its chronological relevance to Lawrence's developing vision in the fiction. Such an approach need not concern itself with value judgments at this time. For the transmutation of ideas or beliefs from one genre to another, and the healthy cross-fertilization occurring between them, does not in any way imply a reduction in seriousness of effort or a slackened intensity of creative expression. It might simply be said at this point that one genre feeds the other. Dramatized theory or intuition, its manifestation in character, scene and setting, has its counterpart in argumentative essays--each genre influencing the other.

Lawrence's findings, reached intuitively by his heroes in Sons and Lovers (1913) and The Rainbow (1915), receives its first fully discursive expression here in the Study of late 1914, the very same season in which he was completing the latter book. In both genres the central message remains the same, but "true being" now implies an ethical sensitivity to any boundaries between self and others:

> And necessarily accompanying this more perfect being of myself is the more extended knowledge of that which is not myself. That is, the finer, more distinct the individual, the more finely and distinctly is he aware of all other individuality. It needs a delicate, pure soul to distinguish between the souls of others; it needs a thing which is purely itself to see other things in their purity or their impurity. (433)

Lawrence, then, has lifted man out of his earlier indeterminacy, dismissed him tentatively from work, and placed him in a conspicuously social setting where he may appreciate an even more refined identity in both himself and others. At this point he experiences his highest degree of selfhood which is even more rewarding than that derived from work, his daily toil. But Lawrence was only half done with his program; there was still something vital missing in his theory. His next step, aspiring ever and ever forward, involved a definition of sociological selfhood in purely sexual terms.

Accordingly, the Study's second half provides a Lawrencean version of sexual evolution, one encompassing everything from man and woman's most intimate moments to a history of passion in European painting. His interest in the self is never lost in this impressive panorama but instead becomes entrenched within a much wider spectrum of human activity. Once again the process of differentiation works in the writer's thought, which by this time has evolved into a kind of sexual physics. His

conception of time and its many mysteries provides his thematic cue. Lawrencean eternity, where all things are perfect and timeless, may actually be a sexless, indistinct zone, in much the same way as man's prior existence was inert, jelly-like, indistinguishable. Until we reach such a time, however, human sexuality must retain its present dynamics, and Lawrence has his own version of this fact of existence. It amounts to a philosophy which has ritualistic, almost mythical overtones. For the present time, man and woman must ceaselessly represent, actively symbolize, and quite literally prove their intrinsic otherness to each other:

> Man is man, and woman is woman, whether no children be born any more for ever. As long as time lasts, man is man. In eternity, where infinite motion becomes rest, the two may be one. But until eternity man is man. Until eternity, there shall be this separateness, this interaction of man upon woman, male upon female, this suffering, this delight, this imperfection. (443)

Man's imperfect nature necessitates his engagement in this drama of sexual activity whose script he must both heed and enact as literal testimony of Nature's flaw. But Lawrence soon contradicts himself. In a later passage we find that all of us have either vestiges or future seeds of this perfect existence, this perfect eternity, in our very marrow: "For every man comprises male and female in his being, the male always struggling for predominance. A

woman likewise consists in male and female, with female predominant" (481). Synthetically, he derives this theory of impurity from his inquiries into ambiguous or "undifferentiated" characterization in the Old Testament, and he proceeds to exemplify his ideas by citing Biblical figures who struggled to reconcile their male and female components (451). None of this, of course, is news; modern science had already speculated on the nature of human identity before sexual differentiation, on the emergence of both sexes from the same biological tissue. But we must briefly inquire how this view relates chronologically to his conception of identity in both its fictional and discursive formats.

H.M. Daleski provides the fullest and most controversial analysis of this aspect of Lawrencean thought. Basing his findings on the contextual elaboration between discrepancies in the writer's growing vision and their manifestation in the biography, the critic argues that Lawrence's conception of fundamental sexuality changed considerably in the subsequently published Fantasia of the Unconscious (1922), that this inconsistency poses serious implications for any true appreciation of the fiction, and finally that it underscores the novelist's inability "to reconcile the male and female" components of his personality (33). The

following extract from the later work, cited here as Daleski's chief form of internal evidence, amounts to an outright refutation of the earlier passage on mixed sexuality from the Study:

> A child is either male or female; in the whole of its psyche and physique is either male or female. Every single living cell is either male or female, and will remain either male or female as long as life lasts. And every single cell in every male child is male, and every cell in every female child is female. The talk about a third sex, or about the indeterminate sex, is just to pervert the issue. (96)

Throughout this slim volume of speculative psychology there is a similar decisiveness about determinate sexuality in both children and young adults. Composed as a kind of pendant to his "Education of the People" (1918), Fantasia strongly advocates a policy of sexual segregation throughout the first years of learning, a practice which will hopefully maintain "some sort of respect and fear for the gulf that lies between them in nature, and for the great strangeness which each has to offer the other, finally" (102). We may, then, tentatively infer that this inconsistency may very well reveal a "split" in Lawrence's very being itself, and Daleski proceeds to do so by citing accounts of the novelist's apparent effeminacy and his efforts to subdue such impurity within himself--the growing of his distinguished beard in 1914 being one of the most

conspicuous examples (33-35). All of this, of course, becomes even more intriguing when we recall that the themes of the fiction of Lawrence's third period--his leadership novels--turn in the direction of manly conduct and masculine authority.

But Lawrence's beard need not be considered solely as a kind of outward defense against inner division. We have other testimony on this point, a point which will also shed additional light on the novelist's evolving theory of identity. Favorably reviewing his old friend's Phoenix in 1936, David Garnett supplied a different perspective on the writer's changed appearance:

> But there was a sort of turning point marked by his growing a beard. In the days before the beard, Lawrence was always eager, alive, sometime petulant and scolding, but then laughing and ragging himself and his own petulance. The beard marked a willingness to surrender himself to the prophet; he concealed himself in his beard and lost the will to mock at himself and to criticize himself. Not that it was all his fault--he was shamefully treated during and after the war--the worms turned on him and he grew a bit savage. (812)

Unlike our other interpretation, we see here firsthand sensitivity to the author's withdrawal and apparent wistfulness, and an equally reliable sensitivity to the influence of external rather than internal factors in such complicated behavior. Lawrence's correspondence at this time seems to corroborate Garnett's view. Commenting on the war's impact upon his spirit in a letter to Edward

Garnett, David Garnett's father, Lawrence talks of feeling "very abstract, as if I and what I am did not matter very much" (Letters 1: 292). Yet only one week later in a letter to Catherine Carswell he confesses not abstraction but comforting security:

> Oh, by the way--I was seedy and have grown a beard. I think I look hideous, but it is so warm and complete, and such a clothing to one's nakedness, that I like it and shall keep it. So when you see me don't laugh. (293)

There is not the slightest trace of insufficient sexuality in this admission, nor is there a sign of disoriented being. But we do detect a sense of compensation for some previous emptiness, some earlier insufficiency of personal outline and vulnerability, and Lawrence's sarcastic openness is quite clearly intended to register an independent resolve in an increasingly hostile atmosphere, a world literally tearing itself to pieces, a sad world he would eventually recollect in the darkest pages of Kangaroo (Moore 207).

It would be, of course, highly improper to represent an unbalanced portrait of the lit and unlit sides of a creator's genius as he imparts pieces of his own intellectual growth to his work, but it would also be equally improper to overlook the consistent steadfastness of mind and its corresponding aesthetic or ethical seriousness which lends solidity and direction to his

vision. The fruits of such an approach provide an indication of a connection between the author's unfolding composition and its existence beyond itself, the process of his own coming into being. This method becomes especially appropriate when we sense this dominant intellectual current occurring within a fairly specified amount of time. Given this chronological privilege, then, we may, in effect, freeze a particular phase in the artist's intellectual growth, just as we would freeze a particular scene in a movie, in order to see how each mental piece contributes to an overall fabric of mind.

Lawrence worked on his Study from September through mid-December 1914, at which time he described the essay "as a sort of Story of My Heart, or a Confessio Fidei: which I must write again, still another time: and for which the critics will plainly beat me, as a Russian friend says" (Letters 1: 298). His correspondence of this period reveals, periodically, an intuition and subsequent registration of the kind of knowledge or wisdom hinted at in his cleverly personalized subtitle above. It is the same kind of knowledge we noticed earlier in his premonition about the Study's tendency toward autobiographical revelation. Like many other authors, Lawrence frequently found himself in his subject, appearing as a faithful shadow, and it is not at all

surprising that his own experiences often provided what amounts to an instructive index of sensibility for others as well. These were matters he had pondered, isolated intellectually, tried out meditatively, and even sometime resolved. Hence the fruits of worthwhile reverie could be passed on, shared with other selves.

Having happily solidified his relationship with Frieda through conventional marriage only two months earlier, the novelist adjusted his private moments to encompass new ideas and experiences and, as if sensing this new turn of events in its master's life, his creativity took a noticeably sexual turn. Now this is neither significant in itself nor highly novel under the circumstances. But what is worthy of concern here was his inability at the time to sever sexual from artistic matters, his inability to see them independently. They are, we see in this letter to Gordon Campbell in late September 1914, related sequentially:

> I believe there is no getting of a vision, as you call it, before we get our sex right: before we get our souls fertilised by the female. I don't mean the feminine: I mean the female. Because life tends to take two streams, male and female, and only some female influence (not necessarily woman, but most obviously woman) can fertilise the soul of man to vision or being. Then the vision we're after, I don't know what it is--but it is something that contains awe and dread and submission, not pride or sensuous egotism and assertion. (Letters 1: 291)

In its awareness of revitalizing forces outside the self, in its dependency upon something foreign yet vitally necessary for wholesomeness, in its intuition of some component of creative potential not inherently pure enough or sufficiently active in its own make-up, this extract is neither an admission of feeble manhood nor an expression of dwindling creative fire. It is, however, the confession of a man whose selfhood, inextricably tied to his artistic vision, gains power from the outside, from its opposite. Not having immediate access to a range of experience desired but not within its own being, the self is forced to rely on another's being and sensibility. This is a decisive moment in both Lawrence's art and biography, for it is the first full expression of his accumulating knowledge of human identity. In the Study, this "poetic sexuality" flourishes into its fullest form as a vitally conductive, mutual dependency between man and woman:

> The supreme effort each man makes, for himself, is the effort to clasp as a hub the woman who shall be the axle, compelling him to true motion, without aberration. The supreme desire of every man is for mating with a woman, such that the sexual act be the closest, most concentrated motion in his life, closest upon the axle, the prime movement of himself, of which all the rest of his motion is a continuance in the same kind. (444)

A man's "movement, the manner of his walk, and the supremest effort of his mind"--all these things derive

from the "stimulus received" in his union with the "female spirit," who activates "in him his idea, his motion, himself" (444-45). Lawrence goes on to adduce the qualities of "Immutability, Permanence," and "Eternality" as the principal fruits man reaps from his union with woman (446). Once again we can note here the centrality of the sexual act in terms of the overall fabric of man's life; subordinate concerns, daily toil, thought, even, we see, artistic craftsmanship itself inspirationally emanate outward from his most central, most urgent, most stabilizing impulse. As a later chapter will point out, it is Tom Brangwen's ability to intuit this process and incorporate it into his life that brings about the vision of tentative sexual harmony in The Rainbow. This conspicuously masculine perspective need not worry us, for the novelist's heroines also learn to achieve such personal stability in their sexual relationships with men. Their struggle to do so, however, exacts heavy tolls along the arduous path to integrated identity, an identity which must reach its fullest expression in sexual union and yet somehow learn not to violate its own borders or those of others.

III. The Advantages of Sexual Opposition

Intellectually, however, Lawrence was not yet ready to give his belief its fullest form. What his characters had been learning intuitionally on their own from Sons and Lovers (1913) through Women in Love (1920) was not quite suitable for framing in less dramatized, less immediate prose. Nevertheless, there were glimmers during this period, pieces of wisdom, but glimmers they remained. Other things needed saying first--among them was an even deeper inquiry into the self's quest for its fullest expression, the nature of its access to such expression, its chances of finding it and, finally, its initiation into this quest even in childhood. Lawrence expended both his meditative and rhetorical energies on these and other central matters in "The Crown" (1915), "Love" (1918), and "Education of the People" (1918-20).

Conceived as a personalized discussion of "impersonal freedom" (Letters 1: 365), "The Crown" spread over three installments of Middleton Murry's newly established Signature from October through November 1915, at which time its third issue became its last (Roberts 254). Its argument "is not fundamentally different from that of Thomas Hardy," Frank Kermode claims, "but it is more rapt" (51). In any case, the essay functions as a

highly informative index to The Rainbow, which appeared on 30 September 1915 (Moore 235).

Foreshadowing his later essays, Lawrence explores his notion of impersonal freedom within a dialectical framework of figurative language, the pull between lion and unicorn, between, respectively, darkness and light:

> The lion and the unicorn are not fighting for the Crown. They are fighting beneath it. And the Crown is upon their fight. If they made friends and lay down side by side, the Crown would fall on them both and kill them. (Phoenix 2:371)

As metaphors of freedom, these two opposites lend themselves to an incredibly diverse spectrum of sociological interpretation as the essay progresses. They take on political, religious and, of course, sexual connotations. But whatever their rhetorical guise, each member retains its "stable equilibrium" or independence by faithfully opposing its partner (366). Whether it occurs in war, love, music, or any other human activity, this vital tension eventually builds to a "consummation," and this consummation is never victory but "perfect relatedness" (373).

Lawrence, however, insists on clarifying the self's consummation in purely sexual terms. A center of mysteriously conflicting impulses, man's being "sweeps together towards the utter consummation, the consummation with the darkness, the consummation with the light, flesh

and spirit, one culminating crisis, when man passes into timelessness and absoluteness" (376). At its highest potential, its very zenith of being, the self receives consummation as it is sent back to the "Source" or "Beginning" (377), and this centermost region of being retains the very same definition it held in the preceding essay:

> It is thus, seeking consummation in the utter darkness, that I come to the woman in desire. She is the doorway, she is the gate to the dark eternity of power, the creator's power. When I put my hand on her, my heart beats with a passion of fear and ecstasy, for I touch my own passing away, my own ceasing-to-be, I apprehend my own consummation in a darkness which obliterates me in its infinity. (377)

In terms very much the same as Tom intuitionally conceives of Lydia in The Rainbow, Lawrence here affirms a mysterious power made accessible to man through woman. Being closer to life's unfathomable source, she provides him the opportunity to reach his highest potential, his very peak of selfhood. She gives him a sense of proportion, a sense of himself in terms of an unfathomable reality outside his natural vision: "Till, new-created, I am thrown forth again on the shore of creation, warm and lustrous, goodly, new-born from the darkness out of which all time has issued" (378). Lawrence clearly echoes the Study here: man revives his own sense of self, his vital singleness, by seeking and

hopefully attaining in woman those very special qualities adduced earlier, Permanence, Immutability, and Eternality. His soul fertilized by woman, he may freely act on his own, holding his head up with a considerably stronger sense of intrinsic being. He has literally become himself, he achieves himself through woman. In purely discursive terms, Lawrence's vision remains highly idealized in "The Crown," for his characters seldom achieve such brilliancy of being. Indeed, they find only moments of rare intimacy and consummation tentative at best, and early or hasty consummation is always folly. Learning to approach their mates delicately, appreciatively, considerately, his most heroic individuals eventually enter into intimacy with the utmost carefulness.

Discursively, however, Lawrence recognizes man's failure to approach love in this fashion. In doing so he denies himself integrated identity. This is largely a matter of misinterpreting the mighty Crown. Realizing in consummation not two but only one opposite, lightness or darkness, "the unconsummated soul, unsatisfied, uncreated in part, will seek to make itself whole by bringing the whole world under its own order, will seek to make itself absolute and timeless by devouring its opposite" (379). Such a being is not capable of appreciating his own

selfhood nor that of others. He has, in effect, proclaimed himself victor, refuting the Lawrencean dynamics of true relatedness, the same ethical principles regarding transgression between selves set down in the preceding essay. Such folly is "the crown of sterile egoism," and Lawrence goes on to adduce some exemplary representatives: "So Shelley also perishes. He wants to be love triumphant, as Napoleon wanted to be power triumphant. Both fell" (381). Poetic and political realms, then, are not free of such impurity; their ranks are filled throughout history. As we observed in the Study, Lawrence seldom hesitates to attribute the collapse of bourgeois culture to blatant egoism. In the world of the seven major novels, however, this gross impurity almost always takes on the form of possessiveness.

In his concluding sections, Lawrence analyzes the most advanced stage of modern egoism, which is, we see, once again a direct result of centuries of progressive decay: "Only when we fall into egoism do we lose all chance of blossoming, and then the flux of corruption is the breath of our existence. From top to bottom, in the whole nation, we are engaged, fundamentally engaged in the process of reduction and dissolution" (393). Although Lawrence ironically views such corruption as a possible

path to social rejuvenation, as a way of wiping the sores of civilization clean once again (Clarke 19), he consistently laments its infiltration into sexual matters. For man's identity, reached completely through his relations with others, could become perverted, twisting grossly out of shape. Having chosen this path, modern man arrogantly violates not only his own being but also that of others: "And then, when a man seeks a woman, he seeks not a consummation in union, but a frictional reduction. He seeks to plunge his compound flesh into the cold acid that will reduce him, in supreme sensual experience, down to his parts" (394). A proper adjustment would therefore be needed in man's attitude toward his innermost activity.

An even clearer conception of adjustment would surely evolve. But there were more stops along the way to full articulation of his theory, two of them occurring in 1918: "Love" and "Education of the People." The former piece is a highly accessible synopsis of Lawrence's ideas on sexual intimacy and its relation to the self, while the latter piece triumphantly reaffirms the glorious and inviolable superiority of the individual over the masses. Both essays clearly prefigure later resolutions in the novelist's intellectual growth, but we shall pay special attention to any premature assimilation and the

solidification of growth at this point in his development.

"Love" is largely an elaboration of ideas found in the Study and "The Crown," focusing primarily on the value of intimacy between man and woman. In addition to "The Crown's" light, darkness, and mythical animals, Lawrence now adds to his impressive roster of figurative devices the "perfect rose," which symbolizes ideal intimacy between man and woman (153). More precisely, it can be taken as a poetic embodiment of "The Crown's" notion of sexual consummation. But Lawrence's earlier program takes on a twofold description at this point. Love, he explains, may be classified under two general headings:

> Sacred love is selfless, seeking not its own. The lover serves his beloved and seeks perfect communion of oneness with her. But whole love between man and woman is sacred and profane together. Profane love seeks its own. I seek my own in the beloved, I wrestle with her to wrest it from her. We are not clear, we are mixed and mingled. I am in the beloved also, and she is in me. Which should not be, for this is confusion and chaos. Therefore I will gather myself complete and free from the beloved, she shall single herself out in utter contradistinction to me. (153)

Again we see here the importance of differentiation between the sexes, the need for separateness with each partner seeking its own identity by way of the other. Lawrence's central concern, however, is one (or indeed

both) partner's failure to do so, and its subsequent effect upon the relationship. For Lawrence, sacred love always carries overtones of Christian love, in which man becomes whole by loving his brother completely, by extending himself generously, by giving something and asking for nothing in return. Essentially, then, man exceeds himself in Christian love, merging with others wholeheartedly.

As a component of love between man and woman as well, sacred love has its negative side for Lawrence. It too often results in an insufficiency of outline, an impurity of being: "There may be no separateness discovered, no singleness won, no unique otherness admitted. This is a half love, what is called sacred love" (154). Half a decade earlier Lawrence explored this very same impurity in the flawed character of Miriam Leivers in Sons and Lovers (1913). Not surprisingly, he would also explore this problem in his next major discursive piece, "Education of the People."

Unfortunately, profane love too has its problems, especially when there are fierce, arrogant personalities involved in the relationship. Echoing Lawrence's ideas in "The Crown," such lovers indulge in corrosive sensuality and pay an extremely high price for their passion: "This is the profane love, that ends in flamboyant and

lacerating tragedy when the two which are so singled out are torn finally apart by death" (154). The greatest exemplification of this flawed behavior in Lawrence's canon is, of course, the violent, almost brutal marriage of Will and Anna in The Rainbow. Lacking a true capacity for sacred love, they arrogantly assert their wills upon each other in a ceaseless battle for complete domination.

But the novelist does offer a corrective solution to this problem between the sexes. It has much to do with a certain sensitivity, something difficult to put in purely discursive terms:

> We have understanding. And if we understand, then we balance perfectly between the two motions, we are single, isolated individuals, we are a great concordant humanity, both, and then the rose of perfection transcends us, the rose of the world which has never yet blossomed, but which will blossom from us when we begin to understand both sides and to live in both directions, freely and without fear, following the inmost desires of our body and spirit, which arrive to us out of the unknown. (156)

The operative word here is, of course, "understanding," one which mankind has not yet attained. As sexual beings, man and woman share the capacity to receive the mysterious unknown, but they must somehow learn to adjust this powerful knowledge in accordance with their individual needs. If they learn to do so, a balanced love occurs between them which offers wholeness and separateness at the same time. It is consummation, the

perfect rose for Lawrence, the relationship in which two individuals exist "in their perfect singleness, transported into one surpassing heaven of a rose-blossom" (154). Although they are completely one for a time, each member remains "separate and proud as a lion or a hawk" (155-56).

As we shall see in a later chapter, Rupert Birkin espouses this very same truth in Women in Love (1920). More important for our purposes here, however, it is also the same philosophy expressed much more cogently less than a decade later on a remote New Mexico ranch in "...Love Was Once a Little Boy" (1925), at which time Lawrence fully articulated its importance. Ironically, his understanding did not flower completely by way of connection with another human being but instead by way of connection with an animal. As a later chapter will show, his curious relationship with Susan, his pet cow, offered him a working objective exemplification of his perfect rose, the rose which always remained the closest approximation to perfect relatedness for him.

IV. Man's Proper Study

A university graduate himself, Lawrence was certainly no stranger to the solemn academic world.

Indeed, from 1908-1912 he spent an interrupted, often harried, but overall instructive existence as a schoolmaster in the Davidson Road School in Croydon, a growing London suburb (Moore 87-100). Although he officially left teaching in his late twenties, he remained quite willing to consider it a possible avenue to further professional advancement (Letters 1: 563). It is not unlikely that the creative impetus behind "Education of the People" was at least partly attributable to such hopes at the time, for he did show considerable interest in obtaining an administrative post at one of the local institutions (Moore 296). Things did not go as planned, however. Having received a respectable rejection from the editor of the educational supplement of the Times in late 1918, he set aside his four essays until future inspiration would prompt him to revise under the fresher skies of Capri in June 1920, at which time he apparently combined them into one single piece (Roberts 163). Neither version of the essays appeared during his short life, however; they were destined to obtain only posthumous immortality (Moore 296).

Lawrence's subject here is not radical change but social rejuvenation by way of educational reform, an honest, patient, careful, and worthwhile revitalization of England's withering educational system. His sincerity,

however, always includes complexity, for his conception of reform called for a drastic adjustment in the establishment's attitude toward its young, the nation's future generations of leaders and workers. Once again Lawrence attributes his country's malaise to hopelessly misplaced energy and foolish idealism: "You can hardly keep a boy for ten years in the elementary schools, 'educating him' to be himself, 'educating him' up to the high ideal of human existence, with the bottle-factory outside the gate all the time, without producing a state of cynicism in the child's soul" (590). Never discounting the seriousness of this unfortunate rift between the classroom's sheltered atmosphere of humanistic inquiry and the harsh reality outside its solemn walls, Lawrence does not want to bridge these two worlds as much as he wants to incorporate them into a wider scope of human existence. Cynicism, in this sense, is merely a symptom of some deeper, more urgent problem. It is largely a matter of forgetfulness; man has forgotten why he exists. He has foolishly rearranged his priorities:

> So there we are, all living in an agony and nightmare of fear of not being able to make a living. But we actually <u>are</u> the living. We live, and therefore everything is ours. Whence, then, the fear? Just a sort of irrational mob-panic. (593)

History, we observed earlier, provides an instructive reference to such error, such unnecessary fear. In its

endless recording of centuries upon centuries of bourgeois decay, in its faithful narrative of the stormy relations between employer and employee, in its ever increasing depiction of the industrialist's gain at the expense of his workers' well-being, history repeatedly reminds us of the disappearance of human individuality amidst a host of seemingly unrelated phenomena. Lacking its only essential ingredient, it records not human lives but fear instead.

Echoing the Study, Lawrence insists on alleviating this fear by first reminding the individual of his primary business and position in life: "For after all, it is a much rarer and more difficult thing to be oneself than to be either a State or a dustbin" (588). How to be oneself is precisely the same question Ursula Brangwen so urgently and earnestly ponders in The Rainbow, and her chosen path accords well with her creator's attempt to reinstate the self as society's major consideration. "How can society best serve the individual's needs"? Lawrence asks. His approach appears simple but somewhat disturbing at face value: abolish our nation's notion of democratic equality and let each man develop his own identity:

> Here then is the new ideal for society: not that all men are equal, but that each man is himself: "one is one and all alone and ever more shall be so." Particularly this is the ideal for a new system of education. Every man shall be himself, shall have every opportunity

> to come to his own intrinsic fullness of being. (603)

The self's development, fraught with anxieties and stubborn obstacles, is an incredibly complicated business, just as it was in the preceding essays. Consistently, it entails a certain ethical awareness, especially in the area of human relationships: "No person is responsible for the being of any other person. Each one is starrily single, starrily self-responsible, not to be blurred or confused" (603). Using the same metaphors Rupert Birkin espouses in Women in Love, Lawrence here advocates extreme differentiation even outside a conspicuously sexual climate, and he repeatedly insists on such separateness throughout the essay. As always, he proclaims the superiority of independent existence over mass humanity: "Vitally, intensively, one human being is always more than six collective human beings. Because, in the collectivity, what is gained in bulk or number is lost in intrinsic being" (637). Once the Establishment acknowledges the inviolable dignity and unlimited potential of the individual, it may then embark on a program of mass education.

Lawrence explores this enormous task on two levels: preschool and secondary education. We shall examine the latter first, as he does himself. On both levels he concerns himself with both the structure and

implementation of a program designed to detect what he calls the "soul-strength" or "living understanding" of each child (607).

Because Lawrence bases his theories of education on whatever is gloriously "incommutable and incommunicable" in the child's being (601), it follows that the professional ranks of administrators and schoolmasters must themselves adjust their outdated teaching methods in order to bring to fruition each pupil's true being. Such reform is, of course, unprecedented in the history of education, and Lawrence is quite justified in saying that it calls for the establishment of "a new morality" (615).

Accordingly, the professional ranks will shed their present role as pedants and transform themselves into "life-priests" who are themselves capable of sensing the child's capacity for living, his potential for true responsiveness:

> The whole business of educators will be to estimate, not the particular faculty of the child for some particular job: not at all; nor even a specific intellectual capacity; the whole business will be to estimate the profound life-quality, the very nature of the child, that which makes him ultimately what he is, his soul-strength and his soul-wisdom, which cause him to be a natural master of life. (607)

In essence, this professional sensitivity amounts to a "religious faculty" (608), and has nothing to do with conventional assessments of intelligence or other such

outdated classroom tools. Lawrence clearly intends each instructor to intuit whatever his pupil intuits about himself. He advocates an extremely basic curriculum of reading, writing, and elementary math for all youngsters, but ultimately "a man's destiny shall be shaped into the natural form" of his own being (613). The teacher's efforts should never attempt "to turn every coal-miner into" a poet (Shelley) or a politician (Parnell) (609). Having spent his morning on sums and English themes, the student may use his afternoon to develop himself even further. The day's spacious hours spread before him, he could wander freely through its panorama in order to arrive at himself and take full advantage of his own potential.

What needs special notice at this point is Lawrence's vehement advocacy of certain extracurricular activities as initiation into life's mysteries throughout the child's day. These special activities, however, are not in any real sense required or officially sponsored. Rather, they remain an integral part of the individual's strong sense of pride, his "aloof" individualism (649). Lawrence insists on the pupil's need for uninterrupted privacy, the few moments spent purely on oneself: "I want to remain intact within my own natural isolation, save at those moments when I am drawn to a rare and significant

intimacy" (649).

It is interesting to note that Lawrence would most likely prefer to complicate his theory of education by making reference to the individual's sexual life as well; put more precisely, his subject matter restrains him from engaging in such extrapolation. But it is worthy to note that his suggestions for awakening the child's pride--doing one's chores for oneself--bear undeniable resemblance to his program of self-awareness in the Study. In both essays we see an emphasis placed on the individual's need for delicate responsiveness to his environment. In "Education of the People," however, this process now takes on twofold significance: tactile engagement brings about not only a finer sense of outline but also a soothing kind of physiological and psychological release:

> The actual doing things is in itself a joy. If I wash the dishes I learn a quick, light touch of china and earthenware, the feel of it, the weight and roll and poise of it, the peculiar hotness, the quickness or slowness of its surface. I am at the middle of an infinite complexity of motions and adjustments and quick, apprehensive contacts. (650)

Our happiness itself, he goes on, depends upon such moments of responsiveness: "If I am to be well and satisfied, as a human being, a large part of my life must pass in mindless motion, quick, busy activity in which I am neither bought nor sold, but acting alone and free

from the centre of my own active isolation" (650). It is literally pure joy for the individual to know that he moves spontaneously from his inmost being.

In his comments on the preschool ages, Lawrence verges on being humorous by today's standards, for he chides modern mothers for attributing personalities to their children. Children are simply children, as he sees it, and any attempt to lend them the greater articulateness of adult emotion and sensibility is sheer, unethical folly. Frequently prodding, selfish, desperately desiring a reciprocation, a reflection of her own maternal feeling in the newborn soul, the modern mother actually thwarts her infant's natural spontaneity and trespasses on its integrity:

> She succeeds, and starts this hateful "personal" love between herself and her excited child, and the unspoken but unfathomable hatred between the violated infant and her own assaulting soul, which together make the bane of human life, and give rise to all the neurosis and neuritis and nervous troubles we are all afflicted with. (625)

As mentioned earlier, Lawrence himself was well aware of the dangers of female willfulness, and it would not be unfair to detect in this indictment at least a morsel of personal experience (Kermode 91). What held true for man and woman was no less true for mother and child: a recognized, respected neutral medium was paramount for healthy relatedness.

Trespass across this medium was potentially fatal. As a corrective solution to this problem, Lawrence advocated a program of free, uninhibited movement for all infants, movement which would put the growing being in immediate contact with himself and his universe. The parent, being especially sensitive to the child's needs, must initiate this movement, but she should remain a nonchalant onlooker during the process. She can inspire, freely instigate a healthy playfulness in its young soul, but an intended response should never become her goal. The child must choose his own mode of expression. It is largely a matter of keeping check on one's own self, of carefully monitoring any signs of flickering egoism and subsequent trespass. In both intention and substance, then, such activity does not differ significantly from the adult's ongoing attempts at self-definition. Curiously mimicking his elders, the infant struggles to determine his own limits, his potential singleness:

> Instead of trying to attract an infant's attention, trying to arouse its notice, to make it perceive, the mother or nurse should mindlessly put it into contact with the physical universe. What is the first business of the baby? To ascertain the physical reality of its own context, even of its own very self. It has to learn to wave its little hands and feet. To a baby it is for a long time a startling thing, to find its own hand waving. (641)

At this point in our analysis we need only note that

Lawrence's educational reforms accord well with his theories of sexual identity in the preceding essays. In whatever instance that can be cited, the reader observes a stubborn insistence on the self's proud singleness and its concomitant need to sense and respect this identical singleness in others. Having explored selfhood in a variety of settings, he decided to assess its ongoing attempts at definition in the fiction of his contemporaries by becoming a critic.

V. The Novelist as Philosophical Critic

From 1923-1925 Lawrence produced a series of journalistic essays on moral art: "Surgery for the Novel or a Bomb" (1923), "Art and Morality" (1925), "Morality and the Novel" (1925), "The Novel" (1925), and "Why the Novel Matters" (mid-twenties).[2] In his helpful editorial premise to Phoenix, Edward D. McDonald explains that at least two of these appeared in short-lived literary reviews (xxii). Today, however, all five remain easily accessible in current anthologies and critical collections. Essential to any full grasp of the novelist's theories of human identity and literary

[2]The chronology behind these compositions is somewhat hazy. See Roberts 77 and 161 for additional background.

practices, they complement his major fiction by providing additional access to his unfolding vision.

"Novel" is, of course, the key word in four out of five titles above. There was, we shall see, nothing spurious or premature about his particular choice of that genre as a topic for discussion in a program of moral criticism. By the mid-twenties, Lawrence had already lived more than half of his short life. During those years he had developed himself into a man of letters, giving full vent to his creativity in a variety of genres. And he also had sampled a fairly wide range of literature both in and outside his native tongue (Letters 1: 424-29). Given this impressive range of accumulated experience, he decided to survey what he, and others like him, had achieved as novelists. The time was ripe for constructive retrospection, for surveying the highs and lows of other literary figures.

But his transformation from novelist into critic was not as complete as we may like to think. Once again he found himself, his old self, his supposedly submerged self, in his subject. As literary critic, he made his observations through the eyes of the novelist. What held for one would surely hold for the other. Why should a man think differently simply because he took on a new role? His particular vision of life, depending as it did on the

need for healthy, vital relations between human beings, could develop only within an obliging genre. Within the novel's refreshing amplitude he had repeatedly defended the self's attempts at definition and its appreciation of the same process in others. Consciously or unconsciously, he had transformed his chosen genre into criticism, an instrument of humanizing proportions (Vivas, "Lawrence's Problems" 84).[3]

The literary critic was surely no exception to this admirable practice; he too relied on personal experience, humane conviction, and a reasonable knowledge of man in relation to other men. Taken together, these qualities would lend the critic's outlook a certain informing tendency, a sense of inner direction, something which may even be useful to others.

As we observed earlier, Lawrence's intellectual growth tends to blur the distinction between creator and created, and more often than not a seamless medium forms itself between the two. It is essential to understand this interface in Lawrence's transition from novelist to critic. David J. Gordon explains quite succinctly:

[3]Unlike many other critics, Vivas notes an impulse toward social or moral reform throughout Lawrence's art; in the context of his essay, however, he places this impulse loosely within the scope of the novelist's overall creativity and imaginative inspiration.

> Lawrence was able to subordinate art to life and still write effective criticism, because his concept of life included, or was identified with, a serious and workable concept of art. His "life" signified both "is" and "ought"; it was both descriptive and honorific; the critic's working distinctions were between life and nonlife rather than between life and art. He did not really deny that art is an autonomous structure, symbolically related to life; he simply very often succeeded in merging moral and aesthetic judgment. (148-49)

The harmony between these two realms of experience is the subject of "Art and Morality" (1925), in which the novelist advocates a certain ethical consistency in the artist's approach to his craft: "The true artist doesn't substitute immorality for morality. On the contrary, he <u>always</u> substitutes a finer morality for a grosser. And as soon as you see a finer morality, the grosser becomes relatively immoral" (525). In his critical essays Lawrence repeatedly reminds us of the driving impulse behind the artist's consistency, the informing principle which lends truth and hope to man's creative endeavors: "What art has got to do, and will go on doing, is to reveal things in their different relationships" (524). Always engaging, somewhat harried, sometime disturbingly redundant and shrill, his critical yardstick varied awkwardly from essay to essay but it bristled unfailingly with argumentative drive and deep conviction. As analysis will indicate, however, the fullest and most cogent statement of his belief did not occur until "Why the

Novel Matters" of the mid-twenties, at which time he proposed a reasoned explanation of the importance of intuition in both modern art and life.

The word "things" in the above excerpt from "Art and Morality" takes on a conspicuously human reference throughout Lawrence's series on moral art. It is also quite appropriate to apply this distinction to his first essay on theme and characterization in the contemporary novel, "Surgery for the Novel or a Bomb," which appeared in Literary Digest International Book Review in April 1923 (Roberts 161). Since Lawrence mentions Joyce's Ulysses (1922) in the essay, it is therefore possible to approximate composition between 1922-1923. The emphasis on chronology is very important since the essay occupies the initial position in the series. In both tone and substance, "Surgery" amounts to an indictment of his contemporaries' work, the literary labors of such avant-garde figures as Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, and Proust, and for this very reason we may justifiably treat its initial position in the series as the principal impetus behind his later corrective strategies for immoral fiction.

Advocating inevitable, even radical surgery for the contemporary novel, Lawrence vehemently eschews the modern writer's solipsistic approach to characterization,

a practice which has led to self-indulgent trivia and rampant egoism:

> And there's the serious novel: senile-precocious. Absorbedly, childishly concerned with what I am. "I am this, I am that, I am the other. My reactions are such, and such, and such. And, oh, Lord, if I liked to watch myself closely enough, if I liked to analyse my feelings minutely, as I unbutton my gloves, instead of saying crudely I unbuttoned them, then I could go on to a million pages instead of a thousand. (518)

As a corrective solution to such foolishness, Lawrence advises the modern writer to consider "a whole line of new emotion, which will get us out of the emotional rut" (520). Unfortunately, he remains hopelessly vague about his suggestion, and the essay's brevity does not allow for further elaboration.

Nevertheless, we should make some effort to understand why Lawrence reacted so strongly to contemporary modes of characterization in light of what we know about his own ideas. Any conclusion we infer cannot realistically ignore the nature of the works Lawrence cites in the essay, the strikingly innovative, extremely self-reflexive worlds of Ulysses, Pointed Roofs, and, apparently, Remembrance of Things Past. Generally speaking, these ingenious works derive much of their kinetic power from the mind's continuous assimilation of experience. They are actually records of mind in motion and tend to dwell upon themselves by

virtue of their very subject matter. Most likely Lawrence rejected their tendency toward hermetic alienation, the mind's ceaseless confrontation with itself, its insistence upon its own imprisonment, its lack of relatedness in terms of things outside its experience. For him, truthful, moral characterization took its cue from something much deeper, something much more significant than waves of random experience.

It was largely a matter of proportion for Lawrence. The contemporary novelist insisted on tipping his scale in the wrong direction, practicing newfangled characterization at the expense of something much more important and durable. In emphasizing the self's ceaseless stream of mental activity, the avant-garde paid only small tribute to the individual's attempts at definition in relation to other selves. In effect, they foolishly substituted a lesser for a finer morality.

In its overall resonance, "The Novel" (1925) functions as a pendant to the preceding essay, for Lawrence carries on his informal but severe campaign against an even larger roster of contemporary immoralists. But now he displays a much tighter grip on his subject and accordingly compensates for much of the vagueness of his last diatribe. He is now almost as close as he will ever come to a fully discursive description of

his intentions as novelist, especially as they pertain to organic unity and truthful characterization:

> The novel itself lays down these laws for us, and we spend our time evading them. The man in the novel must be "quick." And this means one thing, among a host of unknown meaning: it means he must have a quick relatedness to all the other things in the novel: snow, bed-bugs, sunshine, the phallus, trains, silk-hats, cats, sorrow, people, food, diphtheria, fuchsias, stars, ideas, God, tooth-paste, lightning, and toilet paper. He must be in quick relation to all these things. (Phoenix 2: 420)

The word "quick," appearing in one form or another throughout several Phoenix essays, pertains to whatever is incommunicable and unseen in man's mysterious nature. Of all literary genres, the novel was most obliging to man's capacity for quickness, for free, spontaneous being. On the whole, however, Lawrence's informal tone and occasional jocosity tend to undercut the underlying seriousness of his mission. In essence, his advocacy of relatedness pervades the entire essay, but his chosen mode of expression does not match the mature articulateness of some of his other pronouncements on moral fiction.

There is, for example, nothing uneven or brash about "Morality and the Novel" and "Why the Novel Matters." Together these pieces tend to form an interlocking whole, one unified stretch of reasoned, concise prose. Here at last Lawrence presents a program of moral direction for

the modern novel and also tells us about its deep importance to our own lives. As he saw it, it was something we might need to know. Readers could learn something valuable about life by delving into moral literature. Bearing overtones of hopefulness and renewal, Lawrence sets out to defend the modern novel as an instrument of humanizing tendencies. We should pay strict attention to this aspect of his program, for it not only reveals his dream of sexual harmony between man and woman but also places the self's attempts at definition within a continuous context of relatedness.

In "Morality and the Novel," Lawrence hails his chosen genre as "the highest example of subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered" (528). His preference was neither unfounded nor idiosyncratic, nor was it a matter of simply choosing between the rhetorical possibilities of other genres and the fairly restrictive contours of the Victorian novel. As a literary practitioner of all genres, drama, short fiction, travel writing, poetry, and critical reviewing, he was well aware of alternative forms of expression and exercised his genius in all of them. Throughout his major fiction he had consistently achieved a suitable balance between lyrical poetry and the steadier, more masculine, straightforward prose of drama and travel writing. His

preference was based on something much more subtle than general inclination and talent. It took its lead from a deeper resource of being, something hidden yet useful.

Lawrence's choice of subject and form was based largely on his conception of human experience. For him, right and wrong were not merely decisions but experiences of decisions. When a man decides on a specific course of action, he literally places his intellectual and physical weight behind his decision. His resolve, then, has its basis, its force, within his very marrow, and his subsequent action in the world is simply a reflection of inner determination. Because life offers an endless series of decisive moments, the human being remains faithful to himself by reacting as fully as possible to his predicament. Unity of being is the inevitable result of such morality, for the individual responds in both body and spirit to a given situation. Lawrence accordingly treated the novel as a literary forum uniquely suited to his specific needs:

> Right and wrong is an instinct: but an instinct of the whole consciousness in a man, bodily, mental, spiritual at once. And only in the novel are <u>all</u> things given full play, or at least, they may be given full play, when we realize that life itself, and not inert safety, is the reason for living. For out of the full play of all things emerges the only thing that is anything, the wholeness of a man, the wholeness of a woman, man alive, and live woman. (538)

Aside from its comforting atmosphere of organic relatedness, the novel offered Lawrence the closest analogy to felt experience. Only within its obliging contours, its willingness to include the full spectrum of human responsiveness, could integrated personality develop. Every response, love, hate, anger, joy, contributed its part to the individual's totality of being; each deserved equal mention throughout his life. As the novelist saw it, moral art and healthy identity depended solely upon one's attentiveness to the full spectrum of feeling.

It is much too easy to confine his critical program to the context of its utterance: the sincere, reasoned, persuasive argument of an artist who hopes to revivify his chosen genre by reminding his fellow readers and writers to respect and, if possible, employ its humane assets. Throughout his polemic he retains a central focus: characterization. Here again we enter the seamless medium between Lawrence's ideas on art and life. There was no conflict between the two for him: one morality held true for both areas, and the wise artist adapted his powers accordingly. As Anais Nin explains, his approach to both worlds always maintained a certain consistency, and he was simply incapable of making an exception when it came to characterization:

> Lawrence approaches his characters not in a state of intellectual lucidity but in one of intuitional reasoning. His observation is not through the eyes but through the central physical vision--or instinct. His analysis is not one of the mind alone, but of the senses. (18)

Having bestowed the sometime burdensome gift of intuition upon his characters, Lawrence watched over their struggles from a vantage point of moral license, a position completely free of hypocrisy and jealousy. It was up to them to achieve definition by attending to the currents of their inmost being whose source and potential they would eventually understand. In this sense, then, his critical comments resonate beyond their discursive context; they resonate throughout the world of the seven major novels.

Yet the similarity between "Morality and the Novel" and "Why the Novel Matters" must be qualified. Both essays celebrate the novel's capacity for relatedness, but this capacity takes on a conspicuously sexual context in "Morality and the Novel." Here Lawrence insists on placing the self's attempts at definition within an interpretative atmosphere of sexual adjustment between man and woman. But what is most worthy of notice is his emphasis upon the concomitant ethical responsibilities of such interaction:

> Each must be true to himself, herself, his own manhood, her own womanhood, and let the

> relationship work out of itself. This means courage above all things: and then discipline. Courage to accept the life-thrust from within oneself, and from the other person. Discipline, not to exceed oneself any more than one can help. Courage, when one has exceeded oneself, to accept the fact and not whine about it. (531)

Healthy identity depends solely upon a modulated sensitivity between vital singleness and rewarding connection. As we shall see, it is a sensitivity his characters must master for themselves; it becomes the central thrust of their lives.

VI. Analogies to Sexual Equilibrium

Shortly after his stay in Mexico and his completion of The Plumed Serpent there, Lawrence returned to the mountains of his New Mexico ranch, "Kiowa," in April 1925 (Schorer 68-72). Here his life took on new colors. For one thing, literary pursuits were not uppermost in his mind: "I don't do any work since we are here--except milk the black-eyed Susan and irrigate the field--when there's any water. I never felt less literary" (Letters 2: 843). Temporarily, the novelist found emotional release by throwing himself into his daily round of ranch work, irrigating fields, building a corral for his horses, tending his garden. But he did not suppress his true self entirely. His correspondence of this period provides a

summary of his vigorous activities and also comments widely on the natural beauty around Kiowa.

His animal friends were an important part of this beauty. Indeed, he valued their friendship and actually lamented the day he would have to leave them behind: "It grieves me to leave my horses, and my cow Susan, and the cat Timsy Wemyss, and the white cock Moses--and the place" (Letters 2: 849). Susan the black-eyed cow figured prominently among these friendships. Lawrence appropriately paid her immortal tribute in his writings of the time. A distant, nonchalant, intensely single animal, she curiously reaffirmed and broadened some of her master's profound ideas. In doing so she gained immortality in one of the novelist's most engaging pieces, "...Love Was Once a Little Boy."

It is probably Lawrence's most informative commentary on the harried relations between the sexes. Opening with a refreshing catalog of wise analogies and daring similes, he proclaims the need for a certain degree of harmonious equilibrium between the sexes. His advice, aimed largely at the modern ego, attains poetic expression in the following simile:

> You can't worship love and individuality in the same breath. Love is a mutual relationship, like a flame between wax and air. If either wax or air insists on getting its own way, or getting its own back too much, the flame goes out and the unison disappears. At the same

> time, if one yields itself up to the other entirely, there is a guttering mess. You have to balance love and individuality, and actually sacrifice a portion of each. (Phoenix 2: 445)

Yet several paragraphs later he insists on qualifying his earlier idealism: "But the moment you put young Tom in one scale, and young Kate in the other: why, not God himself has succeeded as yet in striking a nice level balance. Probably doesn't intend to, ever" (445). His qualification was not by any means an admission of defeat. Lawrence simply sensed a certain inherent struggle between the sexes, each one struggling to maintain its own singleness yet yearning for worthwhile human connection. Even "God Himself" had not struck a happy medium between these seemingly irreconcilable entities. But Lawrence was not happy with pat explanations, simplified assumptions. He would explore the issue on a deeper level, a personal level.

His curious relationship with Susan the cow offered him the perfect imaginative analogy to his notion of relative equilibrium between man and woman. "How can I equilibrate myself with my black cow Susan?" he asks innocently (446). At sunrise everyday he found it necessary to qualify his earlier idealism once again. Having called his cow in vain, he tells us how he frequently decided to scout the nearby timber. Susan, we realize, has consistently maintained a policy of

inviolable singleness, evading her master whenever she deemed necessary. His calling, he says, "was a mere nothing against the black stillness of her cowy passivity" (446). Finally reaching her on horseback, Lawrence vividly describes Susan in all her victorious isolation:

> It is Susan, her ears apart, standing like some spider suspended motionless by a thread, from the web of the eternal silence. The strange faculty she has, cow-given, of becoming a suspended ghost, hidden in the very crevices of the atmosphere! It is something in her <u>will</u>. (446)

Susan's victory, of course, is attributable to her achieved singleness, as Lawrence saw it, her capacity for protected selfhood. At no time was she interested in surrendering completely any part of herself to her demanding master. Yet there were times when man and beast, Susan and Lawrence, interacted as willing initiates, sharing a mutual warmth as friends in need of each other:

> Yet a relationship there is. She knows my touch and she goes very still and peaceful, being milked. I, too, I know her smell and her warmth and her feel. And I share some of her cowy silence, when I milk her. There <u>is</u> a sort of relation between us. And this relation is part of the mystery of love: the individuality on each side, mine and Susan's, suspended in the relationship. (447)

Lawrence admits a "great blank" or "gulf" between himself and Susan but at this point he does not offer any further

insight into the nature of the mutual sensitivity in this curious relationship. He needed another example, additional illumination.

Expanding his intuitions, he brings this aspect up in his later observations of two other farmyard friends, a cock and a hen, whose "two egos or individualities seem to stay apart without friction" (451). Like Susan, each fowl remains intensely single, isolated. Yet "there is this peculiar togetherness about them" (451). Lawrence refuses to attribute their apparent equilibrium to love, calling it "too ridiculous" (451). Instead, he suspects that each fowl's inherent desire for the other creates a kind of unspoken but unfailing acknowledgment of sexual harmony between them:

> As far as I can see, it is desire. And the desire has a fluctuating intensity, but it is always there. His desire is always towards her, even when he has absolutely forgotten her. And by the way she puts her feet down, I can see she always walks in her plumes of desirableness, even when she's going broody. (451)

At this point we also learn that a "subtle desirableness" explains his healthy relationship with Susan, whose "femaleness" casts a spell over him (452).

Lawrence's notion of "fluctuating intensity" deserves our closest attention, for it literally represents a thematic elaboration or enlargement of his earlier theories on self-definition and sexual identity.

Near the end of the essay he concisely solidifies his impressions in a personal admission:

> The powers that enter me fluctuate and ebb. And the desire that goes forth from me waxes and wanes. Sometimes it is weak, and I am almost isolated. Sometimes it is strong, and I am almost carried away. (457)

Human individuality here is clearly a wavering source of energy, like the fluctuating flame between wax and air at the beginning of the essay. Throughout the piece he reveals an acute awareness of the need for some form of regulation between these oscillating sides of human nature, and he notes instances in which individuals have failed to develop a sensitivity to this fact of human existence. In a short critical aside, for example, he attributes some of Wordsworth's most passionate moments of pantheism to the poet's inability to respect Nature's privacy. By identifying himself so closely with the natural world, Wordsworth ignored his own borders and those of flowers and other living phenomena as well. Lawrence is clear: the individual must remain open to desire, his inmost mystery, but he must not expect his partner to be receptive to such desire at all times. It is the essential Lawrencean paradox, reoccurring throughout his discursive writings and major fiction. It receives its first full notice in Sons and Lovers, rises toward climax in both The Rainbow and Women in Love,

appears as a rather faint echo in the novels of the middle period (Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo, and The Plumed Serpent), regaining some of its earlier vigor in Lady Chatterley's Lover.

Chapter 2

Destructive Possessiveness

Sons and Lovers (1913) is above all else a Bildungsroman, a record of the soul's stubborn persistence from childhood onward. Appropriately, it touches upon whatever cultural and psychological forces exert their influence upon a character's development. Everything remains integral to the genre's purpose; nothing lies outside its domain, for every shred of human experience contributes its significance to the individual's wholeness, his very soul. In essence, the novelist implicates every receptive cavity of his hero's being in order to demonstrate, as far as demonstration permits, the self's amplitude and capability. Though written a decade before his essays on the novel, Sons and Lovers gives "full play" to Lawrence's depiction of Paul Morel's physical and spiritual growth, and we are likely to leave the book with at least a fairly sound conception of his protagonist's selfhood.

It comprises a host of diverse yet related properties: philosophical and artistic tendencies, sexual love, masculine aggressiveness, intense spirituality. Each of these lends its force to Paul's character, but, as we shall see, they remain mostly minor variations on a

much larger theme: Paul's own insights into life's mysteries and his subsequent attempts at self-definition. Standing at the head of Lawrence's canon, Sons and Lovers prefigures the novelist's later concerns and themes in its portrayal of Paul's knowledge about himself as he attempts definition through his relation with others. He is not completely successful, but his struggle may clarify for us many of the conflicts among characters in the later works. At all times the critical lens focuses on the nature of Paul's learning during his experiences, precisely what he intuits and subsequently articulates about his relation to other characters (usually lovers) during certain key episodes in the novel.

I. The Early Years

The young life of Paul, encompassing roughly chapters 1-7, revolves largely around his family life. In his effort to render faithfully all the vivid details and subtle rhythms of working-class Britain at the turn of the century, Lawrence carefully places his hero against a pulsating background of parental squabbles and domestic trivia, and Paul's growth understandably takes its cue from this daily round of familiar sights and sounds. The product of a coarse, sensual, exceedingly inarticulate

miner and his highly literate, spiritual wife, Paul inherits a curious mixture of character traits. Indeed, his impressive amplitude, with its aesthetic inclinations and usually bubbling responsiveness and vitality, has few precedents in English fiction, although his disposition is likely to bring to mind such aspiring young men as Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield, Adam Bede, and Clym Yeobright. In any event, Lawrence treats Paul's youth as an extremely important period. During these years Paul arrives at certain conclusions about himself and his world; each new season not only solidifies an earlier period of experience but also signals an opportunity to look forward and assimilate whatever lies ahead, whatever life holds in its hands for the receptive young man. In this manner Paul's early biography lays an important foundation for his later experiences in the second half of the novel, where we see him busily assimilating all he has learned earlier into an even broader, more conclusive identity, a noticeably sexual identity.

But Paul possesses an identity, however partial or tentative, long before the awakening of sexual desire. Held down by biological and spiritual hardship, his chastened spirit proves its resiliency over and over again; it is good, solid stuff, firmly grounded in his healthy self-awareness and his capacity to feel for

others. His mother's unhappy marriage cuts "the boy keenly" and he repeatedly laments his inability to make it up to her as a "sense of impotence" (66). Yet Paul never completely falls prey to prolonged moping or hopelessness; he is well aware of certain resources of vitality deep within his being, and proceeds to tap them whenever necessary. A shadow seems to loom over much of his youth, bringing repeated illness and relentless outrage against his parents' disharmony, but he retains an admirable receptiveness to even the most familiar spots of sunshine along his poorly lit path to maturity. His strong, if not fierce, autonomy forbids inertia or emotional sluggishness. Recovering from a sudden bout with bronchitis, he does not surrender to the usual feelings of isolation and wretchedness but instead locates a feasible source of spiritual invigoration just outside his bedroom window:

> In convalescence he would sit up in bed, see the fluffy horses feeding at the troughs in the field, scattering their hay on the trodden yellow snow; watch the miners troop home--small, black figures trailing slowly in gangs across the white field. Then the night came up in dark blue vapour from the snow.
>
> In convalescence everything was wonderful. The snowflakes, suddenly arriving on the window-pane, clung there a moment like swallows, then were gone, and a drop of water was crawling down the glass. The snowflakes whirled round the corner of the house, like pigeons dashing by. Away across the valley the little black train crawled doubtfully over the great whiteness. (67-68)

Here Paul displays a detached, entirely appreciative sense of his world; he neither wishes to participate in its pastoral graces nor to change it in any way whatsoever. He accepts it purely on its own terms. Decreed by natural forces beyond himself, its every motion and purpose validated by some benevolent divinity, the wintry scene stands beyond question and doubt; perfect and inviolable, it simply is. Yet it has refreshingly penetrated his very marrow, drawing him out of his burdensome flesh and stuffy isolation.

It is this very same sensitivity to external reality, a behavioral capacity praised as "relatedness" throughout Lawrence's essays and fiction, that Paul brings to his aesthetic appreciation of both animate and inanimate phenomena. Even the most trivial, or seemingly trivial, matters afford him an opportunity to praise and respect what he considers an object's indelible grace and attractive capability. Banality and exhaustion are virtually unknown concepts in Paul's universe; he admits neither. Although his acquisition of a seasonal passage ticket beckons him to exchange the comforts of home and family for the responsibilities of the workday in the city, he nevertheless derives great pleasure, spiritual sustenance, from something as trivial as the strong appeal of its insistent color:

> On the Monday morning the boy got up at six to start work. He had the season-ticket, which had cost such bitterness, in his waistcoat pocket. He loved it with its bars of yellow across. (100)

The appeal of this object resides in its intrinsic assertiveness for Paul; it literally speaks to him, informs him of the possibility of escape. In paying tribute to its uniqueness, he is able to extract a moment of pleasure from an otherwise mundane and morose occasion--his rite of passage to the world beyond, the workday world, or, more precisely, his longest absence from home.

But Paul's healthy relatedness extends well beyond the world of material objects, for he brings to his vision of the world a necessary understanding of his own position in relation to others as well. Endowed with a firm sense of outline--it is by no means accidental that he later expresses a facility for painting "definite figures" rather than impressionistic, shadowy ones (301)--and acute powers of observation, he recognizes and respects the curious lives of others, their personal paths and worldly endeavors, but insists on his own place within the social macrocosm: "But he was proud within himself, measuring people against himself, and placing them, inexorably. And he thought that <u>perhaps</u> he might also make a painter, the real thing. But that he left

alone" (89). Again we note not only Paul's healthy recognition of others but also his insistence on respecting them as reliable standards of measurement. Others exist in their own right. But their success or failure in no way casts a shadow on Paul's awareness of his own potential, his spiritual and aesthetic inclinations. In articulating his own identity, Paul admirably practices the respect for others which Lawrence advocates throughout his Phoenix essays. As we shall soon see, severing these two spheres of sensitivity results in folly.

We are not likely to shrink from a character who, very much like his creator, exhibits a sufficient degree of winsome self-consciousness, especially if he "is a clever painter for a boy of his years" (88), and looks to Nature's kind face for confirmation of his inner vision. To a certain extent, Paul's self-consciousness compensates for his physical frailty and lack of aggressiveness in very much the same way as a blind man's auditory powers improve to compensate for his loss of sight.

In either case the individual is likely to react with bitterness to any suspicion about his act of compensation. So too with Paul, whose resistance to join the workday world is, in effect, a kind of personal

defense against inhospitable assessments of his being and any disabling forays into his private domain. It is in his best interests to ward off both possibilities so as to keep intact every shred of what potential he commands. His anxiety is not unfounded, however, for even at the tender age of 14 he possesses a clearly delineated map of his future. Any obstacles strewn along the path to further artistic expression and domestic bliss are to be avoided at any cost: "His ambition, as far as this world's gear went, was quietly to earn his thirty or thirty-five shillings a week somewhere near home, and then, when his father died, have a cottage with his mother, paint and go out as he liked, and live happy ever after" (89). Society, of course, feels otherwise. Inexperienced and sometime rather shy, Paul shrinks from even the slightest threat, the slightest increase in voice or gesture, in his early confrontations with strangers, oppressive phantoms who orchestrate the unfathomable rhythms of the social machine. Cringing before one of these phantoms, his future employer, Paul passes off as his own a resume he has copied from his brother's fail-safe standard. The ensuing drama takes on farcical proportions:

> At that moment he was occupied in two ways: first, in feeling guilty for telling a lie, since William had composed the letter; second, in wondering why his letter seemed so strange

> and different, in the fat, red hand of the man, from what it had been when it lay on the kitchen table. It was like part of himself, gone astray. He resented the way the man held it. (94)

Paul fully realizes the folly of his little deception, but he also resents the older man's insensitivity to whatever vestiges of himself, whatever pieces of Paul Morel, reside in the document. To Paul's mind, the self deserves respect in even its most extraneous forms; the letters on the page, bearing the stamp, the sheer pressure of their director in every straight line, loop, and curve, should merit a certain tenderness, a certain reverence from others, for they are offered as the linguistic embodiment of earnest hopes and romantic aspirations. In short, they represent the displaced inclinations of his heart.

After some initial awkwardness and ambiguity, Paul's sturdy nature provides more than enough resiliency to pull him through the rites of passage at Jordan's Surgical Appliance Company. Beginning as a spiral clerk, he soon masters the rhythms of the workshop, earns a healthy degree of respect as an independent workman from his bosses, and even becomes a great favorite among the establishment's female element. In this last area he once again makes the most of his innate talents, marshalling them to the pulse of his steadily awakening sexual instinct. Connie, a professional seamstress with "mane of

red hair" and "face of apple-blossom" (110), not only inspires feelings of tenderness in Paul but also finds artistic immortality in one of the lad's most romantic sketches:

> And later on he had a sketch he prized very much: Connie sitting on the stool before the wheel, her flowing mane of red hair on her rusty black frock, her red mouth shut and serious, running the scarlet thread off the hank on to the wheel. (110)

We need not construe his endeavor as an act of pure self-expression, of budding solipsism. It is nothing of the kind. In taking advantage of his subject's impressive beauty and poise, Paul simply affirms the integrity and uniqueness of another human soul.

So far, then, Paul's youthful attempts at definition accord well with Lawrence's central concern throughout the Phoenix essays: the gradual differentiation of the self from its immediate environment and circumstances. Whether Paul observes the natural world from his sickbed or simply appreciates the inherent rights and boundaries of other people and objects, he never once fails to retain a strong hold on his own identity and its vital sources of potential being. He is also highly sensitive to his own creative powers, his painting and sketching, and openly shares his aesthetic visions with others. His sketch of Connie clearly shows that Paul does not make of his own finitude a house of imprisonment, of rampant

solipsism. Rather, it indicates his willingness to extend himself to others as a gesture of courageous kindness and sympathy. At no time, however, does he attempt to impose himself upon others. Nor does he exceed his own boundaries.

II. Confronting Others

Yet Paul is basically unfulfilled at this early stage of his life. It is quite fair to say that he does not yet possess an identity in the full Lawrencean sense of the word. Daniel J. Schneider, adducing the essential components of Lawrence's characteristic plots, clearly forecasts Paul's development during the second half of the novel:

> In Lawrence's novels, generally speaking, a soul is threatened by forces hostile to its development, or an injured soul, incapacitated by hostile forces, struggles to heal itself and to awaken to new life. The conflict in such novels arises initially from the protagonist's attraction to others who seem to promise liberation and fulfillment and then from the protagonist's fear of annihilation in a destructive love relationship. (85)

Lawrence gives these thematic dynamics full play by placing Paul within a complicated matrix of sexual initiation. The principal members he confronts in the matrix act as determinants of his very being--in one way or another, Gertrude Morel, Miriam Leivers, and Clara

Dawes all impinge upon the young man's soul, each woman leaving her distinctive signature. Most readers are likely to express mixed reactions to Mrs. Morel's obsessive concern for Paul's well-being. Having lost her oldest son, she understandably roots all her aspirations and highest ideals in young Paul, whose youthful frailty and reciprocated love ironically strengthen her fairly possessive maternal instincts. Her highly refined intellect and strong spirituality earn Paul's deepest respect and pervade the entire novel as a kind of informing thematic agent. Yet she is not the principal determinate of Paul's character. In terms of the novel's bulk and thematic drive, Miriam's ability to influence Paul surpasses that of Mrs. Morel (Sagar 26). It is she who entangles Paul in a web of possessiveness and provides the most formidable challenge to his personal integrity. In short, Miriam presents the strongest block to Paul's difficult path to self-definition. In order to protect himself from impending spiritual and physical destruction, he must first intuit the nature of her subtle conspiracy, articulate his findings in appropriate terms, and, finally, arrive at an even clearer understanding of himself and his relation to others.

Perhaps a working definition of the word "conspiracy" is in order before we proceed further. As a

description of Miriam's unfairness to Paul, it pertains to a character's lack of full being, split, divided, or insufficient selfhood, and his or her desperate search for a means by which this acute sense of vacancy may be temporarily relieved or stifled. As we shall see, Miriam sets a precedent for such illicit behavior with her early appearance in Lawrence's canon. The problems she introduces into Paul's life will find full-fledged depiction throughout most of his later works. Critical opinion on Miriam has seldom wavered over the past thirty years or so; the verdict is unanimous and somewhat severe. The language of possessiveness dominates virtually every account of her nature. Mark Spilka sees her as a forerunner of such later vampiric characters as Hermione Roddice and Gudrun Brangwen (68). Supplying one of the most popular interpretations of the novel, Dorothy Van Ghent speaks of Miriam's "blasphemous possessorship" (256). Other prominent scholars register similar verdicts as well (Daleski 67; Sagar 26-27). More recently, however, Daniel Albright discusses Miriam as a soul-sucking creature (80) and Daniel J. Schneider sees her as a "serious threat" to Paul's vitality (138). In any event, what these severe comments make clear is Miriam's destructive influence and its impending danger for Paul.

III. Miriam's Relentless Willfulness

Despite such critical harmony, however, most commentators tend to underestimate the perverted nature of Miriam's perspective on Paul, who finds himself literally diffused and strange whenever he is in her presence. Miriam's attempt to spiritualize Paul, her attempt to subdue his sensual side, is not by any means a purely unconscious act of will; rather, it is part of a concerted effort to fill up her own feelings of vacancy and ambivalence. Her behavior is blasphemous in every sense of the word because she not only exceeds her own boundaries but also trespasses over those of Paul Morel.

From the start Miriam fails to see Paul as a separate entity in his own right. She perceives him only in terms of her own insufficiency. Having spent her life in an atmosphere of rural simplicity and religious reverie, she treats Paul as something novel, even extraordinary, a messenger from another world whose "poor morsel of learning exalted him almost sky-high in her esteem" (143). His striking amplitude contrasts sharply with Miriam's feelings of ineptitude and uncertainty: "Even her soul, so strong for rhapsody, was not enough. She must have something to reinforce her pride, because

she felt different from other people" (143). Desperately seeking some form of compensation for such feelings, she lovingly smothers Paul with the compact aggressiveness and fixed will of a ruthless boa constrictor going after its helpless prey:

> Then he was so ill, and she felt he would be weak. Then she would be stronger than he. Then she could love him. If she could be mistress of him in his weakness, take care of him, if he could depend on her, if she could, as it were, have him in her arms, how she would love him! (143)

Paul, quickly succumbing to her influence, unconsciously yields more and more to Miriam's consuming spirituality, teaching her foreign languages, tutoring her in arithmetic, showing her this and that, telling her the secrets of his heart, sacrificing more and more of himself to the vacuity of her being. Together they roam the sunny meadows and flowered patches of the English countryside, gathering their impressions of nature's bounty and holding on to them for further appreciation. During these jaunts Paul's aesthetic inclinations find full confirmation in Miriam's high spirituality. As their friendship deepens, Miriam's influence clearly takes on muse-like proportions: "A sketch finished, he always wanted to take it to Miriam. Then he was stimulated into knowledge of the work he had produced unconsciously" (158). But the scales of experience are always tipped in

favor of Miriam's perspective. Their excursion to Hemlock Stone, a neighboring site of natural beauty and historical relevance, is a case in point. Having invited several other friends on the trip, Paul quite rightly officiates informally as their group leader and organizer, sharing their excitement and commenting on their various activities. In so doing he briefly absents himself from Miriam, who resents his sudden autonomy as a thing apart from herself:

> He had not seemed to belong to her among all these others; he was different then--not her Paul, who understood the slightest quiver of her innermost soul, but something else, speaking another language than hers. How it hurt her, and deadened her very perceptions. Only when he came right back to her, leaving his other, his lesser self, as she thought, would she feel alive again. (165)

Miriam is not self-sustaining; only by living through Paul can she find partial piece of mind.

As their intimacy progresses, Miriam develops an even finer conception of Paul's "other, lesser self." For her it gradually takes on sexual rather than social connotations, and she employs all her cunning to subdue Paul's flaring desire. In both thought and deed she actually refutes or negates the very union between profane and sacred love which Lawrence advocates in "Love." She cannot bridge these two realms of experience, admitting only the spiritual side of human life. She

consequently causes a festering psychological ambiguity in Paul:

> With Miriam he was always on the high plane of abstraction, when his natural fire of love was transmitted into the fine steam of thought. She would have it so. If he were jolly and, as she put it, flippant, she waited till he came back to her, till the change had taken place in him again, and he was wrestling with his own soul, frowning, passionate in his desire for understanding. (173)

What needs emphasizing here, however, is Paul's growing awareness of his companion's immoral folly. We must recall that Paul holds a firm grip on his own self; he is aware, sure of his own limits and potential. He doubts neither aspect of his being. He therefore finds it difficult to accept what he intuits as possessive tendencies in Miriam. Her approach to Nature, we see, is strikingly different from his:

> To her, flowers appealed with such strength she felt she must make them part of herself. When she bent and breathed a flower, it was as if she and the flower were loving each other. Paul hated her for it. There seemed a sort of exposure about the action, something too intimate. (173)

Ironically, the reader may justifiably substitute "Paul" for "flower" in this passage; in either case Miriam violates Nature itself.

Paul, unsure of their deepening relation, tries desperately to come to terms with his conflicting feelings, looking for some feasible articulation of his

inner torment. Suddenly he seizes upon an explanation in his own terms. It is characteristic of Paul to couch his intuitional displeasure in purely aesthetic terms, architectural terms at this point in the novel.

> He talked to her endlessly about his love of horizontals: how they, the great levels of sky and land in Lincolnshire, meant to him the eternality of the will, just as the bowed Norman arches of the church, repeating themselves, meant the dogged leaping forward of the persistent human soul, on and on, nobody knows where; in contradiction to the perpendicular lines and to the Gothic arch, which, he said, leapt up at heaven and touched the ecstasy and lost itself in the divine. Himself, he said, was Norman, Miriam was Gothic. She bowed in consent even to that. (177)

It is difficult to underestimate the aptness of Paul's curious analogy here: in embracing the heavens, a life of pure spirituality, Miriam relinquishes her ties to mortal existence, the joys, troubles, sensual pleasures. In short, she gives up the essential components of a complete, fulfilling life.

Paul senses Miriam's insistence in almost every area of his life, leaving him unable to act on his own as a completely separate individual: "It irritated him that she peered so into everything that was his, searching him out" (201). She hangs his sketches on her wall, keeps his photograph on the mantlepiece, and even enlists the aid of a friend to keep tabs on Paul's activities at Jordan's factory (185-86). She can neither accept nor consider his

right to remain free of her influence.

But her conspiracy soon becomes deadly serious. Increasingly aware of Paul's budding desire, his unwanted side, Miriam devises a little test to determine just how promising and valiant Paul's better nature, his spiritual side, really is. She invites him to meet Clara Dawes, a slightly older, disillusioned suffragette who is separated from her husband. Noticing Paul's attraction to the older woman, Miriam decides to stage a kind of psychological battlefield for Paul's contesting natures:

> Yet he was keen to know about her. Well, he should put himself to the test. She believed that there were in him desires for higher things, and desires for lower, and that the desire for the higher would conquer. At any rate, he should try. She forgot that her "higher" and "lower" were arbitrary. (228-29)

Her conduct is both cruel and selfish, for it actually ignores Paul's wholeness, his capacity for full emotional responsiveness. In recognizing only his higher side, she denies the very wellspring of his manhood, the very source from which he derives his assertiveness and spontaneous warmth, what makes him, essentially, Paul Morel. Ironically, Paul's lesser nature, his need for sexual expression, erupts whenever he is in the presence of Clara, whose attractive figure and mysterious aloofness draw him considerably. It is literally impossible for him to act in any other manner: his

emotional needs have been kept under tight rein by Miriam, who has actually starved his sensual life (Burns 40). Like a newly freed beast, he darts from his cage of spirituality, the high plane of abstraction, and seeks out Clara as the capable embodiment of all his pent-up yearning and passion.

IV. Paul's Sexual Experiences

The concluding chapters of the novel derive much of their thematic force and unity from Lawrence's comparison of Paul's sexual relations with Miriam and Clara, who once again leave their distinctive imprint in this most urgent area of human experience. The yardstick by which he measures Paul's success or failure during these dramatic episodes is consistent, of course: his intimacy, whatever its source, intensity, or mystery, must leave his personal integrity intact if his experience is to be integrated successfully into the overall fabric of his life.

The consummation of relationship with Miriam occurs in two urgently dramatized passages. Both experiences are outright failures, although Paul does learn a great deal about destructive relations from his intimacy. Lacking almost any signs of sexual response, repressing the very

vitality of her female desires, Miriam offers herself to Paul as a literal human sacrifice. She rationalizes her loss by thinking of it as pure ritual, a most disturbing necessity of human experience. Paul feels great release during their first intimacy, but Miriam's passivity throws an almost tragic veil of sadness over the entire event: "Now he realised that she had not been with him all the time, that her soul had stood apart, in a sort of horror. He was physically at rest, but no more. Very dreary at heart, very sad, and very tender, his fingers wandered over her face pitifully" (286). So too with their later intimacies, in which Paul finds himself a stick figure, an only participant in what is ideally the most vital and life-affirming exchange between man and woman:

> He had always, almost wilfully, to put her out of count, and act from the brute strength of his own feelings. And he could not do it often, and there remained afterwards always the sense of failure and of death. If he were really with her, he had to put aside himself and his desire. If he would have her, he had to put her aside. (290)

Their sexuality brings about disunity rather than unity; there is no healthy give-and-take, no real relatedness between them. It is clear, though, that Miriam never once relinquishes her hold on Paul, who hates her for taking all and giving "nothing" (293), for having sucked his soul from his body and offering nothing in return.

Paul's consummation of relationship with Clara is strikingly different, however. Unlike Miriam, Clara embraces sexual intercourse as an opportunity to affirm and celebrate the deep reservoir of desire between man and woman. There is nothing sacrificial or paltry about it for her; it is, quite simply, a fact, a healthy aspect of any deeply satisfying, vitally charged sexual union between two people. Since both lovers act as full-fledged participants during intimacy (Albright 81), their mutual passion takes on suggestions of divine accord, of universal resonance, of infinite mystery and miraculous rebirth. In this manner, Paul and Clara become representatives of the "macrocosm" (Albright 82). Their act implicates the unheard rhythms and unseen graces of the universe:

> It was all so much bigger than themselves that he was hushed. They had met, and included in their meeting the thrust of the manifold grass stems, the cry of the peewit, the wheel of the stars. (353)

Clara and Paul, like any other couple, do fret about themselves, finding the most trivial flaws and quirks in each other's characters. But they are both aware of the deep importance, the gift which lies at the heart of their most intimate moment:

> If so great a magnificent power could overwhelm them, identify them altogether with itself, so that they knew they were only grains in the tremendous heave that lifted every grass blade

> its little height, and every tree, and living thing, then why fret about themselves? They could let themselves be carried by life, and they felt a sort of peace each in the other. There was a verification which they had had together. Nothing could nullify it, nothing could take it away; it was almost their belief in life. (354)

In exchanging their most dynamic, their most passionate selves, they give freely the gift of life to one another, experiencing at least temporary fulfillment through each other.

V. Important Lessons

Their relative success is best understood by focusing on Paul's perspective here: on what he learns during his moments with Clara and on any tentative conclusions or affirmations he reaches. In making our inquiry we do well to focus on the word "grains" in the above excerpt, for Lawrence includes the word only pages later in his narration of Paul's interior reflection in the aftermath of passion. Surveying the Lincolnshire coast, he observes Clara's tiny figure in the water, "lost like a grain of sand in the beach--just a concentrated speck blown along, a tiny white foam-bubble, almost nothing among the morning" (358). He goes on to clarify his observations even further in a moment of intense soliloquy:

> "What is she, after all?" he said to himself. "Here's the sea-coast morning, big and permanent and beautiful; there is she, fretting, always unsatisfied, and temporary as a bubble of foam. What does she mean to me, after all? She represents something, like a bubble of foam represents the sea. But what is she? It's not her I care for." (358)

Paul clearly transforms Clara into "a synecdoche," a part of the sea (Albright 82), and he struggles desperately to understand his position in relation to her. She is not lost but distinctive in her watery immersion, a tiny speck, a grain, ever diminishing in clarity of outline and size but still integral and complete, compact against the blurring background, the immense horizon of sea and sky.

Paul realizes Clara's importance to him as a doorway to the infinite, heaven's mysteries, and she does indeed place him in contact with the sources, the vital springs of the natural world (Gutierrez 174). She is, literally, his "mediate relation" to the universe (Albright 82). Yet the eternal, the infinite, is not possible without the individual; this is precisely what Paul learns from his experiences with Clara. He knows this vital fact to be true for himself; Clara must arrive at her own conclusions. Their affair has been successful largely because of their ability to retain their individual identities; in fact, Paul now commands a much clearer, a much finer sense of self, of differentiation, after his

passionate exchanges with Clara. In this manner they have independently confirmed each other's souls through tentative union.

It would be grossly misleading, of course, to treat their relationship as a complete victory in light of the relative hoplessness and bleakness of the concluding pages of the novel. Paul's relationship with Clara dwindles before we even reach the finale, and Mrs. Morel's death flings Paul into a morose period of spiritual drift and darkness. Yet we have witnessed Paul's growth from childhood into maturity, and whatever knowledge he has acquired along the way. If his walk "towards the city's" alluring lights on the last page is not an indication of hopefulness and renewal, he nevertheless walks with a finer sense of self, a clearer sense of his place in the universe.

Chapter 3

The Triumph of Intuition

The period between 1913-1916 represents Lawrence's zenith of creativity, for during this short but highly productive space of time he achieved, as Harry T. Moore claims, an unprecedented and inimitable "integration of art and idea" (273). We detect in Lawrence's two masterpieces, The Rainbow (1915) and Women in Love (1920), what is rare in literary history: a successful balance between intensity, the passionate heat of imaginative fire, of searing vision, and its reluctant but inevitable assimilation into a working framework of sound dialectic and thematic consistency. It was, even for a novelist of Lawrence's stature, a reluctant transformation from vision to verbal realization because the novelist himself found his own life fraught with difficulties which nevertheless gave shape and verve to his creative impulses. Writing to Edward Garnett in late April 1914, he reminds his mentor of the increasingly indistinguishable line, the barely perceivable medium between life and art in his work in progress, The Rainbow:

> I am sure of this now, this novel. It is a big and beautiful work. Before, I could not get my soul into it. That was because of the struggle and the resistance between Frieda and me. Now

> you will find her and me in the novel, I think, and the work is of both of us. (Letters 1: 272)

"Big" and "beautiful" are easily justifiable terms of praise in any discussion of the novel, but the critical reader treads on unsteady ground when trying to apply the personal resonance of "struggle" and "resistance" to the novelist's own characters. As Moore points out in his biography of the novelist, Lawrence was busily investing much of himself into his marriage with Frieda at the time (197), but any intellectual power wrested from his intense involvement with another human being was certainly not beyond artistic assimilation. Posterity will never know if the couple's stormy relations and intermittent flashes of harmony refer specifically to Tom and Lydia Brangwen, Will and Anna Brangwen, or Ursula and Skrebensky. In any case, Lawrence's letter implies at least a sense of tentative resolution, of faint harmony; despite his personal struggles, spiritual direction and imaginative drive were not beyond him.

Indeed, it is not unlikely that such promise, such hope, reminds the reader of the only successful relationship in The Rainbow, the marriage of Tom and Lydia. Although it is fraught with endless conflicts and bouts of subtle possessiveness, their union remains firmly grounded in mutual sympathy and reciprocal warmth, and therefore figures prominently as an unprecedented

achievement among all of Lawrence's characters. Ursula and Rupert Birkin in Women in Love do manage to approximate their predecessors' sexual harmony, but their success must not go unqualified. They too must learn the mysteries and guidelines of love in much the same way as their ancestors did, but they find it incredibly difficult to fulfill their deepest desires within the hostile, often perverted new world, the industrialized atmosphere of the twentieth century, in which the individual, a tiny figure lost in great social forces beyond his understanding and control, appears belittled, virtually insignificant. It is a world which Tom and Lydia never experience in its fullest impact, its most hostile intensity. In making such a comparison, we automatically ascribe, perhaps somewhat hastily or uncritically, a superior value to Tom and Lydia's union, implying a certain soundness, a certain irreproachableness, about their love. Such judgment is not by any means unfounded. F.R. Leavis, Frank Kermode, Robert Langbaum, Mark Schorer, Arnold Kettle, James Twitchell, Lucia Henning Heldt and others speak approvingly of the couple's relationship; whereas scholars such as Mark Spilka, David Daiches, John E. Stoll, H.M. Daleski, Aidan Burns, and Daniel J. Schneider prefer to temper their approval by noting certain

unresolved tensions in the marriage. The latter group prefers to see their love as a kind of flawed idealism. It is difficult to infer where Lawrence himself stood on this issue. We ourselves cannot say for sure which marriage is most satisfying for both partners, nor can we say with any real certainty, for example, that Anna Brangwen experiences many more moments of joy or satisfaction than, say, her daughter, Ursula. Nor can we realistically claim that Rupert Birkin's sexual experiences in Women in Love afford him more gratification than Tom Brangwen's in The Rainbow.

Yet it is possible to describe, to map out as closely as possible, what and how these characters learn about themselves as they attempt definition within demanding sexual relationships. Such an approach will, for example, reveal just how Tom Brangwen's self-awareness differs from Paul Morel's or Rupert Birkin's. Indeed, it may even be possible to infer which characters possess a finer sense of individuality, a more finely tuned self. Such an approach will account for the relative success of Tom and Lydia's marriage, one of the few sexually balanced unions in Lawrence's canon.

I. Tom's Early Life

The early sections of The Rainbow deal primarily with the spiritual and physical development of young Tom Brangwen, who provides a rather striking contrast to Lawrence's preceding hero, Paul Morel. Unlike his predecessor, Tom does not live an intellectually dramatic existence. He is neither metaphorically inclined nor widely informed. But he is highly "sensitive to the atmosphere around him" (10), his heart stirred deeply by the sounds of Shelley and Tennyson, and he remains reverent before nature's beauty. Despite these admirable qualities, however, Tom cannot by any means match Paul's penetrating powers of intellectual abstraction and expedient criticism. His "generous, honest" disposition rightfully earns him the respect of the local farmers in and around the Ilkeston area, and he usually remains "on good terms with everybody and everything" (11-12). Tom spends his first eighteen years in virtual obliviousness, living out his days and executing his farm work in accordance with the changing rhythms and colors of the seasons.

At nineteen, however, his life changes dramatically. Like any normal, healthy young man, he yearns deeply for the physical embodiment, the perfect woman, of his

dreams, a mate who will, quite literally, exemplify the very same qualities Lawrence attributes to woman in the Hardy essay, Immutability, Permanence, and Eternality. Tom desires all of these, but most likely places slightly more emphasis on the second quality. He hungers passionately for stability and centrality in his life. Unfortunately, lust overtakes him and his sincere needs find misplaced expression in the arms of a local prostitute. His ensuing realization puts a damper on his spirit:

> The disillusion of his first carnal contact with woman, strengthened by his innate desire to find in a woman the embodiment of all his inarticulate, powerful religious impulses, put a bit in his mouth. (14)

Nevertheless, his indiscriminate rendezvous proves curiously instructive, for he realizes "the paucity," the petty, functional nature of his act (14). Emerging from his experience with chastened heart and soul, he still continues to search for his proper mate. In doing so he begins to develop a behavioral pattern which Lawrence modulates with intermittent subtlety throughout upcoming passages; the pattern is neither thematically disruptive nor unrelated to the totality of his hero's experiences as they multiply over the next few chapters. Indeed, it represents a contrived, clever blow from the artist's skillful hammer, and gathers its subtle force and mystery

through a series of accumulating images and highly dramatized scenes. In both tone and description the novelist betrays his indirect admiration for Tom, but he also cleverly discloses an inherent weakness in his hero's character at the same time. Tom, we begin to see, is not a noticeably self-sufficient individual and his gnawing awareness of this insufficiency intensifies as he matures and hungers more and more for evocative experiences outside the familiar domain of his cramped existence. When his growing dissatisfaction with the stifling monotony of rural life combines with his persistent sexual urges, he literally seeks relief at any cost. Experiences with several local girls leave him cold, his spirit ashen, and he foolishly obliterates himself in drink in a tavern in nearby Ilkeston, where he finds temporary relief and escape at rather high cost to his soul: "But he had achieved his satisfaction by obliterating his own individuality, that which it depended on his manhood to preserve and develop" (23). In light of Tom's extremely courageous and difficult attempts at definition over the next few chapters, we see the import of Lawrence's concern for his hero's selfhood here.

Chapters 2-4 are probably more closely aligned with the theories and musing of Lawrence's essays than any

other stretch of prose in his entire canon. Here at last we see in germination the very same intuitions and beliefs he would soon espouse in such essays as the "Study of Thomas Hardy," "Morality and the Novel," "...Love Was Once a Little Boy" and others as well. As we have already witnessed, he constantly defends the self's integrity and healthy vitality throughout these writings. Now in purely imaginative dramatization, in moments of intuitional wisdom and powerful images of self-restraint and sexual balance, Lawrence carefully depicts how two fierce personalities, Tom and Lydia Brangwen, manage to maintain a largely successful union without ever completely relinquishing their strongly independent, almost impersonally insistent integrity as separate human beings.

II. Lydia's Impact upon Tom

The turning point in Tom's life marks the introduction into the novel of Lydia Lensky, a magnetically attractive, disillusioned Polish refugee, a widow six years his senior, with a young child and an incredibly burdensome luggage of sad memories and unrealized dreams. Having taken up foreign footing in both London and Yorkshire, she nevertheless proves her

spiritual durability over and over again, learning to parrot expediently the English tongue and nursing "an old rector in his rectory by the sea" (47). It is quite clear, however, that Lydia's resolve passes through moments of uncertainty and depression: "As if crushed between the past and the future, like a flower that comes above-ground to find a great stone lying above it, she was helpless" (50). Yet she holds her considerable strength in reserve and perseveres even during her darkest times. In this respect Lydia provides an instructive contrast to Tom's weak independence, for she not only attracts him but also represents his most formidable challenge.

Intrigued, Tom strikes up an awkward relationship with her, this mysterious foreign woman with a child. She is, more precisely, beyond anything he has ever experienced, beyond the local farm girls or anyone else in the Ilkeston area. For this reason his friendly gesture is highly admirable; in opening himself spiritually and sexually to a completely alien individual, he courageously admits his willingness to acknowledge another human being's rare promise and vitality (Sale 471). In this manner he makes of himself a source of inspiration for Lydia, a woman who needs understanding and encouragement. Tom also intuits hints

of companionship and reciprocative affection in his compulsive gravitation toward her, "as if a strong light were burning there, and he was blind within it, unable to know anything, except that this transfiguration burned between him and her, connecting them, like a secret power" (33). Awakened as if by lightning, both individuals respond to each other's needs, each one temporarily satisfying in the other what has laid unfulfilled, restive, vacant for so very long: "Aerial and light everything was, new as a morning, fresh and newly-begun" (41). Together they find paradise and release.

But it is exactly at this point that Lawrence exposes Tom's insufficiency, his inability or reluctance to stand on his own when passion subsides, when, as Lawrence puts it, "the light" dwindles between them:

> For soon the light began to fade in her, gradually, and as she was in his arms, her head sank, she leaned it against him, and lay still, with sunk head, a little tired, effaced because she was tired. And in her tiredness was a certain negation of him. (41)

Tom begins to ponder this curious phenomenon. During several intimate encounters before their marriage he detects a certain oscillating nature about his beloved's passion; more precisely, he senses how very much it differs from his own in both intensity and timing. Eager and undisciplined in his youth, he prefers the flame of

love to burn unrestrainedly, but Lydia, whose desire remains fettered by her sad past, "must defend herself against it, for it was a destruction" (35). Somehow she must assimilate her old life into a new life with Tom, who insists on making impossible demands upon her.

It is much easier to appreciate the complexity of the couple's courtship if we briefly examine the expectations or desires each partner brings to the relationship itself. Being less mature and somewhat inexperienced, Tom displays less tact and reserve (qualities earned only through a wide range of sobering experience) in his approach than Lydia, who conversely appears much more restrained and aloof. The difference is, of course, attributable largely to her considerably wider experience of life which Tom cannot even hope to fathom. He remains barred from it forever. In this sense it may be helpful to think of their coming together as a kind of mother-infant relation in which the unformed ego, Tom, entrusts the complete, the absolute gratification of his passion to the formed ego, Lydia, the mature spirit brought down by tragic loss and incommunicable hardship (Howe 38-39).

But such theory only scratches the surface, for there are much deeper, more profound forces at play during the couple's passionate exchanges. Tom's attitude

toward Lydia during their early courtship prefigures a distasteful possessiveness he will display and eventually learn to curtail soon after they pronounce their marriage vows. Meanwhile, the slightest rupture of their passion, a broken or eased embrace, a moment in which "he did not exist" purely for Lydia (35), proves "intolerable" for Tom, who is "unable to bear a contradiction in her" (42-43). Even during the marriage ceremony, his thoughts reveal, however unconsciously or innocently, a certain tendency toward conquest and control, manipulation and self-interest:

> How could a man be strong enough to take her, put his arms round her and have her, and be sure he could conquer this awful unknown next his heart? What was it then that she was, to which he must also deliver himself up, and which at the same time he must embrace, contain? (53)

Shortly after their sacred day, Tom observes Lydia "reaching up to the corner cupboard" (55). He finds himself baffled by her extraordinary separateness and reserve, her unconscious tact and singular assurance. "Did he own her?" he asks himself (55). Her possible absence, he wrongly assumes, would bring about his own destruction, his complete negation as an independently functioning entity; it would, in effect, put him face to face with himself--his own incompleteness.

Yet marriage proves worthwhile for both individuals.

Much of our insight into their early days of nuptial happiness comes by way of Tom's perspective--what he learns about himself and his bride. The reasoning behind Lawrence's preference is not difficult to understand: because Tom bears the unlucky marks of restive personality and dangerously naive aspiration, he has more at stake than Lydia and so logically assumes the hefty burden of proving his capacity for true heroism. Lawrence never gives up on his character, for he demonstrates Tom's eager receptiveness to whatever appears promising and wholesome in life's daily round. Of all the desirable characteristics the novelist mentions in the Hardy essay, Permanence figures most prominently in Tom's new outlook on life. It is quite clear, we sense, that he has successfully clasped "as a hub the woman who shall be the axle," the woman who centralizes his activity and begets "in him his idea, his motion, himself," as Lawrence explains in his essay (444-45). Lydia's vitality, her mere presence, literally sheds new light on old things for Lawrence's hero, having somehow freed his soul and delivered him unto himself:

> It made a great difference to him, marriage. Things became so remote and of so little significance, as he knew the powerful source of his life, his eyes opened on a new universe, and he wondered in thinking of his triviality before. A new, calm relationship showed to him in the things he saw, in the cattle he used, the young wheat as it eddied in a wind. (54)

Lawrence clearly implies a subtle connection between the various advantages man reaps from his sexual union with woman and his own activity in the world beyond passionate embrace. Harmony in one, it seems, implies harmony in the other, offering Tom a kind of interpretative key to life's mysteries (Kiely 107), which have suddenly become intensified and considerably more pleasurable. Such moments of stability and grace do not come easily however; they are unfortunately few in number and earned at rather high cost to the self. Slowly Tom learns this sad fact about his marriage, realizing that passion oscillates tremendously between two people with extremely divergent backgrounds and opposing natures.

III. Learning Restraint and Balance

Lawrence brilliantly conveys his hero's learning process through a series of highly dramatized episodes. One stands out in particular. Working in the field one day, he suddenly feels an irresistible gravitation toward Lydia. Unfortunately, there is "no sign" of desire between them when he finally confronts her (58). He "waited and waited" until Lydia finally shows interest. What needs emphasizing here, however, is the nature of the language Lawrence employs in describing the aftermath

of their passion. Figuratively rich in arithmetical nuance, analogies of restraint and proportion, it clearly recalls the same thematic patterns and speculative conclusions of the novelist's essays, especially the great importance he attributes to the need for discipline and balance in affairs of the heart:

> The hour passed away again, there was severance between them, and rage and misery and bereavement for her, and deposition and toiling at the mill with slaves for him. But no matter. They had had their hour, and should it chime again, they were ready for it, ready to renew the game at the point where it was left off, on the edge of the outer darkness, when the secrets within the woman are game for the man, hunted doggedly, when the secrets of the woman are the man's adventure, and they both give themselves to the adventure. (58)

The obvious reference to musical concord, symbolizing the synchronous nature of their love, lends the passage an even deeper and wider significance. For one thing, it curiously echoes Tom's earlier harmony with nature, derived largely from his rewarding union with Lydia. It also implies a certain symphonic reliability about their intimate exchanges. Although the intensity of their passion may vary from time to time, it will always maintain an unspoken, understood inevitability between them in much the same way as a principal melody reoccurs throughout a long piece of music. Like the changing seasons, husband and wife respond to each other in accordance with the unknown rhythms and fluctuating

reserves of energy. Such "chiming," however, is rare at best, and the elusiveness of its spell can be a source of great anxiety for the unwary soul who foolishly assumes its comprehensibility and unquestioned reliability.

The impact on Tom of Lydia's pregnancy is a case in point. F.R. Leavis, one of the most perceptive critics on this aspect of the marriage, notes how Tom's presumptuous "dependence" upon his mate disrupts their marriage, although the scholar does not provide a detailed inquiry into the character's learning process during this section of the novel (280-81). Schneider also notes a shameful dependency in virtually every male character in the book, but he neither discriminates among their intuitional responses nor gauges the degree of possessiveness in each character's relationship (156). What is most surprising about the scholarship on this aspect of the marriage, however, is the great lack of intensive commentary on the subtle connection between Lawrence's consistent thematic patterns and their dramatization in specific forms of language. The direct correlation between the two, a correlation we have already observed, not only echoes the novelist's obsession with self-restraint in human intimacy but also cleverly prepares us for the characters in the second half of the novel who fail to achieve a suitable degree of sexual harmony.

Lydia's pregnancy should, ideally, afford Tom the perfect opportunity to apply his sense of "chiming" to their newly altered relationship. At first he displays only pure selfishness, blatant insensitivity, raging "with fury at the small, ugly-mouthed woman who had nothing to do with him" (58). But upon further reflection he experiences "an instinct of gratitude and a knowledge that she would receive him back" at some future time, an instinct which fortunately tempers his rage and soothes him (58). The mere thought of life without Lydia, his woman, his source of permanence and strength, his irreplaceable love, instructs him to make the best of his situation by controlling his insensitive demands upon her. He must simply learn not to rely on Lydia as his sole source of experience and emotion at times when she requires complete singleness and privacy in order to tend to the compelling echoes of her own inner life. Tom must learn, in effect, to defer to another soul's need for solitude and absence; he must recognize that certain moments of relationship are neither communicable nor mutual between two individuals, even if they are lovers. To impose himself upon Lydia during her time of defensive withdrawal would surely weaken what warmth and solidity they had already created together as husband and wife. Luckily, Tom assesses his situation once again, intuiting

it in all its various implications, and finally chooses the only sensible code of conduct:

> He knew she might lapse into ignorance of him, lapse away from him, farther, farther, farther, till she was lost to him. He had sense enough, premonition enough in himself, to be aware of this and to measure himself accordingly. For he did not want to lose her: he did not want her to lapse away. (58-59)

Tom's prescriptive measurement requires reinforcement and discipline during the early months of his marriage and there are times when his resolve weakens considerably. But even in his deepest despair and anger he reminds himself of imminent union with Lydia; it is, he believes, simply a matter of time. But his reflection does not pertain solely to himself; it is not selfish. Having fruitfully pondered the sexual dynamics of his own situation, he eventually shows great courage and unprecedented sympathy by applying what he has learned about himself to Lydia's desire as well. What holds true for him might well hold true for her, he correctly senses. So he begins his "bitter lesson, to abate himself" (78), and admirably reaffirms his earlier determination and strength:

> It was not, he had to learn, that she <u>would</u> not want him enough, as much as he demanded that she should want him. It was that she could not. She could only want him in her own way, and to her own measure. And she had spent much life before he found her as she was, the woman who could take him and give him fulfillment. She had taken him and given him fulfillment. She

> still could do so, in her own times and ways. But he must control himself, measure himself to her. (78)

In reaching these profound truths on his own, Tom not only displays his willingness to learn but also opens himself to compassion and understanding. Lydia literally forces him to come to terms with himself. He does; in learning tolerance, he achieves freedom for two.

Thus the thematic significance of Lydia's pregnancy is really twofold: it both compels Tom to regulate his own desires and teaches him to expend his physical and spiritual energies in other ways. He accordingly adjusts his behavior and attains at least partial release in doing so. At first he is not successful, indulging heavily in drink and generally casting about for some feasible form of "outlet" (59). Eventually, however, he smartly diverts his attention to his stepdaughter, Lydia's little girl, Anna, who, in turn, becomes "another centre of love" in his harried life, thereby "relieving the main flood to his wife" (78). A singularly restless child, Anna does not take easily to Tom, looking upon him as a most unlikely candidate for fatherhood. Although their curious relationship does not presuppose any claims or agreements beyond those of the usual arrangement between stepdaughter and stepfather, the two eventually turn to each other in moments of unbearable loneliness

and actually manage to "make a little life together" (79), singing and teasing Lydia's new baby, riding into town closely snuggled together as lovers in Brangwen's trap, each one filling in the other's emptiness.

The closing pages of the third chapter derive much of their thematic impact and psychological force from Lawrence's presentation of Tom and Lydia's reconciliation after two years of stormy marriage. As we have seen, both partners have followed separate paths during this period, each one attending to his own needs. It has been largely a time for mending and preparing, for Tom and Lydia have managed to preserve their union without ever completely relinquishing their separate identities. Just as their earlier intimacy sprung up in accordance with Nature's subtle arithmetic, so now her mysterious powers afford the couple soothing release and valuable reaffirmation:

> Their coming together now, after two years of married life, was much more wonderful to them than it had been before. It was the entry into another circle of existence, it was the baptism to another life, it was the complete confirmation. (91)

The impact of this reaffirmation is far-reaching, for it amounts to a literal fulfillment of something Tom has only been hoping for at best over the past two years. Having reluctantly disciplined himself according to the strictures and encouragement of his inner voices, having heard their promise of hope and renewal, he no longer

faces possible failure in his relation with Lydia. Never again will he doubt the inevitable reliability, however tentative or intermittent, of their passion, which sustains them and yet remains as elusive, as mysteriously active and unpredictable, as necessary and beautiful as the unknown forces behind the changing seasons and the varying colors of the heavens. Tom knows now that such fears are misplaced, for the two share an unspoken understanding, an impersonally secure love (Heldt 366). It is impersonal because it neither requires constant reaffirmation nor calls for worry and suspicion during times of separation. Resilient and comforting, it is a love which not only sets them free but also sustains them in their roles as completely separate selves:

> And always the light of the transfiguration burned on in their hearts. He went his way, as before, she went her way, to the rest of the world there seemed no change. But to the two of them, there was the perpetual wonder of the transfiguration. (91)

There is no trace of external change because the transformation has occurred both in and between them. We have glimpsed the nature of their change through Tom's perspective--his accumulating wisdom and good sense. Lawrence himself registers indirect approval of Tom's progress by putting some curiously profound thoughts into his hero's head, and by having him articulate these thoughts as he gives a slightly tipsy speech on the

virtues of marriage at Anna's wedding reception: "'If I am to become an Angel, it'll be my married soul, and not my single soul. It'll not be the soul of me when I was a lad: for I hadn't a soul as would make an Angel then'" (135). In proclaiming the angelic status he has achieved through sexual harmony with Lydia, Tom unknowingly adds another quality from the Hardy essay to his sense of permanence: Eternality. Both qualities offer him personal contentment and hope. The couple's love, earned through self-discipline and mutual sensitivity, provides them with something lasting whether they are together or apart.

IV. Possessive Love in the Second Generation

Moving his fictional world closer and closer to the twentieth century, Lawrence continues his intensive account of sexual tensions between men and women in the second generation of Brangwens, the marriage of Anna and Will. Here the novelist broadens his imaginative landscape by portraying the erotic dynamics of their relationship against a dimly perceivable social background. The reader senses in the lives of the second generation a religious, social, and materialistic resonance beyond the insulating rusticity and highly

restrictive milieu of the preceding generation. These new thematic elements do not appear as extraneous items along the way; rather, they heighten and color Lawrence's primary concern: the individual's quest for sexual harmony and stable being. For example, Will Brangwen's independent role as handyman and clerical associate for the local church not only implies his ties to the community but also underscores the deep sexual frustrations in his marriage. For his activities--creative, wholesome activities--occur outside the scope of Anna's concerns and so become a source of great resentment for her. At the same time Lawrence's meticulous inquiry into sexual matters seems heightened, more penetrating than the earlier sections of the novel. Urgent, sensually resplendent, rich in physical imagery and psychological nuance, the novelist's bristling prose renders the potential violence and extreme selfishness of Will and Anna's marriage with tense immediacy and moving insight. In this sense their relationship remains the most internalized section of the book (Langbaum 311). Lawrence's treatment of the second generation differs in another way as well. Unlike his earlier practice, he now splits his narrative fairly between hero and heroine, orchestrating his thematic modulations on the consciousness of both sexes with equal tact and sympathy.

From the start Will and Anna's passion shows an underlying disharmony which eventually manifests itself outward and harries them both as individuals and lovers. The behavioral curiosities of their honeymoon underscore this unfortunate division, and also set the stage for Lawrence's subsequent themes. Deeply relaxing, soothing, "sweeter than sunshine" (140), their nuptial bliss proceeds as pleasantly as any other until Will makes a startling revelation about the odd nature of his beloved's desire:

> She was less hampered than he, so she came more quickly to her fulness, and was sooner ready to enjoy again a return to the outside world. She was going to give a tea-party. His heart sank. He wanted to go on, to go on as they were. He wanted to have done with the outside world, to declare it finished for ever. (147)

Although it is Will who consistently displays a stronger interest in socializing and community activity, Anna here virtually nullifies his desire by showing a frivolous interest in the conventions of external reality which Will prefers to keep at a distance during the time of his sensual pleasure. What appears as a completely trivial endeavor to him is, as Anais Nin explains, a kind of "ominous sign," an omen or foreshadowing of further dissension between them, a symbolic act with important thematic implications (23).

Unlike Tom, Will does not use the wisdom he gathers

from his observations to solidify what little relatedness he shares with Anna. On the contrary, his immediate response to her preparation for the party, her housework and other domestic chores, is unreasonable resentment and anger. His discomfiture lasts for several days and, like a confused, helpless child, he subtly tries to ease the tension between them by hankering after her as she does her chores. In doing so he simply aggravates her temper even more. She resents his insensitivity, for his "will seemed grappled upon her" (149). But the problem goes far beyond a case of childish anxiety. By refusing to recognize Anna's need for expressive freedom, her mobility of body and spirit, by unfeelingly circumscribing the scope of her experience to his desires and petty fears, he clearly denies her right to exist at least temporarily as an autonomous self whose very integrity depends upon moments of solitude and personal endeavor. There is, Will must learn, life outside their relation.

But the younger generation is not nearly as perceptive as their predecessors. Not for nothing, Marguerite Beede Howe explains, has Lawrence bestowed the name "Will" upon his character (43), and all its various connotations are equally suitable to his nature. Darlene H. Unrue speaks of Will in terms of his selfish Wille zur

Macht, his lustful hunger to dominate Anna completely (648-49). These are telling comments, but it is probably even more helpful to see Will's attitude as a greatly intensified version of Tom Brangwen's comparatively mild possessiveness. More carefully stated, it is possible to attribute Will's feelings of insufficiency to his unwillingness to both master and apply the lessons of true relatedness. He is capable of making informative observations about his sexual exchanges with Anna but incapable of employing them to either strengthen or deepen what warmth and compassion they already share.

Anna too deserves equal blame for their disharmony. Unlike Will, she tends toward pragmatism and the cold, hard facts of everyday existence. She leaves little room for poetic reverie, diffusive lyricism, or any other pleasurable sensation usually associated with aesthetic contemplation. In this manner she represents the direct opposite of her husband, whose church duties function as a front for his somewhat pretentious flights into religious ecstasy and mystical oneness, "his dark emotional experience of the Infinite, of the Absolute" (155). He is quixotically drawn to a curious assortment of religious phenomena, illuminated Biblical texts, solemn music and inspirational singing, and the hallowed atmosphere of dimly lit cathedrals. A skilled artisan

himself, even his own handiwork around the house bears the personal impress of his mystical disposition, for he carves a wooden panel of Adam and Eve during his spare time. But every one of his religious activities functions as a thinly disguised substitute for the expression of his vibrant sensual desires. He has, in essence, unconsciously marshalled their dark, subterranean forces in the name of aesthetic pleasure. As Aidan Burns keenly points out, "he is a part of a wide tradition and culture which provides a framework within which his passionate nature can develop" (54). Will cares nothing whatsoever for the normal impulses behind true religious feeling, behind worship itself, its ethical and moral precepts and the sober truths underlying its promise of spiritual renewal and undying faith. Whenever he enters the solemn atmosphere of church Will experiences not wholesome oneness with God but sensual arousal. Anna senses this irony in her husband, resenting his passionate spirituality "for not fulfilling anything in her" (154). But in registering such a response she clearly discloses the very same selfish tendencies we have already observed in Will's nature. Her hunger to experience vicariously whatever pleasurable sensations he derives from religion is, in reality, an infringement of his being, of his right to exist as a separate entity away from her. She

cannot stand the elusiveness, the presumptuous independence of his roaming soul:

> He was very strange to her, and, in his church spirit, in conceiving himself as a soul, he seemed to escape and run free of her. In a way, she envied it him, this dark freedom and jubilation of the soul, some strange entity in him. It fascinated her. Again she hated it. And again, she despised him, wanted to destroy it in him. (155)

Like Tom before her, then, Anna brings to her marriage certain presuppositions about the role of her partner. Her assumptions are dangerously unfounded, for they are based on the idea that another self is subject at all times to her command--her needs.

Lawrence heightens their disunity by setting it against an even more suspenseful background of religious conflict. Anna undertakes a somewhat zealous campaign to lift the veil of mystical haze with which Will has surrounded himself. One by one she destroys his little ecstasies, jeering at the diminutiveness of Eve in comparison to Adam's towering presence on his panel, mocking his penchant for Biblical pictures, and harshly criticizing his hasty explanations of various divine mysteries. Of all the prominent critics who offer close analysis of the religious strife in the second generation of Brangwens, John E. Stoll provides what might very well be the most controversial account of the couple's spiritual conflicts. Unlike such critics as Spilka and

Daleski--who do find faults in both characters but tend to see Anna as victor in terms of her sobering rationality (103-04); 103-04)--Stoll not only admires Will's capacity for identity apart from Anna but also praises his character for having achieved a more finely tuned self, more independent and daring than even Tom Brangwen's (119). In any case, these critical views do not explicitly diagnose Anna's problem as a case of deficient selfhood entirely distinguished apart from the heated religious conflict. This point deserves more attention. Whether the reader mocks or respects Will's mystical aestheticism, is really beside the point. What is much more important is Anna's attitude toward her husband, specifically her inability to let him do as he pleases as a completely independent person. In this manner it becomes possible to see the entire religious issue as the thematic scaffolding upon which Lawrence dramatizes the deep unhappiness between his characters. Anna's insensitive criticism, her skeptical hostility toward his elusive soul, simply amounts to a more finely articulated, a much more intellectualized possessiveness than Will's. In essence, she practices a verbal rather than physical selfishness. Instead of hanging on her mate, clinging to him and limiting his physical space and mobility, she literally cuts into his dreamy soul,

demolishing his romantic fancies one by one.

Unfortunately, their fierce opposition and selfishness prevents any real lasting peace between them. Schneider and others have noted how Lawrence's most dissatisfied couples often perversely manage to attain illusory or false contentment by lapsing into orgiastic, even violent sexual release. Such action, he suggests, ends up being the exact opposite of true love or healthy relatedness: "The relationship of the lovers becomes that of the vampire to its victim or of the master to his slave" (153). What little tenderness the couple shares soon degrades over a series of highly intensified scenes. Lawrence's language once again corresponds to the thematic demands of his characters' changing inner lives. Both lovers are described as swooping hawks, each one seeking vindictive sensual pleasure in the other. Their perverse sexual practices are inseparable from the way they view each other: "She had thought him just the bright reflex of herself" (166). Similarly, Will sees her as "the extension of his will" (166). Anna, however, appears much more self-sufficient than her husband, and it is quite clear that she cherishes whatever time she secures away from his disturbing influence. Her appreciation of such independence obviously indicates the hypocrisy in her attitude toward Will's justifiable need

for solitude and distance, however foolish or trivial his aesthetic bent may seem.

Anna's pregnancy is a case in point, for she feels his "will upon her" at a time when she desires only "the joy and the vagueness and the innocence of her pregnancy" (177). Ironically, she offers him, quite understandably, only "flower-like love" (178), which he renounces with extreme resentment, insisting on his kind of sensual gratification, a love she is incapable of giving him in this most urgent period of her selfhood:

> He would destroy her flowery, innocent bliss. Was he not entitled to satisfaction from her, and was not his heart all raging desire, his soul a black torment of unfulfillment. Let it be fulfilled in him, then, as it was fulfilled in her. He had given her her fulfillment. Let her rise up and do her part. (179)

Unlike Tom Brangwen, Will does not attempt to come to terms with their conflict, and even involves himself with a much younger girl in a subsequent chapter. He does not make an honest effort to preserve what little, if any, harmony they do share as husband and wife and he remains incapable of disciplining his own desires. Nor does Anna attempt to adjust their unbalanced union in any way. Retreating from the stifling atmosphere of life with Will into the soothing release and bliss of motherhood, she prefers perpetual pregnancy to peaceful relations with her mate. In true Lawrencean fashion, their deadly

selfishness erupts into sheer lust, illusory relatedness:

> This was what their love had become, a sensuality violent and extreme as death. They had no conscious intimacy, no tenderness of love. It was all the lust and the infinite, maddening intoxication of the sense, a passion of death. (234)

Yet Lawrence's vision is not devoid of hope. For it is up to their child, Ursula, to carry the promise of rebirth and true relatedness into the next generation. Chapters 9-16 test her ability to fulfill her creator's vision.

V. The Lessons of the Third Generation

Like Sons and Lovers, the third generation, the life of Ursula Brangwen, is a record of the soul's differentiation from everything around it: animals, space, plants, earth, and, of course, other people. Homer O. Brown, Robert Langbaum and others adopt this theme in analyzing the latter sections of the novel. Ursula, they claim, must pass through a series of specific experiences--her brief lesbianism, teaching career, religious conflict and the like--in order to determine where her true self resides (Brown 286; Langbaum 316). Generally speaking, their approach applies itself quite efficiently to the novel's concluding chapters, but it nevertheless merits much more qualification and depth than most critical accounts afford it. Any firm grasp of

the progress of Ursula's self-definition must take into account not only her adult experiences but also her childhood ones because they lend force and direction to her ongoing development. Furthermore, the complexities of Lawrence's heroine cannot be appreciated fully unless analysis shows exactly how and why her growing wisdom about herself differs from her predecessors' in light of the novelist's primary concern throughout the Phoenix essays--how well she measures up to his dream of sexual balance and respect between men and women. Analysis must gauge just how successful she is in intuiting the necessary boundary between self and others.

Unlike his Victorian predecessors, Lawrence seldom receives praise for his penetrating depictions of childhood. Although his own marriage was childless, he intermittenly included touching portraits of frustrated children and their various anxieties throughout his canon. At least five of his seven major novels display his sympathy with their difficult plight, and he usually depicts them as the hapless inheritors of the industrialized, adult world. At times he identifies completely with their bewilderment and confusion, almost as if he himself had known what it was like to be a wretched little girl, a mischievous child, or a lonesome changeling. Ursula's childhood is no exception, for in it

Lawrence sketches the same dignity and humanity he would attribute to infantile development only three years later in the controversial "Education of the People" (1918). In both novel and essay he presents experiences in the early years as integral steps toward fully mature being.

Several episodes underscore Ursula's childish attempts at definition throughout the middle sections of the novel. One stands out in particular, however. Lawrence makes it quite clear that her father, Will, is her most exciting and wholesome source of connection beyond the confines of self, "the dawn wherein her consciousness woke up" (218). Much of her early knowledge of the world comes to her through her experience with him; indeed, the two make a life together in much the same way as little Anna and Tom before them. One day Will asks Ursula if she would like to help him plant potatoes, and he accordingly shows her how to do so with admirable patience and sincerity. Despite his instruction, however, she fails to master the task, standing beside her father in "the painful terrified helplessness of childhood" (219). Upset and ashamed, she runs away in complete futility because of her inability to "do it as he did it" (220). The event clearly shakes her into consciousness of herself, for she feels suddenly aware "of the great breach between them" (220).

There is an even more dramatic result of this episode. A carefree, flighty child, Ursula unknowingly tramples across one of her father's seed-beds. Enraged, Will stops short of inflicting violence upon her, abusing her verbally instead. Like a wounded animal, she crawls under the "parlour sofa," where she remains inert and confused in the "misery of childhood" (221). Emerging from her confinement, she feels "nothing in the world but her own self" (221). The "outward malevolence" of her world forces her "to harden her soul in resistance and denial of all that was outside her, harden herself upon her own being" (221). In its own subtle way, though, the impact of the fiasco, a seemingly insignificant mishap in the child's life, extends well beyond a case of childish indiscretion and subsequent parental chastisement. On the contrary, the little girl's reflection in the aftermath of pain and guilt awakens her sense of extreme separateness and disconnection, her existence as a vulnerable, suffering thing:

> But she was always tormented by the unreality of outside things. The earth was to walk on. Why must she avoid a certain patch, just because it was called a seed-bed? It was the earth to walk on. This was her instinctive assumption. And when he bullied her, she became hard, cut herself off from all connection, lived in the little separate world of her own violent will. (221)

Curiously, her instinct is both right and wrong, but she

has not fully learned how to distinguish among certain alternative modes of conduct. The ground is literally the property of all mankind, a gift bestowed upon man from divine powers. Yet the laws of mortal existence interfere and restrict man's free movement and choice. Lawrence lends the episode an undeniable yet subtle urgency. He makes of Ursula's folly a symbolic act, the equivalence of poetic revelation. In overstepping her own boundaries and infringing upon the space of others, Ursula subtly prefigures the very same behavior she later displays in her destructive relationship with Anton Skrebensky, whose borders she also violates, knowingly.

Interestingly enough, Ursula takes quickly to her gentle grandmother, Lydia, whose stories of the old days provide moments of ceaseless fascination and awe for the little girl. In the magical atmosphere of her grandmother's bedroom, a virtual storehouse of stubborn memories, blighted hopes, and elusive joys, Ursula learns of "the tiny importance of the individual, within the great past" (258). It is no wonder at all that Lydia admonishes her grandchild on the importance of finding the right man when she passes from childhood into maturity, hoping that the girl will find "'somebody who will love you for what you are, and not for what he wants of you'" (258-59).

Once again the reader notes just how very subtle Lawrence's art can be. The full import of these scenes cannot be appreciated fully unless one keeps in mind the thematic parallels in upcoming passages, reading them retrospectively. In any case, their significance is twofold: they not only make evident Ursula's growing self-awareness, but also impress upon her the inevitable task, the mighty responsibility of her own identity--a burden only she may assume. Lydia's curious advice points this out, for it subtly works in two ways. Though it is true to say that Ursula's future lover will not truly love her for herself, her intrinsic goodness, it is also equally true, we shall see, that she herself remains unfaithful to her grandmother's words. Indeed, not until Ursula's appearance in Lawrence's sequel, Women in Love, does she begin to both learn and practice the same ethical awareness of other selves which the novelist repeatedly advocates throughout his Phoenix essays.

Having passed from girlhood into womanhood, Ursula embraces the usual implications of adult life, putting her spiritual life in order, considering her personal appearance and unique femininity, wondering about the impact of her presence upon others, and, of course, learning all she can in preparation for choosing a profession one day. Fiercely self-assertive and generally

opinionated on a wide variety of topics and issues, she maintains a close watch on things and events around her, looking out for new experiences and opportunities. All of these elements undoubtedly direct the flow of her life and provide her with a sense of purpose, but they do not affect her as profoundly as her involvement with Anton Skrebensky, her first love. A young military man on leave for a month, he becomes the center of her attention. She immediately "laid hold of him" as a kind of divine messenger or angel who bears special meaning and intention for Miss Ursula Brangwen, looking upon him as "one such as those Sons of God who saw the daughters of men, that they were fair" (290). He too senses sudden attraction between them, but her expectations far outweigh any he holds at the time. The inherent opposition between her romantic individualism and his strictly disciplined pragmatism curiously foreshadows the couple's later problems. In this sense their early friendship already contains the seeds of later disillusionment (Kettle 113).

It is quite clear that Ursula welcomes the young man as an exciting, healthy addition to her own budding adulthood, but her unbridled desires betray a certain insensitivity toward his being. In doing so she foolishly repeats the sexual blunders of her parents and

grandfather by presupposing unfounded truths about the nature of her relation. Daniel Albright, who offers an instructive account of the later stages of her relationship, notes that she neither consciously exhibits maliciousness nor realizes the immense pressure she bears upon Anton during the early phases of their attraction (87). While the critic does not discuss these experiences in detail, his point deserves further attention. Lawrence indirectly implies that Skrebensky's very being, his physical and spiritual selves, functions as a kind of human yardstick by which Ursula can measure the limits of her own self. Through prolonged contact with him she hopes to achieve separateness and true identity (Hinz 34). In fact, she even derives her earliest feelings of femininity from Anton:

> She was thrilled with a new life. For the first time she was in love with a vision of herself: she saw as it were a fine little reflection of herself in his eyes. And she must act up to this: she must be beautiful. Her thoughts turned swiftly to clothes, her passion was to make a beautiful appearance. (291)

Such behavior is, of course, healthy in its own way. For human beings learn about themselves by observing and comparing themselves to others. Moreover, Ursula's femininity is both quickened and strengthened through her relations with Anton.

But she has not learned how to discipline her

exuberance. Unfortunately, her individuality and assertiveness hamper any true relatedness between them. At first they both revel in each other's sensuality, but Lawrence insists on giving her more aggressiveness:

> She could limit and define herself against him, the male, she could be her maximum self, female, oh female, triumphant for one moment in exquisite assertion against the male, in supreme contradistinction to the male. (301)

Somewhat confused and hesitant, Anton begins to sense a certain imbalance between them: "To him this was bitter, that she was so radiant and satisfied. She laughed upon him, blind to him, so full of her own bliss, never doubting but that he was the same as she was" (302). Clearly emerging as a kind of victor from their passionate exchanges, Ursula shows hardly any consideration for her lover, leaving him "no self-bliss, only pain and confused anger" (302). Her so-called triumph, we see, turns out to be nothing but pure illusion, for it exacts heavy tolls from both of them: in exceeding her own limitations, she arrogantly infringes upon his being.

But Anton himself is not without blame, and Lawrence leaves it up to the reader to decide which partner is most offensive to the other. A product of highly regimented training and aristocratic deportment, his very being, his spiritual and physical frame, is incapable of

supporting the enormous pressure of Ursula's romantic individualism. Indeed, the reader gradually realizes that Lawrence's subtle depiction of the soldier's rigidity reflects much of the constructive criticism he launches against the English school system and rampant nationalism in the exceedingly controversial "Education of the People." The novelist employs such words as "hard" and "old form" in portraying the young man as a symbol of national unity, a defender of country and flag (302-07). But from Ursula's perspective his military bearing is nothing but self-evasion and abstraction:

> "That's because you are a romanticist."
> "Yes, I am. I want to be romantic. I hate houses that never go away, and people just living in the houses. It's all so stiff and stupid. I hate soldiers, they are stiff and wooden. What do you fight for, really?"
> "I would fight for the nation."
> "For all that, you aren't the nation. What would you do for yourself?"
> "I belong to the nation and must do my duty by the nation."
> "But when it didn't need your services in particular--when there <u>is</u> no fighting? What would you do then?"
> He was irritated.
> "I would do what everybody else does."
> "What?"
> "Nothing. I would be in readiness for when I was needed."
> The answer came in exasperation. (309)

In sacrificing himself to some greater idea, some barely understood abstraction, Anton not only forfeits his chances of further creative and spiritual growth but also indicates his inherent opposition to change and reckless

adventure. Unlike Ursula, he cannot give himself to life's mysteries, and so becomes a pitifully unsuitable mate for her. Her courage and vitality belittle his fixed, unnatural poise.

Yet Ursula herself continues to exert inhuman pressure upon Skrebensky. Mark Spilka speaks of the burden of "proof" she places upon her lover, explaining that Anton's inability to offer the girl a fuller existence exacts death as its ultimate penalty (112-13). Echoing Spilka, Charles Rossman speaks approvingly of Lawrence's heroine but adds that she literally subjects Anton to a test through which she hopes to tap the "passionate springs of vitality" within the deep recesses of her own self (273). These are revealing comments but it is useful to differentiate among certain phases of her so-called testing.

Generally speaking, there are two principal phases, each with subordinate parts: the first phase corresponds roughly to her moon goddess period, the second to her destructive campaign against Anton's emptiness. The first occurs on the eve of his departure for South Africa, where he eventually earns the rank of first lieutenant. Offering herself to the full moon one night, Ursula decides to absorb into her self all the majesty and power of the evening's mysterious glow:

> She stood filled with the full moon, offering herself. Her two breasts opened to make way for it, her body opened wide like a quivering anemone, a soft, dilated invitation touched by the moon. She wanted the moon to fill in to her, she wanted more, more communion with the moon, consummation. But Skrebensky put his arm round her, and led her away. He put a big, dark cloak round her, and sat holding her hand, whilst the moonlight streamed above the glowing fires. (317)

But is shortly becomes clear that her communion with the moon prefigures her absorption of Anton's very being:

> But hard and fierce she had fastened upon him, cold as the moon and burning as a fierce salt. Till gradually his warm, soft iron yielded, yielded, and she was there fierce, corrosive, seething with his destruction, seething like some cruel, corrosive salt around the last substance of his being, destroying him, destroying him in the kiss. (320)

Skrebensky emerges from her deadly clutches with "no core," for Ursula has actually "broken" his spirit, making his heart "hollow" (321). Whatever attitude the reader takes toward Anton, it remains clear that in such a scene as this Ursula has exceeded her own boundaries and violated his as well.

Her second phase is even more destructive for both of them. It comprises two tense scenes, the first occurring just before the lovers are reunited after Anton's return from South Africa, the latter shortly after their reunion. The first scene provides further evidence of Lawrence's subtlety as artist, his uncanny ability to thematically foreshadow related elements as

they link past and present conflicts in his characters' lives. Examining a specimen under the light of her microscope in her college lab one day, Ursula undergoes instructive revelation:

> It intended to be itself. But what self? Suddenly in her mind the world gleamed strangely, with an intense light, like the nucleus of the creature under the microscope. Suddenly she had passed away into an intensely-gleaming light of knowledge. She could not understand what it all was. She only knew that it was not limited mechanical energy, nor mere purpose of self-preservation and self-assertion. It was a consummation, a being infinite. Self was a oneness with the infinite. To be oneself was a supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity. (441)

The urgent conclusion she reaches here is related to her earlier communion with the moon. Both experiences provide her the perfect opportunity to explore the limits of her being, to test the potential of her maximum self. Even more important is the clever placement of this scene only moments before her reunion with Anton, whose limited character cannot possibly accommodate Ursula's eager romanticism. Albright is one of the few critics who appreciates Lawrence's subtle juxtaposition of these two episodes, claiming that Ursula actually employs Skrebensky's body as an "analogical vehicle" (87). The critic does not dwell at great length on their reunion but his insight is clearly borne out by Lawrence's figurative language. Having cleaned up her work area and

put away her scientific tools, Ursula dashes out of the lab and hurries down the corridor, where she finally beholds Anton as "the key, the nucleus to the new world" (442). They take up where they left off before his journey. But any harmony they share is illusory. From this point on Ursula pursues a conscious, deliberate assertion of her self against Anton's "hopeless fixity," his lack of spiritual vitality and adventurous independence (443).

To fully grasp the second scene some preliminary information is helpful. The reader slowly realizes that Ursula's campaign against Anton's hollow soul is only a symptom, a mere surface feature of a much deeper flaw in her character, her unbridled romanticism and insatiable desire for unlimited being and reckless extravagance. Having pondered the riddles of selfhood, their promise of unbounded power and assertion, she rejects the finitude of her earlier identity and adopts a completely new self-image, an extremely ambitious attitude:

> She was no mere Ursula Brangwen. She was Woman, she was the whole of Woman in the human order. All-containing, universal, how should she be limited to individuality? (444)

Her new feminist perspective is somewhat misleading, however. No matter how much homage she deserves as one of the first truly liberated heroines of modern British fiction, it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore the

great presumptuousness and insensitivity she shows the world at large. Clearly her sense of independence is only a part of a much larger program:

> And she lay face downwards on the downs, that were so strong, that cared only for their intercourse with the everlasting skies, and she wished she could become a strong mound smooth under the sky, bosom and limbs bared to all winds and clouds and bursts of sunshine. (463)

On one level, then, Ursula's exhilarating expansiveness amounts to a violation of the natural world. By exceeding herself, by ignoring the necessary demarcation between self and universe, she remains untrue to her own integral being and attempts to control areas beyond the normal concerns of responsible identity.

On a much more complicated level, though, her expansiveness offers her unqualified access to Anton's inferior being, for she assumes immediate ownership of "his body and enjoyed it with all the delight and carelessness of a possessor" (460). In its most extreme moments, moments of maximum assertion, such behavior is, we suspect, indirect rebellion against the pitiful confinement and inertia of Anton's rigidity. Opposing him in both temperament and intellectual orientation, Ursula accordingly registers a barrage of complaints against his advocacy of British rule over India, where he hopes to prostrate himself before his favorite abstractions, Nation and Service:

> "What is your finger to me?" she cried, in a passion. "You with your dainty fingers, and your going to India because you will be one of the somebodies there! It's a mere dodge, your going to India."
>
> "In what way a dodge?" he cried, white with anger and fear.
>
> "You think the Indians are simpler than us, and so you'll enjoy being near them and being a lord over them," she said. "And you'll feel so righteous, governing them for their own good. Who are you, to feel righteous? What are you righteous about, in your governing? Your governing stinks. What do you govern for, but to make things there as dead and mean as they are here!"
>
> "I don't feel righteous in the least," he said.
>
> "Then what do you feel? It's all such a nothingness, what you feel and what you don't feel." (461)

Her diagnosis of his self-evasion is, of course, unfortunately correct, but her accusation is unnecessarily severe. Soon her growing anger gives her free license to ignore his individuality--his spiritual and physical worth. She refuses to "love him in a house any more" (464). Her increasing expansiveness rejects the closed, stifling constriction of indoor places. Skrebensky too comes to represent nothing but depressing restriction for her.

Shortly before her violent assault upon him, which is probably the book's most breathtaking scene, she decides to employ Anton's body as a mere "personification" (477), "a vehicle" (Albright 91), a means by which she may attain full communion with the

majesty and power of a local windswept seacoast. In doing so she literally nullifies his person, using him as a service or tool. Verging on the Gothic, the episode contains rich description of the swirling, evanescent environment around the lovers. They proceed to make love between the ceaseless activity of the waves and the shifting sand of the beach. Overcome by the tense, expectant aura of this compelling atmosphere, Ursula virtually destroys her victim, attacking him with all the focused will and unrestrained aggression of some remorseless beast upon its prey:

> She held him pinned down at the chest, awful. The fight, the struggle for consummation was terrible. It lasted till it was agony to his soul, till he succumbed, till he gave way as if dead, lay with his face buried, partly in her hair, partly in the sand, motionless, as if he would be motionless now for ever, hidden away in the dark, buried, only buried, he only wanted to be buried in the goodly darkness, only that, and no more. (479)

A tear rolling from his eye, Skrebensky emerges from the experience as a broken, ashen man.

The event proves decisive. The two part company before long, feeling only futility and hopelessness. Having rejected his offer of marriage, Ursula struggles desperately to salvage what feelings she still possesses after her extraordinary incident. She learns later that Anton has married another woman, his Colonel's daughter

in India, where he flees in order "to screen himself from the darkness, the challenge of his own soul" (482). Unfortunately, Ursula retains scars, vestiges of her relationship with him, for she bravely accepts the death of her unborn child and struggles to put the entire episode into the background of her mind. Lawrence conveys her ordeal through highly traumatic dream, a kind of psychological storm in which she anxiously tries to outrun a stampede of ominous horses. Resilient and determined, she eventually emerges from her trance with chastened heart and soul. But her depression lessens considerably when she beholds a vision of a rainbow through her window. There is a hint of promise and renewal in its suddenness and vibrancy. A new beginning is at hand, unavoidable, a beginning which will soon initiate her into the lessons of proper relationship, of relationship with Rupert Birkin in Lawrence's next novel, Women in Love.

VI. Lawrence's Sequel

With Women in Love (1920) Lawrence reluctantly enters the twentieth century, facing its unhallowed complexities and vulgar mechanization with whatever spiritual and creative reserves he can muster. It is not

unlikely that one of his heroines, Gudrun Brangwen, speaks for her creator when she offers her wistful perspective on the sordidness of this new century in the opening pages of the book: "'Everything withers in the bud'" (2). Her plaintive admission is not by any means a singular occurrence in what may very well be Lawrence's darkest novel: at one time or another all of the book's characters utter figurative or literal dissatisfaction with modern life in general. Even in their most casual moments Lawrence's characters either denigrate their industrialized world or cleverly disclose the increasing precariousness of its outworn assumptions and violent dynamics. It is not always easy or even possible for the novelist to diagnose exactly what has gone wrong with his culture, but one thing remains certain: there is a direct correlation between external circumstances and the quality of the inner life, the inmost self, as it gropes for meaning and definition within demanding sexual relationships.

Accordingly, the characters' urgent pronouncements often betray their desire for something permanent, solid and lasting, a form of center in their lives. But all stability appears elusive, denying them any access to emotional and spiritual security. Hope withers everywhere. Innocently scanning his Daily Telegraph on

the train to London one day, Gerald Crich reads about the possible election of a political candidate "'who will give new values to things, give us new truths, a new attitude to life, or else we shall be a crumbling nothingness in a few years, a country in ruin--'" (46). When his friend Rupert Birkin subsequently asks him "'wherein does life centre, for you?'" Gerald affirms that his existence "'is artificially held <u>together</u> by the social mechanism'" (50). Wistfully responding to his friend's inadequate, almost offensive explanation, Rupert notes that society's "'old ideals are dead as nails--nothing there'" (51). Even these brief excerpts suffice to show how the sophisticated cultural climate of Lawrence's sequel differs noticeably from the insular rusticity, the almost backward world of <u>The Rainbow</u>. Indeed, the apocalyptic spirit with which the sequel's characters utter such bleak truths ironically betrays their unhappiness and yearning. The comparatively promising security of Tom and Lydia's world seems beyond their successors' reach. Commenting on the intellectual superiority of Rupert and Ursula Birkin over their ancestors, A.O.J. Cockshut keenly points out that their ample intelligence implies a corresponding "loss of calm" (158). They are seriously deficient and they know it. No matter how hard they try, they realize that the superficiality of intellectual debate and abstract

discussion offers only temporary relief at best, leaving them just as empty and forlorn as they were before. Their sexual health is not any less immune to malaise. Any substantial inquiry into this area, then, must first take into account the general atmosphere of the characters' lives, the very air with which they inhale and exhale. For Lawrence's characters think, talk, feel, and move in the foul air of the modern world, and he makes it his primary business to see exactly how its destructive forces impinge upon them as they attempt meaningful connection. No longer choosing to discount the manifold social influences at work on his fictional world, the novelist slowly began to view his characters' inner lives and sexual relations as a mere reflection of cultural disarray.

Ironically, their unhappiness has less to do with the advent of a new age than it does with the passing of an old one. The colorful figures of Women in Love are the inadvertent inheritors of Victorian culture, situated as they are on the hazy threshold between centuries. It is difficult to decide whether their youth is curse or blessing, for if they are too young to remember the previous century with any real certainty they are too hasty and skeptical to place their faith in the future. So the unsteady atmosphere of the present moment becomes

their personal refuge, a place where they may indulge themselves freely and openly. In falling prey to the dubious advantages, the many options of their particular chronology, in trusting to the makeshift culture of their present situation, they mostly become experimental children, taking full advantage of the uncertainty and obscurity of the age. Lawrence's timely references to avant-garde art, mechanized industry, and Gudrun's flashy attire all testify to the unsettled atmosphere of English life in the late teens and early twenties.

Yet underneath all this cultural flux lies an unexpected safeguard against inertia and sloth: Lawrence has bestowed upon his characters an ancestral gift of great biological and spiritual fortitude: the Victorian will. Utilitarian in spite of themselves, they are always looking for direction and purpose. Indeed, the nature of the moment has little bearing on their personal need for guidance: they seek out such direction in periods of duress and comfort with equal expectancy. In this sense they reflect the intellectual and physical energies of their cultural forefathers, such eminent thinkers as Mill, Ruskin, Dickens, and George Eliot. These individuals, representative of their time, lived and moved in a period of ceaseless activity and thought in which ideas circulated freely. There was, Lionel Trilling

explains, an undeniable accord between cultural pressures and various forms of creativity in the Victorian period, and the driving impetus behind their continuous exertion was the will itself:

> In the nineteenth century the will was a central and controlling topic in psychological and ethical theory--as how could it not be, given an economic system in which the unshakeable resolve of the industrial entrepreneur was of the essence, and given the temperaments of its great cultural figures? Goethe, Byron, Balzac, Dickens--to name just these few practitioners of the single art of literature is to suggest how salient was the will in the personal life of individual artists and the extent to which it preoccupied the moral imagination of the age. (130)

Throughout his essays Trilling refers to both the positive and negative aspects of will, but he usually registers considerable appreciation of its resources of strength and determination in the life of the individual. It is, of course, impossible to gauge the degree of sheer will behind the production of great works of art, but we may assume, as the critic does, that many of them would not exist as we know them today without having had the power of creative will behind them. Yet Lawrence does not concern himself primarily with creative will but rather with destructive will and its effects upon the sexual lives of his characters. Rupert Birkin, who espouses more than his share of Lawrencean theory and hope, wages verbal war against the deadly forces of the will as it

perversely manifests itself in his closest male and female friends. Reacting strongly against its tendency toward possessiveness and anxiety, he dreams of a world where individuals or lovers can "'be together without bothering about ourselves--to be really together because we <u>are</u> together, as if it were a phenomenon, not a thing we have to maintain by our own effort'" (242). There is nothing selfish or purely personal about his dream: access to paradise, he insists, is possible for those who desire to escape the petty cares and hypersensitive complexities of modern life. In a community of free souls who share similar interests, they can find a place to experience happiness "'with some few other people--a little freedom with people'" (355).

VII. The Relation Between Art and Life

Here the indisputable affinity between the novelist's hero and Lawrence himself calls for biographical documentation to provide an informative introduction to the author's transformation of raw or personal experience into the thematic consistency of <u>Women in Love</u>. More precisely, such an approach enables us to see what notions of the will Lawrence had in mind shortly before he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the

composition of the novel throughout the late spring and early summer months of 1916 (Letters 1: 449-61). From late 1915 through early 1916 Lawrence's personal and artistic lives were fraught with some very unsettling anxieties which plagued his mind ceaselessly. His letters of this period confirm the rather bleak state of his soul in their references to the suppression of The Rainbow, the unnecessary violence of the war, and of course, the unlikelihood of his personalized Eden coming to pass.

Constantly emerging out of the restlessness of his harried mind and weary spirit, his conception of "Rananim," his dreamland, would evolve through stages of metaphorical and geographical speculation over the next few years. He could fix neither its permanent membership nor exact location. Nevertheless, he seriously toyed with the idea of establishing a colony somewhere near Fort Myers Florida, but the initial sight of his earthly paradise was much closer to home (Letters 1: 389). Located within convenient distance of Oxford and Cambridge, the 500-acre estate--Garsington Manor in Oxfordshire--of Lady Ottoline and Philip Morrell seemed ripe for such intellectual and spiritual development (Moore 215). Lawrence's letters during this time testify to his great faith in his friend's--really hostess's--substantial resources and apparent

receptiveness. Indeed, her high standing among local intellectual circles and reputation as cultured hostess provided more than enough background for Lawrence's paradisal scheme. He accordingly appealed to her powers of leadership as well:

> I want you to form the nucleus of a new community which shall start a new life amongst us--a life in which the only riches is integrity of character. So that each one may fulfill his own nature and deep desires to the utmost, but wherein tho', the ultimate satisfaction and joy is in the completeness of us all as one. (Letters 1: 311)

Yet the novelist held mixed feelings about his friend's impressive talents, and his subsequent letters to her clearly prefigure the thematic perplexities he would soon grapple with in his novel.

Like other artists of his time, Lawrence grew increasingly distrustful of the phenomenon of personality, especially the kind of insistent, suffocating, cloying personality which hampers true relatedness between individuals. In waging his personal campaign against these harmful cultural tendencies, the novelist was not adopting a stance toward artistic expression as T.S. Eliot would eventually do some three or four years later in the celebrated "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Rather, Lawrence chose to ward off the perverse clutches of the will as it touched upon the social life, the vital currents of relatedness between

responsive individuals.

Unfortunately, he detected in Lady Ottoline certain signs of destructive will, and it is no secret that his friend's negative characteristics provided the basis for his grotesque characterization of the domineering Hermione Roddice in Women in Love (Letters 1: xlviii). In fact, Garsington Manor appears as Breadalby in the novel, an exclusive domain where the intellectual life figures dramatically and usually proves persistently "mental and very wearying" (76). Lawrence's quirky but severe depiction of their relentless mental and verbal life, their endless chatter and abstract tediousness, curiously coincides with his earlier criticism of Lady Ottoline's insistent will. Writing to her in the early spring of 1915, he advises her to exchange her compulsive tendencies for a much healthier, unrealized state of being, a refreshing calm, perhaps:

> It is not your brain you must trust to, nor your will--but to that fundamental pathetic faculty for receiving the hidden waves that come from the depths of life, and for transferring them to the unreceptive world. It is something which happens below the consciousness, and below the range of the will--it is something which is unrecognised and frustrated and destroyed. (Letters 1: 326)

Additional admonitory letters followed but one in late April appears particularly relevant:

> Why must you always use your will so much, why can't you let things be, without always

> grasping and trying to know and to dominate. I'm too much like this myself.
>
> There, now I'm scolding at you, even. But why will you use power instead of love, good public control instead of affection. I suppose it is breeding. (Letters 1: 335)

Lawrence's diagnosis here clearly recalls the possessive tendencies of Miriam Leivers in Sons and Lovers, whose personal feelings of insufficient selfhood drove her to usurp control of Paul Morel's vulnerable soul.

But the novelist's various charges against willful personality did not culminate until he wrote a letter to Katherine Mansfield in early December. Here at last he clarifies the reasons behind his growing anger and also provides an invaluable key to his subsequent outburst of creativity:

> I am sick and tired of personality in every way. Let us be easy and impersonal, not for ever fingering over our own souls, and the souls of our acquaintances, but trying to create a new life, a new common life, a new complete tree of life from the roots that are within us. I am weary to death of these dead, dry leaves of personalities which flap in every wind. (Letters 1: 395)

Exactly like his creator, Rupert Birkin too desires impersonal relations between earnest individuals, people who desire to reduce the noticeably personal element in human relations. His great bursts of theory take their thematic cue directly from Lawrence's own dream of healthier, less anxious exchange between lovers and friends. Setting his characters in the extremely

intellectual centers of Breadalby and Bohemian London, Lawrence traces the arduous progress of Rupert and Ursula Birkin toward the achievement of a satisfying relationship beyond the superficial bonds of willful personality.

But they are not alone in their quest toward ideal relatedness. Their good friends, Gerald Crich and Gudrun Brangwen (Ursula's sister), also seek some promising degree of mutual contentment and stability. In contrasting the sexual dynamics of each couple against the other, the novelist lends their identities almost mythical or archetypical significance by making each individual represent a fallen faculty of the human soul: Birkin, Ursula, Gerald, and Gudrun represent, respectively, Spirit, Body, Will, and Mind (Albright 90). Although these categories seem handy and instructive, they are not as clearly demarcated or restrictive as they may appear at first. For reasons of thematic consistency and aesthetic propriety, Lawrence usually subsumes the perverse extremes of Mind and Body beneath the general aspect of Will, which is, of course, the principal organic disturbance in both relationships.

There is considerable critical accord on this point. Certain scholars find it difficult to speak of the destructive aspects of will without making reference to

each character's specific ego (Unrue 651-52; Jacobson 62-63; Schneider 181). In any case, Lawrence's major critics choose to analyze both relationships in terms of the conflicting psychological forces at work within them. Two scholars in particular employ analytic tools somewhat similar to those of the present study. Carefully combing the novel's rich fabric of metaphors, symbols, and motifs, Sibyl Jacobson demonstrates how Lawrence's subtle language often attempts to assess each character's degree of fulfillment as he or she accepts the challenge to progress beyond certain egotistical boundaries of being. Once these limits are passed, each character ideally achieves, paradoxically, a state of stasis or psychological peace (Jacobson 55-62). Such contentment is best exemplified, of course, by Rupert Birkin's theory of stellar equilibrium, which is, literally, Lawrence's dream of impersonal relatedness.

Echoing these assumptions, Leo Bersani takes psychological analysis even further by provocatively examining the opposition between "agitation and stillness" in each couple's sexual relations (157). Roughly speaking, the critic links the former quality with "frictional" sexuality or perverse willfulness, and associates the latter with "life-preserving" peace or refreshing quiescence (156-61). Balance--sexual or

otherwise--is a key factor in any critical discussion of the novel. Some form of balance is indeed the primary goal of every character in the book, and there is no better spokesman for Lawrence's ideal than Rupert Birkin. Unfailingly prolix, always sincere, and hopelessly idealistic, it is he who opposes the mechanistic, violent inhumanity of his day, who proclaims the potential for tenderness between friends and lovers, and who heroically carries his creator's dream of sexual harmony and peaceful living into the disarming indifference of the new century, the twentieth century.

VIII. The Novelist's Hero

From the start Birkin evinces a slightly withered, reluctant bearing. There is, however, significant incongruity between his physical self, "pale" and "narrow," and the "clever and separate" nature of his inner self (14). His frail physiology is ironically both curse and blessing: "He liked sometimes to be ill enough to take to his bed. For then he got better very quickly, and things came to him clear and sure" (193). This interesting discrepancy, this rift between his external and internal selves, is not by any means a stroke of Lawrence's creative whimsy, an artistic sleight of hand. Rather, it cleverly points out the admirable persistence of his hero's soul as it struggles for recognition and

expression. Birkin, Keith Sagar explains, accurately senses the urgency of his spiritual quest and makes it his driving concern throughout the novel: "The problem Birkin wrestles with throughout the novel is: what must the individual do to be saved when he finds himself living in an age of renewed chaos, of dissolution? Does he go with the current, or does he fight against it?" (78). He bravely refuses to go with the current because of his proud singleness of being. His message, sometimes shrill, sometimes deeply moving, remains consistent from page to page and also embodies many of the same themes, ideas, and images of Lawrence's essays. Birkin's unqualified faith in integral selfhood is a necessary premise to all of his beliefs about life itself. In fact, he finds it impossible to differentiate between these two realms. As we shall see, his theory of sexual fulfillment, ideal relatedness between man and woman, is simply another version, slightly modified, of his personalized theory of social harmony. The following excerpt, pulled from one of his prophetic moments at Breadalby, echoes the ideas Lawrence would eventually amplify only two years later in his essay on education. In fact, Birkin's characteristic rhetoric would not be out of place in "Education of the People":

> "But I, myself, who am myself, what have I to do with equality with any other man or woman?

> In the spirit, I am as separate as one star is from another, as different in quality and quantity. Establish a state on that. One man isn't any better than another, not because they are equal, but because they are intrinsically other, that there is no term of comparison." (96-97)

What holds for the social world, he soon infers, will hold true for sexual life as well. Every individual, he firmly believes, merits the utmost respect, complete admiration, even awe, if only because it is supremely different and separate from every other created thing--human or otherwise. The psychological and physical limits of each individual are the sole determinants of integral being, healthy identity. Birkin disdains even the slightest encroachment of one person upon another. Wise and compassionate, he even extends his belief to the animal kingdom, defending their intrinsic being against the offensive implications of poetic license: "'Nothing is so detestable as the maudlin attributing of human feelings and consciousness to animals'" (130). Whether he discusses social, political, philosophical, artistic, economic, or sexual man and woman, Birkin applies the same humane premise to all his inquiries. He is, it seems, incapable of adopting any other stance toward his world. It is difficult, however, to appreciate the vehemence and tact with which he utters such assumptions unless we fix in our mind the exact target of his verbal

assaults. We must locate and describe the impetus behind his vigorous pronouncements--exactly what is he reacting against and how is it related to the other characters, his friends?

His mysterious past is the best place to start. Although Lawrence denies us lengthy access to Birkin's sexual life before the novel begins, we dare not hesitate to infer that it has been shaped in large part by his ambivalent relations with Hermione Roddice, who, as Leavis explains, represents "dominating" intellectual willfulness (328). As the high priestess of the Breadalby set, widely recognized "in the world of culture" (10), Hermione exemplifies all that is negative in a life of mental excess, sheer thought. Indeed, in many ways her "nerve-worn" disposition serves as a kind of excessive prognosis (10), an exaggerated paradigm of all the comparatively mild vices and flaws of Lawrence's other characters. She represents, that is, a kind of thematic exploitation of their tendencies and anxieties. Having continually exalted cerebral matters above everything else, having obstructed and consequently exacerbated her own springs of tender, responsive humanity, Hermione pitifully inhabits only one domain of human existence, a hopelessly circumscribed domain, and so understandably feels a gnawing void, painful insufficiency and emptiness

in other neglected regions of her being. Hence she lashes out in the only way she knows how: "And she wanted someone to close up this deficiency, to close it up for ever. She craved for Rupert Birkin" (11). Like Miriam Leivers, then, Hermione views another intrinsic being, her lover Birkin, as compensation for her own feelings of insufficiency.

Knowledge becomes her great palliative. She praises the world of fact and theory for its ability to liberate her, its ability to ease or soothe the tight, constricted state of her festering soul. When she proclaims her knowledge of the stars as a source of great liberation, refreshing expansion, Birkin appropriately remarks that she should not "'want to <u>be</u> unbounded'" (78). Her effort to exert her influence over everyone and everything is directly attributable to her own lack of physical and psychological boundaries. She fails to determine the limits of her own person and so becomes a great irritation to those around her. In order to fill in her internal emptiness, soothe its vacancy, she makes herself diffuse and persistently uses her will to transform the world into her own image. Nothing else will offer her even momentary relief. The beloved's temporary absence, always a source of great anxiety for Lawrence's weakest characters, proves almost unbearable for Hermione. Just

as Miriam Leivers registered great dismay whenever Paul tried to struggle free of her destructive grasp, so Hermione bitterly resents the unplanned, seemingly inviolable mobility of Birkin's dancing during one of the gatherings at Breadalby:

> "He is not a man, he is treacherous, not one of us," said itself over in Hermione's consciousness. And her soul writhed in the black subjugation to him, because of his power to escape, to exist, other than she did, because he was not consistent, not a man, less than a man. (85)

Similarly, we note her harmful diffuseness in even the most personal, sequestered areas of Birkin's life. She makes of his living quarters a virtual self-reflexive playpen where she can freely exercise her will, insisting on her little personal touches everywhere. Even casual onlookers such as Ursula can clearly "see Hermione's influence" (143). What her beloved Birkin does in privacy, in his most vulnerable, normally secluded moments, is a source of ceaseless fascination for this increasingly possessive woman. A simple tour of his rooms incites her deadly powers of absorption:

> They went upstairs. There were two bedrooms to correspond with the rooms downstairs. One of them was half furnished, and Birkin had evidently slept there. Hermione went round the room carefully, taking in every detail, as if absorbing the evidence of his presence, in all the inanimate things. She felt the bed and examined the coverings. (129)

It is no wonder that Birkin eventually denounces her passion as sheer willfulness and searches for some other

form of meaningful connection. There is decisive psychological and physical battle between them and the relationship ultimately dissolves, leaving only a slight residue of uneasy friendship at best.

IX. Birkin's Theories

Rebirth, however, lies on Birkin's immediate horizon, in "the beautiful light" and promise of Ursula Brangwen's love (145). The rhetorical and philosophical complexities of Birkin's relations with Ursula, his advocacy of impersonal conjunction and intrinsic separateness, are intellectually accessible, thematically manageable, only if we consider them in light of our familiarity with the hero's earlier conflicts and behavior. Unfortunately, Ursula has no access to such precious knowledge, and so her reluctant attitude toward his seemingly controversial theories is, of course, completely justified. The last thing Birkin needs at this point, we ironically realize, is involvement with another possessive lover. Weary and somewhat cynical, he desires only the peace, the stillness of integral being.

This, then, is the frame of mind Birkin brings to his inevitable relationship with the slightly willful, unbounded Ursula Brangwen, who, we recall, violently

subdued her lover, Skrebensky, near the end of The Rainbow. Now in her mid-twenties, robust, expectant, highly opinionated and not a little willful, she admits her strong attraction to Birkin but sees it as "a fight to the death between them--or to new life: though in what the conflict lay, no one could say" (135). Their willingness to engage in such so-called conflict, however, ultimately earns them refreshing self-awareness and corresponding sexual balance. Their struggle is best--and most strikingly--understood in the thematic context of two urgent scenes in the chapters "Mino" and "Moony." Only by working through the problems they encounter in these sections will the two lovers be able to achieve, as Alan Rudrum says, "an awareness beyond the merely cerebral" and "a capacity for change and growth" (246).

"Mino" both echoes the sexual tension of the earlier novels and anticipates many of the dominant themes, motifs, and images of Lawrence's later works, namely the leadership novels. In fact, Rossman persuasively argues that this particular chapter sets the stage for the novelist's subsequent conception of male leadership and also functions as a kind of universal "paradigm for male-female relationships in this period" of Lawrence's evolving thought (282). The "mino" episode itself may be

described, loosely, as an invaluable educational experience for Ursula, who must learn how to discipline her unbridled desires as she struggles to conform herself to Birkin's greater knowledge of passion and healthy relatedness. The profoundity of the scene derives from the lovers' casual observation of two curious cats, male and female, whose sexual frolicking occurs immediately after Lawrence's hero makes an extremely provocative pledge of love to his hesitant lady:

> "What I want is a strange conjunction with you--" he said quietly; "--not meeting and mingling;--you are quite right:--but an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings:--as the stars balance each other." (139)

Immediately baffled and angered by this offensive combination of abstraction and challenge, Ursula finds herself even more perplexed when Birkin justifies his theory by defending the male cat's aggressiveness--he boxes his mate with his paws--toward his partner as an effort "'to bring this female cat into a pure stable equilibrium, a transcendent and abiding <u>rapport</u> with the single male'" (142). Without his feline aggressiveness, his apparent superiority, Birkin extrapolates, the male cat's mate would remain "'a mere stray, a fluffy sporadic bit of chaos'" (142). Such relatedness, he explains further , brings about a refreshing sense of independence for both partners: "'Love is a direction which excludes

all other directions. It's a freedom <u>together</u>, if you like'" (144). Ursula, however, prefers her own approach to human affection, and tries to provoke verbal declarations of love from Birkin. Resisting her willful strategy, he cleverly rejects her sense of love, insistent and wearisome, by indirectly mocking the traditional, commonplace notions of love:

> "I love you right enough," he said grimly. "But I want it to be something else."
> "But why? But why?" she insisted, bending her wonderful luminous face to him. "Why isn't it enough?"
> "Because we can go one better," he said, putting his arms round her. (145-46)

Birkin's words imply, of course, that a greater, more stable kind of love or union is indeed possible for both of them if they make an earnest attempt to achieve it--to realize their creator's dream.

Their next attempt at sexual balance occurs in "Moony." This particular section usually evokes its fair share of critical commentary because of Lawrence's rich fabric of poetic complexity and psychological drama, especially the scene in which Birkin throws stones at the image of the moon upon the glimmering surface of a pond. Several critics, for example, link Birkin's fear of female possessiveness or egoism--"The accursed Syria Dea!" (238)--with the figurative and literal power and beauty of the moon's luminosity (Howe 77-78; Vivas

259-60; Clarke 101; Langbaum 344-45). The aftermath of the scene is equally important, however, and cleverly functions as a kind of thematic elaboration or progression of Ursula's earlier reluctance to assimilate herself into Birkin's program, stellar equilibrium. Leo Bersani keenly notes that "Ursula's need for agitation in love brings a discordant note into her relation with Birkin, even at moments when they seem most harmoniously at one with each other" (161). Howe too points out how quickly "Birkin quashes" Ursula's efforts to introduce sex into their relationship, explaining that Lawrence's hero desires the same pre-sexual relations shared by mother and infant (71-72).

Our knowledge of Lawrence's earlier protest against willful personality readily amplifies and deepens these critical observations. Having continually extracted tiresome declarations of love from Birkin, Ursula manages to ease her will a bit and obtains momentary peace with her lover, nestling close to him but not violating his person:

> She clung nearer to him. He held her close, and kissed her softly, gently. It was such peace and heavenly freedom, just to fold her and kiss her gently, and not to have any thoughts or any desires or any will, just to be still with her, to be perfectly still and together, in a peace that was not sleep, but content in bliss. To be content in bliss, without desire or insistence anywhere, this was heaven: to be together in happy stillness. (244)

But their peace, their momentary bliss suddenly passes. Foolishly exceeding her own singleness, her own integral being, Ursula unfeelingly "cleaved to him, and he could feel his blood changing like quicksilver" (244). Her sexual folly causes a corresponding imbalance in Birkin, who understandably laments their loss of stellar equilibrium or freedom for two: "'But we'll be still, shall we?' he said" (244). He clearly resents her disruptive selfishness, her inability to remain separate yet engaged. But it must not be left unsaid that Ursula's momentary success here signifies admirable progress in her ongoing education, her continuing attempts at self-discipline and concomitant balance.

By the time of "Excurse," chapter 23, Ursula's receptiveness to stellar equilibrium grows steadily with the passage of each page. During a romantic outing they take to a nearby village, Lawrence begins to soften the intensity of his heroine's untutored desires, couching her feelings and responses in tenderer, much more delicate, reflective language: "She had learned at last to be still and perfect" (307). After they exchange tender emotions in the quaint atmosphere of a local inn, they embark on a refreshing drive through the dark woods of Sherwood Forest. It is quite clear that both lovers have undergone profound change. Their earlier exchange,

gentle and gratifying, has clearly been decisive:

> And he too waited in the magical steadfastness of suspense, for her to take this knowledge of him as he had taken it of her. He knew her darkly, with the fullness of dark knowledge. Now she would know him, and he too would be liberated. He would be night-free, like an Egyptian, steadfast in perfectly suspended equilibrium, pure mystic nodality of physical being. They would give each other this star-equilibrium which alone is freedom. (311-12)

And so the lovers repeat the magical transformation, the initiation into bliss, of their ancestors, Tom and Lydia. Their achievement is remarkable: Ursula and Birkin individually intuit their mutual success, their ability to achieve freedom for two, sexual balance.

X. The Tragedy of Destructive Love

Their good friends, Gerald Crich and Gudrun Brangwen, are not nearly as fortunate; they are not even lucky. Unable to approximate a suitable degree of impersonal conjunction, they helplessly witness the disintegration of their own relationship, permitting it to lapse into sheer aggression and violent sensuality. There is, as Eliseo Vivas claims, "a kind of love between the two of them. But it would be no less inadequate to call it ambivalent" (246). Langbaum refers to their union as a "love-hate" relationship (335), and Schneider calls it a "violent battle for survival, a war for supremacy,

in which one of the partners must be master and the other slave" (183). Indeed, the language of belligerence inheres in virtually every critical account of the couple's relations, but Rossman provides an especially helpful premise to our examination of the characters' psychological dynamics:

> From the outset of their relationship, Gerald and Gudrun are locked in a struggle for mastery over one another. Like Will Brangwen, Gudrun must master or be mastered in love-relationships, although several scenes make evident that she deeply desires to be controlled, that she is a fund of detached energy who seeks without, in a man, subjection to a purpose that she cannot discover within. (277)

What the critic says about Gudrun's perspective holds equally true for Gerald's case; he too searches in vain for some inner purpose, some meaning. The perversions of the will, destroying the very potential so vital for wholesome relatedness, reaches its highest intensity in these two characters, and consequently produces an irreparable organic imbalance in what little love they do share as responsive human beings. In order to grasp the complexities of their odd relations, it is best to trace exactly how each character's will exceeds its normal potential and thereby violates the boundaries of its partner. As is usually the case with Lawrence's weakest characters, the presumption, the stupidity of such self-expansion and unfeeling willfulness, proves

disastrous, even fatal, as in Gerald's case.

Gerald's deep-seated perversion is directly related to his torturous feelings of insufficiency. It is rather difficult to tell whether or not these feelings are actually linked to his accidental killing of his brother some years before, but Lawrence indirectly implies a subtle relation between these phenomena. Unlike Birkin, Gerald does not entertain lofty thoughts of spiritual or philosophical development and derives most of his pride from his precarious position as industrial magnate. But even in this role, his primary capacity, he experiences instability:

> And it was a strain. He knew there was no equilibrium. He would have to go in some direction, shortly, to find relief. Only Birkin kept the fear definitely off him, saved him his quick sufficiency in life, by the odd mobility and changeableness which seemed to contain the quintessence of faith. But then Gerald must always come away from Birkin, as from a Church service, back to the outside real world of work and life. There it was, it did not alter, and words were futilities. (225)

His greatest flaw, we see, is his inability to stand on his own. In this sense he repeats the errors of his predecessors, Tom and Will Brangwen, whose presumptuous natures depended on others as their sole source of personal stability and well-being. Indeed, it is quite justifiable to argue that Birkin plays the same role for Gerald as the cathedral played for Will in The Rainbow:

Birkin and the cathedral both function as compensatory gestures for each character's deficient identity, their inability to achieve contentment as separate entities. Gerald's inability to find direction, some form of promising activity, hampers his connection with others, even in matters of simple friendship. Having rejected Birkin's offer of impersonal male bonding (man to man relationship) or "Blutbrüderschaft," Gerald blindly dedicates himself to the continuous mechanization of his family's coal mines, the prestigious position he takes over from his rapidly aging father, Thomas Crich. But the son displays none of the father's Victorian benevolence, for the comparatively humane patriarch had at least tried to temper his industrial ambitions and powerful greed: "He wanted to be a pure Christian, one and equal with all men" (219). Gerald, however, sees his workers as damned spirits, nonentities. Ironically, his twisted conception of their worth is nothing but a mere image of the emptiness of his own soul, his own hollow being: "But as men, personalities, they were just accidents, sporadic little unimportant phenomena" (224). Such an individual, flagrantly ignoring the intrinsic dignity and personality of others, cannot possibly hope to achieve true connection with another human being. A corrupted soul from the start, he prevents himself from achieving what

his friend, Birkin, prizes most: freedom for two. Repetition, the ongoing wheels of industrial commerce, becomes Gerald's great refuge, but, as we shall see, such activity provides a poor substitute for the invaluable privileges of integral selfhood: invigorating connection with one's world and its inhabitants.

Not nearly as spiritually corrupt or inherently vacuous, Gudrun possesses a fairly suitable degree of creative potential, a sincere desire to lend her world a spiritual significance beyond the merely sensual side of life. But even her artistic endeavors, especially her little figurines, bear the ominous mark of her excessive willfulness, her tendency toward manipulation and possessiveness, as we see in this excerpt from a curious exchange between Hermione and Ursula:

> "Isn't it queer that she always likes little things?--she must always work small things, that one can put between one's hands, birds and tiny animals. She likes to look through the wrong end of the opera-glasses, and see the world that way--why is it, do you think?" (32)

Thwarted and desperate, the combined wills of Gerald and Gudrun soon manifest themselves as extreme lust for power and begin to usurp what little tenderness, what little love and humanity they do share as feeling individuals. The terms of their unspoken compact are, as Lawrence says, diabolical:

> The bond was established between them, in that

> look, in her tone. In her tone, she made the understanding clear--they were of the same kind, he and she, a sort of diabolic freemasonry subsisted between them. Henceforward, she knew, she had her power over him. Wherever they met, they would be secretly associated. And he would be helpless in the association with her. Her soul exulted. (114)

It is an extremely degrading process, but it provides a necessary contrast, and an instructive one, to Lawrence's idealized depiction of sexual love, the harmonious union of Birkin and Ursula. Nothing less than pure challenge and needless viciousness, Gerald and Gudrun's doomed relationship plants its roots in already infected ground, and in so doing invites only spiritual blight and decay.

Lawrence conveys the colorful obscenities of their relationship, its corrosive willfulness and violent possessiveness, in a series of powerfully dramatized episodes. Thematically speaking, each episode operates as a kind of objective correlative or, as Eliseo Vivas explains, constitutive symbol, which he defines as "a creative synthesis of empirical matter which manifests itself in dramatic and moral terms and which functions categorically" (275). The critic goes on to explain that a constitutive symbol is usually a "complex" incident "which gathers the significance of events preceding it and illumines the scenes or situations that follow" (281). Vivas expends considerable time and critical energy on one of the most striking constitutive symbols

in the novel, the scene in which Gudrun and Gerald both engage in a bloody struggle to subdue a rebellious rabbit. This particular scene will be examined momentarily.

Fortunately, there are several other scenes to examine in which we also witness the will at its most imperious heights of perversion. As we have already seen, Lawrence was quite capable of extending his theories of human relations to the animal kingdom, the world of cat, hawk, and horse, and he does so throughout most of his major fiction. Their psychological and physical boundaries, he believed, were no less important than those of his own characters--indeed of all human beings. Here in Women in Love he demonstrates how certain individuals, usually arrogant and vain, exert needless influence over the animal world and cause a corresponding imbalance between nature and man.

Gerald is such an individual, and Lawrence charges him with crimes of blasphemy. Several incidents merit special notice. Deliberately fixing his terrified mare before a passing train, Gerald unmercifully proceeds to dig his spurs into his beast amid the "grinding and squeaking" of the interminable cars, causing "trickles of blood" to appear on the animal's side (104). Needless to say, Lawrence quite clearly depicts Gerald's act as a

crime against Nature herself, but there are even deeper interpretative possibilities inherent in his hero's atrocious behavior. The last line of the following excerpt is especially noteworthy:

> The connecting chains were grinding and squeaking as the tension varied, the mare pawed and struck away mechanically now, her terror fulfilled in her, for now the man encompassed her; her paws were blind and pathetic as she beat the air, the man closed round her, and brought her down, almost as if she were part of his own physique. (104)

His efforts to subdue the animal go well beyond mere insensitivity or cruelty. During this blasphemous deed Gerald actually exceeds his own individuality as he robs the mare of her physical and mental powers, absorbing the very will of the animal, which is itself a piece, a representative of the natural world, into his own being.

Gerald's second atrocity, occurring in the chapter "Rabbit," takes on even deeper significance than his last one simply because it underscores the increasing perversity of his relations with Gudrun. "What precedes the rabbit episode," Vivas argues, "is crystalized and can now be grasped fully as an object of immediate apprehension, and what follows it takes its significance from it" (247). Not purely retrospective, then, the episode clearly foreshadows the later stages of the couple's disintegrating love, but its clever placement in terms of Lawrence's overall thematic fabric cannot be

appreciated fully unless one has, of course, already completed the novel. Critical analysis does not do proper justice to the complexity of the scene's psychological power, but it is nevertheless possible to describe and isolate each character's reactions during this tense moment.

Bismarck the rabbit, who may be compared to Gerald, proves himself a most formidable opponent to Gudrun. Enraged, physically and emotionally battered, "astounded by the thunderstorm," she fails to subdue the highly rebellious beast and acknowledges "the mindlessness" and "bestial stupidity" of her battle (232). Realizing the rare opportunity before his eyes, the perfect chance to apply his superior strength and sheer willfulness, Gerald offers his services, uttering, of course, his special expertise in such matters: "'I know these beggars of old,' he said" (233). A "white-edged wrath" welling up within him, Gerald swiftly "brought his free hand down like a hawk on the neck of the rabbit" (233). Bismarck, who utters an "unearthly abhorrent scream," succumbs to his master's superior force, his furry presence momentarily shocked and "motionless as if it were dead" (233-34). The event, we see, turns out to be curiously ritualistic; once again both lovers acknowledge their subterranean attraction and so reaffirm the twisted pact

between them:

> Gudrun looked at Gerald with strange, darkened eyes, strained with underworld knowledge, almost supplicating, like those of a creature which is at his mercy, yet which is his ultimate victor. He did not know what to say to her. He felt the mutual hellish recognition. (234)

Taking their lead from such dubious currents of feeling, Gerald and Gudrun proceed to engage themselves in a program of sexual warfare and violence, denying their potential capacity for true connection--for true relatedness.

From this point on Gerald tends to take the initiative in their strange alliance, for it is he who suffers the deepest pangs of deficiency. It literally becomes impossible for him to stand on his own, and he desperately seeks out Gudrun--in much the same way as Miriam Leivers, Tom and Will Brangwen, and Skrebensky latched on to their mates--as his primary, his only source of rejuvenation (Langbaum 334). In doing so, Gerald actually exhibits the very same misconceptions that Lawrence adduces as sure signs of sexual corruption in "The Crown," the corrosive, shocking attitude man sometimes adopts toward woman as his sole source of being, his revitalizing instrument of spiritual and physical nourishment, his only compensation for the unbearable tortures of insufficient personality: "And

then, when a man seeks a woman, he seeks not a consummation in union, but a frictional reduction. He seeks to plunge his compound flesh into the cold acid that will reduce him, in supreme sensual experience, down to his parts" (Phoenix 2: 394). James Twitchell, linking the characters' strange passions with Lawrence's knowledge of Midland superstition, argues persuasively that the novelist often portrays destructive love as an exchange of aggressive energies between partners--or, as the critic infers, between vampiric partners (27).

Rendered completely helpless by his own emptiness, his inability to remain single, integral, Gerald drains whatever sustenance he can from Gudrun:

> As he drew nearer to her, he plunged deeper into her enveloping soft warmth, a wonderful creative heat that penetrated his veins and gave him life again. He felt himself dissolving and sinking to rest in the bath of her living strength. It seemed as if her heart in her breast were a second unconquerable sun, into the glow and creative strength of which he plunged further and further. (337)

Approaching Gudrun in this manner, Gerald actually commits unnatural deeds against Nature itself: he not only exceeds his own limits but also violates those of the beloved. He attains not freedom but violation for two. Ironically, Gudrun too derives a kind of passive pleasure or extreme sensation from this strange interlude:

> And she, subject, received him as a vessel filled with his bitter potion of death. She had no power at this crisis to resist. The terrible frictional violence of death filled her, and she received it in an ecstasy of subjection, in throes of acute, violent sensation. (337)

Like Will and Anna before them, then, Gudrun and Gerald transform their capacity for normal, healthy sensuality into lust and mere assertiveness. In doing so they make themselves into agents of death.

Their relationship lapses into its last stages of decadence when Lawrence moves his characters, his entire fictional milieu, from the dreary, industrialized atmosphere of England to the primitive, perpetually white and icy Alpine landscape of his last three chapters. Unfortunately, their exotic vacation in this frozen wasteland turns into a nightmare when they come face to face with the darkest forces. Gudrun steadily realizes the hopelessness of Gerald's condition, intuiting that death may very well be the only solution to his unbearable pangs of insufficiency. Her own actions, unfeeling and inconsiderate, confirm this unfortunate truth, for she openly forms an illicit alliance with the mysterious Loerke, whose presence only aggravates the couple's situation further. Spurred on by her unfaithfulness and his gnawing lack of stability, Gerald becomes a would-be murderer and attempts to strangle Gudrun. Failing to exercise the full force of his will

upon her, he ultimately embraces death as his only recourse to the "irresolvable conflict" within himself (Unrue 652). Birkin later visits the sight of Gerald's suicide, "like a shallow pot lying among the stone and snow of" the Alpine landscape, and wonders if his friend could have saved himself by struggling to safety.

Surely both lovers deserve equal blame for their failed relationship. As adults they are fully aware of their passions and tendencies. But their flawed love is likely to evoke a sense of loss or compassion in Lawrence's most sympathetic readers. His characters are not inherently evil or demonic, but their unwillingness to define themselves against each other prevents them from obtaining individual peace--security. Unable to determine the boundaries of their selfhood, their physical and spiritual limitations, they forever deny themselves the invaluable privileges, the joys and hopes, of sexually balanced love.

Having attained such balance, Ursula and Birkin experience occasional periods of sexual harmony--just as Lydia and Tom did earlier in The Rainbow--and therefore earn themselves a concomitant sense of eternality. At the end of the book Birkin movingly reflects on this rare privilege: "'We shan't have any need to despair, in death'" (472). Clearly echoing the state of angelic

wholeness Tom achieved with Lydia, Birkin's comment indirectly infers his creator's persistent dream of sexual harmony between man and woman--lasting peace and fulfillment between the sexes.

Chapter 4

Broadened Horizons

Encompassing Aaron's Rod (1922), Kangaroo (1923) and The Plumed Serpent (1926), Lawrence's third artistic phase, his so-called "leadership" fiction, presents thematic difficulties for both critic and general reader alike, and it is commonplace to assign these works a lesser position in his canon (Stoll 198; Daleski 210-12; Vivas 21-117). For one thing, it is hard to place them in distinct genres; they defy easy literary categorization. Speaking of Kangaroo, for example, Harry T. Moore claims that "it isn't really a novel but a special kind of production, in the category of such books as Sartor Resartus or Thus Spake Zarathustra" (351). This claim holds for Aaron's Rod and The Plumed Serpent as well, for they too can be read as diaries or accounts of the soul--forms of spiritual autobiography.

This autobiographical tendency also brings us to another problem with these works: the disturbing surface unevenness between Lawrence's engaging observations as world traveller during the middle twenties and the controversial social or political assumptions he arrives at by way of his reactions to such exotic settings as Italy, Australia and Mexico. Throughout the twenties

these countries were beset by internal dissension, and Lawrence was no stranger to the various political and social alternatives posed by revolutionary groups as he passed through these troubled landscapes in search of his own personal utopia, his Rananim.

At this time he became deeply involved with the question of ideal leadership, taking his reflective lead from much of what he saw on his journeys. All three leadership books contain his indirect commentary on various outbursts of social upheaval around the world; his comments on Australian socialism and labor in Kangaroo are prime examples.

Although some readers may view his widening thematic interests as an unwelcome or abrupt departure from the earlier novels, it is possible, as Lydia Blanchard explains, to see his new interests, even his entire canon, as an ongoing assimilation of fresh experiences and alternative life styles:

> But to consider Lawrence's development, through the progress of his fiction, is to see that Lawrence, rather than advocating any one particular life style, was instead moving through a continuing re-examination of the advantages and disadvantages embodied in each of many different life styles. (433)

Echoing other critics, Blanchard goes on to note that Lawrence "flirts" with various forms of political or religious "resolution" (434). That the novelist was

striking out in new directions with these three books is, of course, irrefutable, but this thematic turn in his art has unfortunately led to hasty categorizing and labelling of these works as political commentary. It is probably better, more accurate to say that he simply chose to complicate his earlier ideas and obsessions in order to further them along in a kind of thematic progression. For although he chooses to submit his characters to alternative societies throughout these three books, he never once lets them forsake or neglect their responsibilities as sexual beings as well.

Generally speaking, all three leadership novels take their thematic cue from the essays "Love" and "Education of the People." Indeed, it may even be said that each novel elaborates various points found in both essays. All three protagonists--Aaron Sisson, Richard Somers, and Kate Leslie--try to strike a working balance between complete involvement with some greater person or cause--known as "sacred" or diffusive love in "Love"--and unquestioned allegiance to whatever demands their inner voices--known as "living understanding" in "Education of the People"--make upon them. Taken together, all three books converge thematically and reaffirm one of Lawrence's central concerns throughout his discursive writings: each protagonist finds that total devotion to

other persons or causes amounts to outright self-evasion or, as stated in chapter 1, misdirected energy. Facing this predicament, they attempt to create whatever stability they can between these opposing realms.

I. Aaron's Rod: The Perils of Sacred Love

Although Aaron's Rod deals primarily with friendship between men and masculine authority, it tends to treat these issues within a heterosexual context. It is somewhat inaccurate to advance the theory that the novel substitutes male bonding as compensation for failed male-female relations (Rossman 292; Daleski 190). In fact, some of our most penetrating insights into Aaron's nature ironically come from women, most notably from Lottie, his wife, who is arrogant but nevertheless keenly aware of her husband's irresponsibility as husband and provider: "'If you cared for your wife and children half what you care about your Union, you'd be a lot better pleased in the end'" (15). Her remark not only underscores the pull Lawrence describes in "Love" between one's interaction with humanity and the maintenance of personal integrity but also indicates Aaron's inability to relate himself fully to his partner's needs. Aaron, she explains, has never opened himself fully to her

emotional desires, and she bitterly resents his insensitive aloofness: "'He kept himself back, always kept himself back, couldn't give himself--'" (56). Lottie herself is by no means angelic and Aaron despises her "righteous bullying," her willfulness (34). But the couple's sexual disharmony is only partially responsible for their failed marriage. We soon realize that Aaron's abrupt departure from home and family, his sudden rejection of twelve years of married life, is in its own way a healthy impulse toward greater maturity and growth. Lacking the achieved emotional and physical stability of Lawrence's earlier heroes, Tom Brangwen and Rupert Birkin, Aaron sets out to find himself. In this sense it is justifiable to see his pilgrimage across England and Europe as a necessary prerequisite to healthy fulfilling connection with others.

As Aaron embarks on his journey, Lawrence introduces two other characters who in their own way shed curious light on his hero's uncertain future: Jim Bricknell and Rawdon Lilly. These two are friends but their relationship is ambiguous at best. Jim, who is both the spoiled son of an upper middle-class colliery manager and a relatively minor figure in the novel, suffers painfully from a gnawing sense of personal deficiency, and persistently annoys Lilly, who, we soon learn, is

anything but deficient. Unable to survive on his own, Jim derives what little stability he can from alcohol and self-indulgent yearning: "'If I drink a bottle of burgundy I feel myself restored at the middle--right here! I feel the energy back again. And if I can fall in love--But it's becoming so damned hard--'" (99). He foolishly desires to sacrifice himself to some abstract idea or emotion, to engage himself in a kind of perverse self-diffusion, and in doing so he clearly violates the guiding principle of Lawrence's "Education of the People"--the belief that life "consists in remaining inside your own skin, and living inside your own skin, and not pretending you're any bigger than you are" (660).

Echoing the essay himself, Lilly chastises his friend for having "accepted the love ideal as the answer" (Schneider 203): "'You should stand by yourself,'" he tells Jim, "'and learn to be by yourself'" (100). An isolated author, Lilly vehemently prefers his own singleness to any stifling involvement with others, and he strongly resents individuals who refuse to stay, as Lawrence says, within their own skins, their own boundaries.

Lilly is a sketchy character, inexplicable and evasive, and the reader is likely to feel unsure about his thematic relevance. His significance becomes even

more puzzling when we consider that he "is absent for most of the book" (Sagar 107). But in many ways he functions as a spokesman for the novelist's discursive ideas, and even dramatizes some of Lawrence's key concepts. For one thing he is completely independent, combining the best and most useful male and female traits: "He did the cleaning himself, and was as efficient and unobtrusive a housewife as any woman" (129). And it is by no means accidental that he shares a sexually balanced, even impersonal marriage with his wife, Tanny, who also practices and appreciates separation from her mate at various times throughout the years: "'And if Tanny possesses her own soul in patience and peace as well--and if in this we understand each other at last--then there we are, together and apart at the same time, and free of each other, and eternally inseparable'" (128). Although Lawrence denies us intimate insight into the couple's union, it remains clear that they share a love as eternal and stable as Tom and Lydia's in The Rainbow.

Unlike his friend, however, Aaron seems to elude all sense of balance in his life--sexual or otherwise. This is precisely why Lilly's admonitory words become so very important to Lawrence's unsteady hero. Nursing Aaron back to health after his trying affair with Josephine Hay,

Bricknell's unfaithful lover, and a stubborn case of flu, Lilly tells his patient of his personal philosophy, his code of conduct and belief: "'A man should remain himself, not try to spread himself over humanity. He should pivot himself on his own pride'" (120). Throughout chapters 9 and 10 Aaron absorbs such advice but evinces considerable doubt about his friend's beliefs, "rather resenting the sound of so many words" (147). There is also some vague talk between them about ideal friendship and leadership based on the notion of submission to a higher, greater being. Bored and restless, Aaron resists such notions. It is at this point, however, that we begin to see how his predicament lends Lawrence's discursive ideas a paradoxical twist: in resenting Lilly's insistence upon the virtues of individualism, Aaron unknowingly criticizes his own tendency toward singleness and isolation. Lawrence, in effect, clearly sees Lilly as a kind of prolix representative of "sacred" love--greater cause--or mere abstraction. Instead of simply remaining "inside his own skin," he insists on turning Lawrence's own ideas into mere language, theoretical rhetoric. Disturbed by such sermonizing, Aaron prefers to experience rather than debate such profound notions. In this way, then, the novelist uses Lilly to test Aaron's adherence to his own conscience, his own inner wisdom.

Leaving Lilly behind, Aaron travels to Florence, where he undergoes Lawrence's second test. Here his hero succumbs to the alluring sensuality of the Marchesa de Torre, who is, essentially, an older, wiser version of Miriam Leivers from Sons and Lovers. Like her selfish predecessor, the Marchesa exercises her extreme willfulness upon her lover, who realizes he has been duped by her false passion:

> When his aloof soul realized, amid the incantation, how he was being used,--not as himself, but as something quite different. God and victim; then he dilated with intense surprise, and his remote soul stood up tall and knew itself alone. (318)

Their passion is decisive, for Aaron now realizes the high price he has paid for involving himself with this selfish woman. Her presence, we see, is nothing but an encroachment upon his personal integrity. In surrendering himself to her influence, he clearly evades his own abiding sense of inner direction and worth. Yet in his own curious way Aaron has wisely begun to confirm what Lilly has been professing all along--the need for protective aloofness. But his wisdom comes to him not by way of abstract discussion, as in his intellectual debates with Lilly, but by way of firsthand experience--rites of passage. Having successfully transformed theory into action or life, Aaron manages to pass his creator's test.

Repelled by his destructive romance, he decides to flee and meets up with Lilly again, who sheds light on his friend's recent affair by echoing his earlier chastisement of Bricknell: "'You thought there was something outside, to justify you; God, or a creed, or a prescription. But remember, your soul inside you is your only Godhead'" (344). Noticeably friendlier than before, both men exchange words on the nature of ideal friendship and leadership. Aaron presses his friend for advice on his own uncertain destiny and personal direction, inquiring into the other man's notions of "life-submission" or devotion to some "greater man" (347). Lilly remains evasive, however, indicating that Aaron's "'soul will tell you'" (347).

The book ends on this inconclusive note, and the reader can only surmise whether Aaron will one day return to his wife and two children--a reality he has known for twelve years. Like Paul Morel at the end of Sons and Lovers, he leaves our consciousness with a finer sense of self than he had when he first entered it at the beginning of the story. His future relationships and well-being, occurring perhaps in some reality beyond the pages of the novel, may very well depend upon it.

II. Kangaroo: Brotherhood vs. Proud Singleness

Composed over six weeks during Lawrence's visit to Australia in the summer of 1922 (Moore 352), Kangaroo (1922) represents an important turning point in both the novelist's life and art. By 1919 he had severed his ties to England, his native soil, where he had been recently bullied and harassed by "the wartime officials and other busybodies," and he sadly included a fictional version of his farewell in his so-called Australian novel (Moore 304-05). Conceived in the shadow of Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo can also be described as a "thought-adventure," claims Mark Schorer, for it is closer to being "a novel of ideas" than any of Lawrence's other works (62).

Like Lawrence himself, Richard Somers leaves England in search of more stable surroundings--more fulfilling living and brighter skies. Hoping "to send out a new shoot in the life of mankind" (78), as he puts it, Somers leads his wife, Harriet, to one of the few virgin lands left at the turn of the century, unspoiled Australia, where volatile social and political forces impinge upon the couple and radically alter the course of their lives together. Maintaining a barely perceptible border between art and life, Lawrence's novel records his characters' inner transformation as they struggle to assimilate

themselves to the demands of their new and mysterious environment.

Feeling both enchanted and alienated as they survey "the openness and the freedom" of Sydney and its outlying areas, Somers and Harriet find themselves equally fascinated by the region's "litter of bungalows and tin cans scattered for miles and miles, this Englishness all crumbled out into formlessness and chaos" (33). There is, they see, a little England in Australia, but there is also compensation in the observation that an Australian Sunday afternoon has "none of the surfeited dreariness of English Sunday afternoons" (33). They also register considerable dissatisfaction with the country's makeshift social systems and ways, especially its nonchalant democracy and bustling citizenry, its so-called "do-as-you-please liberty" (33). Australia appears ripe for some form of internal renovation, spiritual or otherwise, and these observations cleverly prefigure the couple's imminent engagement with great cultural forces beyond their understanding and control.

Their feelings of alienation subside somewhat when they reluctantly rub shoulders with their new neighbors, Jack and Victoria Callcott, whose sociable gestures not only draw the English couple out of their isolation but also, in turn, put them in contact with Australia's

competing political movements, the fascist Diggers, led by Ben Cooley or Kangaroo, and the socialists, led by Willie Struthers. Jack, who displays a layman's grasp of complex current events, is himself a faithful disciple of Cooley's party, and almost midway through the novel decides to avail Somers of his organization's chief objective:

> "Why, the plan is more or less this. The Labour people, the reds, are always talking about a revolution, and the Conservatives are always talking about a disaster. Well, we keep ourselves fit and ready for as soon as the revolution comes--or the disaster. Then we step in, you see, and we are the revolution." (106)

Such talk appeals to Somers, for he has already indicated his desire "'to struggle with men and the world of men for a time yet'" (77). His Australian experiences, he realizes, afford him the perfect opportunity, a rare one indeed, to enter into communion with men like himself--other "thought-adventurers."

But there is another equally intriguing story going on beneath the political surface of Lawrence's main plot. It concerns his chief interest as creative thinker: the quest for harmonious sexual relations. Here Lawrence takes Aaron's problems a step further by revealing how two headstrong individuals, husband and wife, can at least attempt to monitor the quality of their intimacy as they risk involvement with the outside world. Like the

Sissons, the Somers have been married for twelve years, and their sexual conflicts arise chiefly from the misdirected energies Richard expends upon intellectual and political matters. He constantly defends the seriousness of his involvement with such issues against Harriet's skeptical inquiries, but she clearly resents his spiritual and physical absences from her side. As Anais Nin explains, Harriet acts a a kind of "anti-Lawrence" antagonist who tends to undercut her husband's intellectual idealism (91). Her interests are clear: she carefully monitors Richard's persistent direction away from their shared concerns as husband and wife. Denied access to his thoughts and emotions, she rightly lashes out at his insensitivity, voicing her disgust with his abrupt "neighbouring," his involvement with Jack and his revolutionary cronies: "'And your beastly sweetness and gentleness with such people. I wish you kept a bit of it for me'" (74). Such words, of course, would not be out of place had they come from Lottie Sisson and Anna Brangwen, or from other women throughout Lawrence's canon who resent aloof, distant husbands. Richard's foolish dealings, Harriet believes, "'are only something you delude yourself about. And then you'll come a cropper, and fall back on me'" (77). However wise this mark may appear in retrospect at the

end of the novel, her prophecy will take longer to pass than she realizes here.

Not surprisingly, their disharmony increases as Somers, repeating the blunders of Lawrence's earlier heroes, slips more and more into activity beyond his wife's purview. Just as Will Brangwen earlier subordinated his intimate moments with Anna to his trivial flights into religious aestheticism, so Somers overlooks his true source of stability and vitality, his life with Harriet, in favor of worldly concerns. Midway through the book Lawrence embodies their conflict in poetic analogy by describing their union as an organic growth whose fundamental balance has been upset, thwarted by Richard's irrelevant concerns:

> A man must strive onward, but from the root of marriage, marriage with God, with wife, with mankind. Like a tree that is rooted, always growing and flowering away from its root, so is a vitally active man. But let him take some false direction, and there is torture through the whole organism, roots and all. (183)

His new interests aside, Somers does intuit the importance of monitoring his relations with Harriet, and admirably senses their need to "maintain the flow between him and her, and safeguard it carefully" (182). Vividly recalling moments of oscillating passion in the earlier books and figures of sexual balance in the Phoenix essays, such allusions to organic relatedness occur

intermittenly throughout Kangaroo, but Somers does little to enact, to implement what he intuits so very deeply and sincerely. His willingness to appreciate what he shares with Harriet, however, surely represents an improvement over Aaron's great reluctance to work through his problems with Lottie, who has, like Harriet, been able to cope with her mate for twelve long years as well. Unlike Aaron, then, Richard does manage to display some of the same sensitivity Tom exercises in his relations with Lydia in The Rainbow; in both marriages such understanding is looked upon as an integral component of sexual harmony between husband and wife.

But Richard's gravitation toward the world of men proves temporarily stronger whenever he confronts Ben Cooley, Kangaroo, who wishes "to create a political movement out of the union of authority and absolute love" (Draper 211). As prophet and leader, Kangaroo feels the need "'to teach my people what it is truly to be a man, and a woman'" (125). Although he believes in strict authority and hierarchical societies, Cooley also advocates love as "'the one inspiration of all creative activity'" (148). But Somers never wholeheartedly embraces such abstract talk, and offers instead his own personal philosophy as a much more realistic alternative to the other man's hazy idealism and lofty spirituality:

> "Really, I know the dark god at the lower threshold--even if I have to repeat it like a phrase. And in the sacred dark men meet and touch, and it is a great communion. But it isn't this love. There's no love in it. But something deeper." (153)

And he goes on to explain his allegiance to "'another God'" (153). For Somers, sincere feeling is never talk but deep intuition; it is, as Lawrence says in his education essay, always a matter of "living understanding" (607). Defending the irrefutable sincerity of his inner voices against Cooley's brand of diffusive emotion and humanity, Richard registers great distrust of "cosmic love" (Nin 97). He wants to escape "this lit-up cloy of humanity, and the exhaust of love, and the fretfulness of desire" (154). Relying on these same assumptions, he also rejects the idealistic politics of the socialist leader, Willie Struthers, who tries to enlist Somers as a revolutionary journalist for his party. Ultimately Somers rejects both leaders, however: "'Though it's a choice of evils, and I choose neither. I choose the Lord Almighty'" (334). Thus his inmost being proves stronger than any ties to the outer world--political or otherwise.

Yet Richard's rejection of the world of men is not as simple as it appears on the surface; it fortunately leaves him one alternative: the fulfillment of Harriet's earlier prophecy. It must be emphasized that his personal

God, his inner voice, "'stands dark on the threshold of the phallic me'" (151). His sense of manhood, his very intellectual and physical orientation, derives chiefly from his abiding sympathy with the internal rhythms and instincts of his soul, a significant part of which includes his life with Harriet. It is she who stands at his side as he bids farewell to Australia's world of men--his trail of misdirected energies.

III. The Plumed Serpent: A Heroine's Rebirth

From early 1923 to early 1925 Lawrence travelled fairly extensively throughout Mexico and during these years also managed to complete his Mexican novel, The Plumed Serpent (1926). Rich in images of Aztec folklore and exotic geography, the book continues Lawrence's search for the ideal leader and life style against a turbulent background of cultural upheaval and also evokes at the same time "a kind of magic in its projection of the actual Mexico" (Moore 399). But it is much more than a colorful travel piece or sociological survey, for The Plumed Serpent vividly records the spiritual and sexual development of Kate Leslie, an Irish widow in her fortieth year and one of Lawrence's most complex heroines.

Although the novelist takes frequent excursions into the colorful world of Mexican religion and history, he usually keeps his protagonist's inner life in the forefront throughout most of his story. It may be said that the two interests are intertwined at all times: Mexico's religious rebirth parallels Kate's continuous attempts at personal revivification. But these two movements are always opposing thematic elements for Lawrence. Drawing on the preceding leadership novels and various ideas from "Love" and "Education of the People" for his overall design, the novelist demonstrates once again how environmental influences obstruct his protagonist's faithfulness to her inner voices.

Kate differs noticeably from Lawrence's earlier heroines by virtue of her age alone, forty, a significant part of which includes her "achieved" womanhood--her wider variety of experience and greater wisdom. Unlike such characters as Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen, Lottie Sisson, and Harriet Somers, she has been married twice and already experiences considerable disenchantment with personal concerns and worldly matters (Jones 22). Leaving Europe, the old world, behind her, she goes to a remote setting in the Mexican countryside, beautiful Lake Sayula, where she hopes to refresh herself and attempt at least partial interaction with a few other budding souls

who share similar interests and needs:

> She was forty, and in the rare, lingering dawn of maturity, the flower of her soul was opening. Above all things, she must preserve herself from worldly contacts. Only she wanted the silence of other unfolded souls around her, like a perfume. The presence of that which is forever unsaid. (62)

As we see here, her need for social interaction, connection with others, is not unqualified, and Keith Jones accordingly points out that the novel's theme is "the conflict between isolation and society" (21). Aside from her slightly advanced age and superior wisdom, then, Kate's immediate situation and its accompanying problems do not differ radically from those of the novelist's earlier heroines. Like them, she too must strike a successful degree of measure between personal concerns and involvement with the world of activity--the "life of mankind," as Richard Somers puts it in Kangaroo.

Her life changes drastically when she finds herself swept up by Mexico's impulse toward cultural renewal and religious revivification, which is led by Don Ramon Carrasco and General Viedma (or Cipriano). These powerful men not only preach and practice the ancient Aztec religion of Quetzalcoatl, half bird, half serpent, but also advocate their beliefs as a way of reviving and liberating "the god in each man" (Vickery 530). As Ramon himself explains, Quetzalcoatl is generally synonymous

with the teachings and habits of Pan, who is, of course, closely aligned with the rhythms and mysteries of the natural world:

> "We must change back to the vision of the living cosmos; we must. The oldest Pan is in us, and he will not be denied. In cold blood and in hot blood both, we must make the change." (347)

Like Ramon, Kate also desires to come to terms with her own natural rhythms, but she hopes to do so purely on the personal rather than national level. Echoing the determination and idealism of earlier prophets like Rawdon Lilly and Ben Cooley, Ramon turns himself into an abstraction by becoming the living manifestation of ancient Aztec religion, "the First Man of Quetzalcoatl" (273)

But Lawrence's exotic setting and enchanting figures are really nothing more than an elaborate scaffolding over which he drapes his principal theme: Kate's inner growth. Her progress becomes further complicated when Ramon and Cipriano try to enlist her services as their goddess Milintzi, which is a kind of counterpart to Quetzalcoatl. Practicing some of Richard Somers' skepticism about such abstract schemes, she hesitates at first but finds herself intrigued by their suggestion; in fact, everything about these men appears intriguing from her European perspective. Basking in the rich glow, the

magical presence of Cipriano and Ramon, Kate realizes that her friends "'have got more than I, they have a richness that I haven't got'" (203). Being cosmopolitan, educated, and highly independent, she also simultaneously intuits that these two "men wanted to take her will away from her, as if they wanted to deny her the light of day" (203). Her situation becomes even more critical when she agrees to become Malintzi, really Cipriano's wife and consort to Ramon. But Kate realizes that "it would not be herself who could marry him. It would be some curious female within her, whom she did not know and did not own" (260). Slowly, she begins to sense that any close alliance with the religious movement and its leaders amounts to a misdirection of her own energies, a subtle violation of her own purpose and being. Kate unknowingly reaffirms the central argument behind Lawrence's educational theories: the idea that masses or one's attachment to the masses is never more important than the tiny components which compose them: the individuals themselves. Intuiting her true calling, she gradually begins to turn her attention to the demands of her inner being--the real Kate Leslie.

The concluding chapters bring her predicament to a climax, and it is at this point that Lawrence asserts his own theories by way of her tentative rejection of Ramon's

program and Cipriano's ambitions. In a moment of tense soliloquy, she affirms the dignity and grace of her own private existence as an independent woman by insisting on all the various symbolic overtones of her maiden name, which, of course, represents her purest recollection of complete female sovereignty: "'I was born Kate Forrester, and I shall die Kate Forrester. I want to go home. Loathsome, really, to be called Malintzi.--I've had it put over me'" (407). Obeying her own instincts, she begins to defend herself from any unnecessary forays into her being as best she can.

After her marriage ceremony, which is conducted by Ramon, Kate's constructive musing clarifies her situation a little more each day. Cipriano seems incapable of accepting her as an independent woman in her own right, refusing to acknowledge the true identity of the woman he has taken as his wife: "The tiny star of her very self he would never see" (424). Denying the validity of both Birkin's theory of stellar integrity in Women in Love and Lawrence's pronouncements on the same subject in "Education of the People," Cipriano prefers her to sacrifice some portion of herself to his dealings with the religious movement. But Kate fears that such involvement might bring about "the death of her individual self" (426). Lacking mutual warmth, their

union lapses into a kind of impersonal friendship or mere connection: "And there was no personal intimacy. He kept his privacy round him like a cloak, and left her immune within her own privacy" (464). Having sacrificed himself to Ramon's movement, Cipriano fails to acknowledge Kate as his first priority, his central activity and source of strength, and instead devotes his physical and spiritual energies to concerns outside their relationship. Determined and inspired, he embraces his role as Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec fire god.

Kate remains undecided at the end of the novel, realizing that her attempts at personal rebirth have been partially successful at best. At forty she sincerely values whatever tenderness and respect Cipriano can offer her, but she also desires to "spread the wings of her own ego" as she makes her way through life (481). "Kate," argues Robert Langbaum, "remains a modern Faustian who would rather forego happiness than sacrifice the sovereign self" (287). Nevertheless, she still manages to arrive at a tentative conclusion: "'Ah yes! Rather than become elderly and a bit grisly, I will make my submission; as far as I need, and no further'" (482). However forced or makeshift this decision may seem, it still amounts to a heroic gesture of sorts. By meeting the world halfway and keeping her inner life secure at

the same time, Kate not only strikes some degree of balance in her own life but unconsciously reflects a good deal of her creator's idealism as well.

Unlike The Rainbow and Women in Love, the leadership novels do not end on a note of hopefulness; there are neither intimations of renewal nor visions of vibrant rainbows for the troubled characters who populate their pages. Yet all three protagonists--Aaron, Richard, and Kate--do manage to meet the world on its own terms without surrendering too much of their personal pride and humanity; they remain heroic in spite of their world. It remained for Lawrence to explore their problems within a much more traditional setting and plot: a typical English romance. Adding his own touches, controversial ones, to this Victorian genre, he took up this task in his next book, Lady Chatterley's Lover, in which we see how two individualists, Mellors and Connie, manage to cultivate mutual warmth as well as personal contentment.

Chapter 5

Personal Fulfillment vs. Destructive Marriage

Although Lawrence's last major work of fiction is somewhat shorter and less philosophically rigorous than its predecessors, the intellectual and physical energies he lavished upon it were certainly no less impressive than those he had expended upon all of his earlier projects. From October 1926 to January 1928 he worked intermittenly on his last full-fledged novel, Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928), producing as many as three versions (Moore 423). The controversy surrounding its sexual explicitness has undoubtedly lessened over the years but there is hardly an educator or parent who would not seriously consider the book's appropriateness for young minds.

Yet the novelist was more concerned about the book's impact upon mature readers, people like himself. Having already experienced firsthand the wrath of the censors, Lawrence wrote a defensive pendant piece for his controversial novel a year after its publication, "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover" (1929). He himself referred to it as a "post-script, or afterthought, to my novel, Lady Chatterley's Lover" (Phoenix 2: 509). Unlike Thomas Mann or Henry James, Lawrence did not look upon

his pendant piece as a self-reflexive inquiry into the aesthetic practices of his fiction. Rather, he simply chose to clarify the views he had registered only a year before in the final version of his novel. But the essay itself is neither an unqualified plea (or excuse) for freedom of expression nor a celebration of phallic consciousness. It ventures beyond these concerns but still manages to touch upon them as well. Indeed, it is likely that a firm grasp of his discursive ideas will deepen the reader's appreciation of the novel.

I. The Relation Between Essay and Novel

Lawrence's other celebrated essay of this period, "Pornography and Obscenity" (1929), obviously springs from the same pen as "A Propos," and also defends with equal vehemency the importance of human tenderness and warm sensuality against the vulgarities of modern cinema, counterfeit emotion, and, of course, social hypocrisy. Throughout the late twenties the novelist continued to do battle with his decadent culture which had somehow transformed its potential for vital sexual relations, for vital human feelings, into "a pure matter of nerves, cold and bloodless" (Phoenix 2: 507). An adjustment was needed and, as Mary Freeman points out, Lawrence accordingly

shaped his discursive prose into a corrective program of humane inquiry and social rejuvenation:

> In these essays he made even clearer the connection he saw between sex and the rest of life, between individual honesty and social decency, and between warmheartedness and revolution. The very sensuousness of coition made it appeal to Lawrence as the most appropriate symbol of life with which to defy a world obsessed by counters. If sex could burst through its own artificial barriers, might it not help us to free ourselves from all social stagnation? (220-21)

An essentially religious man in his own way, Lawrence sought to change his society's attitudes about itself by appealing to its deepest, most vital center of being--the sexual life.

Sexual intercourse occupies a central position throughout the novel as well; characters discuss it, engage in it, and generally find themselves unable to assimilate it into the overall pattern of their lives. The following passage, pulled from the early pages of the novel, typifies the kind of intellectual exchanges held within the stately walls of Clifford Chatterley's Wragby estate, which is, of course, a later version of Hermione Roddice's exceedingly mental Breadalby:

> "It's an amusing idea, Charlie," said Dukes, "that sex is just another form of talk, where you act the words instead of saying them. I suppose we might exchange as many sensations and emotions with women as we do ideas about the weather, and so on. Sex might be a sort of normal, physical conversation between a man and a woman. You don't talk to a woman unless you

> have ideas in common: that is you don't talk with any interest. And in some way, unless you had some emotion or sympathy in common with a woman you wouldn't sleep with her. But if you had. . . ." (32)

A disabled World War I veteran, Clifford feels great isolation as he listens to such talk because his lower paralysis understandably prevents him from interjecting his fair share of sexual anecdote into these curious debates, but even before his accident "the sex part did not mean much to him" (12). When his cronies insist that his upper half is not dead and press him for a response, he merely discloses his inherent ambivalence about sexual matters:

> "Well," stammered Clifford, "even then I don't suppose I have much idea . . . I suppose marry-and-have-done-with-it would pretty well stand for what I think. Though of course between a man and woman who care for one another, it is a great thing." (33)

Sexual matters are debated everywhere--in both drawing room and rustic cottage--in Lady Chatterley's Lover, but, as we shall see, the answers come only to a select few.

It is useful to explore the characters' frustrations in light of the obvious rift between the ideal sexuality of Lawrence's essay, "A Propos," and the ambivalent sexuality he depicts throughout the novel. His discursive stand is both familiar and clear: "It is a question, practically, of relationship. We must get back into relation, vivid and nourishing relation to the cosmos and

the universe" (510). But Lawrence goes on to situate the sexes in his theory of organic relatedness:

> But relationship is threefold. First, there is the relation to the living universe. Then comes the relation of man to woman. Then comes the relation of man to man. And each is a blood-relationship, not mere spirit or mind. We have abstracted the universe into Matter and Force, we have abstracted men and women into separate personalities--personalities being isolated units, incapable of togetherness--so that all three great relationships are bodiless, dead. (512)

One by one Lawrence proceeds to gauge each character's potential for such relatedness.

II. Dramatized Theory

His study yields disheartening results, for only two individuals, Oliver Mellors and Constance Chatterley, manage to achieve true connection amid the sordid realities of modern life, the sordid, completely unnatural realities of Clifford Chatterley's mining industry. Combining the worst qualities of Tom Brangwen and Gerald Crich, their insensitivity and extreme willfulness, Clifford looks upon his workers, his miners, "as objects rather than men" (15), and he displays little capacity for integrated being and self-reliance: "But alone he was like a lost thing. He needed Connie to be there, to assure him he existed at all" (15). Connie

sadly senses her husband's pitiful state, his personal insufficiency and lack of connection with everything around him: "Connie felt that she herself didn't really, not really touch him; perhaps there was nothing to get at ultimately; just a negation of human contact" (15). Lawrence too echoes the same feelings about his hero in "A Propos": "So in Lady Chatterley's Lover we have a man, Sir Clifford, who is purely a personality, having lost all connection with his fellow men and women, except those of usage" (513). Left to his own devices, Clifford throws himself into the mechanization of his mines and also continues to churn out popular fiction, stories with "no touch, no actual contact" (16). He is, then, a man, if that is the proper word, in whom all emotional warmth has gone dead, and his influence, his mere presence, increasingly frustrates his wife's efforts to salvage or reaffirm whatever feelings of tenderness still lie between them. Clifford's world, claims Frank Kermode, is a place of death, but, as the critic goes on to say, it "is the background against which Connie's rebirth will be described" (136).

Yet Connie herself ironically shares some of her husband's perversity, namely his willfulness and selfishness. By putting his heroine through an educational process no less rigorous than Tom Brangwen's,

Lawrence attempts to rid, to cleanse her of these distasteful tendencies.

Like Clifford, Connie is the product of a refined upbringing, having grown up in a bookish environment where the pleasures of stimulating discussion are valued highly. Her mother, a cultivated Fabian, "only wanted her girls to be 'free,' and to 'fulfill themselves'" (8). One of the chief characteristics of Connie's impressive background, her refinement and articulateness--she later dismisses Proust as boring--is her accompanying sense of freedom, which is, in effect, a kind of incipient feminism. Unlike Lawrence's other heroines, she has always managed to find at least partial contentment within her own class structure, and her fashionable role as first lady of Wragby is a fitting extension of her earlier life as a music student in Dresden. She is cosmopolitan in every sense of the word, being at least partially aware of cultural trends and the like. Indeed, her scholastic life in Dresden, an engaging, challenging existence for any capable young woman, was, in effect, a continual effort to assert privately the silent, the unspeakably vulnerable superiority of intellectual engagement over the sexual inquisitiveness of her male counterparts: "It was the talk that mattered supremely: the impassioned interchange of talk. Love was only a

minor accompaniment" (7). All of this culture, however, has endowed Connie with a strong sense of pride, a pride bordering on arrogance or willfulness. Lawrence refers to this characteristic as freedom. In any case, it is inseparable from her cultural heritage. It is, argues Mark Spilka, "an established fact, a part of her modern education" (178).

But Connie's youthful intellectual bent, her unquestioned devotion to the life of the mind during her late teens, begins to impinge artificially upon her increasing sexual desire; the two areas begin to intertwine themselves as she moves from late adolescence into womanhood. On the eve of her twenties she is concerned for the preservation of her achieved independence, for all she has wrested from the man's world, where she has successfully made her mark as an informed, highly intelligent woman: "The beautiful pure freedom of a woman was infinitely more wonderful than any sexual love" (7). More precisely, she realizes that "a woman could yield to a man without yielding her inner, free self" (7). Inwardly insisting on her freedom at any cost, Connie refines her preference for intimacy, nonparticipating intimacy, into an art, yet a wholly unnatural art: "For she only had to hold herself back in sexual intercourse, and let him finish and expend himself

without herself coming to the crisis: and then she could prolong the connection and achieve her orgasm and her crisis while he was merely her tool" (7). There is, we see, nothing mutual about her approach to sexuality, for she denies the normal, healthy, spontaneous flow of desire and tenderness between man and woman.

Like Clifford, then, Connie sometimes allows her selfishness to overpower her better nature, her goodness and humanity. Just as he coldly looks upon his workers as objects, mere instruments, so she treats her sexual partners as vehicles, tools for her own private pleasure. She foolishly carries this harmful misconception into the affairs she has with other men behind Clifford's back. No matter how we may feel about the moral or ethical implications of her passionate affair with Michaelis the dramatist, we surely cannot overlook the acuity of his comments on Connie's approach to their intimacy, her preference for sexual disjunction, insensitive separateness:

> He laughed grimly: "I want it!" he said. "That's good! I want to hang on with my teeth clenched, while you go for me!"
>
> "But don't you?" she insisted.
>
> He avoided the question. "All the darned women are like that," he said. "Either they don't go off at all, as if they were dead in there . . . or else they wait till a chap's really done, and then they start to bring themselves off, and a chap's got to hang on. I never had a woman yet who went off just at the same moment as I did." (51)

Arrogant and self-centered himself, Michaelis is far from admirable, but his charge against Connie's halfway approach to sexuality is not unfounded.

By exercising her willfulness upon their intimacy, by manipulating the very rhythms of their passion to suit her own desires for dominance, she frustrates the normal stream of desire between Michaelis and herself. Unlike Tom and Lydia Brangwen, then, Connie fails to sense, to intuit the need for simultaneous exchange, healthy mutuality, during their lovemaking. Her lack of awareness thus prevents her from obtaining balanced relations with her lover.

III. Sexual Rebirth

But Lawrence never gives up on his heroine. Growing weary of the sterile life at Wragby, the unnatural world of Clifford and his cronies, Connie periodically retreats to the nearby woods to preserve her "health and sanity" (Sagar 183). The great representative of this sequestered domain is, of course, Oliver Mellors, who is ten years her senior and, ironically, Clifford's gamekeeper.

His effect upon her is nothing short of miraculous, for he not only manages to realign her with the rhythms of nature, the world of plant, tree, and flower, but also

restores her sense of womanhood (Sagar 187). In the aftermath of their passion Connie reflects on this new presence in her life, this tender, mysterious man: "And after all, he was kind to the female in her, which no man had ever been" (113). But her early receptiveness to the keeper's warmth, his tenderness, is only the first step in her progress toward revivified being, wholeness and contentment.

There are at least eight passionate exchanges between them, but their third experience, noticeably different, proves unusually refreshing, mutually gratifying. As they engage in intercourse Connie manages to ease her will, to open herself completely for the first time:

> It was like bells rippling up and up to a culmination. She lay unconscious of the wild little cries she uttered at the last. But it was over too soon, too soon, too soon, and she could no longer force her own conclusion with her own activity. This was different, different. She could do nothing. She could no longer harden and grip for her own satisfaction upon him. (124-25)

Her impassioned responsiveness to Mellors' desire is decisive: the lovers achieve simultaneous orgasm (Langbaum 295). Emerging both revivified and encouraged himself, Mellors comments sincerely on the success of their act: "'It's good when it's like that. Most folks live their lives through and they never know it,' he

said, speaking rather dreamily" (125). Somewhat unsure of his words, Connie innocently asks him if other people also achieve such passion. "'A good many of them,'" he explains, "'never'" (126). But she presses him for insights into his past experiences with women. Although he fails to satisfy her urgent inquisitiveness at the moment, she suddenly realizes the depth of her feeling for this new man in her life, this vital lover: "She watched his face, and the passion for him moved in her bowels. She resisted it as far as she could, for it was the loss of herself to herself" (126). This is probably the most astonishing observation Connie has ever made about herself; it is a sign, a fortunate indication of her capacity for meaningful connection with another human being. She has finally realized how needless, how foolish, her earlier assertiveness has been, for she has used it as a kind of misleading refuge, a defensive posture against the loss of some part of herself to another individual (Daleski 294).

Her achievement, however, is not a true "loss of herself to herself," for such a loss would ironically represent the direct opposite of the change Lawrence wants to bring about in his heroine. Rather, Connie has learned to flow, to gravitate toward another receptive being. In doing so she releases her deepest desires and

therefore enacts the very rhythms of nature itself. There is little doubt about Connie's achievement. Her revitalized soul manifests itself only three pages later: "She was like a forest, like the dark interlacing of the oakwood, humming inaudibly with myriad unfolding buds" (129). In this manner she too becomes a representative of the natural world, exactly like Mellors, having gained true awareness of her own potential for tender relations beyond the needless confinement of selfishness.

It is difficult to grasp the significance of Connie's rebirth unless substantial inquiry is made into the vehicle of her transformation, Mellors himself. His personal history, a source of great interest for Connie, affords insight into the nature of his impact upon Lawrence's heroine. As Charles Rossman explains, his deliberate withdrawal from the world, the retreat into the security of Clifford's woods, is explainable only in terms of his past relations with women:

> Like Aaron in Aaron's Rod, Mellors has discovered that neither his wife nor earlier lovers could meet him in sexual relationship which granted him his independent being, and he pays the price of sexless isolation from women in order to retain his integrity. (307-08)

Mellors is literally afraid of women, especially willful ones, and understandably skeptical about the possibility of finding fulfillment in future entanglements. As we know from Lawrence's previous novels, his fears are not

unfounded.

What needs clarification, however, is the curious similarity between Lawrence's idealistic theories of sexuality, his ideas in the Phoenix volumes, and Mellors' approach to Connie's womanhood. But this similarity does not end with the novelist's essays; rather it encompasses the experiences of his earlier heroes as well, Tom Brangwen, Will Brangwen, Richard Somers, and Rupert Birkin.

IV. The Keeper's Wisdom

Like his predecessors, Mellors has suffered from previous relationships with extremely assertive women. In a moment of painful recollection, he tells Connie about the perverse sexual practices of his wife Bertha:

> "If I kept back for half an hour, she'd keep back longer. And when I'd come and really finished, then she'd start on her own account, and I had to stop inside her till she brought herself off, wriggling and shouting, she'd clutch clutch with herself down there, an' then she'd come off, fair in ecstasy. And then she'd say: That was lovely! Gradually I got sick of it: and she got worse. She sort of got harder and harder to bring off, and she'd sort of tear at me down there, as if it was a beak tearing at me. (189)

There is, of course, a little of Bertha in Connie, but what is most important is the knowledge Mellors has reaped from his past experiences. Having made clear to

Connie that the "'core of my life,'" his central activity, the very pivot of his being, is "'right relation'" with a lover (191), he goes on to transform Tom Brangwen's purely emotional discovery, the awareness of the need for self-measurement and rhythmic balance in sexual relationships, into a unique blend of his own articulateness, logic and rustic speech:

> "Nay!" he said. "I wanted to have my pleasure and satisfaction of a woman, and I never got it: because I could never get my pleasure and satisfaction of her unless she got hers of me at the same time. And it never happened. It takes two." (193)

But Mellors' belief goes beyond mere words, insufficient language. Like Tom Brangwen, he heroically exercises, practices his own intuitions, his deepest feelings and impulses. Standing in the twilight outside Wragby's impressive walls one night, a lone figure in the shadows, his heart drawn to the sleeping woman inside, Mellors reaffirms the need for control, for measurement in his relations with Connie:

> But he, the keeper, as the day grew, had realised: it's no good! It's no good trying to get rid of your own aloneness. You've got to stick to it all your life. Only at times, at times, the gap will be filled in. At times! But you have to wait for the times. Accept your own aloneness and stick to it, all your life. And then accept the times when the gap is filled in, when they come. But they've got to come. You can't force them. (136)

It is at this point that we realize the uniformity of the

keeper's thoughts on sexuality. Just as Mellors earlier proclaimed the need for equal participation from both partners during sexual intercourse, so now he fully affirms, embraces, the need for mutual sensitivity and desire in all meaningful relations between man and woman. True relatedness, sexual harmony, depends solely upon this notion of "coming together" (136), as Mellors further reflects outside the beloved's window.

It is, of course, a fitting notion for Lawrence's last major work of fiction, for in his own way Mellors has successfully learned the virtues of sexual restraint as practiced earlier by such heroes as Rupert Birkin and Tom Brangwen. At the end of the book Mellors speaks poetically of a "little flame" between himself and Connie (282). It is obviously a symbol of their capacity for true connection. He hopes to keep "the little flame brilliant and yellow, brilliant" (282). But the flame also casts its light on some of the novelist's earlier heroes and heroines. For his most successful characters, a select few, have learned to keep it lit, to regulate its healthy glow as well.

Conclusion

Appropriate expediency, clarity, and strict thematic consistency are always unavoidable characteristics of any critical inquiry which purports to be a so-called "canonical" study. This is particularly the case when the body of the writer's work under scrutiny is as large and complex as D.H. Lawrence's. The progressive nature of his art complicates the process even more. In succession, his books tend to elaborate earlier ideas and motifs as much as they change their situations and characters.

Despite such progression, however, the preceding examination has demonstrated how the novelist lends aesthetic shape and argumentative force to an enormous framework of speculative, intuitional thought by making his discursive writings and fiction into powerful thematic allies. As we have noted, this creative unification takes as one of its principal themes the systematic yet ever changing exploration of human identity as it is forged, learned, through sexual relations and personal reflection. The novelist usually presents self-awareness, gained through crisis and inner growth, as a necessary prerequisite to interaction with others. Throughout his Phoenix volumes and fiction, he repeats the belief that rewarding friendship and love are

possible only if each individual remains conscious of his or her own physical and psychological limits. Such self-discipline or monitoring, Lawrence infers, tends to prevent the unchecked impulses of the will from lapsing into possessiveness.

There is, however, an inherent irony or paradox in Lawrence's program which the limitations of time and space have prevented the present study from examining clearly and efficiently. It is, then, ripe for further speculation. None of Lawrence's characters possesses an inherent sense of personal wholeness, and yet they insist on risking involvement with others. We can neither live with or without others, the novelist implies. Perhaps future studies will address this aspect of the writer's work, asking whether or not such a dichotomy tends to undercut his central message.

The social implications of this discrepancy point to yet another area for further inquiry, an area only indirectly developed in the preceding chapters: Lawrence's position as social thinker or reformer, constantly portraying characters whose unsettled actions and thoughts reflect unceasing cultural change, the transition from Victorian to modern times. Lawrence depicts their inner lives as reflections of this uncertain external world. Gerald Crich and Gudrun

Brangwen immediately come to mind as archetypal figures for Lawrence, for their selfish attitudes are inseparable from the newly industrialized, highly aggressive atmosphere of the twentieth century. Affairs of the spirit--love, kindness, self-discovery--are, they find, difficult to cultivate in the hectic, sordid society of modern life, where standing armies, mechanized coal mines, and outdated educational methods both flourish with and dwarf the spontaneous desires of individual existence.

Yet the vehemency with which Lawrence states his case calls attention to another paradox in his art. It has often been remarked that Lawrence seldom creates what most readers acknowledge as characters (Auden 482; Albright 19). It is, for example, appropriate to say, as Anais Nin does, that he creates states of instinctual being rather than clearly outlined figures (18). The emotions of the Brangwen sisters are difficult to differentiate at times, especially when they are in their most excitable states--in moments of passion or anxiety. Always responsive to their immediate environment, they move from one state of being to another with all the urgency and vibrant display of a chameleon changing his colors; they are, in a phrase, unfailingly responsive.

The analogy is exaggerated but apt. Future critical

studies will undoubtedly turn their attention to this aspect of Lawrence's art--exactly how his approach to characterization alters the prevailing conceptions and practices of his Victorian predecessors. If, as readers, we find ourselves puzzled by the rapidly shifting inner lives of his characters, we might do well to consider their reactions in light of the challenges posed by their culture. In Beyond Culture, Lionel Trilling argues that much of modern literature is explainable only in terms of its attack upon the "specious good," what he adduces as "the habits, manners, and 'values' of the bourgeois world" or, more precisely, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (77). If, as the present study has argued, Lawrence's canon undertakes as its principal theme a severe criticism of the various ills of modern life, its advocacy of unchecked aggression and sham emotion, we might very well profit from the novelist's lessons by asking ourselves if his vision, his artistic rendering of reality, the everyday, has in any way revealed something previously unknown in our own approach to living and interaction with others. This study has tried to show how Lawrence's characters teach us about ourselves. Immortalized in language, they remind us, paradoxically, that we are not by any means alone in our singleness as uneasy citizens of the modern world.

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Vita

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