THE FEMALE QUEST IN THE

NOVELS OF D.H. LAWRENCE

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ABSTRACT

The quest of a bored or frustrated woman for some appeasement of desire is a familiar one in Lawrence's fiction. The following study concentrates on three such quests: Ursula Brangwen's in *The Rainbow*, Kate Leslie's in *The Plumed Serpent*, and Connie Chatterley's in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The study draws attention to recurrent patterns and motifs in these three novels and makes some tentative distinctions between the different interests and achievements of Lawrence's career.

"Living is moving and moving on."

(*Lady Chatterley's Lover*)

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INTRODUCTION

"Oh, mother-in-law, it must be so!", D.H. Lawrence wrote to Frau Baronin von Richthofen after his arrival in Australia in the Spring of 1922, "It is my destiny, this wandering."[1] As the compulsive wanderer, the man who, in order to better his health and to locate his Rananim, condemned himself to an unending exploration of the globe, Lawrence had an enforced interest in the whole concept of 'quest'. Indeed so intensely did Lawrence believe that "man is an adventurer and...must never give up the venture"[2] that he often failed to draw the distinction between "travel" and "life". It is not surprising, then, that so many of his most important protagonists should be travellers-in-search, men and women who, like their author, are propelled ever-onward in a restless quest for both defined and indefinable grails. In the following study of The Rainbow, The Plumed Serpent and Lady Chatterley's Lover I have focused on three of these characters, three women -- Ursula Brangwen, Kate Leslie and Connie Chatterley -- whose different quests provide a partial index to distinct phases of Lawrence's career. Using the "female quest" as a starting-point, I have attempted an interpretation and assessment of three of Lawrence's most famous novels. That the chapter on The Rainbow is much longer than those on The Plumed Serpent and Lady Chatterley's Lover perhaps indicates in itself the orthodoxy of my assessments;

it is only in the manner of reaching those assessments that I can claim to have occasionally deviated from the well-worn path of Lawrencian criticism.

It is probably a good thing to make it clear, at the outset, what I have not done. I have not approached the quest as 'archetype', I have not attempted to show how Lawrence's female quests do or do not conform to the recurrent patterns of ancient myth. A mythic approach to Lawrence's female quest is certainly quite feasible. Jascha Kessler has shown how closely Kate's quest in The Plumed Serpent follows what Joseph Campbell in The Hero with a Thousand Faces posits as the familiar directions of universal myth.[3] And since Northrop Frye has argued that the archetypal "quest-romance", with its fourfold division into 'agon'/'pathos'/'sparagmos'/'anagnorisis', culminates in "the victory of fertility over the waste land",[4] it seems only a matter of time before someone puts forward Lady Chatterley's Lover not, as Harry T. Moore rather flippantly does, as "Lawrence's variant on the Sleeping Beauty myth",[5] but as one of the central re-birth myths of our time. The mythic approach to the concept of "quest" can be illuminating, but I have not taken it myself.

Nor have I laid undue emphasis on the word "female". My study, that is to say, has neither broached the question of Lawrence's attitude to women nor discussed the social implications of his depiction of women in quest. There are of course a number of commonplaces about Lawrence's delineation of women to which,

at times, it has been tempting to resort: that his women are granted more freedom to move and are less subject to the pressures of a moral code than the women of most Victorian novels; that this change is indicative of a larger upheaval, the emancipation of women in European society; that, nevertheless, Lawrence's women are not truly "liberated", but must seek their fulfilment through relationships with the opposite sex and, more often than not, submit to their man; that, as Greer and Millett would have it, the seeming modernity of Lawrence's women is therefore countered by the thinly disguised misogynic chauvinism of their creator, who, paranoiac about his virility, dare not allow them the necessary liberty for existential exploration. Interesting issues, undoubtedly, but ones that I have preferred to leave to the more informed attentions of the social historian, psychoanalyst and committed feminist.

One question, however, has been less easy to ignore: why is the quester of England's most famous twentieth-century male novelist so frequently female? Granted that, as Lawrence put it, "the final aim of every living thing, creature or being is the full achievement of itself",[6] and that the goal of every one of Lawrence's quests, male or female, is therefore self-fulfilment, why, nevertheless are his protagonists-in-search, especially in the late fiction, so often women? There have been answers. H.M. Daleski implies one when he discusses "Lawrence's fundamental identification with the female principle"[7] and insists that Lawrence "was more strongly feminine than masculine."[8] But then Daleski's reading is complicated by his convincing evidence that Lawrence associated the ideas of "doing", "motion" and "activity",

prerequisites for the quest, with the "male" principle. L.D. Clark takes a rather different line when he argues that "the Christian and pagan tradition of regarding the seeking soul as female is one of which Lawrence had ample knowledge...Centuries of Christian mysticism have made the soul incarnate in the form of a woman."[9] But Clark's explanation seems no more satisfactory than that of William York Tindall, who comments: "It is not surprising that the character who undertakes Lawrence's quest should be a woman. A reasonable explanation, but not the only one perhaps, is that Lawrence, like Jung or indeed like Joyce, thought the creative principle feminine."[10] As the tentativeness of Mr. Tindall's speculation advises, it would be unwise to offer a conclusive solution, and I do not pretend to have found one myself. However, in a late essay called "Nobody Loves Me" Lawrence himself provides what is at least a half-answer:

> It seems to me that in a woman the need to feel that her life means something, stands for something, and amounts to something is much more imperative than in a man. The woman herself may deny it emphatically; because of course it is the man's business to supply her life with this "purpose". But a man can be a tramp, purposeless, and be happy. Not so a woman. It is a very, very rare woman who can be happy if she feels herself "outside" the great purpose of life. Whereas, I verily believe vast numbers of men would gladly drift away as wasters, if there were anywhere to drift to. A woman cannot bear to feel empty and purposeless.[11]

This statement of belief might well be countered by others, particularly from the 'male leadership' period, where Lawrence

sees the quest for meaning and purpose as an exclusively male activity, and argues that "being a man means you go on alone, ahead of the woman, to break a way through the old world into the new."[12] Yet as a touchstone for the fictional achievement which begins with Lettie in The White Peacock and ends with Connie in Lady Chatterley's Lover, the convictions of 'Nobody Loves Me' would seem to hold more true. And for the three novels under examination here, where the dedicated female quester has to reject the offer, example or stranglehold of an inert or purposeless male, they have a special relevance.

This brings us to the question of the inter-relatedness of Lawrence's various female quests, and though this is something I will consider in greater detail during the course of the thesis, a few preliminary remarks are appropriate here. There are first of all, I would suggest, certain obvious narrative and thematic links between the three quests: each quest involves the escape of the female from a life-denying bondage of home, husband or family; each quest involves the heroine's annihilation of her hard, independent, female will and her surrender to a greater cause (in Ursula's case the transition is not completed until Women in Love); each quest involves the movement of the heroine between a pale, intellectual male who is concerned with the well-being of the state (in Kate's case the male, Joachim, is already dead) and a dusky, physical presence who is primarily concerned with an earthy, sensual fulfilment (in Connie's case the distinction between the two men is blurred by Lawrence's substitution of Mellors for Parkin); each

quest involves an eventual choice between the two men (in Ursula's case neither Anton nor Anthony will do, and she must wait for Birkin); finally, each quest involves the heroine, once she has made her choice between "paleface" and "redskin", in the ultimate decision of whether to continue the quest or to put down roots. (Ursula travels on, Kate remains ambivalent and indecisive, Connie seems ready to settle down.)

These thematic and narrative connections are supplemented by Lawrence's use of recurrent patterns of imagery, patterns which not only give shape to the fiction but which also embody many of its moral implications. When Lawrence described "the goal of living" as "the achieving of a vaster, vivider cycle of life"[13] he provided the key to at least one strand of his imagery; it is to that strand -- with its images of centres and circles, of nuclei and perimeters, of gateways and cul-de-sacs, of openings and enclosures, of expansion and contraction, and of growth and stagnation -- that I have paid most of my attention here.

Third, and finally, there are significant structural similarities in the three quests. Each of the women-in-search progresses by contraries, fights her way forward by fluctuating to-and-fro, vacillates towards her consummation. The fluctuation may be primarily between illusion and disillusion (Ursula), or between faith and scepticism (Kate) or between intellect and penis (Connie), but in every case it has as its basis the restlessness of a heroine who is eager to taste all of life's offerings and reluctant to

commit herself to any single one of them. The wavering of the labile heroine is, of course, a useful fictional device; it allows Lawrence to explore the polarities of possibility and to give his novels both breadth and dramatic force. The see-sawing of his heroines is also consistent with his idea of what the novel should be: "Life is so made that opposites sway about a trembling centre of balance...And of all art forms, the novel most of all demands the trembling and oscillating of the balance."[14] But the productive oscillation of the Lawrencian heroine is more than merely convenient; it emerges quite naturally, I would argue, from Lawrence's dualistic vision, from his belief that "life depends on duality and polarity",[15] that "all existence is dual, and surging towards a consummation into being",[16] that "it is the fight of opposites which is holy",[17] and that once "remove the conflict and there is a collapse, a sudden crumbling into universal nothingness."[18] Lawrence's dualism also lurks beneath his most characteristic prose, that rhythmical ebb-and-flow which so perfectly enacts the undercurrents of both intellectual and emotional tension. Lawrence himself defended this style as the "right" one for his fiction, the one which could best express human conflict: "In point of style, fault is often found with the continual, slightly modified repetition. The only answer is that it is natural to the author: and that every natural crisis in emotion or passion or understanding comes from this pulsing, frictional to-and-fro, which works up to a culmination."[19] And if Lawrence's dualism provides the key to the structure of his

novels, the oscillation of his heroines, and the rhythm of his prose, so too does it condition his whole attitude to human relationships. For him, the opposition of man and woman is the most creative opposition of all; as he puts it: "The man embraces in the woman all that is not himself and from that resultant, from that embrace comes every new action."[20] Or again: "In life, then, no new thing has ever arisen or can arise, save out of the impulse of the male upon the female, the female upon the male."[21] Men and women can renew and re-vitalise each other because they are polar opposites, and when, in The Rainbow, Tom and Ursula are attracted to "Poles", the verbal link is no coincidence; indeed, by having Tilly, Tom's housekeeper, hopelessly confused as to whether Lydia is "fra' th' Pole -- else she is a Pole, or summat",[22] Lawrence subtly draws attention to the pun.

These, then, are some of the recurrent patterns and principles in the three female quests which I have chosen to examine. Of those other Lawrencian female quests which I have not had the time or space to include here, the dual quest of Ursula and Gudrun in Women in Love is the most serious omission. "St. Mawr", with the dual quest of Lou and Mrs. Witt for a vitalism equivalent to that of their most un-Houyhnhnm-like of quadrupeds, would also have provided some valuable material. Other female quests that might have been considered are those which culminate in human sacrifice ("The Woman Who Rode Away"), seduction and murder ("The Princess"), seduction and drowning ("The Virgin and the Gipsy"), and heliolithic

re-juvenation ("Sun"). Though I cannot hope to recoup these losses, I believe that a close analysis of The Rainbow, The Plumed Serpent and Lady Chatterley's Lover may at least shed a little light not only on Lawrence's concept of the female quest, but also on his fictional achievement as a whole.

CHAPTER ONE

Expanding Beyond: Ursula in The Rainbow

> Always the shining doorway ahead; and then, upon approach, always the shining doorway was a gate into another ugly yard, dirty and active and dead. Always the crest of the hill gleaming ahead under heaven: and then, from the top of the hill, only another sordid valley full of amorphous, squalid activity. No matter! Every hill-top was a little different, every valley was somehow new. Cossethay and her childhood with her father; the Marsh and the little Church school near the Marsh, and her grandmother and her uncles; the high school at Nottingham and Anton Skrebenksy; Anton Skrebensky and the dance in the moonlight between the fires; then the time that she could not think of without being blasted, Winifred Inger and the months before becoming a schoolteacher; then the horrors of Brinsley Street, lapsing into comparative peacefulness, Maggie and Maggie's brother, whose influence she could still feel in her veins, when she conjured him up; then college and Dorothy Russell, who was now in France, then the next move into the world again! Already it was a history. In every phase she was so different. Yet she was always Ursula Brangwen.[1]

Thus Ursula, just before her second affair with Anton Skrebensky, describes the long and winding road to her womanhood. Her experiences on that road, we note, are categorised as a series of pairs, and the dualistic summary is, in fact, a very deliberate one. For Ursula's development is dependent upon opposition, her growth achieved by way of vacillation. Hurled continuously between the extremities of experience -- between unknown and known, between

Sunday and weekday, between illusion and disillusion, between dream and reality, between hilltop and abyss -- Ursula explores the polarities of human possibility, and constantly drives herself into the discovery of new terrain. And after all the inevitable disappointments of her oscillatory quest she can still tell herself, as above, "No matter!", can console her battered spirit on the principle that violent fluctuations are the source of all knowledge and novelty. The rhythm of vacillation which has ebbed and flowed from the very outset of The Rainbow, sweeping Tom and Lydia from love to hate and back again, and heaving Will and Anna into an alternating struggle for dominance, thus attains a new intensity and significance in the final section of the novel: it accommodates Ursula's fluctuations between opposites, helps enact what Yeats would have called her "perning in the gyre", that productive frenzy upon which her fulfilment is contingent.

If the motif of fluctuation suggests an obvious and important link between the Ursula section of the novel and the two preceding sections, (the histories of her grandparents and parents) then critics have been slow to push the point further, and to argue for the novel's unity. The majority of Lawrence's critics have, in fact, always been troubled by the unity of The Rainbow -- or, rather, by what they see as the lack of unity. Whether they interpret the novel as a Three-in-One (three different stories united by overlapping episodes and recurrent motifs) or as a One-in-Three (a single search for fulfilment conducted by a trinity of generations),

most critics give the impression that Lawrence has not quite 'got it all together', that somehow his novel does not form a coherent whole. For all the eagerness and earnestness of their academic efforts, few critics have managed to tie up all of The Rainbow's loose ends. "Loose end" is, indeed a fortuitous phrase here, for most of their complaints have been registered against the novel's loose ending, the Ursula section, which has been variously written off as spurious, irrelevant or simply boring. F.R. Leavis, for example, complained of "signs of too great a tentativeness in the development and organisation of the later part. Things very striking in themselves haven't as clear a function as they ought to have. Above all the sterile deadlock between Ursula and Skrebensky...seems too long drawn out".[2] Since Leavis, a number of other critics have also found cause for complaint: Roger Sale talks of the "marked inferiority in the second half",[3] and J.F. Stoll laments the way in which Lawrence "turns his attention away from the vital self...to an attack upon the social order" with the result that "the positive accomplishment of the work as a whole is thereby blurred".[4] The mutual exclusiveness of a theory of the "vital self" and "an attack upon the social order" may not be immediately apparent, but Mr. Stoll is not alone in his dissatisfaction with the latter; Keith Sagar, also, presumes that every reader must "feel dissatisfied with some of the less fully realised episodes of the later chapters, where Lawrence, losing interest, lapses occasionally

into his Carlylean essay-style".[5] Mr. Sagar does, to his credit, give a fair amount of attention to the Ursula section of the novel; the same cannot be said of Marvin Mudrick whose brief and vitriolic treatment of the section is summed up as follows:

> ...it is this concluding section -- in bulk, more than half -- of the novel that has been the most vexatious and unrewarding for readers; and any effort to assess The Rainbow bumps hard against it. No doubt the section is less satisfying than most of what has come before: it is unduly repetitive...its tone sometimes verges on stridency... much of the last half of The Rainbow seems to have been written with a slackening of Lawrence's attention to proportion and detail.[6]

Magnanimous as Mr. Mudrick may be in allowing the novel "greatness" (as he does earlier in the essay) while virtually disposing with half of its content, there is, to my mind, something singularly unintelligent in feeling obliged to make the disposal in the first place. Are we to conclude that Lawrence, so clearly in control, all agree, in the first half of the novel, is thoroughly out-of-touch at the end? It would appear so, for Mr. Mudrick's principal objection, and it is shared by most of the other critics in some form or other, is that the Ursula section is loosely constructed, unduly long and dismally disproportionate. It is partly in answer to these criticisms that I write here: I want to argue that it is not "slackening" that we have in The Rainbow but "expansion",[7] that a sense of proportion and consistency have been perfectly maintained, and that the bulkiness of the Ursula section of the novel is a logical outcome of the novel's expanding structure.

I mean to suggest that we should approach The Rainbow without prescriptive critical standards and should think instead of what the novel intends and achieves. What we have here, first of all, is organism rather than organisation. The essence of the novel is growth, a fact underlined by its format, the second section roughly twice the length of the first, and the third section twice the length of the second. Sustained by recurrent motifs, the novel swells larger and larger, ever-increasing its dimensions and interests so that its ending will be larger, freer and more expansive than its beginning. It is no coincidence that two of the chapters of The Rainbow are called 'The Widening Circle': the novel's form is, indeed, a ceaseless widening out from a single centre. To describe it we might talk of an unfolding flower (an image which Lawrence uses many times in The Rainbow), or of how, after a stone is thrown into a pond, ripples spread outwards in ever-enlarging circles. More prosaically, and I believe more accurately, we should think of the vortex or gyre, with its circular movement upward, outward and into the unknown.

I have permitted myself these rather fanciful descriptions of The Rainbow for two reasons: first, because, as I shall presently explain in more detail, Lawrence makes many allusions to circles, and particularly to expanding ones, within the novel itself; second, because I believe that the widening circle is Lawrence's choice of 'the appropriate form' for The Rainbow. The expansive form, that is to say, becomes a structural

equivalent to the tales of expansion it contains: it 'expresses' the content. For the central theme of the novel is the venture of the individual on into the 'unknown' or 'beyond', and on the success or failure of the protagonist to reach the beyond, to find the pots of gold in the expanses below the rainbow's end, to enter what Lawrence calls "the finer, more vivid circle of life" (p. 10), most of the narrative hinges. This single theme binds the drama of individual desire with the drama of human relations, fuses the potentially alien genres of marriage-fable and 'Bildungsroman' into a satisfying whole. The Rainbow, then, both is, and is about, a series of expansions.

It is this expanding movement that the prototypal Brangwen wife represents at the beginning of The Rainbow: she "faced outwards" to "the world beyond" and "aspired beyond herself, towards the further life...towards the extended being..."(p. 10). The impulse is passed down to Tom Brangwen; while still a youth he inherits restlessness, defying the local realities of Cossethay and Ilkeston and dreaming beyond them: "He baulked the mean enclosure of reality, stood stubbornly like a bull at a gate, refusing to re-enter the well-known round of his own life...He wanted to go away -- right away. He dreamed of foreign parts" (p. 26). Tom does not get to foreign parts, but he does get a foreign partner: Lydia Lensky. At first Lydia, aloof, older, and previously married, seems too far beyond him, a circle into which he cannot enter: "...he noticed the wedding-ring on her

finger. It excluded him: it was a closed circle. It bound her life, the wedding-ring, it stood for her life in which he could have no part" (p. 39). It is not for long, though, that Tom is excluded, and on the night Lydia agrees to marry him he walks out into a new world; amidst the strangeness and disorder, the symbol of the expanded circle shines clear: "He went out into the wind. Big holes were blown into the sky, the moonlight blew about...Then somewhere in the night a radiance again, like a vapour. And all the sky was teeming and tearing along, a vast disorder of flying shapes and darkness and ragged fumes of light and a great brown circling halo..." (p. 49).

Expansion does not end with marriage, though, and when Lawrence abandoned the title of 'The Wedding Ring' for his novel, he consciously or unconsciously acknowledged the limits and constrictions of marriage; fulfilment, if it exists at all, must lie beyond the rainbow, not within the wedding ring. Thus Tom soon discovers that he "must find other things than (Lydia), other centres of living" (p. 83). It is not clear that he ever does; indeed looking back on his life in middle age, Tom has to admit that marriage has remained "the be-all and end-all" (p. 124) of his life. It is only within the circumference of his married life that any growth takes place: "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" (p. 95).

For Tom and Lydia, wonder is more "within" than "beyond". Theirs, the first circle, is narrow, but perfect.

In Chapter Four of The Rainbow, 'The Girlhood of Anna Brangwen', we are told how Anna "was too much the centre of her own universe, too little aware of anything outside" (p. 98). It is a just comment: the childhood and girlhood scenes depict Anna as tight, proud and egotistic. But when she meets and falls in love with Will, Anna finds life has opened up new possibilities, shifted its centre: "In him she touched the centre of reality. And they were together, he and she, at the heart of the secret. How she clutched him to her, his body the central body of all life" (p. 130). Lawrence's brilliant descriptions of their honeymoon show Will and Anna slowly moving out from their still point of perfection to the noise of the turning world:

> Inside the room was a great steadiness, a core of living eternity. Only far outside, at the rim, went on the noise and the destruction. There at the centre, the great wheel was motionless, centred upon itself. Here was a poised, unflawed stillness that was beyond time...it was as if they were at the very centre of all the slowwheeling space and the rapid agitation of life, deep, deep inside them all, at the centre where there is utter radiance and eternal being, and the silence absorbed in praise... then gradually they were passed away from the supreme centre, down the circles of praise and joy and gladness, farther and farther out, towards the noise and friction... gradually they began to wake up, the noises outside became more real.
>
> (p. 145)

The newlyweds do not "wake up" at the same time. After the honeymoon it is Anna who "is sooner ready to enjoy again a return

to the outside world" (p. 150). Once there, though, Anna is reluctant to go any farther. She clings fiercely to her "known self" (p. 167), insists on the secular applicability of religious concepts, and represses her vague yearnings for the infinite. Though intuitively attracted to the beyond, she ignores the sight of the sun and moon beckoning her to their wider orbits. Fulfilled in motherhood, confined by "the ring of physical considerations" (p. 353), drowsing in lazy domesticity, Anna prefers to abandon the outward mission:

> She forgot that she had watched the sun climb and pass his way, a magnificent traveller surging forward. She forgot that the moon had looked through a window of the high, dark night, and nodded like a magic recognition, signalled her to follow. Sun and moon travelled on, and left her, passed her by, a rich woman enjoying her riches. She should go also. But she could not go, when they called, because she must stay at home now. With satisfaction she relinquished the adventure to the unknown. She was bearing her children.
>
> (p. 196)

As Will feels his inarticulate faith and mysticism being opposed by Anna's down-to-earth scepticism, so he begins to lose his belief in the absolute-ness of the church. Unable to express or justify his fascination for the beyond, Will realises that his life is "shifting its centre, becoming more superficial" (p. 206). At the same time he is made "aware of some limit of himself...some unfolded centres of darkness which would never develop or unfold" (p. 210). Unformed and unfulfilled, he gives himself up to work and family. But middle-age does bring a partial reprieve for Will; promoted to the post of 'Art and Handwork

Instructor for the County of Nottingham', he feels "as if a space had been given him, into which he could remove from his hot, dusky enclosure" (p. 418). Routine and restricted as life at Beldover may be, it does allow Will to breathe a little more freely. Similarly the marriage of Will and Anna, though less contented than that of Tom and Lydia, is, in the end, less claustrophobic. Some kind of expansion has been achieved.

It is in this context of Tom, Lydia, Will and Anna that Ursula's quest should be seen. Their accomplishments, their failures or success in expansion, make her own achievements more comprehensible and meaningful, and help define the means and end of her quest. Her questing spirit is, moreover, a hereditary trait; the enthusiasm which sustains her outward-bound passage must be seen as a generic product, one for which Ursula is indebted to the cumulative pressure of her ancestors' frustrations and desires.

Conceived during the early marital combats of her parents, Ursula is born into a turbulent household. As an infant she is forced by her mother to watch "blue-tits scuffling in the snow" (p. 194), and she is weaned on the sensual conflict of her parents. At first she is torn between "knowledge" of her mother and "ecstasy" for her father, but she soon grows to be "the child of her father's heart" (p. 213). Because of him she becomes reckless and ambitious. More important she toddles "in the shadow of some,dark potent secret" (p. 239), receiving from Will a premature initiation into subterranean mystery and magic. It is no coincidence that Will

teaches "night-school", and it is from his lessons that Ursula learns about darkness and depth: "He held long discussions with his child as she sat on his knee and he unfastened her clothes. And he seemed to be talking really of momentous things, deep moralities" (P. 215). "Deep moralities": already, as an infant, Ursula has been exposed to them. Indeed, one of the main points about Ursula is that she awakens too soon, is unjustly wrenched from innocence into experience at an early age:

> Wide-eyed, unseeing, she was awake before she knew how to see. She was wakened too soon. Too soon the call had come to her, when she was a small baby, and her father held her close to his breast, her sleep-living heart was beaten into wakefulness by the striving of his bigger heart, by his clasping her to his body for love and for fulfilment, asking as a magnet must always ask.
> (p. 221)

The frustrations of the father fall on the daughter, drawing her within the field of adult desire and restlessness. Ursula's growing pains stab again, when, after her grandfather's death, her grandmother's recollections and predictions of "far-off things" give her a further sense of time and space: "Ursula was frightened hearing these things. Her heart sank, she felt she had no ground under her feet... Here, from her grandmother's peaceful room, the door opened on to the greater space, the past which was so big, that all it contained seemed tiny; loves and births and deaths, tiny units and features within a vast horizon" (p. 260). Ursula's precociousness, something that Lawrence wanted to emphasise, becomes clearer if we compare it to the expansions

or cosmic awakenings of George Eliot's heroines. It is only after the trials of marriage and the tribulations of disillusion that Dorothea, in Middlemarch, feels "the largeness of the world and the manifold wakenings of men to labour and endurance";[8] and in Daniel Deronda, Gwendolen's escape from constrictive egotism also comes after the death of a husband and enforced disillusionment with her spiritual mentor; only then does she find herself "for the first time feeling the pressure of a vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world, and getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving".[9] Ursula's first sense of the vastness of the world comes much earlier, long before she is an adult. Old Lydia's stories, shrouded in "mystic significance" and treasured as "a sort of Bible" (p. 260) by Ursula, make her thirst for the beyond she also fears.

The net result of this is Ursula's dissatisfaction with the limits and littlenesses of the local school. Responsible for the care of her younger brothers and sisters, and constantly having to protect them from the lock-raping onslaughts of the dreaded Pillins family, Ursula feels immersed in pettiness. It is no compensation for her that, unlike the dream-burdened Gudrun, she becomes "one for realities" and copes with the experiences of innocence. For Ursula, contemptuous of "the narrow boundary of Cossethay where only limited people lived" (p. 264),

only escape can be satisfying: "She had a passionate craving to escape from the belittling circumstances of life, the little jealousies, the little differences, the little meannesses" (p. 263). Ursula's answer is to run from reality to dream. Behind locked doors (an ironic contrast to the open gateways that lead out to the beyond) she indulges in solitary meditations, imagining herself as a "lonely maid high up and isolated in the tower" (p. 265) or as "the only daughter of the old lord, gifted with magic" (p. 266). Elevation and isolation prove constant attractions for Ursula, but at home, where littleness, in the form of brothers and sisters, rudely breaks in on the "intricately woven illusion" (p. 266), they are not attainable. It is only by graduation to Grammar school that a first real escape is effected.

Appropriately situated on a hill, "looking down on the smoke and confusion" and the manufacturing, engrossed activity of the town" (p. 269) the school raises Ursula beyond the spiteful clutches of reality. Latin, Greek, French, Mathematics -- these arouse Ursula like "the sound of a bugle to her heart, exhilarating, summoning her to perfect places" (p. 269). The difficulty of the summons to perfect places is, however, its eclipse of the imperfect ones, and it is at this time that the 'real world' and the 'other world' become irreconcilably divided for Ursula. "She lived a dual life, one where the facts of daily life encompassed everything, being legion, and the other wherein the facts of daily life were superseded by the eternal truth" (p. 276). Her

initial ploy, as the novelty of school wears off, is to put faith in the "Sunday world" rather than the "weekday" one. Sunday becomes the "maximum day" (p. 270) , a "sanctuary" where she "could wander in dreams, unassailed" (p. 273). Ursula's Sunday, like her father's, is a mystical world untainted by the brutishness of scepticism:

> Ursula was all for the ultimate. She was always in revolt against babies and muddled domesticity. To her Jesus was another world. He was not of this world...To her Jesus was beautifully remote, shining in the distance, like a white moon at sunset, a crescent moon beckoning as it follows the sun out of our ken.
> (p. 275)

Ursula's Jesus, described here in the image of the moon which will return to haunt her, is beyond human knowledge and expression. Similarly her heaven is beyond all exaggeration and expansion, beyond both word and gesture:

> It pleased her also to know that in the east one must use hyperbole, or else remain unheard; because the Eastern man must see a thing swelling to fill all heaven, or dwindled to a mere nothing, before he is suitably impressed. She immediately sympathised with this Eastern mind.
> (p. 272)

But Ursula's sympathies are not one-sided, and her expansion, as I have said, is dependent upon fluctuation. Thus, at this point, carried to the extreme of exclusively 'Sunday' vision by hyperbole, Ursula shifts back to the weekday world. Whereas before she had wanted "the non-literal application of the scriptures" (p. 278), now she wants religion to "have a weekday meaning" (p. 284). Whereas before she had disliked Fra Angelico's portrait of an

"encircled God, surrounded by all the angels on high" (p. 278), now she wants her religion circumscribed so that "that which one cannot experience in daily life is not true" (p. 285). Whereas before she had listened carefully to Christian ethics and parables, now she is impatient with Christian morality, returning Theresa's blow and feeling "unchristian but clean" (p. 285). Whereas before she had seen Jesus as spiritual and other worldly, now "she wanted Jesus to love her deliciously, to take her sensuous offering, to give her sensuous response" (p. 287). And whereas before she had "believed more in her desire and its fulfilment than in the obvious facts of life" (p. 277) now she is totally given over to hard facts and everyday realities: "The weekday world had triumphed over the Sunday world. The Sunday world was not real, or at least, not actual. And one lived by action. Only the weekday world mattered" (p. 284). So Ursula feels herself to have run the whole gamut of religious faith, to have explored both sides of every question. Clearly it is time for expansion, for a new circle of possibility to be discovered. Enter Skrebensky.

The Ursula-Skrebensky episodes have often confused the critics. Graham Hough, for example, complains that "it is hard to see how a love like Ursula's and Skrebensky's, which fails on all planes, can ever have begun -- except as an idle diversion, which it clearly was not";[10] or again: "The attraction and failure between Ursula and Skrebensky ought to be a mystery, but in fact it becomes a muddle".[11] That it is Mr. Hough who is muddled rather than

Lawrence is clear, I believe, from the several sound reasons which Lawrence gives for the mutual attraction of Ursula and Skrebensky. First, and most important, Skrebensky brings her "a strong sense of the outer world" (p. 296), promises infinite expansion and eternal delight: "He seemed more and more to give her a sense of the vast world, a sense of distances, and large masses of humanity. It drew her as a scent draws a bee from afar" (p. 293). As all good Lawrencian protagonists should, Skrebensky leads out, or rather seems to lead out, (the qualification is important) into the unknown.

A second reason for compatibility is the fact that they are both victims of rootlessness, vagrants in search of a home. Ursula, we are told, "attentive and keen abroad, at home was reluctant, uneasy, unwilling to be herself, unable" (p. 270). It is not with disinterest, then, that she asks Skrebensky: "Do you feel like a bird blown out of its own latitude?" (p. 293). Nor is it disturbing for her when he admits that "the outside world was always more naturally a home to me than the vicarage" (p. 293). Skrebensky reinforces Ursula's restlessness and becomes her partner in travel.

He is also a substitute for the failed or failing preoccupations of her past. Ursula's relationship with her father, we remember, had been precious to her, so it is significant that Skrebensky, the moment she sees him, "reminded her of her father" (p. 291). When Skrebensky takes Ursula on the swingboats, just

as her father had done, the link is underlined. A father-substitute in one sense, Skrebensky is also an alternative to religion, a phoenix rising from the ashes of her doubt and disillusion. It is interesting, for example, that when, in Derby, they visit a church which is under repair, Skrebensky appears to her as the one entity amidst a general fragmentation:

> ...the whole interior was filled with scaffolding, fallen stones and rubbish were heaped on the floor, bits of plaster crunched underfoot, and the place re-echoed to the calling of secular voices...Skrebensky sat close to her. Everything seemed wonderful, if dreadful, to her, the world tumbling into ruins, and she and he clambering unhurt, lawless over the face of it all.
> (pp. 296-7)

Ursula sees Skrebensky as a "Son of God (come) unto the daughters of men", a divine human or human divinity come to take her into a new halo of experience. Little wonder, then, with the secular and religious reconciled, that Ursula can declare "I think it's right to make love in a cathedral", and later be almost as good as her word when she holds him in a passionate embrace inside the local church.

There is nothing incongruous or unconvincing in Ursula's elevation of Skrebensky, for her romanticising of his potentialities is evident all along, and a further reason why their relationship lasts as long as it does. Drawn in childhood to the remoteness of her grandmother's Polish origins, and to the chivalry of storybook nobility, Ursula finds in Skrebensky alliegances to

both of these romantic worlds; as she tells a schoolfriend proudly: "He is half a Pole, and a Baron too. In England he is equivalent to a Lord. My grandmother was his father's friend" (p. 301)[12]. Romance is, in fact, the key word in the first affair between them. We learn that "they were lovers in a young, romantic fantastic way" (p. 326), that Ursula, especially, is quick to "kindle and flare up to the romance of the situation" (p. 304), and that even when Skrebensky has to depart for the Boer war, it is for her "a sort of romantic situation" (p. 327). It is a young and idealistic love affair for a time, typified in Ursula's reaction to the motor-ride, where she envisages Skrebensky's car not as a mundane machine passing through the Nottingham countryside, but as a white charger bounding through fairy-land: "She saw the familiar country racing by. But now it was no familiar country, it was wonderland...Ah, if only she and Skrebensky could get out, dismount into this enchanted land where nobody had ever been before" (p. 305).

The differences between the first and second affairs of the lovers (and the quality of 'romance' is certainly one of these) I will consider in more detail later, but one scene in the first affair -- the dance below the moonlight -- deserves special attention here, if only because Ursula herself sees it as the key incident. The scene has been skilfully analysed by H.M. Daleski,[13] but his account does need to be qualified and supplemented. The dance takes place shortly after Ursula's

realisation that she has transcended her old limited self, and is "beyond herself":[14] "Oh, it was her transfiguration. She was beyond herself. She wanted to fling herself into all the hidden brightness of the air. It was there, it was there, if she could but meet it" (p. 306). Under the moonlight during the wedding dance, the same feelings of newness and further possible transcendence overtake her once again: "She felt she was a new being...She wanted to let go. She wanted to reach and be amongst the flashing stars, she wanted to race with her feet and be beyond the confines of this earth" (p. 317). The "magnificent, godly moon" (p. 324) shining above seems to offer Ursula not as Daleski suggests "woman-being" (i.e.self-realisation) but rather unlimited fulfilment in the beyond, knowledge of a greater life and radiance outside the moon's orbit. Skrebensky's offence is therefore not, as Daleski argues, his inability "to produce a man-being to match the woman-being of Ursula", but rather his denial of her entry into the outer circle. Though able to give her greater space than she has had, he cannot, in the end, give her space enough. Imprisoned himself within the values of the daily world, too timid to see himself as more than "a brick in the whole great, social fabric" (p. 328), he prevents Ursula from going beyond him. His imprisonment of her is evoked in images of crippling encirclement: "Skrebensky put his arm round her", "he put a big, dark cloak round her" "he appropriated her" "he could only set a bond round her" "he must weave himself round her, enclose her,

enclose her" "People stood round her like stones...Skrebensky like a loadstone weighed on her", etc. He will not let her go free.

Ursula's mistake, if it can be described as such, is to try to force her way through Skrebensky's encirclement. She resorts to violence, fighting fiercely against her chains. Her destructiveness is described in terms of "blades", "corrosion", "salt" and "steel",[15] and she achieves only a deathly, negative transcendence, which is not really transcendence at all. The violent imagery -- "the great, _blistering_, transcendent, night", "that other _corrosive_ self", "the great moon-_conflagration_ of the cornstacks" "a _horrible_ thing had possessed her", "burning and brilliant and hard as salt, and _deadly_", "consuming, scathing _poison_" -- provides a grim comment on the attempt to get beyond, and stands, of course, as a fearful omen of what is to come second-time round.

When Skrebensky leaves Ursula for South Africa, he is convinced that "his life was elsewhere -- the centre of his life was not what she would have" (p. 331). Ursula, too, seeks new centres of living, and the first one she finds is Winifred Inger. The relationship with Winifred follows the same fluctuating pattern of her other experiences. At first Miss Inger, like Skrebensky, unites the 'here' and the 'beyond' for Ursula, standing as an example of efficiency in the daily world ("Everything about her was so well-ordered" - p. 336) yet able, also, to lead Ursula into new realms of experience: "It was a strange world the girl was swept into like a chaos, like the end of the world. She

was too young to understand it all. Yet the innoculation passed into her through her love for her mistress" (p. 343). The image of "innoculation" is part of the pattern of imagery which dominates this episode, and which tells how Miss Inger leads Ursula from sickness into health and back into sickness again. Ursula draws near to Miss Inger after Skrebensky's departure when "her sexual life flamed into a kind of disease" and "a sort of madness ran in inflammation over her flesh and her brain" (p. 333). In her teacher, Ursula identifies some kind of remedial heat-treatment, and, in class, she feels herself to be "within the rays of some enriching sun, whose intoxicating heat poured straight into her veins" (p. 336). As the intimacy between them increases, becomes more physical, Ursula does, indeed, receive this heat; we are told how her "heart burned in her breast as she set off for school" (p. 337) and how "her thoughts burned up like fire" (p. 339). But as these images suggest there is something inflammatory, rather than curative, in the intensity of Ursula's desire, and soon it turns to shame: "A terrible, outcast almost poisonous despair possessed her...a sort of nausea was coming over...a heavy, clogged sense of deadness began to gather upon her, from the other woman's contact" (pp. 343-4). Miss Inger's friends also strike Ursula as "inwardly raging and mad" (p. 343) and finally Ursula fightsto overcome the increasing unhealthiness of the relationship, becomes "immune" (p. 341), so that "her mistress was extinct, gone out of her" (p. 341) and so that her own fitness and freedom are assured: "The fine unquenchable

flame of the younger girl would consent no more to mingle with the perverted life of the elder woman" (p. 344).

It is difficult not to feel, for all the consistency of the structure and imagery of the episode, that this is one of the less happy moments of Lawrence's accomplishment in The Rainbow. Its resolution, in particular, is unsatisfying, Ursula being rescued from her problems, albeit through some unlikely ingenuity of her own, by a 'deus ex machina', rather than convincingly coming to terms with them herself. And why Winifred Inger should want to marry Tom Brangwen, thus relieving Ursula of her diseased attentions, is never really established convincingly either. The disposal of Winifred seems all-too-neat: Uncle Tom, whose "marshy" appearance immediately recalls the limitations of the inward-looking Brangwens of 'The Marsh', emerges faithfully to carry her off to his industrial cabin, the "inert" and "brackish" couple retiring to a life of conjugal turgidity and "succulent moistness", "warm clay lifted through the recurrent action of day after day by the great machine" (p. 352). It is surprising that Marvin Mudrick should select this section as the only redeeming moment in the latter half of the novel, (it is, he says, "finely done")[16] for the oppressiveness and inertia Lawrence wishes to convey through the imagery of "clay", "lizards" and "foetid air" seems only to have weighed him down. Winifred Inger and Tom Brangwen are more the victims of hasty authorial mud-slinging than the creations of a controlled artistic integrity.

The same repugnant inertia that Ursula discerned in Tom and Winifred she now sees also in her parents. Her father is drowsy and blind "like a mole" (p. 355), working busily but myopically "in a private retreat of his own" (p. 356). Her mother sits "slovenly, easy" within "the ring of physical considerations" (p. 353), and "the close, physical, limited life of herded domesticity" (p. 354). For Ursula, frustrated but ambitious in "all the anguish of youth's reaching for some unknown ideal" (p. 353), the immobility of life at home offers no expansive future, and it is in this context that her decision to begin teaching should be seen: it is yet another movement outward into the unknown. This relationship of the schoolteaching episodes to the main thematic line of The Rainbow has not, unfortunately, been generally recognised. Graham Hough, for example, remarks of this section that "we must pass it by, as we have passed by earlier episodes, to follow the main thematic line";[17] and Marvin Mudrick says much the same, arguing that "the career of Ursula as a teacher, however interesting it may be in its own right, is recorded at too much length and with too little relevance to the theme of the novel".[18] Yet the thematic relevance of Ursula's teaching is something that Lawrence is very careful to explain. As I have already suggested, and as Ursula herself makes plain, it is another step towards liberation:

> She felt that somewhere, in something, she was not free. And she wanted to be. She was in revolt. For once she

> was free she could get somewhere. Ah, the wonderful real somewhere that was beyond her, the somewhere that she felt deep, deep, inside her. In coming out and earning her own living she had made a strong cruel move towards freeing herself. (p. 406)

Ursula's decision to teach is not so much the act of a 'modern woman' wishing to be liberated from domestic slavery (though certainly Ursula's interest in the Woman's Movement, substantiated by her friendships with Winifred Inger, Maggie Schofield and Dorothy Russell, cannot be ruled out) as it is the committed effort of a pioneer in search of the big spaces. It is surely relevant that the two forces at Brinsley Street against whom Ursula has to fight most ardently for her freedom -- the headmaster, Mr. Harby, and a schoolboy called Williams -- should be described in metaphors of obstruction and confinement. Mr. Harby is "threatening", "fettered", "bullying", "narrow and exclusive", "invincible iron closing upon her"; Williams has "that peculiar jail instinct","a kind of leech-like power", and Ursula feels him "hanging round to fawn upon her". It is only after a violent thrashing of Williams that Ursula can go "beyond Mr. Harby" (p. 399): the same stroke defeats them both.

The schoolteaching episodes are not only consistent with the theme of expansion, they are also sustained by that rhythm of fluctuation on which expansion depends. They begin, as must all Ursula's adventures, with illusion. Though hoping school will "purge her of some of her floating sentimentality" (p. 367)

Ursula strides forward with a brief-case full of dreams, looking, with that predictable confidence of a novice sure that she can be "the gleaming sun of the school", to the glorious moment when her children will "blossom like little weeds". At Brinsley Street, she is sure, a new world lies waiting: "She walked forward to the new land. The old was blotted out. The veil would be rent that hid the new world" (p. 367). Ursula's visions may be all milk and honey, but the new land is no Canaan. Her journey there in "the wet, comfortless train" is singularly unheroic, and it is clear from the mere situation of the school, that it will not match Ursula's uphill aspirations: "She was walking down a small, mean, wet street, empty of people. The school squatted low within its railed, asphalt yard, that shone black with rain. The building was grimy and horrible, dry plants were shadowily looking through the windows" (p. 369). "Small", "mean", "empty" and "low" -- dreaded words in Ursula's vocabulatry, and that the school should be "railed" and a "prison" (predictable images, perhaps, but ones which, within the overall context of the "enclosure" and "gateway" metaphors that control <u>The Rainbow</u>, have a special force) is even more devastating. It is obvious that in an environment where "there was no sky -- no luminous atmosphere of out-of-doors" (p. 384) Ursula must soon be disillusioned, and Mr. Harby's demand for a mechanical imposition of 'will' on the children is a further blow. Until she thrashes Williams, thereby simultaneously succumbing to the system and freeing herself from it, Ursula finds it hard to take her reality undiluted. The "old duality", Sundays and weekdays,

emerges once more: "She was struggling between her two worlds, her own world of young summer and flowers, and this other world of work" (p. 408). But in the oppositions of these two worlds, Ursula's growth continues.

It is through her experience at Brinsley Street that Ursula meets Maggie and Anthony Schofield, and because of them, takes decisions which push her further in the journey outward-bound. Maggie, Ursula's companion in the lunchbreak world of partial escape, encourages her into a new awareness of society and literature. But, at the same time, there is born in Ursula a bigger want which even stimulating prospects like the emancipation of women cannot satisfy:

> Maggie was a great suffragette, trusting in the vote. To Ursula the vote was never a reality. She had within her the strange, passionate knowledge of religion and living far transcending the limits of the automatic system that contained the vote...She wanted so many things. She wanted to read great beautiful books, and be rich with them; she wanted to see beautiful things, and have the joy of them for ever; she wanted to know big, free people; and there remained always the want she could put no name to. [19]
> (p. 406)

It is Ursula's awareness of "the want she could put no name to" that finally separates her from Maggie. For Ursula all human activities are but stepping stones to the greater world; even love, she tells Maggie and later, Dorothy Russell, is "a way, a means, not an end in itself" (p. 411). Where life does lead ("Whither?" is a question all the protagonists of The Rainbow must

face) Ursula cannot define, but her intuitive response to the call beyond ensures that she leave the reluctant Maggie behind: "Maggie enjoyed and suffered Ursula's struggles against the confines of her life. And then the two girls began to drift apart, as Ursula broke from that form of life wherein Maggie must remain enclosed" (p. 412).

Like his sister, Anthony Schofield offers Ursula an enclosed life. She sees him as a "goat", a "satyr" and an "animal", and the rich bestial existence he symbolises, and which Ursula identifies later in the "full-blooded animal face" of a taxi driver (p. 460) and the "sharp- sighted intent animality" of a Sicilian waiter (p. 473), both unsettles and attracts her. But her response is not a complete or wholesome one: "She was aware of him as if in a mesmeric state. In her ordinary sense she had nothing to do with him" (p. 414). To accept a life on Anthony's farm, a farm which she significantly describes as "a Garden of Eden" (p. 416), would be to revert to her origins, to return to the old Brangwen at-one-ness with the soil. Ursula does not permit herself the retrogression: "...she was a traveller on the face of the earth, and he was an isolated creature living in the fulfilment of his own senses. She could not help it, that she was a traveller. She knew Anthony, that he was not one. But oh, ultimately and finally she mustgo on and on, seeking the goal that she knew she did draw nearer to" (p. 417).

Like Chapter Ten of The Rainbow, Chapter Fourteen is called

'The Widening Circle' and what constitutes that title is not only Ursula's break from Brinsley Street, Maggie and Anthony, nor even just the promise of a University career ahead, but also the removal of the Brangwens from Cossethay to Beldover. For Ursula the new house has "a delightful sense of space and liberation, space and light and air" (p. 426) and opens up the possibilities of "a large freedom of feeling" (p. 420). It is not so much the petty bourgeois in Ursula that is gratified by her father's promotion, as it is the inner Prometheus in sight of freedom; her equation of "bond" and "bondage" speaks for itself:

> ...the bond between her and her old associates was becoming a bondage...Cossethay hampered her, and she wanted to go away, to be free to fly her kite as high as she liked...So that when she knew her father had the new post, and that the family would move, she felt like skipping on the face of the earth, and making psalms of joy. The old, bound shell of Cossethay was to be cast off, and she was to dance away into the blue air.
> (p. 419)

For Ursula, who had "a passion for all moving active things" (pp. 267-8) even a house removal can be a passionate triumph. It is, quite literally, a new lease of life.

Ursula's university career begins, typically, on a crest of illusion. She finds it "remote, a magic land" (p. 430), a "religious retreat" (p. 434) on whose "holy ground" (p. 430) she receives from "black-gowned priests of knowledge" (p. 431) the sacraments of learning. Even the friendship with quiet, intense, Cassandra-like Dorothy Russell has a religious enchantment.

Here, for a time, Ursula feels protected from the secular vulgarity of time, space and reality: "Here within the great, whispering sea-shell, that whispered all the while with reminiscence of all the centuries, time faded away, and the echo of knowledge filled the timeless silence" (p. 431). The image of the "sea-shell" points, however, to the inherent constrictions and delusions of University, and within a year there Ursula begins to vacillate back to disillusion. It is, in fact, by the sea, on a holiday near Scarborough, that Ursula realises how unsatisfied her longings remain: "Out of the far, far space there drifted slowly in to her a passionate, unborn yearning. There are so many dawns that have not yet risen. It seemed as if, from over the edge of the sea, all the unrisen dawns were appealing to her, all the unborn soul was crying for the unrisen dawns" (p. 433). When Ursula returns to University she sees it as more a shop than a shrine: "College was barren, cheap, a temple converted to the most vulgar, petty commerce. Had she not gone to hear the echo of learning pulsing back to the source of mystery? The source of mystery! And barrenly, the professors in their gowns offered commercial commodity..." (p. 436). Marvin Mudrick, in his much acclaimed essay 'The Originality of '<u>The Rainbow</u>', takes strong exception to this passage, arguing that "when Lawrence, in his haste to dismiss dry book-learning, tries to palm off on us so trivially literary a truism about college as this...we are persuaded that he is no longer, for the time being at any rate,

attending to the seriousness of his theme".[20] Yet it is clearly Mr. Mudrick, in his earnestness to keep the ivory tower intact, who is being perverse. For Ursula is passing judgment here, not Lawrence, and the fact that her criticisms of University are not, according to Mr. Mudrick, articulated beyond an extravagant "truism" aptly underlines the extent of her disillusion. If the passage seems exaggerated, then so, of course, are Ursula's to-and-fro fluctuations between hope and despondency. So that the passage, pace Mr. Mudrick, is unquestionably in keeping with the main thematic line of her story.

University, then, proves another constriction. It may be a bastion of enlightenment, but for Ursula only the great darkness beyond really matters:

> This world in which she lived was like a circle lighted by a lamp...This inner circle of light in which she lived and moved, wherein the trains rushed and the factories ground out their machine-produce and the plants and the animals worked by the light of science and knowledge, suddenly it seemed like the area under an arc-lamp (21), wherein the moths and children played in the security of blinding light, not even knowing there was any darkness because they stay in the light...ignoring always the vast darkness that wheeled round about with half-revealed shapes lurking on the edge...with grey shadow-shapes of wild beasts...[22]
> (pp. 437-8)

It is in this imagery of "beasts" and "darkness" that the renewed relationship of Ursula and Skrebensky, the next turn of the wheel, is described. Skrebensky, back from Africa where the darkness "seems massive and fluid with terror" (p. 446) is depicted

as "a leopard", "a lion" and "a tiger", or as "a wild beast escaped straight back to its jungle" (p. 449). To Ursula he is "a voice out of the darkness" (p. 446), and when they kiss she feels to be "in the embrace of the strong darkness" (p. 446). The shadow of the new dark knowledge passes over Ursula too: she is a "leopard that sends up its raucous cry in the night" (p. 449), moving around in "sensual sub-consciousness" (p. 448) with her eyes "dilated and shining like the eyes of a wild animal" (p. 448). The landscapes which the lovers inhabit are also dark: they walk beside the Trent, its "dark water flowing in silence through the big restless night" (p. 445) or they simply sit at home in the Brangwen household which "was always quivering with darkness" (p. 450). So totally pervasive is the darkness that even the average citizen seems to Ursula a "subdued beast in sheep's clothing...primeval darkness falsified to a social mechanism" (p. 448). For Ursula the darkness is rich and fecund, the source of her fulfilment, and when, after a nocturnal walk with Skrebensky, she turns back to the lights of the town, the move is not, as it had been for Paul Morel, a step towards life, but a drift towards death, towards "unfulfilment" (p. 451).

Lawrence's use of the imagery in these sequences suggests the firmness of his grasp of the material: his hold is sure and consistent. More important, the very frequency with which the images are employed implicitly refutes a charge that is often levelled against him; namely, that he lacks, in Henry James' terms,

"operative irony", that he is too deeply immersed in the unconscious desires and subterranean preoccupations of his protagonists to retain a nail-paring distance from them. It might seem an odd way to defend Lawrence but I think it is nevertheless true: the excessiveness of the imagery points to the integrity of his stance. For it is not Lawrence who is obsessed here but Ursula; she can see nothing but darkness, so that, in a sense, she cannot see at all. And Lawrence makes this perfectly explicit not only by making her seem faintly absurd (that, for example, she can see her dry, old professor as a "lurking, blood-sniffing creature with eyes peering out of the jungle darkness, snuffing...for desires" is excessive to the point of being ridiculous) but also by intervening himself to stress her short-sightedness: "...she began to think she was really quite of the whole universe, of the old world as well as of the new. She forgot she was outside the pale of the whole world" (p. 455). True, Lawrence's criticism of Ursula is tentative. True, also, his own emphasis in writings both fictional and non-fictional, on the need for darkness, blood-consciousness and unconscious being, makes the extent of the irony difficult to assess. True, yet again, that the darkness brings Ursula her first sexual experience, (a point, incidentally, that critics seem to have missed)[23] and is therefore an important part of her expansion and growth. But the point about the darkness is, surely, that it represents, in Lawrence's own words, "one half of life",[24] and that because Ursula has failed

to balance night-goals and darkness with day-goals and light her relationship with Skrebensky becomes yet another cul-de-sac. Lawrence's irony is strengthened by the disparity between Ursula's initial faith in the darkness ("So she had all, everything" p. 449) and its eventual failure to provide her with lasting fulfilment. Significant, too, is the way the imagery of darkness contradicts the expectations she has of Skrebensky before she allows herself to be, quite literally, seduced by him. When she first hears that he is returning to England, she pictures him as a "gleaming dawn, yellow radiant", as the "angel" who holds "the keys of the sunshine" (p. 438) for her. Ursula is unwilling to accept that the dawn has not arrived: self-deception is, indeed, an important aspect of her behaviour. She prefers not to see that the "sunshine" he has brought her is a "sunshine of frost", she tries to ignore the "chill" that comes over her, she enjoys being "blind, dazzled" rather than face the truth (p. 442). But the truth is there all the same: "She knew, vaguely, in the first minute, that they were enemies come together in a truce. Every movement and word of his was alien to her being...The same iron rigidity, as if the world were made of steel, possessed her again" (pp. 442-3).

The image of "steel" recalls, of course, the night of destruction, six years before, and the echo is not accidental. For the painful truth about the Ursula-Skrebensky relationship is that, despite superficial changes, it achieves no meaningful development. The rhythm of The Rainbow, what Leavis called "the movement that, by recurrence along with newness, brings

continually a significant recall of what has gone before"[25] is put to devastating uses here, for it establishes precisely that: 'plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose'. There is always this double truth about the renewed relationship: it is different but it is also the same. And Lawrence himself, in an uncharacteristically dogmatic intrusion, calls special attention to it: "'It is like it was before', she said. Yet it was not in the least as it was before." (p. 445). The author offsets his protagonist. Yet in the end we trust the tale rather than the teller, and of the two truths, Ursula's tells most heavily. Beneath all transition lies stagnation, and beneath all progress, immobility. For if we trace the important events of the second relationship we see not only that they match events in the first relationship, but that they also, almost without exception, follow the same order. I have tried to suggest this in my summary of the key incidents and parallel quotations below:

When she first sees him, Ursula believes Skrebensky can open up new vistas for her:	1) "He seemed more and more to give her a sense of the vast world" (p. 293) 2) "He could open to her the gates of succeeding freedom and delight" (p. 438)
She is fascinated by his total self possession:	1) "He was so finely constituted, and so distinct, self-contained, self-supporting" (p. 292) 2) "He seemed so balanced and sure, he made such a confident presence" (p. 442)

She is, however, ambivalent in her initial responses to him:	1) "It drew her as a scent draws a bee from afar. But it also hurt her" (p. 293) 2) "She shrank in fear. Yet she flashed with excitement" (p. 443)
As their love becomes more physical, she grows to proud fullness, "like a flower":	1) "Like a flower shaking and wide-opened in the sun, she tempted him and challenged him" (p. 302) 2) "She became proud and erect, like a flower, putting itself forth in its proper strength" (p. 444)
She realises a new, "strong" self:	1) "She asserted herself before him, she knew herself infinitely desirable, and hence infinitely strong...she was beyond herself." (pp. 303-4) 2) "She was perfectly sure of herself, perfectly strong, stronger than all the world" (p. 452)
In her new independence, she finds Skrebensky superfluous:	1) "The fact of his driving on meant nothing to her, she was so filled by her own bright ecstasy" (p. 306) 2) "She followed after something that was not him...Her soul began to run by itself" (p. 456)
Skrebensky himself feels grey and insubstantial:	1) "Skrebensky drifted beside her, indefinite, his old form loosened, and another self, grey, vague, drifting out as from a bud" (p. 309) 2) "The whole being of him had become sterile, he was a spectre, divorced from life. He had no fullness, he was just a flat shape" (p. 458)
During a political argument, Ursula accuses him of nullity:	1) "'Are you anybody really? You seem like nothing to me.'" (p. 311) 2) "'It's all such a nothingness what you feel...I'm against you and all your old dead things'" (p. 462)

Beneath a white moon, Ursula feels elation and yearning:	1)	"She wanted to let go. She wanted to reach and be amongst the flashing stars...She was mad to be gone" (p. 317)
	2)	"'I want to go', she cried in a strong dominant voice. 'I want to go'" (p. 474)
In a moonlit battle that follows Ursula proves her own power and destroys Skrebensky:	1)	"She had triumphed: he was not any more" (p. 322)
	2)	"There was no moon for her, no sea. All had passed away... He was white and obliterated" (p. 481)
Shortly afterwards, Skrebensky departs overseas:	1)	"He wrote in March to say that he was going to South Africa" (p. 330)
	2)	"In another week, Skrebensky sailed with his new wife to India" (p. 483)

To represent the development of the relationship in this way is to fail to do justice to its complexities. It is also, of course, to distort the brilliance of Lawrence's 'significant form' by making it appear too schematic. Yet to over-simplify is to err in the right direction, for many critics have seen Lawrence's presentation as formless and confused; Graham Hough, we remember, calls it a "muddle";[26] Marvin Mudrick complains that "there are, after all, too many and too similar descriptions of Ursula and Skrebensky making hopeless love";[27] and Dr. Leavis suggests that "the sterile deadlock between Ursula and Skrebensky -- seems too long-drawn-out".[28] In the light of the analysis above, the weakness of these indictments from three of Lawrence's most eminent scholars should be self-evident. To Mr. Hough we must answer that an author who has produced here such a supreme example of significant

form can clearly not be muddled; to Mr. Mudrick we must point out that the "similarity" he complains of in the relationship is an essential, indeed the essential, part of its hopelessness; and to Mr. Leavis we must retort that the relationship is not "long-drawn-out", but falls, rather, into two parallel but distinctive parts, each one allotted exactly the same amount of space (in the Penguin edition forty-five pages) and each one following precisely the same dramatic sequence so as to suggest that a "deadlock" has indeed occurred.

It is not Skrebensky, then, who can take Ursula 'beyond'. Her original conception of him as "the man with the wondrous lips that could send the kiss wavering to the very end of all space" (p. 439) is a bitter mockery now. For Skrebensky is, emphatically, a closed circle: "He seemed completed now...She knew him all round, not on any side did he lead into the unknown" (pp. 473-4). For Ursula it should be a time to move on into new and more expansive experience. In actual fact, it is not. Terrified by the power of her ego, by the destructive dominance she had shown beneath the Lincolnshire moon, she retreats into humility and self-reproach. It is at this point that the whole form of her outward development -- fluctuation and expansion -- is most severely threatened. She regrets her wild fluctuations, vowing to "beat her way back through all this fluctuation, back to stability and security" (p. 487). And she turns her back on the beyond, threatening to become as inward-looking as her ancestors:

> What did the self, the form of life, matter? Only the living from day to day mattered, the beloved existence in the body, rich, peaceful, complete, with no beyond, no further trouble, no further complication. She had been wrong. She had been arrogant and wicked, wanting that other thing, that fantastic freedom, that illusory conceited fulfilment...Suddenly she saw her mother in a just and true light. Her mother was simple and radically true. She had taken the life that was given. She had not, in her arrogant conceit, insisted on creating life to fit herself.
>
> (pp. 484-5)

This does not sound like Ursula, and, of course, it is not. Because she feels guilty over Skrebensky, she has temporarily effaced her true, travelling 'self', and these distorted sentiments are the consequence. Nevertheless it takes a violent experience to free Ursula from her temporary imprisonment in the modest "ring of physical considerations". The crucial breakthrough comes by way of breakdown, by way of an hallucination which pounds "the old duality" of Ursula's life into a once-and-for-all nothingness.

Interpretations of Ursula's ordeal before the horses (pp. 487-90) differ markedly, but on one point critics seem to agree: whatever does happen to her in this scene must, in some way, be preparatory for the vision of the rainbow that follows. If liberation has been achieved at all, and the rainbow symbol suggests it has, then it must have been here. Consequently critics have tended to see the scene as a one-to-one struggle in which one party (Ursula) submits to or overcomes the other (the horses) to attain some mysterious something which wins her the crown of

freedom (the fulfilment of the rainbow). The problem with this kind of interpretation I have already hinted at: how clear is it whether she "submits" or "overcomes"? And what exactly is the mysterious something attained that leads her to the rainbow? Difficult questions these, and it is not surprising that a satisfying interpretation of the scene has yet to be produced.

There is no ultimate reason, however, why this sort of reading (Ursula versus the horses) should be taken at all. If, instead, we regard the horses as themselves representing Ursula's conflict (what this is remains to be discussed), that is to say, standing for both halves of her conflict rather than symbolising a single force which she must oppose, then many of the problems fall away. What we have then is not Ursula versus the horses, but Ursula deciding between the two possibilities which the horses offer. So that the real issue becomes not whether Ursula submits or overcomes but rather what it is she chooses.

Just before Ursula encounters the horses, we recall, she has been thinking of renouncing her journey beyond and settling for a life of confined domesticity: "Who was she to be wanting some fantastic fulfilment in her life?...She would marry...She gave her limbs to the bondage, she loved the bondage she called it peace" (p. 485). The conflict, of course, is between contraction and expansion, and it would seem likely that in any psychic trauma that followed hard on the heels of these reflections, the conflict would recur. That this is indeed the case, and that the choices

which the horses offer are confinement and contraction or freedom and growth, is clear, I believe, from the imagery of the passage. On the one hand, the horses threaten to encircle Ursula: they are "gripped, clenched, narrow in a hold that never relaxed"; they are a "concentrated, knitted flank" or a "halo of lightning" or "circles of lightning"; they are a "blue, iridescent flash surrounding" her, "blocking her", "enclosing her". In one sense, then, though their physicality is exacerbated beyond anything so mundane as domesticity, the horses represent that narrow, domestic "ring of physical consideration" into which Ursula has been tempted to recede. The oppressiveness of the possibility is heavily emphasised.

On the other hand, the horses symbolise something outside this ring, they symbolise the elusive 'beyond'. Ursula's first reaction to them is that "suddenly she knew there was something else" (a nice ambiguity) and when she sees them they are "beyond, above her". Before the encounter Ursula had tried to banish the thought of "that other thing, that fantastic freedom" (p. 484) and so here also she tries not to acknowledge the horses, "did not want to know they were there". Ursula feels their urgent, vital activity passing through her own body: "In a sort of lightning of knowledge, their movement travelled through her..." The canters of the horses back-and-forth enact Ursula's own previous fluctuations and when the horses draw her on "beyond" she approaches them in response; but still they move onward,

"making a wide circle". This wider circle beyond the domestic and physical, therefore the horses also represent.

So far, Ursula has been a kind of spectator at the drama of her own conflicting desires; but at this point (roughly half-way through the scene) she is drawn into the action, is confronted with a choice. Either she can choose constriction, can take the minimal step "into the smaller, cultivated field, and so out on to the high-road and the ordered world of man" (my underlining). Or she can choose expansion, can take the way of aspiration, and "climb into the boughs of that oak-tree, and so round and drop on the other side of the hedge". To a traveller like Ursula, the second choice must, for all its doubts and difficulties, be the right one; in the inner circle she would re-enact the same frustrated movements as the horses, be "pressing forever till they went mad , running against the walls of time, and never bursting free". So she begins the outward movement, "making a wide detour round the horse-mass" (the previous associations of the word 'mass' underline the larger significance of this movement) and "working her way round to the other side of the tree". As Ursula expands outwards, so the horses, in a kind of ritual of sympathy or identification, begin "loosening their knot", and though they make one last rush at her, she is safe now, falling out from the tree and beyond their field. With the choice taken, and the conflict resolved, the horses seem "almost pathetic".

The resolution of the contraction-expansion conflict seems to me the overriding intention of the scene, and in so far as it

dramatises Ursula's escape from the narrow "ring of physical consideration" it is wholly successful. "It is Ursula's express triumph over her experience", Edward Engelberg notes, "to break through all circles, all encircling hindrances, and among them, particularly, the circle of the wedding ring",[29] and, although Engelberg is wrong to overemphasise the rejection of the wedding ring,(Skrebensky's does not fit but, we feel, a larger one, as it turns out Birkin's, might) a triumph it surely is. There is nothing incongruous, therefore, when we are told shortly afterwards that her triumph has taken her to the 'unknown' she has always sought:

> ...when she looked ahead, into the undiscovered land before her, what was there she could recognise but a fresh glow of light and inscrutable trees going up from the earth like smoke. It was the unknown, the unexplored, the undiscovered upon whose shore she had landed, alone, after crossing the void, the darkness which washed the New World and the Old.
> (p. 494)

Ursula, we are informed, arrives "alone", so what jars in the symbol of the rainbow that follows is the implication that she will not be "alone" for long, the suggestion that the society against which she has fought to attain her freedom will presently be joining her in the 'beyond'. The image of the rainbow, as Leavis was the first to note, is an extravagant and unprepared symbol of social apocalypse because although Ursula has, for the time being at least, solved her own problems, she has certainly not solved society's. The ending seems an imposition, and many

reasons have been offered why this should be so. Probably Lawrence was eager to move on to his next novel, and was hasty and careless in his conclusion of The Rainbow. Possibly he even had another novel in mind when he made his conclusion so much more 'social' than was warranted. Possibly he had not the conviction to resolve The Rainbow satisfyingly. Or possibly, as Alan Friedman suggests, he did not consider it a 'conclusion', in the normal sense of the word, at all: "As it turns out, the impulse beyond knowledge into the unknown, predicated by the introduction, is the energy which not only shapes the several arcs of experience of which The Rainbow consists, but determines and even makes imperative the absence of the 'inevitable' conclusions of fiction".[30] What Friedman suggests, of course, is that a non-ending is the logical outcome of 'expansive' form, but it is difficult not to feel that Lawrence did mean to produce a finite and conclusive ending. Whatever the case we should remember that Ursula's expansion is not really over, and that in Women in Love she will be asked to go 'beyond' once again.

CHAPTER TWO

Retreating Within: Kate in The Plumed Serpent

> This is the way out of the vicious circle. Not to rush round on the periphery, like a rabbit in a ring, trying to break through. But to retreat to the very centre and there to be filled with a new strange stability, polarized in unfathomable richness with the centre of centres. We are so silly, trying to invent devices and machines for flying off from the surface of the earth. Instead of realising that for us the deep satisfaction lies not in escaping, but in getting into the perfect circuit of the earth's terrestial magnetism. Not in breaking away.[1]

There are eleven years, a world war, a couple of continents and at least one major novel (Women in Love) between The Rainbow and The Plumed Serpent, so it is hardly surprising that the Quetzalcoatl novel should be radically different in its shape, tone and interest. Yet its opening, at any rate, is peculiarly similar. It begins, after all, with the encircled heroine: Kate Leslie, a voluntary exile no longer able to serve that in which she does not believe -- her homeland, her family, her religion -- has come to Mexico City in search of new freedom; but as she enters the bullring there, she notices the stadium's "network iron frame" and feels as if she is going to "prison". When she has taken her seat "between two iron loops" the fear is renewed: "Now Kate knew she was in a trap -- a big concrete beetle trap"[2]. Her claustrophobia is intensified by the pressure of the Mexican crowd, for "above Kate's row was a mass of people, as it were impending; a

very uncomfortable sensation" (p. 7). The faint echoes, here, of the threatening horse-mass in The Rainbow reverberate more fiercely when the spectators descend on and surround the heroine: "...the masses in the middle, unreserved seats suddenly burst and rushed down on to the lowest, reserved seats. It was a crash like a burst reservoir, and the populace in black Sunday suits poured down round and about our astonished, frightened trio" (p. 8). Like the bull which she watches being taunted and tortured, Kate is a bewildered innocent ensnared by human brutality, surrounded by a diseased mob, totally "surprised" by the horrors she must suffer. Desperate to escape, she searches, like the bull, for a way out of the ringed torment:

> There she was in the great concrete archway under the stadium, with the lousy press of the audience crowding in after her. Facing outwards, she saw the straight downpour of the rain, and a little beyond, the great wooden gates that opened to the free street. Oh, to be out, to be out of this, to be free! ...And the gates were almost shut. Perhaps they would not let her out. Oh horror!
>
> (p. 12)

The archway, the woman facing outwards, the partially-open gates, the tantalising freedom "beyond" -- the imagery takes us right back, once again, to The Rainbow, and like the protagonists in that novel, Kate is rescued from a state of cramp and confinement by the intervention of a member of the opposite sex, Don Cipriano, who takes her to liberation (in the form of a taxi) outside. Slight as Don Cipriano's assistance seems at this early stage, it marks him out as a potential partner for Kate: he has shown that he can take her away and "beyond".

By the end of Chapter One of The Plumed Serpent, then, we should have recognised that we are once more in the presence of a woman's quest for the beyond. Like Ursula Brangwen, Kate Leslie is a traveller on the face of the earth, a restless soul searching for new life in the unknown. Like Ursula, she leaves behind her dead or broken relationships with the opposite sex, in order to continue onward. And like Ursula after her first failure with Skrebensky, Kate wants "to be left alone, not to be touched" (p. 114), shrinks from all intimacy so as to preserve the autonomy of her ego, outlaws and isolates herself in order to be fulfilled:

> No, she no longer wanted love, excitement and something to fill her life. 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 wordly contacts...Perhaps this had brought her to Mexico: away from England and her mother, away from her children, away from everybody. To be alone, with the unfolding flower of her own soul, in the delicate, chiming silence that is at the midst of things. 3
> (p. 62)

It is this desire to be "at the midst of things", however, which makes Kate's quest, in an important sense, antithetical to Ursula's. For where Ursula had sought the outer circle, Kate seeks the inner one, "the centre of centres"; where Ursula had looked outwards and upward, Kate looks inwards and down; and where Ursula had strained beyond the circles of experience, Kate seeks "man's innermost clue" (p. 458), the centre of all being. United in their quest to transcend the mediocrities and disappointments of the past,

Kate and Ursula look in opposite directions for the means to transcendence. Kate's quest is centripetal where Ursula's has been centrifugal. In "Study of Thomas Hardy" Lawrence makes the distinction between 'male' and 'female' traits: "The woman grows downwards, like a root, towards the centre and the darkness and the origin. The man grows upwards like a stalk, towards discovery and light and utterance.[4] If we apply the terms here, we will find that where Ursula's quest had, for the most part, been conducted on 'male' lines, Kate's is primarily a 'female' quest. The differences tell on Lawrence's imagery; the metaphor which controls The Plumed Serpent and assists our understanding of its themes, patterns and structure is not the 'expanding circle', but the "nucleus of new life" (p. 133). Kate's quest is for a centre.[5]

Though Kate and Ursula take different paths, their mode of travelling is identical. Kate's quest, that is to say, proceeds like Ursula's by a series of fluctuations. Critics have not been slow to note this; Graham Hough, who shows a far better understanding of The Plumed Serpent than he does of The Rainbow, argues that "Kate's oscillations between acceptance and rejection of Mexico set the pattern for the whole book",[6] and J.B. Vickery makes much the same point when he says that "Kate's alternating approach to or withdrawal from both Cipriano and the new religious life constitute the major part of the book."[7] The ebb and flow of Kate's feelings is charted in her restless movements over the Mexican landscape: from Mexico City to Orilla; from Orilla to Sayula; from Sayula to Jamiltepec; home to

Sayula; back to Jamiltepec; home to Sayula again; then back again to Jamiltepec, and so on. But Kate's fluctuations between illusion and disillusion, hope and disappointment, faith and distrust, are never so easy to define as Ursula's. Not only do they lack pattern, they also fail to help her develop in any obvious or meaningful direction. They lack credibility, for while the frictions and contradictions of Ursula's growth are relatively easy to explain because they emerge naturally out of the situations which provoke them, Kate's wanderings seem to operate quite independent of any shaping context. L.D. Clark's explanation that "her pilgrimage is beset by a caution that prompts her to contrary statements"[8] is a benign understatement; Kate's unmotivated contrariness, a projection of Lawrence's own ambivalent feelings about Mexico, is a major obstacle to the unity of the novel.

But at the beginning, at least, all seems well-organized. The quest begins in Mexico City, and in the first three chapters we watch Kate testing out its most prized possessions. She attends a bullfight and, as we have already seen, finds it corrupt, brutal, nauseating; she leaves in outrage. She is summoned to Mrs. Norris's where she meets some of the capital's most respected and respectable citizens; all, barring Ramon and Cipriano, leave her bored or irritated, and she departs cursing the "awful, ill-bred" Burlaps and the "ghastly" tea party. (p. 49) She visits the University to see the capital's most esteemed art, Rivera's frescoes, and, repulsed by the artist's crude socialist propaganda, she flies off in "a towering rage". (p. 56) Mexico City fails on all counts; as L.D. Clark suggests,

Kate's experiences there demonstrate"...the death of ritual...the death of politics and social contact...the death of art".[9]

The humbler natives of Mexico, the peons, Kate finds more interesting, but her attraction to them is tinged with reservation or even disappointment. The novel had opened, we remember, with the disembowelling of a horse, and these natives, too, seem to have been deprived of a core of life. The "handsome men looking up with their black, centreless eyes" (p. 53) fascinate Kate, but their vacuity disturbs her: "Their bright black eyes that look at you wonderingly...have no centre to them" (p. 81). Their wives are the same, "the dark eyes of half-created women, soft, appealing, yet with a queer void insolence! Something lurking where the womanly centre should have been..." (p. 82). Even Juana, whom Kate employs as a servant, has "centreless, dark eyes", (p. 126) and the general aimlessness, to which her eyes are a tell-tale sign rubs off on the whole of Juana's family, whose existence is a sort of Mexican Brangwen-ism, a life "lived absolutely a terre" (p. 153). Behind the eyes of the natives there lies, Kate tells Cipriano, the larger story of "the uncreated centre" (p. 83), the people who have lost, and not yet re-discovered, purposeful being: "Their eyes have no middle to them. Those big handsome men, under their big hats, they aren't really there. They have no centre, no real I. Their middle is a raging black hole like the middle of a maelstrom" (p. 40).

Clearly, Kate attaches a great deal of importance to eyes, and one of her reasons for leaving England is the bleakness of attitude

there, "that reversed look which is in the eyes of so many white people, the look of nullity, and life wheeling in the reversed direction. Widdershins." (p. 84) What Kate must learn about Mexican eyes is that their blackness does not necessarily signify nullity and emptiness, but can mean an alternative way of seeing;[10] for the Quetzalcoatl movement, which replaces Christian symbols with "the Eye of the Other One" (p. 367), is an attempt to establish a new kind of vision. Similarly, Kate must learn that the oppressive, ponderous, "down-pressing" Mexican spirit, which makes her feel "like a bird round whose body a snake has coiled itself" (p. 77) may be a source of renewal; given the right encouragement, Don Ramon tells her, the burden of Mexico can be transformed into a regenerative connection with the primal source of life:

> Mexico pulls you down, the people pull you down like a great weight! But it may be they pull you down as the earth's pull of gravitation does, that you can balance on your feet. Maybe they draw you down as the earth draws down the roots of a tree, so that it may be clinched deep in soil. Men are still part of the Tree of Life, and the roots go down to the centre of the earth:..The roots and life are there. What else it needs is the word, for the forest to begin to rise again. And some man among men must speak the word.
>
> (p. 86)

It is a tentative faith that Don Ramon will prove the "man among men" to lead her to the earth's centre that makes Kate decide, after the inner debate which constitutes Chapter Four of The Plumed Serpent, 'To Stay or Not to Stay', to move towards his hacienda; "in spite of the sense of doom on her heart" (p. 86) she has taken the crucial step into the hinterland of Mexico.

Kate's journey across Lake Sayula, in mythic terms, as Jascha Kessler has suggested, "the crossing of the threshold",[11] is Kate's first significant step towards "the nucleus of new life", for, according to rumour, a messenger has already risen from the lake to herald the return of Quetzalcoatl, and as Cipriano tells her later "Ramon says he will make the lake the centre of a new world". It is on the lake that Kate has three visionary experiences which baptise her into the new faith. The first of these is her encounter with two men of the lake, her boatman and a man who bathes near the boat, both Quetzalcoatl converts whose contact with the holy waters of Sayula has given them "extraordinary beauty". From their dark eyes, distant rather than void, Kate gains a new insight into native potential:

> The man in the water stood with the sun on his powerful chest, looking after the boat in half-seeing abstraction. His eyes had taken again the peculiar gleaming far-awayness, suspended between the realities, which, Kate suddenly realised, was the central look in the native eyes. The boatman, rowing away, was glancing back at the man who stood in the water, and his face, too, had the abstracted, transfigured look of a man perfectly suspended between the world's two strenuous wings of energy. A look of extraordinary, arresting beauty, the silent vulnerable centre of all life's quivering, like the nucleus gleaming in tranquil suspense, within a cell...'You have the morning star in your eyes', she said...
>
> (pp. 99-100)

As this passage and others make clear, the centre which Kate seeks must also, in order to be the nucleus of remedial energy, become a pivot for the antitheses of experience, "the gleaming clue to the two opposites" (p. 101), the mid-point of the cosmic see-saw. Hence Kate's reference to the Morning Star, the symbol of a balance between day and night, bird and snake, spirit and soul, man and woman.

Like Birkin in Women in Love, Kate believes that relationships between men and women ought to be based on equilibrium, that human partners should meet at the centre of their relationship, and not trespass on each other's individuality. She admits to Don Ramon that what she fears with Cipriano is imbalance:

> 'He would never meet me. He would never come forward himself, to meet me. He would come to take something from me, and I should have to let him. And I don't want merely that. I want a man who will come half-way, just half-way, to meet me.' Don Ramon pondered, and shook his head. 'You are right,' he said. 'Yet in these matters one never knows what is half-way, nor where it is.'
> (pp. 297-8)

Don Ramon's answer is evasive, deliberately so perhaps, and we will have to consider the charge that he marries Kate and Cipriano in full knowledge that their marriage will be off-centre, lop-sided, and illegitimately weighted towards the male.

Kate's second important experience on the lake is her discovery of something whole and holy amidst the ruins of Mexico. Until she crosses the lake, Kate has seen only decay in Mexico: the "dreary" buildings of its capital city, the shabby marketplaces, "the noble ruined haciendas, with ruined avenues approaching their broken splendour" (p. 84). Even the boat-ride itself begins and ends in the same atmosphere of fragmentation: the hotel's boat which Kate wants to hire is "broken", the boatman she has to choose instead is "crippled", the bank from which they embark is "broken" (p. 96), and it is at a "broken-down landing place" (p. 102) and a "heap of collapsed masonry" (p. 103) that their journey ends. Because of this background of disintegration, the

boatman's gift to Kate of an ancient, undamaged earthenware pot, which he draws from the lake-bed, is endowed with special significance. Preserved in the lake since "the time of the old gods" (p. 103) the pot is a symbol of "the same mystery unbroken" (p. 100) which Kate seeks, and a confirmation that the gods themselves are alive, well and ready to be retrieved.[12]

Convinced of the need to "turn one's back on the cog-wheel world" and to dwell in a house which is "turned inwards" (p. 114) to the mystery, Kate moves from the soulless hotel at Orilla to a place of her own in Sayula village. On her boat-journey there, she has a third visionary insight, which, like the first one, involves two men, an anticipation perhaps of her further experiences with another male partnership: Ramon and Cipriano. For most of the journey Kate is suspicious of the two men, seeing them as "incomplete", "half-made", "insect-like" and "non-integrate". But suddenly, and for no apparent reason, Kate's fear of them dissolves, leaving her free to revere their "dark, strong, unbroken blood", (p. 117) and to inhale, like them, "the Other Breath", the mysterious, new, "delicate yet supreme life-breath in the inner air". (p. 119) The draught of refreshing air brings Kate nearer to her elusive centre, for the vital landscape around her seems to beat with the pulse of the universe: "Behind the fierce sun the dark eyes of a deeper sun were watching, and between the bluish ribs of the mountains a powerful heart was secretly beating, the heart of the earth". (p. 119)

Cleansed of some of her scepticism by the waters of Sayula,

Kate now faces the more strenuous ordeal of coming to terms with the mainland of Mexico. She must triumph over her former, European self. In particular, she must conquer that isolating and egotistical distaste for the blood-togetherness which Ramon wants to effect, since merger, fusion and communion in touch are, in The Plumed Serpent, necessary antecedents to fulfilment at life's source. Kate's participation in the Quetzalcoatl ceremonies at Sayula plaza (Chapter Five) is therefore a dance-step in the right direction, one which, had Lawrence planned Kate's development as uniform instead of oscillatory, we might even expect to be decisive. For Lawrence's use of imagery makes the relevance of the scene to Kate's quest plain enough: the men who join the ritual gather in "a clear circle, with the drum in the centre" (p. 131); there is also a "central fire"(p. 141); the singer is heard "singing inwardly, singing to his own soul, not outward to the world, nor yet even upward...(but) to the inner mystery...the other dimension of man's existence";(p. 137) the drum, too, is "strange, inward" (p. 137), and beats like "a new strong pulse" (p.139) or with a "changeless living beat, like a heart".(p. 140) The drum, the fire, the songs, the circle of men — these, Kate suddenly understands, are the atoms or components of the vital centre for which she has been looking:

> She was attracted, almost fascinated by the strange nuclear power of the men in the circle. It was like a darkly glowing, vivid nucleus of new life...here and here alone, it seemed to her, life burned with a deep, new fire. The rest of life, as she knew it, seemed wan, bleached and sterile. The pallid wanness and weariness in her world! And here, the dark, ruddy figures in the glare of a torch, like the centre of the

> everlasting fire, surely this was a new kindling of mankind! She knew it was so. Yet she preferred to be on the fringe, sufficiently out of contact.
> (p. 133)

Once the dance begins, however, Kate does not stay "out of contact" for very long. She is led into its inner circle and there contributes to the communal, eurhythmic tread down towards the world's centre,[13] down towards "the dark body of the earth".(p. 143) As all good Lawrencian dances should, the ritual takes Kate "beyond" herself and into new knowledge: "She felt her sex and her womanhood caught up and identified in the slowly-revolving ocean of nascent life, the dark sky of the man towering and wheeling above. She was not herself, she was gone, and her own desires were gone in the ocean of the great desire".(p. 143) We are reminded of the wedding dance in The Rainbow which takes Ursula "beyond" herself; but Kate's transcendence of selfhood is not, in the end, quite like Ursula's. For if, as Kenneth Innis suggests, "the circling ring of horses that almost captures Ursula in The Rainbow is analogous to the outer circle of male power in the dance of the wheeling snake,"[14] then the irony of the echo becomes all-too-plain: Kate allows herself to be trapped by inward-looking male power where Ursula had fought free of it.

Kate's sacrifice of herself to the elements, and of her own desires to a greater cause is, in fact, more akin to the experiences of the woman who rode away,[15] or, indeed, to her own sexual non-intimacy with Cipriano, where she learns to renounce the personal satisfaction of orgasm for a "mindless communion of the blood". (p. 464)

Ursula, we remember, had rejected the goat-like Anthony, but Kate accepts the Pan-like Cipriano and welcomes a closer union with the earth. "Transcendental" as Lawrence insists Kate's actions are, it is hard not to feel that her foregoing of individuality for a mindless connexion with Cipriano and the cosmos is less persuasive and admirable than Lawrence intended. It is perhaps indicative of Lawrence's post-war disillusion that he should be asserting as primary in The Plumed Serpent something which in 1915 was clearly meant to be transcended; for, as H.M. Daleski argues, a "mindless communion of the blood" was "where the men of The Rainbow started not ended".[16] One can only say in Lawrence's defence that the position he holds here (and there seems little doubt that he does condone Kate's submersion in, and submission to, blood-consciousness), offensive as the liberal conscience might find it, is perfectly in keeping with the quest motif of The Plumed Serpent: Kate's search, described by J.F. Stoll as "a kind of archetypal lapsing back into the life-source",[17] is always downwards to a primal centre, and total immersion in the fountains of life remains, from the very beginning, the logical outcome of her search. At the well of being, it is consistently implied, lies Kate's well-being.

Like Chapter Four, Chapter Eight of The Plumed Serpent , 'Night in the House', functions as an epilogue to the preceding three chapters, an epilogue in which the oscillations of Kate's recent experiences are renewed and brought to a pitch of intensity, forcing her to consider the wisdom of remaining in Mexico. Terrified by the darkness of the

Mexican night, and prevented, by her scepticism, from a compensatory faith in its potency, Kate debates whether the Quetzalcoatl drums she has heard are a new pulse connected to the old mystery, or an ancient savagery foolishly brought back to life. It is her faith in Don Ramon which clinches the argument: "No! Its not a helpless panic reversal. It is conscious, carefully chosen. We must go back to pick up old threads...We must do it. Don Ramon is right. He must be a great man, really". (p. 150)

From this point on, the "great man" plays an increasingly important part in the novel, and this is suggested by a technical detail, the shift in perspective from Chapter Eleven onwards, which allows us to see Don Ramon on his own, without the intervention of Kate's presence or consciousness. Though Ramon is, as we shall see, a necessary part of Kate's quest, the artistic integrity behind the shift is not easy to discern. We are no longer able to follow Kate's quest with confidence: its tracks are obscured by a mass of material superfluous to it. The hymns, meetings and ceremonies which ritualise Ramon's revival of men and gods constitute the weakest sections of the novel and threaten to, or at times manage to, eclipse and disrupt what seems to have been established as the novel's main thematic line. The quest motif is, moreover, undermined where it should be supported, for the increasing absence of a shaping pattern or central character militates against Kate's mission for shape and centrality. Because the novel becomes more and more diffuse, theme and structure are opposed. Graham Hough has noted how "The Plumed Serpent is a book that has no one centre; its movement is an alternate backward and forward one, and it

clusters round a number of nodal points".[18] Yet the novel does, at least, begin with a centre, Kate Leslie, and that she should be pushed out of the foreground, and that the novel should become increasingly centreless, is surely antithetical to the story of a search for "the centre of centres". The form of the novel contradicts the content, the decentralisation gives the lie to the tale. And during the second half of the novel, we find it almost impossible to say where Kate's quest, which in 'The Plaza' scene had been so near its elusive centre, is actually leading.

Major as these flaws undoubtedly are, Lawrence does take pains to establish the relevance of Ramon to Kate's quest. The Quetzalcoatl movement which he leads is a search for the same centrality, balance and renewal which Kate herself seeks. By bringing back the gods, Ramon hopes to bring back mankind, to help men and women realise their "manhood" and "womanhood". "Quetzalcoatl" he tells Kate in one of his rare but refreshingly sane moments of moderation, "is to me only the symbol of the best a man may be, in the next days",(p. 299) and in bringing man to his "best" Ramon hopes also to initiate a large-scale political and religious upheaval.

His chief political opponent is Montes, President of the Republic. Montes eventually joins forces with Ramon, rather than face him as an enemy, but their innate opposition is plain enough: Montes concerns himself with social improvements which can raise the country from starvation, poverty and unenlightenment, but Ramon, as Montes himself puts it, "wants to save its soul".(p. 209) As far as Ramon is concerned, the President's policies only scrape the surfaces of

society, fail to achieve any meaningful, inner advancement. (There are echoes here of Lawrence's quarrel with Bertrand Russell.) Ramon's own attempt "to open the oyster of the cosmos" (p. 211), as he explains to Cipriano in the image of the social egg which Lawrence himself uses in 'The Crown', will be internal, will appeal to the very centre of the individual Mexican soul:

> Politics, and all this social religion that Montes has got is like washing the outside of the egg to make it look clean. But I myself, I want to get inside the egg, right to the middle, to start it growing into a new bird...the spark of fire has never gone into the middle of it to start it...let us hatch the chick before we start cleaning up the nest.
>
> (p. 210)

The re-vitalising spark must begin "at the middle" because it is there, Ramon believes, that "man's innermost clue" (p. 458) resides. From this premise springs Ramon's opposition to Christianity. His disagreement with the Bishop of the West, his destruction of the Christian symbols at Sayula Church, his establishment, at the expense of his wife's life, of the Quetzalcoatl faith: all these are based on his conviction that Christianity has failed to give the Mexican people "the clue-word to their own souls",(p. 289) and that his own religion can fill "the uncreated centre" with life. Ramon's religion means to strike at the "heart" and "blood" of his people, and to prove its case on the pulses. Ramon's goal is the kingdom of heaven within: within each human soul "at the middle",(p. 80) within the universe at the "perfectly unfathomable life mystery at the centre".(p. 299) In the irresistible pursuit of his dark and nuclear god Ramon leaves no sceptical stone unturned, not even Kate, not even his own doubting

sons, whose credulous Christianity he feels bound to oppose:

> 'Mama's soul', said Cyprian, 'will go straight into Paradise.' 'Who knows, child! Perhaps the Paradise for the souls of the dead is the hearts of the living... It is possible', said Ramon, 'that even now the only Paradise for the soul of your mother is in my heart... I believe, my son, that the hearts of living men are the very middle of the sky. And there God is; and Paradise; inside the hearts of living men and women. And there the souls of dead men come to rest, there, at the very centre...'
> (p. 389)

It is to "the very centre" that Ramon himself looks when he conducts the numerous religious ceremonies which dominate (and detract from) the second half of the novel. He is described as "looking into the heart of the world" (p. 214) and as "seeing the heart of all darkness in front of him where his unknowable God-mystery lived and moved". (p. 371) To pass out towards the centre of deeper being, Ramon relies on a transcendental exercise, involving intense concentration and a Nazi-like salute, which allows him to cast off the "cords of the world" and to go "free in the other strength".(p. 186) Both Cipriano and Kate, in order to attain God- or Goddess-like status and to join Ramon in the mindless heart of darkness, have to undergo a similar kind of ritualistic self-abandonment. Cipriano, whose unshakeable belief that "Ramon is the centre of a new world" (p. 355) earns him the right to become the living Huitzilopochtli, Quetzalcoatl's right-hand God, (and, incidentally, makes nonsense of the earlier prophecy - see p. 212 - that he will "betray" Ramon), gets his second strength from Ramon after subjecting his militia to a new, fierce

discipline. The scene in which Ramon binds Cipriano's eyes, closing them to the daily world and opening them to "where there is no beyond"(p. 405) is described in terms of circles, circles of consciousness which reel away to leave Cipriano exposed at the primal source:

> Ramon came quickly to him, placed one of his hands over Cipriano's eyes, closing them. Ramon stood behind Cipriano who remained motionless in the warm dark, his consciousness reeling in strange concentric waves, towards a centre where it suddenly plunges into the bottomless deeps, like sleep...Ramon felt the thud of the man's heart slowly slackening. In Cipriano another circle of darkness had started slowly to revolve, from his heart...And Cipriano began to feel as if his mind, his head were melting away in the darkness, like a pearl in black wine, the outer circle began to swing, vast. And he was a man without a head...The last circle was sweeping round, and the breath upon the waters was sinking into the waters, there was no more utterance...And both men passed into perfect unconsciousness, Cipriano within the womb of undisturbed creation, Ramon in the death sleep.
>
> (pp. 402-4)

"Womb", "death", and "sleep": the terms suggest how the way forward to fulfilment is really the way backward to unconsciousness. This disturbing conclusion Kate herself reaches, albeit somewhat reluctantly, through her increasing attraction to the uncommunicative Cipriano and through a more committed participation in the Quetzalcoatl revolution. Despite moments of doubt and anguish, she allows "the death of her individual self",(p. 426) looks forward to the "supreme passivity" and "living lifelessness" of a future with Cipriano,(p. 342) prepares to be "a subservient, instrumental thing",(p. 424) accepts a man who "would never woo"[19] and who abhors intimacy,(p. 342) and finally, stoops, quite literally, to marry him. The imagery makes the deathly quality of the matrimony explicit, and Kate is certainly limited,

ignored and overshadowed by her subterranean spouse. But seated on her throne as Malintzi, bride of Huitzilopochtli, Kate seems, after all, to have brought her search for a centre to a rewarding close. She sees the circles of time receding and finds herself being carried back down the years to the re-discovery of her virginity. She is re-born, replenished, returned to "the bud of her life":

> 'Ah, God!' she thought. 'There are more ways than one of becoming like a little child.' The flaminess and the magnificence of the beginning: this was what Cipriano wanted to bring to his marriage...she felt her own childhood coming back to her. The years seemed to be reeling away in great circles, falling away from her. Leaving her sitting there like a girl in her first adolescence...Their marriage was a young vulnerable flame. So he sat in silence on his throne, holding her hand in silence, till the years reeled away from her in fleeing circles, and she sat as every real woman can sit, no matter at what age, a girl again, and for him, a virgin... When she remembered his stabbing the three helpless peons, she thought: Why should I judge him? He is of the gods... What do I care if he kills people? His flame is young and clean.
> (p. 431)

So Kate is re-born a goddess in green; but the passage is not without its more sinister aspects. Kate's Olympian indifference to the brutality of General Viedma, reminiscent perhaps of the infamous "What Matter?" in Yeats's poem "The Gyres", stands out as yet another rationalisation in a series of logic-chops and self-deceptions which marriage to Cipriano requires her to perform. As for the rest: he asks her to believe that fear can be "good", (p. 72) that "Peace is only the rest after the war", (p. 204) that man must "fight for the vulnerable unfolding of life", (p. 396) even though this means killing, and that "horror is like the sesame seed in the nougat, it gives the

sharp wild flavor. It is good to have it there".(p. 259) And for all her oscillations, Kate swallows the Newspeak without undue difficulty. Her acceptance of Cipriano may be crucial to the novel's design, but if Lawrence intended to convince his readers of Cipriano's acceptability then his attempt has surely failed. We have, regrettably, seen all-too-little of his young, clean flame and all too much of his assassinating knife. Indeed the Quetzalcoatl movement as a whole, initially so attractive in its theoretical vitalism, in the end breeds more savagery than it does either sanctity or sanity. When the "panther"-like, "lynx"-like, "snake"-like Cipriano teaches his soldiers "the spear dance, the knife dance, the dance of ambush and the surprise dance"(p. 399) we have surely come a long, violent and degenerate way from the opening dance at the plaza. The world which seems to Kate "to have opened vast and soft and delicate with life"(p. 468) is, in fact, a disconcertingly deathly one. The "Lords of Life" are indeed "The Masters of Death" and theirs is a Ministry of Hate.

One is left with the conclusion that <u>The Plumed Serpent</u> is a book of false promises, that the targets at which Lawrence aims the novel are never satisfactorily struck. The earlier part of the novel, planned, it appears at first, so that every demolition it makes will be replaced by a new building, is, on closer analysis, a preparation for something that never happens. The false equation of Life and Death which Kate locates and detests in Villiers, Owen, the bullfight and Mexico as a whole, screams out to be substituted by a new and vital truth; yet the beliefs and rituals of Ramon and Cipriano are, if

anything, an even more abhorrent confusion of life and death. Equally, one would expect the Swiftian like fear of touch, the "Noli me Tangere" which initially obstructs Kate's search for the Fresh Connection, to be superseded by a relationship of true touch and creative contact. Instead Kate gets Cipriano, whom she has to leave "along with the things that are, but are not known. The presence. The stranger" (p. 464), and Lawrence palms off on us the astonishing claim that Kate "had so craved for intimacy, insisted on intimacy", (p. 464) a remark which contradicts all previous evidence.[20] We have to wait until Lady Chatterley's Lover before Lawrence coherently works out the theme of 'touch' which has been in the offing here.

Similarly unachieved is the balance of snake and bird which Ramon, as "Lord of the Two Ways" seems destined to effect. This failure is, admittedly, prepared for by the young professor Garcia, who warns that "in Mexico you can't keep a balance, because things are so bad" (p. 55) and, indeed, we might not feel the imbalance to be a failure at all had not Lawrence made such a strenuous effort to disguise it with assertions to the contrary. But as late as the penultimate chapter he has Kate reflect that "this was Ramon, and this was his great effort: to bring the great opposites into contact and into unison again" (pp. 458-9), and there is little evidence to suggest that Lawrence is free of the myopia which makes Kate abandon her search for a centre of balance and turn instead to reverence for Ramon and jealousy of Teresa's possession of him. That it is myopia, and that the novel ends in imbalance, has, I think, been admirably demonstrated by H.M. Daleski,[21] who pays

particular attention to the inequality of the Kate-Cipriano marriage. Further to this, one should note how from the very start, when Kate is described as the bird and Cipriano as the snake who waits to weight her down, the white woman's struggle, at least in terms of imagery, is always an impossible one. As scenes like that in which she is unable to save an injured waterfowl from the ponderous cruelty of a black-eyed urchin make clear, she constantly fights a losing battle. The imagery tells a truer tale than the narrator, for while marriage under the Morning Star, Lawrence and Ramon assure us, keeps man and woman in balance, an earlier reference to the Morning Star shows how the dice are loaded: "For man is the Morning Star/And woman is the Star of Evening".(pp. 373-4)[22] The appearance of a snake before Kate in the penultimate chapter, and the description of the self-effacing Teresa as "snake"-like (p. 475) in the final one, confirm all suspicion: the Morning Star has bestowed victory upon the phallic mystery, and male chauvinists will rule the Mexican roost.

The final and most serious of these failures in consistency and continuity is, as I have already suggested, the Quetzalcoatl revival itself. We are told at the end how the revival has proved successful, how "the whole country was thrilling with a new thing",(p. 461) and how it has worked regenerative wonders on Kate herself, "changing her to another creature".(p. 462) But apart from widespread bloodshed, its only positive achievement seems to have been a change in time-scale, one which has Cipriano meeting Kate not at mundane five o'clock but at "down-slope middle" or by "the watch of the turkey-buzzard",

vitalist measurements, of course, but scarcely apocalyptic enough to convince us that an epoch-making revolution has occurred. But, to be fair, Kate is not convinced either, and her doubts about Quetzalcoatl and staying in Mexico linger until her final words to Cipriano: "You won't let me go!" (p. 487) A command? A plea? Or an admission of defeat? It is hard to say; as Graham Hough argues, Kate's attitude to Mexico is always ambivalent, is "one of oscillation and, and the needle has not ceased to tremble at the end".[23] The problem is, though, that Kate's uncertainty about what she has gained is offset by Lawrence's implications that "the centre of centres" lies beneath her feet. It is as if Lawrence were embodying his own doubts about Mexico in Kate, but at the same time designing his novel in such a way that the doubts are played down. When the author tells us, for example, that Kate "had sunk to a final rest within a great opened-out cosmos" (p. 462), a statement obviously aimed to show that Ramon's attempt to "open the oyster of the cosmos" (p. 211) has been successful, the story, in terms of imagery at least, is over. Yet, as in The Rainbow, we are not really convinced that the heroine has got her kernel, let alone eaten it. The protagonist combats the teller, resists his simplistic efforts to bring her tale to a close. So, in the end, there are two sides to the story, and the reader is uncertain which to take. Kate's quest ends in confusion, and, as if to set things straight, Lawrence writes Lady Chatterley's Lover, a novel which leaves nothing and nobody in doubt.

CHAPTER THREE

Opening Out: Connie in Lady Chatterley's Lover

> She went to the wood at last, one evening immediately after tea. Spring was here...Many primroses now showed their cold faces, which yet had a bright wide-open fulness of life. The dark-green spears of the blue-bells were opening and spreading like velvet under the oaks, strong and unhesitating, so filled with dark green life. Birds whistled, whistled, whistled and called aloud in the voice of life. The wood was like a sanctuary of life itself. Life itself! Life itself! ...Life is soft and quiet and cannot be seized. It will not be raped. Try to rape it, and it disappears. Try to seize it, and you have dust...when you come to life itself, you must come as the flower does, naked and defenceless and infinitely in touch.[1]

Lady Chatterley's Lover is the simplest and most didactic of all Lawrence's novels. It is also the most coherent. The control, consistency and careful organization which distinguish the novel are, in fact, the outcome of a very conscious effort on Lawrence's part to strengthen the novel's "message" by forcing his readers to an awareness of the imaginative integrity which underlies it. In one sense, then, the earnestness of Lawrence's moral and social programme does exert a beneficial influence on his art; there is a welcome return to clarity after the blood-stained murkiness of The Plumed Serpent. True to the "Tenderness" novel's theme of "touch", Lawrence proves to be totally in touch with the material he handles. With "tenderness",

as Mellors says, "not to be mistaken", (p. 213) Lawrence makes the patterns and progress of Connie's quest for tenderness quite unmistakeable too. Confusion gives way to confidence.

At the same time, however, the tentativeness or "trembling balance" which sustains so much of Lawrence's fiction is lost. Lawrence's hold becomes a stranglehold, his firm grasp squeezes the life out of the fiction. Moral urgency drives him to the employment of somewhat blatant techniques. His naming of characters and locations for example, is uncharacteristically blunt, and almost Dickensian in the way it spells everything out. Thus "Chatterley" suggests 'chatelain', the French word for a 'lord', but also 'chatterer' or 'chatterbox', and much is made in the novel of Clifford's empty talk and "lording it" over his servants. Constance, ironically named in one respect because she is maritally inconstant, is, in another respect, well-named; her constancy to life itself determines and justifies her lesser infidelity. "Mellors" is almost an anagram of "Morel": the two, gamekeeper and miner, are related in their physical attractiveness. "Bolton" links the Wragby housekeeper to the ugly Lancashire industrial town of that name, and also suggests her "bolt-on", or sturdy clasp of Tevershall gossip. Tommy Dukes is "Tommy" because of his soldierly contribution to World War One, while surnames of minor characters -- Jack and Olive Strangeways or Harry Winterslow -- speak for themselves. "Wragby" suggests both "ragged" and "wrangle", and the combination of the two aptly underlines the shoddiness and inconsequence of the intellectual debates which take place there. Finally, Lawrence calls the local industrial town

"Tevershall" in order to echo its interminable, 'ever-shall-be', monotony.

If these are rather trite examples of the way in which Lawrence trims his fiction into an unmistakeable shape, they do at least give a hint of the burdens which Lawrence's moral commitment places upon his art. Every nail is driven home in this novel of un-gentle persuasion, and consequently, Connie's quest has more designs on the reader than has either Kate's or Ursula's. Not content to present or examine the phallic cause, Lawrence tries to prove his case beyond the shadow of a genuine doubt. The revisions of Lady Chatterley's Lover are in this respect pernicious, for while the final version is undoubtedly the most carefully organized of the three, it is also the least honest. The re-writing of the novel unconvincingly purges Connie of her quite understandable doubts about life with Mellors in order to provide an assertive ending; but Connie's eventual freedom from the pressures of class, culture and conscience seems the product less of her own strength than of the dogmatism of Lawrence's thesis. The female quest thus becomes more exhortation than exploration.

The plot of Lady Chatterley's Lover is very simple, and Connie's story can be told in terms of the images of "circular enclosure" and "breaking-out" which inform Ursula's quest. The novel opens with Connie imprisoned within the "thick walls" (p. 89) of Wragby. The walls shut out all but the intellectual life, and Connie feels cramped by the culture and conversation which Wragby

houses, by the "tightness, niggardliness of the men of her generation. They were so tight, so scared of life!" [p. 71] Neither Connie's husband nor the lover she takes, Michaelis, can free her: "...it was like being inside an enclosure, always inside. Life always a dream or a frenzy, inside an enclosure". (p. 42) Connie knows that "the thing to do was to pass the porches and portals" (p. 87), but it is not until she is seduced by her husband's gamekeeper that freedom becomes possible. For the keeper, Mellors, the sexual desire that Connie renews in him is initially a threat, a force "circling in his knees" (p. 119) which destroys his hermit-like freedom: "She had connected him up again, when he had wanted to be alone...He went down again into the darkness and seclusion of the wood. But he knew that the seclusion of the wood was illusory...he had taken the woman, and brought on himself a new cycle of pain and doom."[p. 123] For Connie, too, intimacy has its drawbacks, and in her first sexual experiences with Mellors she is afraid that he is "encompassing her somehow" (p. 130). But as the love grows, the mutual distrust diminishes, and Connie finally accepts the circle of tenderness which Mellors offers her, a circle which promises protection rather than prohibition:

> She herself was enclosed in the phallic circle of flesh, and her female nature set in the socket of the male clasp. For the moment. But this night, at least, she submitted. She did not feel a prisoner. She felt enclosed and safe, and her heart at last was still, had lost its tightness...he was the silent man who enclosed her in the phallic circle, and she was like the yolk of the egg, enclosed...It was so good to lie like this, so still, within the inner circle of the angels, beyond all fear and pain.
> 2

If Connie's story has connections with Ursula's, so too is it related to Kate's. The novel opens, as The Plumed Serpent had, with a rotten centre; Wragby is situated, we are told, in the Midlands, and if there is any doubt about the connotations of that location, Clifford soon dispels it: "I consider this is really the heart of England...the old England, the heart of it; and I intend to keep it intact" (p. 44). The heart-beat is, however, a feeble one, Wragby woods having been badly damaged in the war: total cardiac arrest seems imminent. Clifford's seemingly noble attempt to prevent this, to keep the heart "intact", is, however, undermined not only by his lack of centrality and sensitivity (Connie sees his centre as "pulpy" and later accuses him of failing to have "one heart-beat of real sympathy" (p. 189) for men) but also by the large question-mark that hangs over his protectiveness: "I want this wood perfect...untouched. I want nobody to trespass in it...We can only do our bit...one must keep up tradition."(p. 45) In Sons and Lovers there had been a 'right way to pick flowers'[3] and here there is a right way to keep woods. Clifford's keeping, impersonal and possessive at the same time, is contrasted to that of Mellors, who is a true guardian of the living heart. Just as the woods themselves have a "strong and aristocratic silence", a "vital presence" and "inwardness" (pp. 67-8) and thus function as a kind of botanic equivalent to those "inward" aristocrats, Ramon and Cipriano, so also Mellors is independent and taciturn, possessing "an inward not an outward strength" (p. 218). It is he who renews Connie (as, indeed, he dreams of renewing England!) by restoring her centrality.

When she first sees Mellors half-naked, the visionary shock hits her, significantly enough, "in the middle of the body" (p. 68) and through increasing sexual contact with him, she begins to feel "very different from her old self, and as if she was sinking deep, deep to the centre of all womanhood and the sleep of creation." (p. 141) The tenderness may be a new feature, but Mellor's role is very like Cipriano's: he brings the woman, as Connie's boast to her sister makes clear, to a new life at the centre of centres: " 'After all, Hilda,' she said, 'love can be wonderful; when you feel you live, and are in the very middle of creation'." (p. 252)

Though Connie's quest is partly defined by the echoes of these earlier works, it nevertheless remains very much a quest in its own right. The central metaphor in the novel is that of "unfolding" or "opening out". Connie's quest is to follow the development of the natural world, to labour towards a blossoming, to come into fullness of being. Hence there is an almost relentless recording on Lawrence's part of Wragby forest's seasonal changes, of the births or bloomings of its birds, beasts, trees and flowers. Connie's search for a means to "open-out", though reminiscent of Ursula's growth or expansion and of Kate's tentative acceptance of an "opened-out cosmos", transcends them both to become the simplest, most positive and most successful of the three missions. The novel ends with a restrained but firm optimism quite different from the ambivalent conclusions of the previous female quests. And long before this, in any case, Connie's endeavour to open out seems to have been happily rewarded.

Following the tradition of most re-birth myths, the novel opens in a winter of discontent. The first seven chapters are concerned, almost exclusively, with death and disease. Deaths from the past (Connie's mother, Connie's lover in Germany, Clifford's brother, Clifford's father, Mrs. Bolton's husband) haunt the dreary present, but these seem slight in comparison with the gnawing cancer which continues to eat out Wragby's core of life. Connie diagnoses the sickness as influenza; she notices how "somebody always seemed to have influenza at Wragby" (p. 67), herself included; "her fear of the mining and iron Midlands affected her with a queer feeling that went all over like her, like influenza" (p. 166). It is, however, a misleadingly mild analysis, one which fails to measure the real impact of the creeping sickness. Connie's husband, the "null" and "vacant" Clifford, is crippled, his paralysis an external and physical counterpart to the "something inside him (that) had perished" in the war. Denied any feeling for the earth (and in Lawrence's fiction "earth" is consistently associated with woman, life of the body, unconsciousness and the primal source) Clifford is self-defensively critical of all that the earth represents.[4] His trite and empty literary efforts, which clearly recall that Galsworth-less-ness which Lawrence so abhorred, are a poor substitute for life, and have fatally taken over the whole Wragby atmosphere.

Connie also is sick. Though not quite 'la belle dame sans merci', (it is, in fact, pity which draws her to both Clifford and Michaelis) Connie has, nevertheless, had since her adolescence a cold,

egoistic and Clifford-like attitude to sexual contact:

> It marked the end of a chapter. It had a thrill of its own too: a queer vibrating thrill inside the body, a final spasm of self-assertion, like the last word, exciting, and very like the row of asterisks that can be put to show the end of a paragraph, and a break in theme.
> (p. 8)

Little wonder, with even sex reduced to a half-hearted, extra-literary activity, that "everything in her world and life seemed worn out" (p. 50). As much the victim of her own destructive female will as of Clifford's infectious vacuity, Connie, at twenty-seven, is withering away. As for Michaelis, the morbid hypoteneuse to a loveless triangle, the "rat-like" (p. 24) and "hang-dog" (p. 29) alternative to wedded listlessness, he, too, is vacant and insensitive, a kind of mock-gallant. His just but strangely inhuman sneer at Connie's masturbatory sexuality is the death-blow of their relationship, and "one of the crucial blows of Connie's life. It killed something in her." (p. 57) The paramour is as life-denying as the parasite.

The dying protagonists move in a landscape of death, wander palely through the lifeless Wragby wood with its "dead bracken", "big sawn stumps", "grasping roots", and "patches of blackness" (p. 43). Though the novel's opening paragraph talks of "new, little hopes" there seem to be none in the offing. From the polite, meaningless words of Clifford's circle of admirers to the raucous blubbering of the "black, shrewd" little Connie Mellors as she witnesses the most ominous death of all, that of a black cat, the outlook is total

despair. The visit of Hilda, Connie's sister, provides conclusive proof of Wragby's ravages; where Connie's body, once similar to Hilda's, is "harsh" "dull" and "astringent", her breasts "dropping pear-shaped" and "unripe, a little bitter" (pp. 72-3), Hilda, free of Wragby's devastation, looks "soft and warm as a ripe pear" (p. 79).

In this desert of death, Mellors' first appearance (pp. 47-50) is the first seed of hope. A fine example of Lawrence's grasp of his material in Lady Chatterley's Lover, and of what Julian Moynahan presumably meant when he referred to "the rich simplicity of its structural design",[5] the scene defines Mellors by contrasting him to the preceding sterility. In the same moment as Connie reflects, while out walking with the motorised Clifford, that "life may turn quite a new face on it all" (p. 47), the new face enters abruptly, the keeper's "swift yet soft movements" foreshadowing that fusion of vitality and tenderness which Connie will learn from him. His "green velveteens" and "red face" are a blaze in the bleakness of the "grey", "worn-out" world. While Clifford is insensitive to Connie's feelings, and Michaelis had "never noticed things, or had contact with his surroundings" (p. 25) the gamekeeper watches "everything narrowly, missing nothing", and notices the restlessness in Connie. In the blue eyes of Clifford and Mellors are written two entirely different stories; in Clifford's "pale, slightly prominent blue eyes...a certain vagueness was coming...the background of his mind filling up with nothingness", but Connie notices in Mellors' "blue impersonal eyes a look of suffering and detachment, yet a certain warmth." Similarly, while

it is appropriate that Mellors "reminded Connie of Tommy Dukes", appropriate because both men are lean soldiers who assert the life of the penis, the differences are ultimately more telling than the similarities. For where Dukes speaks entirely from theory and is what Lawrence would call "word-perfect, but Deed-demented",[6] Mellors always acts upon his phallic beliefs and impulses. And where Dukes' emotional shallowness is implicit in his failure to remember, or fear of completing, the lines "Blest be the tie that binds/Our hearts in kindred love", ("Blest be the tie that binds/Our hearts in kindred something-or-other" (p. 38) is the best he can manage). Mellors, in a later scene (p. 219), has no difficulty in supplying the missing, tender word.

If the keeper's entrance is the first glimpse of hope, the second is Mrs. Bolton's employment at Wragby, the result of which is Connie's increased freedom to wander, as Birkin had in Women in Love, through the restorative foliage of a nearby wood. Connie's upsurge of faith that a "new phase was going to begin in her life" (p. 87) is matched by the unfolding of the forest: young fir trees begin "rising up", yellow buds start "unfolding themselves" (p. 88), the "leaf buds on the hazels (are) opening like the spatter of green rain" (p. 112), and finally, in a triumphant climax, a pheasant chick breaks open its shell and commences "eyeing the Cosmos" (p. 118). It is tempting to regard Connie's subsequent sexual intercourse with Mellors as a similar triumph of opening-out, as the decisive step in her development; and this is how Julian

Moynahan interprets the scene when he argues that the "first sexual encounter between gamekeeper and heroine completes rather than begins the drama of her passing over from one life-orientation to another... When the heroine first enters the hut...the central section is substantially complete".[7] A close study of the scene does not, however, permit this reading. Connie, we note, lies "in a kind of sleep, always in a kind of sleep" (p. 120), feeling very little, remaining motionless, gaining only a sense of "peace". Afterwards she reflects that "she had not been conscious of much" (p. 122), but remembers the gamekeeper's "warm, naive kindness, curious and sudden, that almost opened her womb" (p. 126 - my underlining). That the womb has still to be fully opened is clear from the mirror images of the world around Connie, the "trees making a silent effort to open their buds" (p. 126), and the "half-open, half-unsheathed flowers" (p. 127). Though Mellors claims that in the sexual experience he has been "broken open again" (p. 122), the same is not true for Connie, who still mistrusts the keeper ("he might be the same with any woman as he had been with her") and who remains enclosed within the armour of her female will. The real significance of the first sexual encounter, then, is that Mellors plants a seed of hope (it is no coincidence that Lawrence refers to "the springing of his seed"), not that he opens the flower.

The following pages describe a second sexual encounter -- a dismal failure -- and Connie's subsequent refusal "to go to the wood and open her thighs once more to the man" (p. 134). In the context of the "opening" images which shape Lady Chatterley's Lover the

refusal has, of course, a special significance; though to put it so bluntly may be to run the risk of making Lawrence's "message" more bathetic than it actually is, the implication is clearly that by keeping her legs closed Connie shuts herself off from all means to fulfilment. Moreover, since the natural world around her is shown to be in a constant process of opening-out, Connie's closing-up takes on the appearance of grossly unnatural behaviour, even of anti-life. Not that Lawrence is advocating promiscuity: that, I think, has been pointed out so often that even the most liberal academic thinks twice about reiterating the argument. What Lawrence does suggest, however, is that sexual behaviour reflects, or even determines, spiritual health, and that an unhealthy sexual attitude, whether it be cold passivity or greedy self-gratification, or shrinking distaste, leads to sickness of the soul. Thus Connie's closed legs are indicative of the constrictive independence which is slowly killing her off. Disconnecting herself from true human contact, she cuts herself off from life.

It is of the dangers of isolated independence that Mellors warns Connie after their first sexual contact; he tells her that sex is "life" and that "there's no keeping clear. And if you do keep clear you might almost as well die" (p. 122). Not until the third sexual experience, beneath the "half-grown" fir trees, does Connie begin to understand. Only then, when she renounces "her hard, bright, female power" (p. 141) can she at last begin to open out, to swell, and to grow:

> ...all her womb was open and soft, and softly clamouring, like a sea-anemone under the tide, clamouring for him to come in again, and make a fulfilment for her. She clung to him unconscious in passion, and he never quite slipped from her, and she felt the soft bud of him within her stirring, and strange rhythms flushing up into her with a strange rhythmic growing motion, swelling and swelling till it filled all her clearing consciousness...In her womb, and her bowels she was flowing and alive now and vulnerable...her womb, that had always been shut, had opened and filled with new life, almost a burden, yet lovely.
>
> (pp. 139-40)

Between the lovely "burden" of intercourse with Mellors and the dead weight of marriage to Clifford, Connie's attention is now divided. The central section of the novel (Chapters Eight to Sixteen) juxtaposes Connie's new and vital experiences with harsher and bleaker ones. Thus the unfolding into life described above is followed soon after by a car-ride through Tevershall, where every opening has been barred, where every construction has become constrictive, where every healthy impulse has been imprisoned:

> ...all went by ugly, ugly, ugly, followed by the plaster-and-gilt horror of the cinema with its wet picture announcements, 'A Woman's Love', and the new big Primitive chapel, primitive enough in its stark brick and big panes of greenish and raspberry glass in the windows. The Wesleyan Chapel, higher up, was of blackened brick and stood behind iron railings and blackened shrubs...Just beyond were the new school buildings, expensive, pink brick, and gravelled playground inside iron railings, all very imposing, and mixing the suggestion of a chapel and a prison. Standard Five girls were having a singing lesson...Anything more unlike song, spontaneous song, would be impossible to imagine...It was like nothing on earth.
>
> (p. 158)

The vision of life-denying exclusiveness recalls not only Blake's 'Garden of Love', 'London' and 'Holy Thursday' but also Ursula's Standard Five teaching at Brinsley Street, and, like Ursula, Connie now finds her life divided between irreconcilable halves of experience. As she oscillates between Clifford and Mellors, between Wragby and the keeper's cottage, between intellect and penis, between industrialism and nature, between Death and Life, Connie follows, of course, the same vacillatory path as Lawrence's other questing heroines. Julian Moynahan notes how Connie "shuttles from one realm to another -- both in space and in terms of inner awaaeness",[8] and thereby sets the pattern for the central part of the novel. The back-and-forth movements, the heroine's ebb-and-flow -- these, by now, should be very familiar to us.

There are, however, radical differences between Connie's quest and the previous ones. Where Kate's quest, for example, had been throughout uncertain and inconsistent, a result of her temperamental unpredictability, there is, from the outset, little or no doubt about the direction in which Connie is moving, nor about the camp in which she will finally arrive. With the happy gain in clarity (Kate's fluctations, we remember, had been difficult to follow) there is, however, a concomitant loss of dramatic possibility. Since Connie's choice is virtually that of 'Life or Death', and since she has not the slightest Whitmanesque fascination for the latter, neither suspense nor ambivalence is permitted. All that Connie does and should do is glaringly obvious. Similarly, where Ursula's fluctations in The Rainbow had intrinsic value, were important not

because they finally resolved anything but because they held her in a constant and creative awareness of the antitheses of experience, Connie's movement between the poles of Clifford and Mellors seems but a perfunctory prologue to her lasting commitment to the latter. Clifford' rivalry to Mellors, for all its symbolic weight, is too much a token rivalry, and Connie's escape from the bondage of marriage is just a matter of time. Though it has all the appearances of vacillation, Connie's development is almost uniform.

The absence of pulse-proven oscillation in Connie's quest raises larger questions about Lawrence's whole attitude to dramatic conflict. It suggests that he has somehow 'sold out' or compromised himself, is no longer prepared to explore inner and outer tension and has settled for a schematic simulation of conflict instead. As Ian Gregor suggests, Lady Chatterley's Lover's structural simplicity, its careful balance of opposites, is facile and misleading, and evades the real issues: "There is a simplicity about Lady Chatterley's Lover not to be found in any of these (earlier) novels, but this is not the simplicity which arises from the harmony of opposites, but the simplicity obtained by the elimination of opposition".[9] Though opposition is there in scheme it is not there in essence.

This, I think, might even be said of the memorable "bath-chair" scene (pp. 186-201), the climax of the conflict between Clifford and Mellors, though as a symbolic battle the scene works superbly well. From one side of the wood comes Clifford, borne home, as he himself jokes, on a "foaming steed", (p. 186) a mechanised wheel-chair.

Armed with a Skrebensky-like faith that "the individual hardly matters" (p. 191), Clifford fights for intellect and industry and tramplingly defeats whatever bluebells stand in his way. When his "steed" halts at a steep incline in the centre of Wragby forest, Clifford sounds out his gamekeeper-opponent with a honk of the horn. Mellors, guardian of body, organism and forest energy, emerges immediately and obligingly, armed with a shotgun but concerned only to protect tender and vulnerable life. Connie, the living laurels of the war, wants peace between the men, but is unable to effect a treaty: "She had had fugitive dreams of friendship between these two men: One her husband, the other the father of her child. Now she saw the screaming absurdity of her dreams. The two males were as hostile as fire and water. They mutually exterminated one another." (p. 200)[10] Battle commences. Disguised as a communal effort to get Clifford and his wheelchair back to Wragby Hall, the combat between the men is fierce and fluctuating. At first, Clifford, who has "snarled" and "jabbed at his levers" in a "savage" effort of "putting on all his pressure", seems to have the upper hand, and boasts of the virtues of his "steed". But his "victorious" proclamations soon disappear when he discovers that his machine is in the power of the "spunky" Mellors; Clifford, violently resentful of being a "prisoner" (p. 197) who is "at everybody's mercy" (p. 198), goes "yellow with anger". In one final superhuman effort, Mellors lifts Clifford and his steed into the air, and, though Connie wonders that the struggle "hadn't killed him" (p. 199), the victory is now

plainly his. The scene concludes with Connie secretly kissing the victor's hand, and planning to give him her favours. The motto "à la guerre comme à la guerre" (p. 204) ends the chapter.

As a mock-heroic battle (and Lawrence, in describing Clifford's wheelchair, makes uncharacteristic use of mock-heroic prose) and symbolic clash of opposites, the scene is finely done. But on a realistic level, despite some penetrating psychological insights into a cripple's struggle for self-sufficiency, despite some fine comic moments, and despite some convincing glances at man's frustrating relationship with machines, the scene is far less successful. By drawing sympathy away from Clifford, by emphasing his "yellow" snarling, his "cool superior tone" in addressing Mellors, his ill-concealed snobbery, Lawrence prevents a true dramatic conflict from occurring. The dice are so heavily loaded in the attempt to elicit our sympathy for Mellors, and thereby, of course, to convert us to the Lawrencian values he represents, that we feel bullied by the author, and find it difficult to respond to his art. It is in this sense that Lawrence's crippling of Clifford is unfair: unfair on Clifford, unfair on the reader, unfair, most lamentably, on the fiction itself. For by reducing Clifford to a sterile stereotype, by chopping away not only his legs but also whatever claim he may have to sympathy and understanding, Lawrence denies Clifford any means of becoming a genuine human rival to Mellors and reduces the novel to a lifeless treatise. In this respect, Lawrence's highly acclaimed comments on "the importance of the novel" seem narrow and

not a little pernicious. However much we applaud his concern to "lead" the "sympathetic consciousness" away from "the things gone dead" (the Cliffords of this world) and towards "the passional secret places of life" (the phallic tenderness of an Oliver Mellors), we must regret the consequences on his art. For it is with the dramatic, not the moral, possibilities of the "ebb-and-flow" (p. 164) of human consciousness that Lawrence's strength really lies.

Even before the wheelchair-war described above, Connie's "flow" towards Mellors has been faster and stronger than her "ebb" back to Clifford. As she listens to Clifford read Racine,his voice "clapping and gurgling with unusual sounds" (p. 144) her mind wanders from the cacophony of "ravishing" dead language and turns instead to the melodies of the forest: "She was gone in her own soft rapture, like a forest soughing with the dim, glad moan of spring, moving into bud...She was like a forest, like the dark interlacing of the oak-wood, humming inaudibly with myriad unfolding buds" (p. 143). This explicit identification of Connie with the forest suggests how, like Wragby wood, she has "opened and filled with new life" (p. 140). The tale of unfolding continues to unfold. Connie's ventures into the forest now become less tentative, and her sexual voyages are increasingly rewarding. An evening she spends in the hut proves to be, after an initial failure, the most resounding of all her successes:

> He took her in his arms again and drew her to him, and suddenly she became small in his arms, small and nestling. It was gone, the resistance was gone,

> and she began to melt in a marvellous peace.
> And as she melted small and wonderful in his
> arms, she became infinitely desirable to him...
> She yielded with a quiver that was like death,
> she went all open to him. And oh, if he were
> not tender to her now, how cruel, for she was
> all open to him and helpless. She quivered
> again at the potent inexorable entry inside her,
> so strange and terrible. It might come with the
> thrust of a sword in her softly-opened body and
> that would be death...But it came with a strange,
> slow thrust of peace...Oh, and far down inside her
> the deeps parted and rolled asunder, in long, far-
> travelling billows...as the plunger went deeper
> and deeper, touching lower, and she was deeper and
> deeper and deeper disclosed...and closer and closer
> plunged the palpable unknown...Till suddenly, in a
> soft, shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her
> plasm was touched, sheknew herself touched, the
> consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She
> was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman.
> Ah, too lovely, too lovely!...And now she touched
> him and it was the sons of god with the daughters
> of men.
>
> (pp. 180-2)

The passage is interesting for several reasons. First, as the repeated phrase "all open to him" (the word "all" contrasting with the half-openings Connie has managed previously) and the description of Connie as "softly-opened" suggest, here is the climax of Connie's opening up. Mellors'own comments, immediately after the intercourse, make this doubly clear: "I love thee that tha opened to me...Tha loved me just now wider than iver tha thout tha would" (p. 184). Second, and, of course, a necessary part of the opening, is the "death" of Connie's "resistance" and female will. Though Connie initially fears this death as if it were "the thrust of a sword", she comes to welcome its "slow thrust of peace", the tenderness of communion. For the twofold purgation of her ego (abandonment and annihilation) is simultaneously a discovery of

real womanhood: "She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman." The losing of known is the gaining of unknown. The death of selfhood is the birth of self.[11]

A third feature of the passage is the suggestion of the new and perfect fusion that Connie and Mellors have achieved. The repeated word "melt" describes not only the defrosting of Connie's icily-intact female will, but also the resultant mingling she achieves with Mellors. The lovers' feelings have become synonomous, their responses indistinguishable. The phrases "suddenly she became small in his arms", and "she melted small and wonderful in his arms" might refer to the feelings of either Connie or Mellors. That it is impossible to say which, is the essence of Lawrence's point. And though the "merging" might seem a sad betrayal of Ursula's desire in The Rainbow for balance with Skrebensky (or of Birkin's in Women in Love for "star-equilibrium") the rewards of mingling would seem to be the same: for Connie, as for Ursula in Women in Love, the "sons of god" come unto the "daughters of men".

Finally, it is worth noting how Lawrence insists, almost to the point of monotony, on the word "deep". He does so, I would argue, not only to enhance the rhythmic effect of the passage ("she was deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed") but also to suggest how the phallus can heal up the deepest bruises in the human soul. The deep bruise, in part an outcome of the First World War, scars not only Connie and Clifford but also the entire English populace and landscape. Lawrence refers to it earlier

in the novel:

> The bruise was deep, deep, deep...the bruise of the false inhuman war. It would take many years for the living blood of the generations to dissolve the vast, black clot of bruised blood, deep inside their souls and bodies. And it would need a new hope.
> (p. 52)

The bruise goes "deep, deep, deep" but the "new hope", the phallus, goes "deeper and deeper and deeper". As Mellors tells Connie immediately after their intercourse: "It heals it all up, that I can go into thee" (p. 184). It remains only for Mellors to conduct the "phallic hunt" which by "burning out the shames, the deepest, oldest shames in the most secret places" (p. 258) brings both him and Connie to a new and lasting health. With that, Connie's quest is brought to a close.

No treatment of Lady Chatterley's Lover can be complete, however, unless it attempts to answer the questions which the material of the novel inevitably demands: How extensive does Lawrence imagine the remedial powers of the phallus to be? Does he really believe that phallic tenderness can solve the problems not only of special individuals but also of industrial society at large? Is his thesis reducible, in fact, to a theory of sexual apocalypse? Early critics of the novel tended, depending on their overall attitude to Lawrence, to answer this last question with either a reluctant or a hostile "Yes".[12] Recent critics have taken what would seem, at first glance, to be a more commonsense line; H.M. Daleski, for example, warns that "Lawrence is often misunderstood to be claiming in the novel that...tenderness can solve the

problems of an industrial society",[13] and goes on to disprove the case against Lawrence's facile,phallic optimism by pointing to the mouthpiece-gamekeeper's prophecy of a "bad time coming" (p. 315). To this we might add further evidence of Lawrence's moderation: the stoical note of the novel's opening, the enduring hopelessness of 't-ever-shall-be-Midlands industry, the impossibility of ever changing a Clifford Chatterley, the unalterable hostility between penis and intellect, and the implicit resignation in Mellors' final plea for "patience". All in all, these features of the novel supply weighty evidence of the modesty of Lawrence's vitalist claims.

And yet, for all this, one cannot help feeling that the novel still lays Lawrence open to the original charge, that somewhere beneath it lurks the beast of sexual apocalypse. Tommy Dukes suggests as much when he argues that "our civilization is going to fall...and believe me the only bridge across the chasm will be the phallus" (p. 77). Similarly, Connie's discovery of the gamekeeper's "primordial tenderness, such as made the world in the beginning" (p. 181) hints at the power of phallic tenderness to make the world again, to re-create an Eden; later Lawrence underlines this point rather blatantly by having Connie, on her return from Venice, meet Mellors "outside the Golden Cock in Adam Street" (p. 287). Mellors is thus made, on the one hand, the original Adam, and, on the other, the 'salvator mundi'. In his less gloomy moments he is particularly true to the second of these roles, and speaks of his "battle against the money, and the machine, and the

insentient ideal monkeyishness of the world" (p. 292). On at least one occasion he declares a full confidence in the apocalyptic powers of phallic tenderness: "I believe if men could fuck with warm hearts, and the women take it warm-heartedly, everything would come all right" (p. 215). As spokesman for, and instigator of, sexual apocalypse Mellors soon converts Connie to his faith, and her vision of "a lovely, lovely life in the lovely universe, the life of the human" incites the "mental-lifer" Clifford to the sardonic accusation that she is "ushering it all in" (p. 245).

Clifford is nearer the mark than he realises. At least one scene in the novel seems to have been specifically designed as a symbolic "ushering in" of the new world, seems to enact in miniature the apocalyptic process which Mellors, and to a lesser extent Connie, predict. This is the scene where Connie, on an afternoon just before her departure to Venice, visits Mellors at his cottage (pp. 224-40). During the visit a storm begins. The thunder "crashes" so violently that for Connie it is "like being in a little ark in the Flood (p. 225), just she and Mellors "alone in the flood" (p. 225). Even Clifford, back at Wragby, looks at "the icy thunder-rain as if it were the end of the world" (p. 240). (And for Clifford, in a way, it is: Connie leaves him within a few days.) The meteorological rumblings seem indicative of a larger destruction, particularly as the lovers discuss social decay and human self-annihilation:

> 'All the modern lot get their real kick out of killing the old human feeling out of man, making mincemeat of the old Adam and the old Eve'...'But won't it ever come

> to an end?' she said. 'Ay, it will. It'll achieve its own salvation...'
>
> (pp. 226-7)

In the apocalyptic context, Mellors' seemingly innocuous comment which follows -- "If my cock gives its last crow, I don't mind" (p. 227) -- assumes a special significance. For while the "last crow" of the cock symbolises the end of the old order, the "cock" itself, as Lawrence's extended pun on the word in 'The Man Who Died' makes clear, is the instrument of cosmic re-birth, "the bridge to what comes next" (p. 77). The cock both crows out the old, and ushers in the new. Thus, as the storm begins to die out, Mellors describes his vision of what the new world may be like: "An' I'd get my men to wear different clothes: 'appen close red trousers, bright red, an' little short white jackets. Why if men had red, fine legs, that alone would change them in a month. They'd begin to be men again, to be men! An' the women could dress as they liked" (p. 229). By the time this prophecy has finished, the thunder has died out , and all has "gone still". As if in celebration of the new-world and its gamekeeper - Elijah, Connie throws off her clothes and runs out into the rejuvenated air, beginning a "eurhythmic" dance in the "greenish light", her body "offered in a kind of homage towards him, repeating a wild obeisance" (p. 230). Connie's body, like Mellors', is an important part of the new order, and Mellors makes large claims for the Atlas-like potency of Connie's posterior: "It's a bottom as could hold the world up, it is!" (p. 232)

Close as this is to the ludicrous, it stands, nevertheless, as an essential part of Lady Chatterley's Lover's apocalyptic vision: a new world is coming in which the body will no longer be denied. Thus it is no coincidence that Connie thinks of Mellors' buttocks as "globes" (p. 181): in the human body, she has found, lie all the lost or previously undiscovered worlds that man need ever know. In a triumph of assertion, the scene ends with the flower-blessed marriage of John Thomas and Lady Jane, which, like the wedding of Malintzi and Huitzilopochtli in The Plumed Serpent, puts the final seal on the new covenant.

If the claims for sexual tenderness seem a little forced and excessive at times, and, worse still, are marred by Lawrence's unfortunate sanctioning of an elitism of sexuality not in the least comparable to his aristocracy of life,[14] they do, at least, leave no doubt as to where the female quest has brought us. In Lady Chatterley's Lover, Lawrence restricts himself to moral definition and pays little or no attention to what he called "the non-human in humanity", those unconscious forces and presences which he had explored so brilliantly in The Rainbow and less successfully in The Plumed Serpent. In many ways this development is to be regretted. The following passage from The Rainbow, for example, a brilliant evocation of Ursula's awareness of the powerful forces which constantly threaten to break into the daylight world, is a fine example of what the earlier Lawrence could do:

> And her soul acknowledged in a great heave of terror only the outer darkness...she could see the glimmer of dark movement just out of range, she saw the eyes of the wild beasts gleaming from the darkness...saw the gleam in the eyes of the wolf, and the hyena, that it was the flash of thesword of angels, flashing at the door to come in, that the angels in the darkness were lordly and terrible and not to be denied, like the flash of fangs.
> 15

One need not be a committed Freudian to see that there are sexual overtones in the image of "the sword of angels flashing at the door to come in", and that these prepare for the next episode of the novel, Ursula's sexual awakening with Skrebensky. But, on the whole, the prose is suggestive rather than definitive, and invites more possibilities than the merely sexual. Indeed, it seems to be part of Lawrence's point that what Ursula experiences here is to a large extent nameless and indefinable, pre-linguistic. The heroine is, at best, only half-aware of what she experiences or whither she moves.

The following passage from Lady Chatterlye's Lover, on the other hand, leaves little to the imagination:

> He dropped the shirt and stood still looking towards her. The sun through the low window sent in a beam that lit up his thighs and slim belly and the erect phallos rising darkish and hot-looking from the little cloud of vivid gold-red hair. She was startled and afraid...'So proud!' she murmured, uneasy. 'And so lordly. Now I know why men are so overbearing. But he's lovely, really, like another being! A bit terrifying! But lovely really!...The man looked down in silence at the tense phallos, that did not change. 'Ay' he said at last, in a little voice, 'Ay ma lad! tha're theer right enough...Ax'er then! Ax Lady Jane! Say: Lift up your heads o' ye gates that the king of glory may come in.'
> (pp. 218-9)

The verbal links between the two passages are interesting. In The Rainbow passage the beast-angels are "lordly" and "terrible" and "not to be denied"; here it is Mellors' penis which Connie finds "lordly" and "terrifying" and "overbearing". In The Rainbow the "darkness" of the beasts is illuminated by the "gleam" of their eyes; here Mellors' "darkish" penis is offset by "a beam that lit up his thighs". In The Rainbow there is a certain divinity about the darkness, angels move in it; here the penis is sacred, its holiness implicit in Connie's awestruck reverence and in Mellors' semi-comic address to "the king of glory". In The Rainbow Ursula sees the beast-angels "flashing at the door to come in"; here Mellors' penis seeks admittance through the "gates" of Lady Jane.

If the verbal recurrence suggests how Lawrence leans increasingly heavily on the phallus, and also how the great "unknown" and nameless yearnings which haunt Ursula become, for Connie, something as known and nameable as sexual desire, the different overall interests of these two passages imply something more. They suggest how we have moved from a world of darkness and mystery to a daylight world where the biggest mystery of all is the erection of the phallus. They suggest, moreover, Lawrence's increasing conviction of the need for close human contact, and his final awareness that human connections cannot be denied. As Mellors points out, "sex is really only touch, the closest of all touch" (p. 296), and as a metaphor for human contact in general, the clamorous sexuality of Lady Chatterley's Lover becomes more palatable. That, if anything, is the real importance of the

last of Lawrence's female quests. It reminds us, in its more restrained moments, that Lawrence made his final commitment to "touch", and allows us, as a result, to place him in the most wholesomeof twentieth-century cultural traditions, that which, embracing both the sleepy Molly Bloom of Joyce's Ulysses and the dying heroine of Bergman's Cries and Whispers, utters a final triumphant 'Yes' to the most rare, agonizing but beautiful of earthly experiences, human connection.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

1 E. Nehls, D.H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography, (New York: Viking, 1957-9), Vol II, p. 142.

2 Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Macdonald, (New York: Viking, 1936), p. 734.

3 J. Kessler, "Descent into Darkness: The Myth of The Plumed Serpent" in H.T. Moore (ed.), A D.H. Lawrence Miscellany, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959), pp. 239-61.

4 N. Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism, (Princeton: University Press, 1957), p. 193.

5 "Lady Chatterley's Lover as Romance" in Moore (ed.), op.cit. p. 263.

6 Phoenix, p. 403.

7 H.M. Daleski, The Forked Flame, (London: Faber, 1965), p. 35.

8 Ibid, p. 33.

9 L.D. Clark, Dark Night of the Body, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), p. 14.

10 W.Y. Tindall, Introduction to The Plumed Serpent, (New York: Vintage, 1959), pp. vi-vii.

11 Phoenix, pp. 209-10.

12 Fantasia of the Unconscious/Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious,

(London: Penguin, 1971), p. 192.

13 Phoenix II: The Uncollected Papers of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Moore and Roberts, (New York: Viking, 1968), p. 483.

14 Phoenix, p. 529.

15 Phoenix II, p. 235.

16 Ibid, p. 470.

17 Ibid, p. 374.

18 Ibid, p. 368.

19 Ibid, p. 368.

20 The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Moore (New York: Viking, 1962), p. 324. cf. Yeats: "I think that all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask or some other self, that all joyous creative life is a re-birth of something not oneself." Since I shall imply throughout this thesis that Lawrence can usefully be placed in a tradition which, embracing both Yeats and Blake, elevates the concepts of "productive tension" or "creative conflict", I should make it clear, at the outset, that there is a risk of overstating Lawrence's commitment to these concepts. He was well aware that opposition, even the sacred opposition of the sexes, could destroy as well as construct, and we should remember not only his deathbed regret over the twenty-year conflict with Frieda (see Nehls, op.cit. Vol. III, p. 437) but also,much earlier, his recognition that real battle, like the 1914-18 War, could be totally disastrous: "So that now, in Europe, both the lion and the unicorn are gone

mad, each with a crown tumbled on his bound-in head. And without rhyme or reason they tear themselves and each other, and the fight is no fight, it is a frenzy of blind things dashing themselves and each other to pieces." (Phoenix II, p. 371) Lawrence could not endorseopposition unless it was perfectly balanced,a true equilibrium.

21 Phoenix, p. 444.

22 The Rainbow, (London: Penguin, 1949), p. 31.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter One

1 D.H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (London: Penguin, 1949, orig. pub. 1915), pp. 436-7). All subsequent references to the novel will be bracketed and included in the text.

2 F.R. Leavis, D.H. Lawrence: Novelist, (London: Chatto, 1955), p. 144.

3 R. Sale, 'The Narrative Technique of The Rainbow' in Modern Fiction Studies, No. V, Spring, 1959, p. 29.

4 J.F. Stoll, The Novels of D.H. Lawrence, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971), p. 106.

5 K. Sagar, The Art of D.H. Lawrence, (Cambridge: University Press, 1966), p. 72.

6 M. Mudrick, 'The Originality of the Rainbow' in Mark Spilka (ed.) Lawrence: A Collection of Critical Essays, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963), pp. 45-6.

7 Alan Friedman is perhaps the only critic to have commented on the expansive form of The Rainbow; he notes that "the movement is always outward from a centre, 'beyond' a limit, and into the 'unknown'". Friedman, The Turn of the Novel, (Oxford: University Press, 1966), p. 140.

8 G. Eliot, Middlemarch, (London: Penguin, 1965, orig. pub. 1871-2), p. 846.

9 G. Eliot, Daniel Deronda, (London: Penguin, 1967, orig. pub. 1876), p. 876.

10 G. Hough, The Dark Sun, (London: Duckworth, 1956), p. 71.

11 Ibid, p. 69.

12 Given the recurrent ambiguity in Lawrence's use of the word 'Pole' (Polish/polar opposite) in The Rainbow, it is worth remembering that Skrebensky is only "half"-Polish. Ultimately, as we shall see, he has not the extremity, or opposite-ness, or unknown-ness to take Ursula into the territory of the beyond.

13 See Daleski, op. cit., pp. 109-13.

14 That Ursula is indeed "beyond" the limitations of her old ego is clear from her generosity to some barge-people, a generosity which exemplifies the type of moral enlargement that love for Skrebensky has brought. Earlier, she had been horrified at the thought of parting with "her lovely little necklace" (p. 284); now, on an outing with Skrebensky, she determinedly gives it away to the baby of the barge people. It is only a temporary expansion, however; after Skrebensky has left her, she contracts back into selfishness: "When a dirty, red-eyed old woman came begging of her in the street, she started away as from an unclean thing" (p. 339).

15 In a letter to Kyle Crichton in 1925 Lawrence gives further indication of what "steel" meant to him; he describes "the mystery, the cruelty, the deathliness of steel", and goes on: "...steel is a symbol of something else in the soul, hard and death-dealing,

cutting, hurting, annihilating the living tissue for ever".
Edward Nehls, op. cit, Vol II, p. 422.

16 Mudrick, in Spilka (ed.) op. cit, p. 46.

17 Hough, op. cit, p. 68.

18 Mudrick, in Spilka (ed.) op. cit, p. 45.

19 cf. Lawrence's own comment on the suffragette movement in 'Study of Thomas Hardy': "It is so sad that the earnest people of today serve at the old, second-rate altar of self-preservation. The woman-suffragists, who are certainly the bravest and most heroic party amongst us, even they are content to fight the old battles on the old ground, to fight an old system of self-preservation to obtain a more advanced system of preservation. The vote is only a means they admit...And surely this is admirable. Yet it is like protecting the well-being of a cabbage in the cabbage-patch, whilst the cabbage-patch is rotting at the heart for lack of power to run out into blossom." (Phoenix pp. 404-5) Lawrence seems to have seen the suffragette movement as a touchstone for the opposition of "self-preservation" (improvement of the Lesser World) and "self-fulfilment" (transcendence towards fulfilment of the Greater World.)

20 Mudrick, in Spilka (ed.), op. cit, p. 45.

21 That the "darkness" and "light" opposition represents the larger opposition of unconscious or physical life and conscious or intellectual life is clear from Lawrence's use of a similar image in a letter to Ernest Collings in 1913: "I conceive of a

man's body as a kind of flame...and the intellect is just the light that is shed on things around." (Letters, p. 180).

22 cf. the language of the earlier moonlight dance of Ursula and Skrebensky: "The darkness seemed to breathe like the sides of some great beast, the haystacks loomed half-revealed..." (p. 317). The similarities show how subtly Lawrence prepares for the re-entry of Skrebensky into Ursula's orbit.

23 Graham Hough, for example, admits to being uncertain of when they become lovers: "I am not quite sure when; the style in which the sexual encounters are described is so fuliginous that it is impossible to tell." (Hough, op. cit, p. 69) H.M. Daleski guesses, but surely guesses wrong when he talks of "Ursula's sudden, overwhelming adolescent experience of sexual passion...her frantic consummation under the moon at the age of sixteen." (Daleski, op. cit, p. 123) That Ursula's first sexual experience with Skrebensky does not occur until shortly after his return from South Africa, and that the experience is an important new facet of their relationship, Lawrence is careful to spell out. We are told that "He had not taken her yet", but that they both know "subconsciously that the last was coming" (p. 450). It comes, in fact, on "a windy, heavy night" when "He came to her finally in a superb consummation" (p. 450). That this is the "first time" is clear also from Ursula's post-coital reflections: "When she rose she felt strangely free, strong. She was not ashamed -- why should she be? He was walking beside her,

the man who had been with her. She had taken him, they had been together...Her soul was sure and indifferent of the opinion of the world." (p. 451)

24 Letters, p. 393.

25 Leavis, op. cit, p. 122.

26 Hough, op. cit, p. 69.

27 Mudrick, in Spilka (ed.), op. cit, p. 45.

28 Leavis, op. cit, p. 144.

29 E. Engelberg, 'Escape from the Circles of Experience', in P.M.L.A, Vol. 28, (March, 1963), p. 107.

30 Friedman, op. cit, pp. 140-1.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Two

1 Fantasia of the Unconscious/Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, p. 149.

2 Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, (New York: Vintage, 1959), p. 4. All subsequent references to The Plumed Serpent are bracketed and included in the text.

3 cf. also, Lou in 'St. Mawr': "I will stay alone, just alone. Alone and give myself only to the unseen presences, serve only the other unseen presences." St. Mawr/The Virgin and the Gipsy, (London: Penguin, 1950), pp. 145-6.

4 Phoenix, p. 514.

5 Lawrence's own life and work between about 1918 and 1926 display a similar interest in 'centres' of both a geographical and physiological kind. The 1914-18 War, a shattering experience for him, convinced Lawrence that the "nodality" of Europe, England and, more particularly, London,had been lost for ever. Looking back in 1923 he writes: " Some places seem final. They have a true nodality. I have never felt that so powerfully as, years ago, in London. The intense, powerful nodality of that great heart of the world. And during the war that heart, for me, broke." ('Taos', Phoenix, p. 100) Lawrence's exploration of Australia and America is, in one sense, a search for an alternative centre. If, in the end, the mission failed, Lawrence was

nevertheless temporarily at peace in Taos, which he claimed, "still retains its old nodality." (Phoenix, p. 100)

Lawrence also held the 1914-18 War responsible for a loss of human integrity and nodality; as Somers reflects in Kangaroo: "The terrible, terrible war, made so fearful because in every country practically every man lost his head, and lost his own centrality, his own manly isolation in his own integrity." (Kangaroo, p. 236) Much of Lawrence's work after the war is preoccupied with the re-definition of the mysterious "clue" to men and women, and with the subsequent restoration of human centrality. Fantasia of the Unconscious which re-locates the centres of human consciousness as the "solar plexus", "cardiac plexus", "lumbar ganglion"and "thoracic ganglion" is a case in point.

6 Hough, op. cit, p. 124.

7 Vickery, 'The Plumed Serpent and Eternal Paradox', Criticism V (Spring, 1963), p. 119.

8 Clark, op. cit, p. 62.

9 Ibid, p. 52.

10 cf. Cartwright in St. Mawr: "...if your third eye is open, which sees only the things that can't be seen, you may see Pan within the thing, hidden: you may see with your third eye, which is darkness." (St. Mawr/The Virgin and the Gipsy, p. 62).

11 Kessler, 'Descent in Darkness' in Moore (ed.) A D.H. Lawrence Miscellany, p. 244.

12 cf. the imagery of Lawrence's own comments on New Mexico: "A vast old religion which once swayed the earth lingers in unbroken practice there..." (Phoenix, p. 145) The image of the "break", so positive in The Rainbow where Ursula must continually break out of her environment in order to move on towards fulfilment, is a far more negative image after 1915. It seems probable that Lawrence's experience of destruction and disintegration during the 1914-18 War has much to do with this: Women in Love, Aaron's Rod and The Plumed Serpent show more of breaking-up than they do of breaking through, and, in general, Lawrence's work in the twenties reveals more interest in making connections than it does in breaking them.

13 The anti-Christian import of the down-tread Lawrence explains in his essay 'New Mexico': "the ceaseless down-tread, always to the earth's centre (is) the very reverse of the upflow of Dionysiac or Christian ecstasy." (Phoenix, p. 145)

14 K. Inniss, Lawrence's Bestiary, (Paris: Mouton, 1971), p. 186.

15 e.g. "Her kind of womanhood, intensely personal and individual, was to be obliterated again, and the great primeval symbols were to tower once more over the fallen independence of woman. The sharpness and the quivering nervous consciousness of the highly-bred white woman was to be destroyed again, womanhood was to be cast once more into the great stream of impersonal sex and impersonal passion." ("The Woman Who Rode Away", Collected Short Stories, Vol. II, p. 569).

16 Daleski, op. cit, p. 226.

17 J.F. Stoll, op. cit, p. 215.

18 Hough, op. cit, p. 129.

19 cf. the relationship between Lou and St. Mawr: "He would never respond. At first she had resented it. Now she was glad of it. He would never be intimate, thank heaven." (St. Mawr/The Virgin and the Gipsy, p. 60)

20 This is by no means the only instance of contradiction and inconsistency; too often Lawrence imposes familiar obsessions on a text that will not bear them out as true. When Teresa is introduced, for example, as having been persecuted by her brothers, Ramon announces: "It is a country where men despise sex and live for it...which is just suicide." (p. 433) Yet in the early half of the novel we are told on several occasions that, for the Mexicans, "sex itself was a powerful, potent thing, not to be played with or paraded. The one mystery." (p. 167) and that Mexicans "never walked their sex abroad, as white people do." (p. 165).

21 See Daleski, op. cit, pp. 240-51.

22 cf. "The Woman Who Rode Away" where the difference is even more pronounced: "...our men are the fire and the day-time, and our women are the spaces between the stars at night...that keep the stars apart." (Complete Short Stories, Vol. II, p. 570).

23 Hough, op. cit, p. 136.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Three

1 John Thomas and Lady Jane, (New York: Viking, 1972), pp. 167-8. Lawrence wrote three versions of his story of Lady Chatterley. These are now called The First Lady Chatterley, John Thomas and Lady Jane, and Lady Chatterley's Lover. Unless otherwise indicated, all references in this chapter are to the third and final version, Lady Chatterley's Lover, (London: Penguin, 1961), and are bracketed and included in the text.

2 John Thomas and Lady Jane, pp. 233-5. The final version of Lady Chatterley's Lover makes much less of this theme; the corresponding passage describes Connie simply as "small and enfolded" (p. 217).

3 See Mark Spilka, The Love Ethic of D.H. Lawrence, (Indiana: University Press, 1955) pp. 39-59.

4 This self-defensive denial of the earth lies behind Clifford's following exchange with Connie: "'Look aren't the little daffodils adorable? To think they should come out of the earth!' 'Just as much out of air and sunshine', he said. 'But modelled in the earth', she retorted, with a prompt contradiction." (p. 89) Unlike Mellors who can "(feel) his way by tread" (p.132), Clifford is cut off from the soil. The "great desert tracts" (p. 100) in his consciousness are the outcome of his rejection of fertility and preference for the wasteland of intellect.

5 J. Moynahan, The Deed of Life, (Princeton: University Press, 1963), p. 145.

6 "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover", Phoenix II, p. 510.

7 Moynahan, op. cit, pp. 165-6.

8 Ibid, p. 141.

9 Gregor and Nicholas, The Moral and the Story, (London: Faber, 1962), p. 241.

10 The word "exterminate" in particular and the destructive conflict of Clifford and Mellors in general give the lie to Lawrence's defence of his novel in "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover": "I stick to my book and my position: Life is only bearable when the mind and body are in harmony, and there is a natural balance between them and each has a natural respect for the other." (Phoenix II, p. 492) Though this position is undoubtedly one that Lawrence does hold elsewhere in his writings, Lady Chatterley's Lover itself suggests the impossibility of balance between mind and body. Connie's contentment with the exclusively physical Mellors seems to suggest where Lawrence's real, rather than professed, sympathies lie.

11 cf. both the ideas and imagery of the following passage from "Study of Thomas Hardy": "He who would save his life must lose it -- like a poppy that has come to bud, when he reaches the shore, when he has traversed his known and come to the beach to meet the unknown, he must strip himself naked and plunge in, and pass out: if he dare." (Phoenix, p. 407)

12 See, for example, W. Tiverton, Lawrence and Human Existence, (London: Rockcliff, 1951), p. 95.

13 Daleski, op. cit, p. 281.

14 Sexual elitism runs throughout Lady Chatterley's Lover. Mellors, for example, is quite impatient of those less virile than himself, notably Sir Clifford whom he indelicately accuses of lacking both "balls" (p. 204) and a "cod" (p. 281). His consistent punning on the word "spunk" (= courage and/or male spermatozoa) betrays a hasty, albeit characteristically Lawrencian, equation of bravery and virility. And in a scene which makes one wish Lawrence had left the masculine ethic to the more healthy attentions of Henry Miller, Mellors, as the epitome of sexual tenderness, seems far too tolerant of Sir Malcolm's smutty humour. Sir Malcolm is an even bigger sexual snob than Mellors, and his apparently earnest concern that Connie should have "a real man" (p. 286) is unfavourably offset by his callous curiosity into the "going", or sexual enjoyment, that Mellors has had with his daughter. Not that Connie would object to this necessarily, for she, too, is impatient to find a "real man...there aren't many of them about" (p. 286), and is so won over by Mellors' virility that she doesn't seem to mind when he takes her "short and sharp and finished like an animal" (p. 231) after her respectful, "eurhythmic" celebration of their love. It is not clear whether the earlier reflections on Michaelis' sexual incapacity ("like so many modern men, he was finished almost before he had begun" -- p. 56) are Connie's or Lawrence's, but either way this kind of men-ain't-what-they-used-to-be lamentation leaves one wondering whether it really isn't a kind of chauvinistic sexual snobbery, not sexual

tenderness, that lies behind the book.

15 The Rainbow, pp. 437-8.

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