

REVERENCE AND WORSHIP IN D.H. LAWRENCE

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Dividing the writings of D.H. Lawrence into three groups, this thesis proceeds to analyze his writings--paying particular attention to the novels--in the light of Lawrence's attitude of reverence and his involvement with the desire to worship. The first grouping treats two of Lawrence's first three novels. The White Peacock and Sons and Lovers are shown to indicate Lawrence's naturally/reverent disposition, as well as his early interest in the social and personal problems which he was later to be more concerned with. The second chapter deals with The Rainbow and Women in Love, discussing Lawrence's concept of love and marriage as well as his mature social ideas. The last chapter is devoted to an examination of the existentialist nature of Lawrence's philosophy and his implicit denial of the intellectual nature of being.

This thesis concludes that D.H. Lawrence demonstrated an attitude of reverence which was profoundly Christian in its meaning and importance, but that as a philosopher and as the prophet of a new religion, Lawrence was committed to a doctrine whose ultimate promise was only despair and meaninglessness.

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INTRODUCTION

It is understandable that persons who have known D.H. Lawrence personally should have written about him as prolifically as they have. Their efforts have resulted in an amazing accumulation of biographical-critical works which will, no doubt, one day be valuable material for the person attempting to gain a greater knowledge of Lawrence's life and personality.

But this day will only come when what Lawrence himself had to say is respected and taken for what it is worth. Lawrence's wife, Frieda, seems to have accomplished what others failed to do with her warm and fluid reminiscences in "Not I, But the Wind..." . She knew what Lawrence was trying to say and do, appreciated its depth and importance, and has given us an account of some of their time together which passes beyond surface foibles and idiosyncrasies to the relevant area of understanding and patience. The person who reads John Middleton Murry's Son of Woman, however, will find it difficult to take Lawrence's novels at their face value. Murry is so concerned with the personal reasons for Lawrence's writing, that he goes so far as to say Lawrence only wrote to shake off his com-

plexes and phobias, and did not intend his novels to be art. We fare no better with Richard Aldington's Portrait of a Genius, But..., and are left with a picture of Lawrence which, however true to the facts of his life, distorts our comprehension of his work.

There are signs, though, that the wind is shifting. The past year has seen at least two fine pieces of criticism of Lawrence. F.R. Leavis devoted three articles in his series "The Novel as Dramatic Poem"¹ to the study of Women in Love. The articles are an indication of what truly fine criticism can accomplish. Father William Tiverton, in his D.H. Lawrence and Human Existence, approaches the body of Lawrence's work from a specifically Christian frame of reference. Although Father Tiverton's book is generally good and makes many important relations of Lawrence's philosophy to Christianity, he does not make an adequate statement of Lawrence's accomplishment. In any listing of good Lawrencian criticism, mention should also be made of an earlier, discerning essay by Sigrid Undset.²

D.H. Lawrence always contended that he was a deeply

1 F.R. Leavis, "The Novel as Dramatic Poem: Women in Love", (I,II,III), in Scrutiny, Vol. 17, 18, Nos. 3, 4 and 1, p. 203-220, 319-330, 18-31.

2 Sigrid Undset, Men, Women and Places, "D.H. Lawrence", New York, Knopf, 1959.

religious man, and it is this aspect of his work which will be dealt with in the thesis. The title "Reverence and Worship ..." has been used here, rather than one such as "Religion in D.H. Lawrence", both because the true religious impulse is one of reverence and worship, and because it would seem the development of Lawrence's work makes the division valid.

Although the approach has been chronological, the division of Lawrence's work into three groups has been logical, and is warranted by the content of the material. The first chapter investigates two of Lawrence's first three novels, with the intention of discovering his early attitudes towards religion, marriage, love and his fundamental reverence of the natural world. In the second chapter the mature expression of his ideas is revealed. In these chapters particular attention will be paid to the texts of the novels. This approach is justified in the light of a principle of criticism which Lawrence himself stated:

The artist usually sets out...to point a moral and adorn a tale. The tale, however, points the other way, as a rule. Two blankly opposing morals, the artist's and the tale's. Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. 3

The books discussed in the first two chapters, because they are first and finally novels, and not philosophical tracts, will be regarded as novels, in which the tale--that is, the

3 D.H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, 1923, Seltzer, p. 3.

world created by the author, peopled with characters of his imagination--will be honored. The author's attitude will be examined in relation to the artistic integrity of this created world. It should be stressed, however, that the world which art creates is not one which has been removed from reality, but one in which reality is more pleasingly and precisely present.

The third chapter of the thesis will be devoted to discussing the value of the ideas which Lawrence wanted to convey in his art and his essays. Here again it is felt that Lawrence would have to sanction this treatment. He indicated the justice of the approach used in this chapter when he wrote: "The novel is a perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationships. The novel can help us to live...if the novelist keeps his thumb out of the pan"⁴. With the exception of St. Mawr Lawrence did not keep his 'thumb out of the pan' in the novels which he wrote in this third phase. It is hoped that the reverent nature of Lawrence's gift will have been shown in the earlier two chapters, and here a discussion of his existential and religious beliefs will be presented.

The intention in the thesis has been to respect the unity and integrity of Lawrence's work, and to demonstrate

⁴ Edward D. McDonald, Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence, New York, Viking, 1936, p. 532.

that his vision was one which was primarily concerned with the problem of establishing a reverent relationship with the world. It is on the level of religion and philosophy that Lawrence's viewpoint proves itself inadequate, and it is in the novels, and other writings, where Lawrence left the sphere of art and vision, and assumed the role of prophet, that this inadequacy can most directly and clearly be seen.

The greater part of Lawrence's work has been unavailable in its original publication. A revised edition of Lady Chatterley's Lover, published by William Faro, was used. However, the editions of Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow and Women in Love which have been used, published by The Modern Library, are complete. For references from the novels Moron's Rod, Kangaroo, St. Mawr, The Plumed Serpent and The Virgin and the Gipsy, and the travel book Etruscan Places, the commemorative edition published by Penguin Books has been relied upon. Others had to be taken as they were found: The White Peacock in the Everyman Edition; The Lost Girl in the Boni-Books edition; some of the poetry, essays, letters and short-stories have been made available in selection published by both Penguin Books and Everyman, and these editions have been used where none more authoritative could be gotten. Love Poems and Others, published by Duckworth; Birds, Beasts and Flowers,

by Martin Secker; Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, by Heinemann; Studies in Classic American Literature, published by Seltzer; Sea and Sardinia, by Secker; Mornings in Mexico, and The Man Who Died, by Knopf; and A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, by Mandrake, were all available in their original editions. Phoenix, published by Viking in 1936, has made available previously unpublished or uncollected works by Lawrence.

CHAPTER I

THE WHITE PEACOCKS

THE WHITE PEACOCK

The ability to perceive values beyond the surface area of objects, to discover in them some finally inexpressible quality which finds its home in the very depths of the heart of man is perhaps as simple a way as any of stating what the attitude of reverence is. This attitude of reverence is poetry's secret: poetry converts the surface of objects into such a brittle and brilliant flash and sparkle that we know the flame must be burning from within. Such a glow was never seen in the brightest daylight. In D.H. Lawrence's The White Peacock and Sons and Lovers the attitude of reverence is the one which prevails. An examination of these two books in this chapter will reveal the manner in which this attitude is expressed, and the direction it took with regard to Lawrence's views on society, marriage, and the specific type of Non-Conformist Christianity in which he had been brought up.

The White Peacock, Lawrence's first novel, is strongly reminiscent of Thomas Hardy in its major theme, if not in its total effect. Some of the broader statements concerning Hardy's meaning, which Lawrence made in the long

"Study of Thomas Hardy", could be directly applied to his own first novel. Speaking of the people in Hardy's books, he observed,

One thing about them is that none of the heroes and heroines care very much for money, or immediate self-preservation, and all of them are struggling hard to come into being. What exactly the struggle into being consists in, is the question. But most obviously...the first and chiefest factor is the struggle into love and the struggle with love: by love, meaning the love of a man for a woman and a woman for a man(...) In the long run...the established form of life remained, remained intact and impregnable, the individual, trying to break forth from it, died of fear, of exhaustion, or of exposure to attacks from all sides, like men who have left the walled city to live outside in the precarious open. 1

The White Peacock is primarily the story of Lettie Beardsall and George Saxton, both of whom, in the process of 'struggling into being', are finally defeated. As the title of the book suggests, they never achieve the full flowering of themselves--they never become more than white peacocks.

There are indications in the novel that Lawrence would like to have used the natural world in somewhat the same manner as Hardy had, as a sort of ironic page on which the less significant and doomed lives of men and women are written. But it appears obvious that this conception of nature was not quite Lawrence's forte. There are several scenes in which nature is presented as thwarting and malevolent, but perhaps the most memorable one occurs when Cyril, the first-person narrator of the story, and his sister Lettie are watching four

1 Edward D. McDonald, op. cit., p. 410, 411.

crows struggling against the wind.

Whirled down the sky like black maple leaves caught up aloft, came two more crows. They swept down and clung hold of the trees in front of the house, staying near the old fererunner. Lettie watched them, half amused, half melancholy. One bird was carried past. He swerved rowing laboriously against the driving wet current...The bird wrestled heroically, but the wind pushed him aside, tilted him, caught under his broad wings and bore him down. He swept in level flight down the stream, outspread still, as if fixed in despair. ²

Considering the theme of the story, which is one of frustration and despair, we may surmise that this brooding, heavy atmosphere is the one Lawrence intended to convey.

But it must be admitted that he never quite comes off in this. It is not the fatal notion of nature which Lawrence succeeded in relating; the over-all impression the reader gets is rather of the tenderness, the richness of a humid, flowering earth. The people, Lettie and her husband Leslie Tempest, George and his careless wife Meg, may well fail in their lives; but it is in spite rather than because of whatever powers the natural world exerts.

Against the finely depicted landscapes of Nethermere the people in The White Peacock grow to manhood and womanhood, marry and waste their lives away in anxiety or mediocrity. George Saxton "was a young farmer, stoutly built, brown eyed, with a naturally fair skin burned dark and freckled in patches." ³

² D. H. Lawrence, *The White Peacock*, London, Dent 1911, p. 91-2

³ Ibid., p. 101.

He had lived on the farm by Strelley's Mill for most of his life, satisfied that the farm was universe enough for his life. The White Peacock follows his story from the first contacts with, under Cyril's influence, the world beyond, through his confused love for Lettie and eventual dissolution. He, along with Cyril, is the most enigmatic and unbelievable character in the novel and its major defects can be traced to his inability to bear the weight which the story places on him.

The thwarting of George's life and the ultimate irrelevance of Lettie's marriage, Lawrence suggests, are accountable to their hesitation in their love for each other. Yet George strikes the reader as being anything but a tender blossom, striving to burst into flower. He mutters and stammers around, when he is with Lettie. And when he has been rejected by her and mutters "She'd 'a' loved me better",³ we realize for once and all that, rather than a sensitive-soul thrown into a state of bewilderment by his beloved's presence, he is a clod whom the sprightly Lettie could never have married. Rather than be affected by the pathos of their little love game, we are inclined to consider the whole thing a mismatch from the very beginning. In the later novels Lawrence was able to overcome this obstacle by making his earthy heroes more sensitive and human. But he failed to make us accept George as the husband

³ Ibid., p. 101.

who could have assisted Lettie in her 'struggle into being'.

It is different, however, with Lettie. Her failure to achieve the fullness which she senses to be possible is unbelievably portrayed and significant, even though the process of frustration by 'fate' is hardly credible. She is a distinct person from the moment we first see her

charming in her fresh linen frock and flowered hat, ...she waved...a lace mitten, then glinted on like a flower moving brightly through the green hazels. Her path lay through the wood in the opposite direction from Strelley Mill, down the red drive, across the tree-scattered space to the high road (...). Lettie was like a distant sail speeking along the water's edge, her parasol flowing above.⁴

She is well progressed in her association with Leslie Tempest, but--and here again Lawrence failed to delineate clearly--we surmise that she is not completely satisfied with him. Part of this feeling we are supposed to attribute to the fact that Leslie is the son of a partner in the local coal-mining corporation. It is undoubtedly the naturalness of George which attracts Lettie to him, but as has been stated, this naturalness impresses the reader as being less than magnetic.

Lettie and George find it impossible to meet on common ground. When she is discouraged by her prospects with Leslie, she finds George beerish or incoherent; and when George is moved by a sudden impulse of tenderness for Lettie, he finds her either in Leslie's company, or spiteful. Finally, Lettie and Leslie are precipitated into marriage by "an arrow

⁴ Ibid., p. 11-12.

from the impatient God". Leslie is hurt in an automobile accident; and in the course of being nursed back to health he plays upon Lettie's sympathy, until she agrees to marry him.

Lettie balks from the forthcoming marriage, and occasionally tantalizes herself with George's company, but is 'resigned to her fate', so to speak. Suddenly coming across a valley blossoming with snowdrops, she is moved:

"What do you think they say--what do they make you think Cyril?" Lettie repeated.

"I don't know. Emily says they belong to some old wild lost religion. They were the symbol of tears, perhaps, to some strange-hearted Druid folk before us."

"More than tears," said Lettie. "More than tears, they are so still. Something out of an old religion, that we have lost. They make me feel afraid."

"What should you have to fear?" asked Leslie.

"If I knew I shouldn't fear," she answered. "Look at all the snowdrops--they hung in dim, strange flecks among the dusky leaves--"Look at them--closed up, retreating, powerless. They belong to some knowledge we have lost, that I have lost and that I need. I feel afraid. They seem like something in fate."⁵

Lettie is all too ready to accept her fate. She makes no real attempt to escape the circumstances which we are to believe are necessarily death to her finer being, and the details of the relationships in the novel are too unclear for us to accept the notion of fate which the author has superimposed on the action. Lettie's ready acceptance of an unsatisfactory mode of life seems clearly to be the result of Lawrence's maneuvering. He was writing a novel about fate, and consequently the people in the novel had to be crushed in the grand tradition.

5 Ibid., p. 144.

"I wish," she said, "I wish we were free like that. If we could put everything safely in a little place in the earth--couldn't we have a good time as well as the larks?"

"I don't see," said he, "why we can't."

"Oh--but I can't--you know we can't"-- and she looked at him fiercely.

"Why can't you," he asked.

"You know we can't--you know as well as I do," she replied, and her whole soul challenged him. "We have to consider things," she added.⁶

And one can't help but feel that the concept of fate is finally stretched beyond its limits when George, offering a bouquet of flowers to Lettie, is refused: "No thanks--they'd be dead before I got home..."⁷

In spite of its defects, The White Peacock is far from being a failure as a novel. We are given too vivid a picture of the grandeur of purely natural creation, and too comprehensive a realization of the frustration of the loves of Lettie and George to remain unmoved. The ability which Lawrence had, of capturing the spirit and feeling of a place, is demonstrated effectively in the glimpses of Nethermere, with its burgeoning spring, the humid summers, and the long, sweet autumns:

Though spring had come, none of us saw it. Afterwards it occurred to me that I had seen all the ranks of poplars suddenly bursten into a dark crimson glow, with a flutter of blood-red where the sun came through the leaves; that I had found high cradles where the swan's eggs lay by the waterside; that I had seen the daffodils leaning from the moss-grown wooden walls of the boat-house, and all, moss, daffodils, water, scattered with the pink scarves from the elm-buds; that I had broken the half-spread fans of the sycamore, and had watched the white cloud of sloe-blossom go silver-grey against the evening sky...⁸

⁶ Ibid., p. 232

⁸ Ibid., p. 197

There in the green shade, between the tall gooseberry bushes, the heavy crimson peonies stood gorgeously along the path. The full red globes, poised and leaning voluptuously, sank their crimson weight on to the seeding grass of the path, borne down by secret raid, and by their own splendour. The path was poured over with red rich silk of strewn petals. The great flowers swung their crimson grandly about the wall, like crowds of cardinals in pomp among the green bushes.⁹

* * *

I was born in September, and love it best of all the months. There is no heat, no hurry, no thirst and weariness in corn harvest as there is in the hay. If the season is late, as is usual with us, then mid-September sees the corn still standing in stock. The mornings come slowly. The earth is like a woman married and fading; she does not leap up with a laugh for the first fresh kiss of dawn, but slowly, quietly, unexpectantly lies watching the waking of each new day. The blue mist, like memory in the eyes of a neglected wife, never goes from the wooded hill, and only at noon creeps from the near hedges. There is no bird to put a song in the throat of morning; only the crow's voice speaks during the day.¹⁰

In their relation to their physical surroundings, we are given an intimation of what the lives of these Nethermere people could have been, although only in the case of a few of the characters--Lettie, and several less important--do we actually believe that the potentiality really exists.

Thus, in The White Peacock, Lawrence would seem to have followed the Hardy tradition almost scrupulously, eliciting the power of a nature which exceeds human limitations and has no regard for men. But there is a difference in attitude. Lawrence himself has very adequately stated the importance and purpose of nature in Hardy's novels:

9 Ibid., p. 258.

10 Ibid., p. 65-6.

This is a constant revelation in Hardy's novels: that there exists a great background, vital and vivid, which matters more than the people who move upon it. Against the background of dark, passionate Egdon, of the leafy, sappy passion and sentiment of the woodlands, of the unfathomed stars, is drawn the lesser scheme of leaves...¹¹

In the few places Lawrence attempted to evoke this ironic, hostile nature he was taguey and false, as we have seen in the passages quoted above. On the other hand, his flights into descriptions of natural beauty are so frequent and deeply felt and successful, it is difficult for the reader to believe that Nethermere is on the same planet as Hardy's Casterbridge, much less in the same country.

The attitude apparent in *The White Peacock* can best be called a reverent one. If reverence is "that fundamental attitude towards being in which one gives all being the opportunity to unfold itself in its specific nature, in which one neither behaves as its master nor acts arrogantly towards it..."¹² then The White Peacock clearly is demonstrative of the attitude of reverence which Lawrence directed, all his life, towards the natural world: the flowers, animals, the rhythm of the seasons. However imperfectly this attitude is expressed in his first novel--and there are times when it does border on sentimentality--this natural reverence is not to be confused with sentimentalism. We can distinguish between the basically egoistic attempt to refer the complexities and depths

¹¹ Edward D. McDonald, Op. Cit., p. 419

¹² Dietrich Von Hildebrand, Liturgy and Personality, New York, Longmans, Green, 1943, p. 57-8

of human life to the level of a more easily acceptable state of nature, from the desire to accept the world of nature as a flowering of meaningful and profound being. This novel, while it doesn't attempt to explore very consciously the world of nature as an expression of being, at least gives clear indications that Lawrence's attitude was one of reverence, and in this regard is in a direct line with the whole of Lawrence's work.

An interesting and important aspect of the book is the analysis of Lettie's acceptance of mediocrity.

There was a touch of ironical brutality in her now. She was, at the bottom, quite sincere. Having reached that point in a woman's career when most, perhaps all of the things in life seem worthless and insipid, she had determined to put up with it, to ignore her own self, to empty her own potentialities into the vessel of another or others, and to live her life at second hand. This peculiar abnegation of self is the resource of a woman for the sweeping of the responsibilities of her own development. Like a nun, she puts over her living face a veil, as a sign that the woman no longer exists for herself: she is the servant of God, of some man, of her children, or maybe of some cause. As a servant, she is no longer responsible for herself, which would make her terrified and lonely. Service is light and easy. To be responsible for the good progress of one's life is terrifying. It is the insufferable form of loneliness, and the heaviest of responsibilities. So Lettie indulged her husband, but did not yield her independence to him; rather it was she who took much of the responsibility of him into her hands, and therefore he was so devoted to her.¹³

The theme of the 'polarization' of two individuals in marriage was explored and developed fully in his later novels. But in The White Peacock, begun when he was twenty-one years

13 The White Peacock, p. 216-17

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old and published in his twenty-sixth year, Lawrence showed sufficient awareness of the complexities of the relationship to trace Lettie's and Leslie's frustration through their possessive and servile attitude towards each other.

One could cull details from the novel which have significance with relation to Lawrence's later work at too great a length. For our purposes it is sufficient to note that Lawrence was not unaware of the absence of religious spirit in England, at this time, and the power of industrialism to accelerate the materialistic trend. Lettie and Cyril meet two youths going to work at the mines:

"Why?" said Lettie. "Are you going to work on Christmas eve?"

"It looks like it, don't it?" said the elder.

"And what time will you be coming back?"

"About 'alf past tow."

"Christmas morning?"

"You'll be able to look out for the herald angels and the star," said I.

"They'd think we was two dirty little uns," said the younger lad, laughing.

"They'll 'appen 'a' done before we get up ter th' top," added the elder boy--"Can' they'll none venture down th' shaft."¹⁴

Lawrence's realization of man's ability to build for himself a wall of abstraction, mortared and strengthened by insentient wilfulness, and thus to cut himself off from the deepest springs of his nature, is somewhat superficially expressed in the characterization of Leslie Tempest. Nevertheless, it is clear that many of Lawrence's later characters and

14 Ibid., p. 111-12

preoccupations have their prototypes and first faint articulation in The White Peacock.

SONS AND LOVERS

In 1912 D.H. Lawrence wrote to his friend Edward Garnett, outlining the novel he had recently finished:

If follows this idea: a woman of character and refinement goes into the lower class, and has no satisfaction in her own life. She has had a passion for her husband, so the children are born of passion, and have heaps of vitality. But as her sons grow up she selects them as lovers--first the eldest, then the second. These sons are urged into life by their reciprocal love of their mother--urged on and on. But when they come to manhood, they can't love, because their mother is the strongest power in their lives, and holds them...As soon as the young men come into contact with women, there's a split. Will iam gives his sex to a fribble, and his mother holds his soul. But the split kills him, because he doesn't know where he is. The next son gets the woman who fights for his soul--fights his mother. The son loves the mother--all the sons hate and are jealous of the father. The battle goes on between the mother and the girl, with the son as object. The mother gradually proves the stronger, because of the tie of blood. The son decides to leave his soul in his mother's hands, and, like his elder brother, go for passion. He gets passion. Then the split begins to tell again. But almost unconsciously, the mother realises what is the matter, and begins to die. The son casts off his mistress, attends to his mother dying. He is left in the end naked of everything, with the drift towards death. 15

Where The White Peacock is far from being a completely
 16
 satisfying novel, the novel outlined above, Sons and Lovers,

15 Richard Aldington, editor, Selected Letters, Penguin Books, 1950, p. 47-8.

16 The Trespasser, Lawrence's second novel, has been inaccessible to me.

stands by itself, and is a firmly outlined and tightly drawn book, witnessing as well the sensitiveness and the ability to realise characters which kept Lawrence's first novel from being sheer melodrama.

It is only in retrospect, with knowledge derived from his later novels and essays, that we realize the division of the person's love into what Lawrence in his letter referred to as 'soul-love' and the varieties of passionate love, was the underlying theme of The White Peacock. Sons and Lovers needs no such clarification. The cleavage is drawn with large strokes in the case of the elder brother, William, and then more subtly with Paul Morel. Mariam, the young girl who gets Paul's soul was

brown-eyed, and inclined to be mystical...Christ and God made one great figure, which she loved tremblingly and passionately when a tremendous sunset burned out the western sky(...)Anthropomorphic as she was, she stimulated him into appreciating things...and then they lived for her. She seemed to need things kindling in her imagination or in her soul before she felt she had them. And she was cut off from ordinary life by her religious intensity which made the world for her either a nunnerly garden or a paradise where air and knowledge were not, or else an ugly, cruel thing.

So it was in this atmosphere of subtle intimacy, this meeting in their common feeling for something in nature, that their love started.¹⁷

Mrs. Morel, sensing Paul's new interest in Mariam reflects, "She is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left...and he is just such a gaby (sic) as to let himself be absorbed. She will

¹⁷ D. H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers, New York, The Modern Library, 1913, p. 169, 176-7.

never let him become a man..."¹⁸ Lawrence's reference to the 'tie of blood'^a which prevents Paul from breaking away from his mother is related to nothing more esoteric than the fact that his deepest sympathy and sense of protection lie with her:

He walked biting his lips and with clenched fists, going at a great rate. Then, brought up against a stile, he stood for some minutes, and did not move. There was a great hollow of darkness fronting him, and on the black up-slopes patches of tiny lights, and in the lowest trough of the night, a flare of the pit. It was all weird and dreadful. Why was he torn so, almost bewildered, and unable to move? Why did his mother sit at home and suffer? Why did he hate Miriam, and feel so cruel towards her, at the thought of his mother. If Miriam cause his mother suffering, then he hated her. Why did she make him feel as if he were uncertain of himself, insecure, an indefinite thing, as if he had not sufficient sheathing to prevent the night and the space breaking into him? 19

In either case, Paul is torn apart. He cannot merge with Miriam in a satisfactory association; and he feels himself straining beyond the close area of his home which can only give him partial expression of the life which he feels growing within.

In his relationship with Clara Dawes the dichotomy is reversed. Paul attempts to satisfy his passions, while giving his mother the spiritual love which had previously been Miriam's:

"That's what one must have, I think," he continued--"the real, real flame of feeling through another person--once,

18 Ibid., p. 190.

19 Ibid., p. 228.

only once, if it only lasts three months..." 20

But it is Clara who finds the affair too devastating. Paul is really so frenzied when he is with her that she feels she must break off with him:

...she was afraid. When he had her then, there was something in it that made her shrink away from him--something unnatural. She grew to dread him. He was so quiet, yet so strange. She was afraid of the man who was not there with her, whom she could feel behind this make-belief lover; somebody sinister, that filled her with horror. She began to have a kind of horror of him. It was almost as if he were a criminal...it made her feel as if death itself had her in its grip. 21

The inability to maintain a physical relationship which negates the mental and spiritual nature of a man, and the loss of the protection which his mother had given him, leave Paul in a state of terror at the close of the novel. Only a realization of the gap between life and death sustains him, and even this has been dangerously narrowed by his contemplation of suicide. The book closes on an unhopeful note:

On every side the immense dark silence seemed pressing him, so tiny a spark, into extinction, and yet, almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night, in which everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror, and holding each other in embrace, there in a darkness that outpassed them all, and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness, and yet not nothing.

"Mother!" he whimpered--"mother!"

She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid

20 Ibid., p. 572.

21 Ibid., p. 452.

all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself. He wanted to touch her, have her alongside with him.

But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly. 22

Sons and Lovers, like Lawrence's first novel, is an examination of the inability of persons to achieve the development of their being, and the subsequent shattering effect of this frustration. Lawrence himself called the novel a tragedy, and if we do not demand too strict an adherence to the more formal rules of tragedy, his judgement is legitimate. Although it is not the most mature nor profound of his novels, Sons and Lovers is the most unique, and stands as the culminating point in Lawrence's more negative attempt to embody the complex of human relations which leads to the deadening division of life.

The term 'more negative' is used, not to signify that Sons and Lovers is only negative and therefore negligible. Rather, it is used to contrast the novel with the most important achievements of Lawrence's later work in which, though the division and opposition of life into its physical and spiritual aspects occurs, a positive attempt to establish the basis for a fertile and beneficial set of relationships is made. It will be seen that Lawrence was unable to make an adequate synthesis, even in the last years of his life.

No small part of this failure can be attributed to the fact that Lawrence was unable to conceive of a God Who possessed an intellectual nature. At the time he was writing *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence advised his sister Ada concerning the religious doubts she was experiencing:

...it seems to me like this: Jehovah is the Jew's idea of God, not ours. Christ was infinitely good, but mortal as we. There still remains a God, but not a personal God: a vast shimmering impulse which waves onwards towards some end, I don't know what--taking no regard of the little individual, but taking regard for humanity. 23

This notion of a beneficial impulse, though its good intentions had been seriously doubted by Thomas Hardy and George Meredith among others, and though belief in the very existence of an absolute had been greatly undermined during the later Romantic movement, can be vaguely sensed as the nourishing quality of the Nerthermere countryside described in *The White Peacock*, and is clearly present in *Sons and Lovers*. When Miriam asks Paul to explain to her why she likes his painting so well, Paul says:

"It's because there's scarcely any shadow in it; it's more shimmery, as if I'd painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not the stiffness of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real living. The shape is a dead crust. The shimmer is inside really." 24

The sense of some mysterious principle, informing life and giving it its beauty, the "shimmering impulse" of ultimate life, is found in Lawrence's writing. His unusually acute awareness of the depths of physical life extended

23 Ada Lawrence and G. Stuart Gelder, Early Life of D.H. Lawrence, London, Secker, 1932, p. 72.

24 Sons and Lovers, p. 180-1.

to an attitude of reverence for the world of nature, in which the infinity of color and the mystery of the flowering of life gave testament to him of this final vast 'impulse'. This awareness of Lawrence's is not sufficient grounds for classifying him as a materialist or a sensualist. It is rather an amazing source of vitality in his writing. Such passages as this bear witness to his appreciation of physical beauty:

It was very still. The tree was tall and straggling. It had thrown its briers over a hawthorn-bush, and its long streamers trailed thick, right down to the grass, splashing the darkness everywhere with great spilt stars, pure white. In bosses of ivory and in large splashed stars the roses gleamed on the darkness of foliage and stems and grass. Paul and Miriam stood close together, silent, and watched. Point after point the steady roses shone out to them, seeming to kindle something in their souls. The dusk came like smoke, and still did not put out the roses. 25

This is the sort of world that Paul Morel--and Lawrence--believes men should be in contact with. Walking through a pine-wood with Miriam, Paul tells her,

"A sort of hush: the whole night wondering and asleep: I suppose that's what we do in death--sleep in wonder. (...) To be rid of our individuality, which is our will, which is our effort--to live effortlessly, a kind of conscious sleep--that is very beautiful, I think; that is our after-life--our immortality." 26

But it is to be noted that even in this early period Lawrence's conception of the good life and whatever after-life he would allow himself to believe in, was not the one of

25 Ibid., p. 189.

26 Ibid., p. 328.

sheer Elysian sensuality which he has been accused of ad nauseam. It would be more exact to consider it a state of being in which a man would achieve the closest and most complete contact possible with the life-force informing nature. Nor would Lawrence's attitude at this stage appear to be strictly Pantheistic--however ephemeral and naive it was. Lawrence's primary interest in the person, and his reserve, keep him from making the Pantheistic error.

That Lawrence had, by the time he finished Sons and Lovers, found Christianity unacceptable, is evident in some of Paul Morel's remarks.²⁷ We learn that, after having made his break with Miriam,

Paul and his mother had long discussions about life. Religion was fading into the background. He had shovelled away all the beliefs that would hamper him, had cleared the ground, and come more or less to the bedrock of belief that one should feel inside oneself for right and wrong, and should have the patience to gradually realize one's God. Now life interested him more. 28

Early in the book, Mrs. Morel makes a remark which is out of place, considering she is a non-conformist of the most enthusiastic kind. She has a Congregational clergyman in for tea and while he expostulates on the miracle of the Feast of Cana, she thinks, "Yes, poor fellow, his young wife is dead; that is why he makes his love into the Holy Ghost."²⁹ The

27 In this essay, it is hoped that the mistake of considering each sentence which Lawrence wrote to be nothing more than a personal documentary, can be avoided. Yet it should be realized that his writing was highly personal, and to a very great extent based upon his own immediate experience and life.

belief that the profession of a distinct God is merely a retreat from the more demanding and difficult problem of developing the being which one already has, was to remain with Lawrence all his life, though with subtle variations. Paul Morel is repelled as much by Miriam's religiosity as anything, and the description of Miriam praying in Sons and Lovers implies that she is evading the need to balance her mental and spiritual life with a physical and passional maturity:

She remained kneeling for some time, quite still, and deeply moved, her black hair against the red squares and the lavender-sprigged squares of the patchwork quilt. Prayer was almost essential to her. Then she fell into that rapture of self-sacrifice, identifying herself with a God who was sacrificed, which gives so many human souls their deepest bliss. 30

But even more significant is the attitude towards Christianity which Lawrence expressed in the novel. Miriam, picnicing with her friends at Wingfield Manor, thinks of Mary, Queen of Scots, "...looking with her strained, hopeless eyes, that could not understand misery, over the hills whence no help came, or sitting in this crypt, being told of a God as cold as the place she sat in." ³¹ The God of Christianity, for Lawrence, was only a moral God. He was the ultimate abstraction which the mind of man had achieved. With his vision of the world as an ever-changing, pulsing expression of some mysterious life-force--unknown and unknowable because undefined

30 Ibid., p. 203.

31 Ibid.; p. 199-200.

and infinitely mutable--Lawrence would not allow himself the luxury of a revealed God.

Nor would he allow himself to accept the Puritanical God of his Non-Conformist youth, a God which would disclaim the validity of the area of existence which Lawrence most revered. A glimpse of the attitude which Lawrence always felt to be a necessary result of Christianity is gotten when Miriam tells Paul Morel, "...all my life mother said to me, 'There is one thing in marriage that is always dreadful, but you have to bear it.' And I believed it."³² Religion seemed to Lawrence to be a denial of the physical, perceptible aspect of human life.

If Lawrence's judgement of religion was not conventional, however, neither was it completely irreligious. His reverence of the natural world, and his awareness of the existential basis of being was more orthodox than he might have known:

"It's not religious to be religious," he said. "I reckon a crow is religious when it sails across the sky. But it only does it because it feels itself carried to where it's going, not because it thinks it is being eternal (...). I don't believe God knows such a lot about Himself...God doesn't know things. He is things. And I'm sure He's not soulful." ³³

To say that Lawrence's religion at this point was only one of "becoming himself" would not be grasping the whole truth. It

32 Ibid., p. 341.

33 Ibid., p. 294.

is true that this process of becoming was his primary concern. But there are depths beyond what is immediately apparent. However strongly he refused to accept any end as the final one for which all men must strive, Lawrence's expression of a natural world, not deprived of its union with the 'shimmering impulse' beyond creation by objective knowledge, gives us the certainty that this impulse, for him, was both good and beautiful. Paul Morel, then, speaks for Lawrence when he describes to Miriam

...how...the great levels of sky and land in Lincolnshire, meant to him the eternality of the will, just as the bowed Norman arches of the church, repeating themselves, meant the dogged leaping forward of the persistent human soul, on and on, nobody knows where; in contradiction to the perpendicular lines and to the Gothic arch, which, he said, leapt up at heaven and touched the ecstasy and lost itself in the divine. 34

The White Peacock and Sons and Lovers serve to reveal the particular awareness of life which was Lawrence's gift. In the first novel the most striking impression made on the reader is Lawrence's fundamental reverence of natural forms; and in Sons and Lovers he was able to couple this attitude with the insight and depth of motivation which found their clearest and greatest expression in The Rainbow and Women in Love. The two novels studied in this chapter give implicit evidence that Lawrence was early aware of the mechanization and ugliness of life in an industrial England. These novels show

that the objections to Christianity, which he was later to elaborate upon and which will be examined, had been formulated by the time he began his second cycle of novels. That Lawrence from the first showed a disposition to approach the important problems of life--the development of the whole person, and the establishing of a legitimate and non-thwarting relationship with the exterior universe--through an examination of love and marriage, is also witnessed in a reading of the first novels.

The White Peacock bears witness to the natural reverence of Lawrence's temperament. Although it seems that in it Lawrence attempted to write another of the Fate novels which were so popular in his time, the existence of Fate in the lives of the characters and in the natural background of the novel is a very artificially sustained one. Strangely enough it is on the strength of the very unfatalistic representation of the beauty and frailty of the Nethermere countryside, and the gentle characterization of Lettie, that the novel is worthwhile reading. Both of these qualities spring from an attitude of reverence, and reveal Lawrence's inclination toward this attitude. Although the first novel shows signs that Lawrence was aware of social developments at this time, the awareness plays only a small part in the novel. The White Peacock is particularly interesting for its dem-

onstration that Lawrence was from the start disposed towards examining the fundamental problems in the lives of men and women through the relationships they establish in marriage.

Sons and Lovers marks a further step in Lawrence's growth as a novelist, and reveals a matured ability to perceive through the relationship of love and marriage the drama of human lives. In this novel it becomes apparent that Lawrence was involved in probing the destructive cleavage of body and spirit which can frustrate life so completely. Paul Morel's mother, his brother and himself all suffer as a result of this split in their affections. The trend which Lawrence's religious thought took is evident in Sons and Lovers. He formulated a religion of nature, and his God was essentially the one the early romantics had attempted to delineate: an impersonal, evolving, 'shimmering impulse.'

Both novels, then, are relevant to the main-stream of Lawrence's later writing and thought. In their reverential regard for the natural world, in their perception of the disintegral direction which life may take, and in their examination of this cleavage in the love and marriage and familial relationships the novels prepare the way for a reading and appreciation of Lawrence's greatest work. They mark the first phase of Lawrence's development as a novelist, and have in common their concentration on the negative processes and

and results of the dichotomy of mind and passion. None of the characters in these novels are able to achieve the fulfilment of their being. Like George Saxton, they all remain merely 'white peacocks.'

CHAPTER II

PEOPLE IN LOVE

THE RAINBOW

It was noted in the first Chapter that Lawrence, as early as The White Peacock, had tended to examine the primary values of his characters' lives through the marriage relationship. In Sons and Lovers this inclination to view the deepest stirrings of the heart through love and passional relationship had developed to the extent where Lawrence could have Paul Morel remark: "It's so hard to say, but the something big and intense that changes you when you really come together with somebody else. It almost seems to fertilize your soul and make it that you can go on and mature."¹ The disposition here is one of near-religious enthusiasm, and the fervour of the statement belies the sincerity with which Lawrence accepted it. In the previously mentioned "Study of Thomas Hardy", we find a more dispassionate declaration of what is fundamentally the same idea:

The via media to being, for man or woman, is love, and love alone. Having achieved and accomplished love, then the man passes into the unknown. He has become himself, his tale is told. Of anything that is complete there is no tale to tell. The tale is about becoming complete, or about the failure to become complete. 2

1. Sons and Lovers, p. 413

2 Edward D. McDonald, Op. Cit., p. 410.

Both The Rainbow and Women in Love are tales about people "becoming complete, or about the failure to become complete", through love.

Lawrence examined his thesis, that only through the love relationship men and women could arrive at a balance in their lives in which both the integrity of individuality and satisfaction of the longing for completion are respected, in these two novels. In The Rainbow Tom and Will Brangwen attempt to arrive at this synthesis in their lives--Tom successfully, and Will unsuccessfully. Where Tom Brangwen accepts the realization that he would have to recognize his wife's integrity as a person, would have to "meet and embrace and know her, who was other than himself..."³, Will Brangwen refuses to make the surrender of his pride and possessiveness which is demanded:

There was no tenderness, no love between them any more, only the maddening, sensuous lust for discovery and the insatiable, exorbitant gratification in the sensual beauties of her body...Their children became mere offspring to them, they lived in the darkness and death of their own sensual activities. 4

The difference in the attitudes of the two Brangwen men is that of reverence on the one hand, and irreverence on the other. Lawrence held that the ultimate test of the deepest being in man was whether the marriage relationship

3 D.H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, New York, The Modern Library, 1915, p. 86.

4 Ibid., p. 222.

could be established by two persons pressing into infinity and fusion in marriage, and yet called upon to retain their separate, inviolate individualities. He expressed this belief in an essay on Edgar Allen Poe, written during the period when he was working on Women in Love, and published later in the Studies in Classic American Literature:

Love is the mysterious vital attraction which draws things together, closer, closer together. For this reason sex is the actual crisis of love. For in sex the two blood-systems, in the male and female, concentrate and come into contact, the merest film intervening. Yet if the intervening film breaks down, it is death.

So there you are. There is a limit to everything. There is even a limit to love.

The central law of all organic life is that each organism is intrinsically isolate and single in itself. 5

Referring to the relationship as one of 'polarization', Lawrence compared the achieved state to the harmony and balance of the stars, each of which radiates from within itself, and stands in its unique perfection of being, single but juxtaposed to the other stars. And so it is with men and women, in his view. It is each person's obligation to perfect himself, to come to the full flowering of his nature. This can only be done if the person is juxtaposed to the exterior world, and most perfectly, to the exterior world of another person in the union of marriage: a union allowing for the deepest knowledge of the other, and yet demanding

5 D.H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, New York, Seltzer, 1925, p. 94.

the most complete, because the most urgent, assertion of the person's individuality. As Lawrence stated it in his

Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious:

For the end, the goal, is the perfecting of each single individuality, unique in itself--which cannot take place without a perfected harmony between the beloved, a harmony which depends on the at-last-clarified singleness of each being, polarized in one by the counter-posing singleness of the other. 6

But only if the integrity of the other person is honored, the right of the other to come into the perfection demanded by his or her own unique being, will the polarization be complete. And the same rule holds, on its own level, in man's relationship with the natural, physical universe of being. There, too, the contact must be one of reverence for the lesser, but not to be exploited or misused, world of being.

In The Rainbow, Lawrence's first novelistic attempt to examine in artistic and positive terms the idea of polarization, the dramatic structure derives from the attempts of the Brangwen men and their wives to achieve this satisfactory relationship in marriage, and the fulfillment which would be consequent upon such a relationship.

It is not necessary to subscribe to any doctrine of marital love as being the only salvation of mankind to accept The Rainbow as a novel. But that this was Lawrence's belief there is little doubt--though here again the mistake of pin-

6 D.H. Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, London, Heinemann, 1925, p. 59.

ning Lawrence' down with an easy interpretation which his writing will not bear should be avoided. Thus, he says of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher":

It is lurid and melodramatic, but it is true. It is a ghastly psychological truth of what happens in the last stages of this beloved love, which cannot be separate, cannot be isolate, cannot listen in isolation to the isolate Holy Ghost. For it is the Holy Ghost we must live by. The next era is the era of the Holy Ghost. And the Holy Ghost speaks individually inside each individual: always, forever a ghost. There is no manifestation to the general world. Each isolate individual listening in isolation to the Holy Ghost within him. 7

Which should lead one to conclude that even with regards marriage, Lawrence did not intend to be doctrinaire, would have paid the final and most reverential deference to the man "listening in isolation to the Holy Ghost within him." Lawrence's conception of the Holy Ghost, it should be added, is rather a figurative than a Christian one.

Despite the statement quoted above, there remained in Lawrence an implicit inclination to view the repose achieved in the perfectly balanced marriage as one which would fulfill the basic religious requirements of man. The change which occurs in Tom Brangwen's relation with his wife Lydia is described in specifically religious terms:

And always the light of the transfiguration burned on in their hearts. He went his way, as before, she went her way, to the rest of the world there seemed no change. But to the two of them, there was the perpetual wonder of the transfiguration. 8

7 Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 116.

8 The Rainbow, p. 87.

Earlier, Lawrence remarked on the effect the union with Lydia had upon Tom Brangwen: "The strange, inviolable completeness of the two of them made him feel as sure and as stable as God."⁹

If Lawrence conceived of the communion of marriage as being more than "...the physical expression of incarnation of a spiritual union in which the sexual act has become the vehicle of a higher creative purpose",¹⁰ and it seems as though the disposition to regard it as the ultimate religious experience was always strong with him, we are not in the least required to agree with him in either The Rainbow or Women in Love. In The Rainbow, whatever the theological and philosophical implications which this conception may have, and however much we might regard it as unsatisfactory, the process of "coming into being" through marriage is psychologically true. Thus when Tom Brangwen and his wife are able to arrive at a relationship in which the integrity of their individual selves is both safe and nourished, the struggle has been within the dramatically valid confines of their marriage. Once married, they are forced to come to some resolution, to establish their relationship in some order and with some intention. Perhaps Tom and Lydia do not consciously grasp the fact that the choice lies between a relationship in which neither their souls nor their bodies would be safe from the

9 Ibid., p. 39

10 Christopher Dawson, Enquiries into Religion and Culture, "Christianity and Sex", London, Sheed and Ward, 1953, p. 289.

possessive drive of the partner, or one in which the unique being of the other would be recognized and revered. But Lawrence made clear that this is the choice they must make:

She wanted his active participation, not his submission. She put her fingers on him. And it was torture to him, that he must give himself to her actively, participate in her, that he must meet and embrace and know her, who was other than himself. There was that in him which shrank from yielding to her, resisted the relaxing towards her, opposed the mingling with her, even whilst he most desired it. He was afraid, he wanted to save himself. 11

Their solution, for the purposes of the reader, is both dramatic and valid, and involves nothing more cosmic than the recognition of the final individuality of one another and their desire to maintain the integrity of their love.

The resolution of the same situation, in the lives of Will and Anna Brangwen, has been noted earlier. Here too it is in terms of the demands of the same basic and dramatic situation that the problem is posed and a position is arrived at. But in their case, the decision is an unsatisfactory one: "They accepted shame, and were one with it in their most unlicensed pleasures. It was incorporated. It was a bud that blossomed into beauty and heavy, fundamental gratification." 12

While the generations of Brangwens are attempting to come to some satisfactory and fruitful terms with life, the world in which they live is being rapidly changed. The per-

11 The Rainbow, p. 86.

12 Ibid., p. 223.

ception of the movement of modern history which reveals itself so fully in Women in Love, can be witnessed in The Rainbow.

At the beginning of the story we are made aware of the changes occurring outside the lives of the people at Marsh Farm:

About 1840, a canal was constructed across the meadows of the Marsh Farm, connecting the newly-opened collieries of the Erewash Valley. A high embankment travelled along the fields to carry the canal, which passed close to the home-stead, and, reaching the road, went over in a heavy bridge. (...) The Brangwens received a fair sum of money from this trespass across their land. Then, a short time afterwards, a colliery was sunk on the other side of the canal, and in a while the Midland Railway came down the valley at the foot of the Ilkeston hill, and the invasion was complete. The town grew rapidly, the Brangwens were kept busy producing supplies, they became richer and they were almost tradesmen. 13

By the time Tom Brangwen has reached manhood, he is the only one of his family who is interested enough in the farm to make it his life. His brothers have all gone into various small businesses, less demanding and more lucrative. This is the family that

...had lived for generations on the Marsh Farm, in the meadows where the Erewash twisted sluggishly through the alder trees...working hard because of the life that was in them, not for want of the money (...) They felt the rush of the sap in the spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but every year throws forward the seed to begetting, and, falling back, leaves the young-born on the earth. They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that comes under the wind in autumn, showing the birds' nests no longer worth hiding. Their life and interrelations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened

13 Ibid., p. 5-6.

to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying hard and unresponsive when the crops were to be shorn away. 14

Tom is the last of the Brangwens to work the farm. And no little part of his ability to find satisfaction in his life and in his marriage can be attributed to the fact that the close quarters and rich intimacy of the farm life make his solution the most unavoidable and natural one. Will Brangwen, in his failure to achieve an integral synthesis, is able to divert his energy to outside interests. The channels of escape have been multiplied for his generation:

And gradually, Brangwen began to find himself free to attend to the outside life as well. His intimate life was so violently active, that it set another man in him free. And this new man turned with interest to public life, to see what part he could take in it... He wanted to be unanimous with the whole of purposive mankind. 15

But it is the third generation, that of Ursula Brangwen, Anton Skrebensky, the young Tom Brangwen and his wife Winifred, which finds itself completely at sea, grasping at whatever rock would allow some permanent mooring. Anton finds his hope in an acceptance of the life of the mass of men:

The good of the greatest number was all that mattered. That which was the greatest good for them all, collectively, was the greatest good for the individual... no highest good of the community, however, would give

14 Ibid., p. 1-2.

15 Ibid., p. 224.

him the vital fulfilment of his soul. He knew this. But he did not consider the soul of the individual sufficiently important. He believed a man was important in so far as he represented all humanity. 16

Tom and his wife Winifred make the most devastating and cynical solution of all. Tom takes a job as the manager of a coal-mine. Ursula, coming into the mining town, is appalled: "The place was a moment of chaos perpetuated, persisting, chaos firm and rigid."¹⁷ She observes that the "...men ...were all decently dressed, and most of them rather gaunt...They believe they must alter themselves to fit the pits and the place, rather than alter the pits and the place to fit themselves."¹⁸ What one finally realizes is that Tom Brangwen must accept this life or go mad. Needing some goal, at least some direction, and finding none in the course of his life, he grasps the proffered control of a machine-organization, and makes his life's work the synchronizing of the wheels and gears which run the machine. It is merely too bad that the wheels and gears are men.

She [Ursula] knew her Uncle Tom perceived what was going on. But she knew moreover that in spite of his criticism and condemnation, he still wanted the great machine. His only happy moments, his only moments of pure freedom were when he was serving the machine. Then, and then only, when the machine caught him up, was he free from

16 Ibid., p. 309.

17 Ibid., p. 326.

18 Ibid., p. 327.

the hatred of himself, could he act wholly, without cynicism and unreality. 19

Like the others, Ursula Brangwen finds herself stymied and her life meaningless in a world whose values she cannot accept. She perceives the horror of the machine society and is repelled. She finds untenable Winifred's advice to seek the same compromise which Anton Skrebensky earlier had made: "You will learn that mankind is a great body of which you are one useful member, you will take your own place at the great task which humanity is trying to fulfil."²⁰ A form of Christianity which has lost its vitality, has been bleached to a death-pallor by rationalism and sentimentalism, cannot offer the explanation or provide the nourishing force for an existence which Ursula feels is tender and basically rich. She is caught half-way between the desire for the complete sensual contact with the exterior world which Lawrence perceived to be the death impulse of a disintegrating civilization, and a slowly developing awareness of the mystery of existence, the beauty and awe of a life too deep to be penetrated completely:

That which she was, positively, was dark and unrevealed, it could not come forth. It was like a seed buried in dry ash. This world in which she lived was like a circle lighted by a lamp. This lighted area, lit up by man's completest consciousness, she thought was all the world: that here all was disclosed forever...This inner circle of light in which she lived and moved, wherein

19 Ibid., p. 330.

20 Ibid., p. 338.

the trains rushed and the factories ground out their machine-produce and the plants and the animals worked by the light of science and knowledge, suddenly it seemed like the area under an arc-lamp, wherein the moths and children played in the security of blinding light, not even knowing there was any darkness, because they stayed in the light...Yea, and no man dared even throw a fire-brand into the darkness. 21

The 'knowledge' which Ursula denies is the sort which has been sucking away the life of the Brangwens throughout The Rainbow: the knowledge which has built up the terror of the mines, has turned the traditional forms of life and the organic relationship with the universe into a paying proposition, and allows her science teacher to tell Ursula "No, really...I don't see why we should attribute some special mystery to life--do you? We don't understand it as we understand electricity, even, but that doesn't warrant our saying it is something special, something distinct..."²² The book closes with a description of Ursula walking across the flat, desolate fields towards her home. Cutting through a pasture she is surrounded by a pack of stallions which form a terrifying circle around her and start to gallop:

Large, large seemed the bluish, incandescent flash of the hoof-iron, large as a halo of lightning round the knotted darkness of the flanks. Like circles of lightning came the flash of hoofs from out of the powerful flanks. 23

21 Ibid., p. 413.

22 Ibid., p. 460

23 Ibid., p.

Caught in the center of this chaos, suddenly released from routine by the leaping of fear within her, Ursula has a faint recognition of the existence of mystery. No scientific formula could explain away the beauty of the stallions' gleaming coats, could reduce the flashes of fire from the horses' hoofs to a mathematical equation. Though the vision terrifies her, it liberates her as well. She feels she can make the attempt to break away from the purely surface and deadening level of existence which has been stifling her. The title of the book derives from the insight into mystery which she has, the realization of the depths and wonder of existence which she achieves in the closing pages of the novel.

And the rainbow stood on the earth. She knew that the sordid people who crept, hard-scaled and separate on the face of the world's corruption were living still, that the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to life in their spirit, that they would cast off their horny covering of disintegration, that new, clean, naked bodies would issue to a new germination, to a new growth, rising to the light and the wind and the clean rain of heaven. She saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven. 24

The epiphany in Ursula is really of the same disposition that Dietrich Von Hildebrand describes as being basic to an attitude of reverence:

...It is the illuminated, conscious reverence which clearly grasps its object and is formed by the latter's

infinite and manifest greatness, its mysterious, inconceivable depths, by the infinite fullness of its values. 25

WOMEN IN LOVE

The meaning of the phrase 'attitude of reverence' is almost as difficult to convey as the description of the values it regards would be. It is the attitude which disposes a man to see and accept the depths of existence; to be awed by creation; to acquiesce to a final mystery; to open his life to value and further being purely because they demand this acceptance of him. The natural virtues require a basic spirit of reverence, and the supernatural virtues are formed around a spirit of reverence which has been given its ultimate confirmation in Christ. The reverential man does not live in a plane-world, but perceives depths and heights as well. All of which can mean everything or nothing; and both so completely that one gives up the attempt to express the meaning and basis of 'an attitude of reverence'.

But if anything at all is conveyed when it is said that the reverential man is one whose world has depths and heights, and the flat, plane-world is the one in which the irreverent man exists, then there is justification for saying that

Women in Love is about both worlds.

In the very terms of the 'objective correlatives'²⁶ which Lawrence has used to establish an important theme in the novel, the distinction made above is appropriate. Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen, the two 'Women' in the novel, walk to a lake near their home;

Suddenly, from the boat-house, a white figure ran frightening in its swift sharp transit, across the old land-stage. It launched in a white arc through the air, there was a bursting of the water, and among the smooth ripples a swimmer was making out to space, in a center of faintly heaving motion. The whole other world, wet and remote, he had to himself. He could move into the pure translucency of the grey, uncreated water. (...)

From his separate element he saw them and he exulted to himself because of his own advantage, his possession of a world to himself. He was immune and perfect. He loved his own vigorous, thrusting motion, and the violent impulse of the very cold water against his limbs, buoying him up. 27

The swimmer, Gerald Crich, is described as being in perfect mastery of the water's surface, just as he is in control of the events of his exterior life. When he is swimming on the surface level of existence, just as when he remains on the surface of the water, he is unperturbed. Lawrence uses this device to concretize the realm in which Gerald needs to live. But even Gerald, the master of the coal-mines, the possessor of the powerful will which directs the lives of

26 An apology is made here for the use of an already over-worked term. But what would better indicate that which is really a symbol, but is so organically alive in the context of the work that to call it a symbol would seem like taking a tree from the soil to examine its roots

27 D.H. Lawrence, Women in Love, New York, The Modern Library, 1920, p. 50-1.

a community of miners, who almost completely succeeds in creating a superficial existence demanding all his energy, is not immune to the more mysterious and terrifying aspects of existence. We learn from Ursula that there are depths even in his life.

"You know he shot his brother?" said Ursula.

"Shot his brother?" cried Gudrun, frowning as if in disapprobation.

"Didn't you know? Oh, yes! I thought you knew. He and his brother were playing together with a gun. He told his brother to look down the gun, and it was loaded, and blew the top of his head off. Isn't that a horrible story?"

"How fearful!" cried Gudrun. "But it is long ago?"

"Oh, yes, they were quite boys," said Ursula. "I think it is one of the most horrible stories I know." 28

The water theme is repeated several times in the course of the novel, to symbolize the surface level of the lives of several characters. Gudrun, after she has fallen in love with Gerald, assumes the same desire to master the surface. When Gerald and Gudrun have been picnicing with Rupert Birkin and Ursula they light little lanterns for the boat trip back across the lake. Gudrun's first lantern is one with primroses and butterflies in the clear white light of day, while Ursula's lantern has a flight of storks painted on it. Gudrun is given her second lantern and is terrified to see that it has a picture of a cuttle fish, swimming through dark water into the heart of a brilliant light. She exchanges it for one with black crabs and seaweed and transparent water.

After an accident in which his sister has fallen into the lake, Gerald dives into the water, hoping to find her before she drowns. He cannot locate the body, and when he surfaces he tells Gudrun:

"But it's curious how much room there seems, a whole universe under there; and as cold as hell, you're as helpless as if your head was cut off." He could scarcely speak, he shook so violently. "There's one thing about our family, you know," he continued. "Once anything goes wrong, it can never be put right again--not with us. I've noticed it all my life--you can't put a thing right, once it has gone wrong." 29

Any depth, any mystery frighten Gerald. He has established a surface area of existence and will abide by no other. He is even exasperated when he hears that his sister had indulged in a bit of playfulness at her wedding. Birkin tells him,

"I think it was perfect good form in Laura to bolt from Lupton to the church door. It was almost a masterpiece in good form. It's the hardest thing in the world to act spontaneously on one's impulse--and it's the only really gentlemanly thing to do--provided you're fit for it." (...)

"And I", said Gerald grimly, "shouldn't like to be in a world of people who acted individually and spontaneously, as you call it. We should have everybody cutting everybody else's throat in five minutes." 30

In his dealings with other persons Gerald has reduced virtue to the level of business. This aspect of his nature is demonstrated when, after taking his pleasure of a young girl, he has qualms of conscience... "...because he had left without

29 Ibid., p. 209.

30 Ibid., p. 36.

giving Pussum money...she would have been glad of ten pounds, and he would have been very glad to give them to her. Now he felt in a false position."³¹

Gerald's life is built deliberately around his attempt to remain on the purely steady, level world of immediate experience, knowledge and action. The affair of the accidental killing is one of the unacknowledged tortures of his deeper consciousness, and though Gerald doesn't allow the realization of the terror to remain for long in his mind, it occasionally rushes into the hard light of his mechanically coordinated mind, to reveal its ugliness all the more terribly because it is denied. In the passage where Gerald reveals his terror of the world he has seen under water to Gudrun, he compares his helplessness to that of a man with no head.

Death is what really frightens Gerald, but only because he knows that death is uncontrollable. If only he can maintain control of things, shape them, bend them to his own purposes, then he feels that he will be finally beyond the reach of death. Through Gerald, Lawrence perceived the drive that was invigorating industrialism to a certain extent. With the trend of the modern world, as with Gerald Crich, it is a matter of controlling.

31 Ibid., p. 91.

Immediately he saw the firm, he realized what he could do. He had a fight to fight with Matter, with the earth and the coal it enclosed. This was the sole idea, to turn upon the inanimate matter of the underground, and reduce it to his will. And for this fight with matter, one must have perfect instruments in perfect organization, a mechanism so subtle and harmonious in its workings that it represents the single mind of man, and by its relentless repetition of given movement and will accomplish a purpose irresistibly, inhumanly. 32

If he can act as though there are only these two existences, himself and matter, then that will be sufficient, he believes.

Gerald would be a god to himself:

He, the man, could interpose a perfect, changeless, god-like medium between himself and the Matter he had to subjugate. There were two opposites, his will and the resistant Matter of the earth. And between these he could establish the very expression of his will, the incarnation of his power, a great and perfect machine, a system, an activity of pure order, pure mechanical repetition, repetition ad infinitum, hence eternal and infinite. He found his eternal and his infinite in the pure machine-principle of perfect co-ordination into one pure, complex infinitely repeated motion, like the spinning of a wheel; but a productive spinning, as the revolving of the universe may be called a productive spinning, a productive repetition through eternity, to infinity. And this is the God-motion, this productive repetition ad infinitum. And Gerald was the God of the machine...and the whole productive will of man was the Godhead. 33

Lawrence's insight into the negation implied by a purely mechanized and industrialized life found its most powerful expression in Women in Love. But it is the comprehension of the relation of mechanization to the individual person's life

32 Ibid., p. 259.

33 Ibid., p. 260.

which makes it a profound novel as well as an investigation of some aspects of modern history.

Gerald's father, Thomas Crich, had built up his colliery with at least some of the principles of traditional Christianity in mind. But the degree to which these principles had been perverted even in his time is revealed in the book. He had leavened the burden of guilt, felt whenever he considered the tremendous wealth he was amassing, by telling himself that he was only operating his colliery for the poor. The cleavage was even more difficult to repair in his case than the traditional discrepancy between the letter and the spirit would have been. Thomas Crich's motivation was the sentimentality of a weakened form of Christianity--a sentimentality as far removed from the 'letter which killeth' as the letter is from the 'spirit which giveth life.'

He had been so constant to his lights, so constant to charity, and to his love for his neighbour. Perhaps he had loved his neighbour even better than himself--which is going one further than the commandment. Always, this flame had burned in his heart, sustaining him through everything, the welfare of the people. He was a large employer of labour, he was a great mine-owner. And he had never lost this from his heart, that in Christ, he was one with his workmen. Nay, he had felt inferior to them, as if they through poverty and labour were nearer to God than he. He had always the unacknowledged belief, that it was his workmen, the miners, who held in their hands the means of salvation. To move nearer to God, he must move towards his miners, his life must gravitate towards theirs. They were, unconsciously, his idol, his God made manifest. In them he worshipped the highest,

the great, sympathetic, mindless Godhead of humanity. 34
 That this attitude was one of decayed sentimentality was revealed in the strikes of the coal-miners. Though the strikers seldom were able to get justice from Crich's hands, he took comfort from the fact that he was able to give the hungry miners' children little cakes and loaves of bread. He sat in his great study, receiving the widows and the poor, wallowing in the philanthropy he could extend.

The disintegration of values and order has reached a climax by the time Gerald Crich takes over the firm from his father.

Whilst his father lived Gerald was not responsible for the world. But now his father was passing away, Gerald found himself left exposed and unready before the storm of living, like the mutinous first mate of a ship that has lost its captain, and who sees only a terrible chaos in front of him. He did not inherit an established order and a living idea. The whole unifying idea of mankind seemed to be dying with his father, the centralising force that had held the whole together seemed to collapse with his father, the parts were ready to go asunder in terrible disintegration. Gerald was as if left on board a ship that was going asunder beneath his feet, he was in charge of a vessel whose timbers were all coming apart. 35

So it is not only his fear of mystery, the unknown, that Gerald hopes to conquer by ignoring it and occupying all his time with the known, conquerable level of existence. The whole of life is to be encompassed in his plans. He will give the corpse of social relationships its injection of embalming

34 Ibid., p. 245.

35 Ibid., p. 251-2.

fluid, give existence a purpose and time & direction:

He had his life-work now, to extend over the earth a great and perfect system in which the will of man ran smooth and unthwarted, timeless, a Godhead in process. He had to begin with the mines. The terms were given: first the resistant Matter of the underground; then the instruments of its subjection, instruments human and metallic; and finally his own pure will, his own mind. It would need a marvelous adjustment of myriad instruments, human, animal, metallic, kinetic, dynamic, a marvelous casting of myriad tiny wholes into one great perfect entirety. And then, in this case there was perfection attained, the will of the highest was perfectly fulfilled, the will of mankind was perfectly enacted; for was not mankind mystically contra-distinguished against inanimate Matter, was not the history of mankind just the history of the conquest of the one by the other? 36

Dietrich Von Hildebrand is aware of the mentality which Gerald Cricht displays when he says:

The lack of reverence is a specific defect our age has. On the one hand, the feeling of reverence is undermined by the increasing technicalization and instrumentalization of the world wherein everything is considered only as a means for the attainment of practical aims, and being is not allowed to be taken seriously. On the other hand, the attitude of self-glorification is increased in man by progress in the knowledge of secondary causes and by the conquest of the physical world. 37

It was this realization which informed Lawrence's conception of Gerald Cricht, and which gives the characterization its greatest significance. In one scene Gerald is shown driving his car through a crowd of miners in the village:

He did not care whether they made way with alacrity, or grudgingly. He did not care what they thought of him. His vision had suddenly crystallized. Suddenly he had

36 Ibid., p. 260

37 Liturgy and Personality, p. 61-2.

conceived the pure instrumentality of mankind. There had been so much humanitarianism, so much talk of sufferings and feelings. It was ridiculous. The sufferings and feelings of individuals did not matter in the least. They were mere conditions, like the weather. What mattered was the pure instrumentality of the individual. As a man as of a knife: does it cut well? Nothing else mattered. 38

With a deep perception of the lengths to which a man could go in his attempt to deny the spiritual being of himself and others, Lawrence also recognized that the basic longings of the soul, once frustrated, and then denied, would search for satisfaction in sensualism.

Gerald Crich, in his attempt to order his life by the power of his will, never quite succeeds in deadening the little fears, the momentary quiverings of his deeper self. He turns, at first casually and finally frantically, to the hope of living a completely sensual life. Here again it is not merely a matter of one person, but a whole generation is presented as making the attempt. When Gerald and Rupert visit London they stay with some young friends, all of whom are in accord with the youth who remarks:

"How perfectly splendid it must be to be in a climate where one could do without clothing altogether...one would feel things instead of merely looking at them. I should feel the air move against me, and feel the things I touched, instead of having only to look at them. I'm sure life is all wrong because it has become too visual--we can neither hear nor feel...I'm sure that is entirely wrong. 39

38 Women in Love, p. 255-4.

39 Ibid., p. 87.

In the 'Totem' chapter of Women in Love a primitive statue is displayed to the group, a "...grey, forward-stretching face of the negro woman, African and tense, abstracted in utter physical stress...abstracted almost into meaninglessness by the weight of sensation beneath."⁴⁰ The statue becomes a symbol of the disintegrating effect of pure sensuality, and as Gerald and Gudrun become more and more involved in their deification of the senses⁴¹, Rupert recalls this carving.

He remembered the African fetishes he had seen at Halliday's so often. There came back to him one, a statuette about two feet high, a tall, slim, elegant figure from West Africa, in dark wood, glossy and suave...Her face was crushed tiny like a beetle's she had rows of heavy round collars, like a column of quoits, on her neck...She had thousands of years in purely sensual, purely unspiritual knowledge behind her. It must have been thousands of years since her race had died, mystically; that is, since the relation between the senses and the outspoken mind had broken, leaving the experience all in one sort, mystically sensual. Thousands of years ago, that which was imminent in himself must have taken place in these Africans: the goodness, the holiness, the desire for creation and productive happiness have lapsed, leaving the single impulse for knowledge in one sort, mindless progressive knowledge through the senses, knowledge in disintegration and dissolution, knowledge such as the beetles have, which live purely within the world of corruption and cold dissolution...

There is a long way we can travel, after the death-break: after that point when the soul in intense suffering breaks, breaks away from its organic hold like a leaf that falls. We fall from the connection with life and hope, we lapse from pure integral being, from creation and liberty, and we fall into the long, long African process of purely sensual understanding, know-

40 Ibid., p. 88.

41 F.R. Leavis' articles on Women in Love, mentioned earlier in this essay, make extremely clear the comprehension and creative intelligence of Lawrence's treatment of this theme.

ledge in the mystery of dissolution. 42

Ursula Brangwen is the only one of the four principal characters in Women in Love who avoids any taint of this sensuality, and her freedom was won in the affirmation made in the final pages of The Rainbow, in her acceptance of mystery and hope.

The relationship of Ursula and Rupert, although it contains at least as many religious overtones as that of Tom and Lydia Brangwen in The Rainbow, is, again, validated in terms of the context of the novel. As F.R. Leavis notes, the reader accepts the relationship in contradistinction to the irreverent, destructive one which Gerald and Gudrun form. It is, under the circumstances created in the novel, a redeeming relationship.

Only with great difficulty is Rupert able to win through to any adjustment with Ursula. He is shown to be not immune to the same disintegrative process that possesses Gerald and Gudrun, and so violently does he rebel against this sensuality, that he is in danger of going to the other extreme: that of denying the reality of natural, perceptible existences.

Both temptations, that of dissolute sensuality, and of denying the value of natural creation, are overcome in the marriage to Ursula, in which he must recognize the reality

and integrity of her person. In making this adjustment, he is able to avoid the extreme of sensuality and the other extreme of idealistic unrealism.

In The Rainbow and Women in Love, two major themes can be recognized: that of marriage as being the relationship in which a fundamental attitude of reverence and a respect for the integrity of the other person must be established; and the theme of the progressive irreverence of an industrial world, complicating the need man has of establishing the reverential relationship. In The Rainbow Tom and Lydia Brangwen need with success in their attempts to find a 'polarization' in their marriage, while the younger generation Will and Anna Brangwen resort to a relationship of sheer sensuality, in which each takes as much pleasure as possible, at the expense of the integrity of the other. But it is also made clear that Will Brangwen is not required by the very nature of his mode of life to find some satisfactory solution in marriage; when he and his wife fail towards one another, he turns to the life of the community to spend his energy. This had been impossible for the older Tom, who had been forced by the close association of the farm life to fight the battle through to a satisfactory conclusion. In the case of the third generation, Anton Skrebensky, Tom and Winifred Brangwen and Ursula, the problem is not of avoiding the problems of life by escaping into communal life. The question

has become one of whether or not they will be able to even realize their own personal lives have an importance and require certain moral adjustments. In The Rainbow Ursula alone succeeds in making a satisfactory synthesis. She realizes the need for reverence and the existence of hope.

In Women in Love the two couples, Rupert and Ursula, Gerald and Gudrun, find themselves in a world which has not "an established order and a living idea", and the necessity of finding the roots and meaning of life has become an urgent one. Gerald Crich so completely establishes a surface level of existence, so completely avoids recognizing the fact that life has springs beyond the power of his will and the order of his abstractions, that he is finally driven insane by the terrible murmurings of his unconscious life. Lawrence's realization of Gerald's condition, and indeed of the condition of many modern men, was informed by an insight into the spiritual, deeper life of the soul. His intention was not to deny the validity of the will so much as to demonstrate that the will is not the be-all and end-all of human existence. Romano Guardini clarifies this truth --that the will is not to be confused with the whole of life-- when he speaks of the tendency of modern man to emphasize the Ethos rather than the Logos:

Man's will was required to be responsible for him. Only one Will can do this, and that is creative in the absolute sense of the word, i.e., it is the Divine Will.

Man, then, was endowed with a quality which presumes that he is God. And since he is not, he develops a spiritual cramp, a kind of weak fit of violence, which takes effect often in a tragic, and sometimes (in the case of lesser minds) even in a ludicrous manner. This presumption is guilty of having put modern man into the position of a blind person groping his way in the dark, because the fundamental force upon which it has based life--the will--is blind. The will can function and produce, but cannot see. From this is derived the restlessness which nowhere finds tranquility. Nothing is left, nothing stands firm, everything alters, life is in continual flux; it is a constant struggle, search and wandering. 43

But Gerald's driving will is not only destroying himself, it is reducing the miners who work for him to the status of mechanical instruments. And thus a cycle of disintegration and despair is set in motion. His need to find an outlet for his inner life is converted to sensuality, and finally in his relationship with Gudrun, he finds his desire to possess her thwarted by her own will. It is this final frustration which drives him insane.

Rupert and Ursula, on the other hand, win through to a relationship which will be based on mutual respect of each other's individuality and ultimate 'isolation', and thus they are able to avoid the irreverence and possessiveness which dominate the lives of Gerald and Gudrun. It is in this manner that Women in Love represents the validity of Lawrence's insight into the marriage relationship.

When Lawrence viewed the marriage relationship as an association of two persons called upon to achieve an

43 Romano Guardini, The Spirit of the Liturgy, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1935, p. 206.

attitude of reverence, and when he made a creative art of the presentation of the attractions and repulsions of these persons, the result was the magnificent novels The Rainbow and Women in Love. The religious undercurrents of Lawrence's vision, though they were present as early as Sons and Lovers, do not become obtrusive in the two novels studied in this chapter. At times, indeed, this deep, quasi-religious aspect, serves to make the presentation of the relationships described in the novels more electric and vital. The dominating themes are those of the human need to find a relationship of reverence, one which would preserve the integrity of creation and would allow the person to come to the perfection of his individual being. In these novels Lawrence saw the basic drama as occurring in the loves of people in love. His intention and his achievement was to present the drama which he believed to be an urgent one, in an artistically satisfying form. The Rainbow and Women in Love are the monuments of his success.

CHAPTER III

...AFTER STRANGE GODS

EXISTENCE

It is not always easy to determine when a novelist or poet relinquishes the realm of art, and takes it upon himself to be a philosopher, or a saviour. This is the more so when we consider that the poet is always in some manner a philosopher, and usually always is a moralist, in either the strict or more general meaning of the word. That Lawrence had from the very first a philosophy, an approach to reality, which was specifically reverent has been pointed out. This attitude was the one which basically informed The Rainbow and Women in Love--both of which could be said to be concerned with the reverence or irreverence of persons and of a changing society. Lawrence's concern with marriage, as far as the structure of the novels is concerned, centered around the drama of persons attempting to arrive at a reverent, integral relationship in marriage. But that Lawrence had more in mind than dramatically examining the marriage relationship as the means of establishing and confirming the reverent, integral life, was also made apparent. Nevertheless, The Rainbow and Women in Love are both primarily works of art,

though this phrase should be understood in all its implications --for art is also philosophical, moral and intellectual, and not merely aesthetically pleasing. What is meant here is that the two novels, though they have a moral purpose and effect, and have philosophical content, maintain an emotional and aesthetic context in which the morality and philosophy are integrated and vitalized. They are given their particular importance in relation to the whole life of the novel, though it should be remembered, of course, that the 'life of the novel' has its final and most significant meaning in its relation to actual life. In The Rainbow and Women in Love, the religious and philosophical overtones did not become dominant and were not obtrusive. Since that was the case, the opportunity was taken to demonstrate the reverential attitude which Lawrence had towards natural and human existence, and also his ability to see in marriage a state which would reveal the fundamental reverence of men and women.

But Lawrence was not content to be only a novelist. As Sigrid Undset says, "...his own wish was to be a prophet, a saviour of the world, a Messiah."¹ With the exception of the shorter St. Mawr the novels which Lawrence wrote during the period between the close of the first world war and his final residence in Italy give witness to this fact. In The

¹ Sigrid Undset, Men, Women and Places, New York, Knopf, 1939, p. 43.

Lost Girl, Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo (though to a lesser extent), The Plumed Serpent, and The Man Who Died, Lawrence was a 'man with a message' to a greater extent than he was a novelist. This fact no doubt accounts for the fact that the greater part of Lawrence's essays, travel books and the two psychological studies, were written during the period when he most strongly believed that his message was the one which would redeem the modern world. Messages lend themselves to essays and non-fictional treatment with the greatest of ease. By the same token, they tend to turn novels into extended essays--a condition which is deadly for the novel.

To classify Lawrence as an existentialist would seem to be begging the question in our day, and yet it will have to serve as a starting point if we are to find a term which stands in contradistinction to the idealism he abhorred. For it was always the existence, the here-and-now being of the object to which Lawrence paid the final deference--whether the object was a group of Hopi Snake dancers, a flower, or the spontaneous life within himself. His concern was for the existent, as opposed to the abstracted, the real as opposed to the ideal. In a passage from Sons and Lovers which was quoted earlier, Lawrence demonstrates this basic concern, and also gives an insight into the character of his existentialism. Paul Morel speaks for Lawrence when he tells

Miriam:

"It's not religious to be religious...I reckon a crow is religious when it sails across the sky. But it only does it because it feels carried to where it's going, not because it thinks it is being eternal. (...)

I don't believe God knows such a lot about Himself... God doesn't know things. He is things." 2

For Lawrence there could be no reconciliation of the two: knowing and being. Natural being is good and undefiled because it exists, it is without knowing that it is, and thus achieves the perfection of its being spontaneously, unhampered by what Lawrence considered the devitalizing process of knowing.

It is only man, he believed, who has tasted the fruit of knowledge, and has thus doomed himself to a life of oscillating between the two poles: the death of knowledge and the life of being. "Keep Knowledge for the world of matter, force and function. It has got nothing to do with being."³

Throughout the whole of Lawrence's work there is the same insistence that knowledge is existence deprived of its very life, is being bereft of its vigor. He considered knowledge to be the corpse of existence, drained of its sap and value.

What he was protesting against, of course, was the form of knowledge peculiar to the modern world, the "absolutism of reason" of a Hegel, who had "disunited all things and sowed war among them by placing the universality of being

2 Sons and Lovers, p. 294.

3 Stories, Essays and Poems, p. 306.

in the anti-existentialist perspective of an absolute idealism
 ..."⁴ In saying this form of knowledge "has nothing to do
 with being", Lawrence was correct. For it is an incomplete
 type of knowing in which the full apprehension of the existence
 of the subject is accepted as containing the fullness of
 the subject's being. The complete circuit of knowledge, as
 Jacques Maritain states in Existence and the Existent, is
 existential.

The intellect, laying hold of the intelligibles, dis-
 engaging them by its own strength from sense experience,
 reaches, at the heart of its own inner vitality, those
 natures or essences which, by abstracting them, it has
 detached from their material existence at a given point
 in space and time. But to what end? Merely in order
 to contemplate the picture of the essences in its ideas?
 Certainly not! Rather in order to restore them to exist-
 ence by the act in which the intellection is completed
 and consummated...the judgement pronounced in the words
ita est, thus it is. 5

Lawrence's remark that knowledge has nothing to do
 with being was not merely a protest against abstractionism,
 however. In his reaction against the anti-existential ideal-
 ists, Lawrence came to the conclusion that existence is un-
 knowable, that being is a cavern of darkness whose depths
 forbid the entrance of the light of intelligibility;

...if you want to breathe deep, sumptuous life
 breathe it all alone, in silence, in the dark,
 and see nothing.

4 Jacques Maritain, Existence and the Existent, New
 York, Pantheon, 1948, p. 11-12.

5 Ibid., p. 143.

From this anti-intellectual existentialism sprang the images of darkness in Lawrence's writing, his belief that in the depths of darkness being comes into existence, and remains most fully being when it remains in the heart of this darkness, gushing unbidden, unknowing and unilluminated into the fullness of existence. Lawrence's most satisfactory renderings of this philosophy occur in his descriptions of vegetative and animal life. His insights into the non-spiritual world of nature in the descriptive essays, the poetry in Birds, Beasts and Flowers, the renderings of 'the spirit of place' in the travel books, are unmatched. In the essay "Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine" there is a description of the growth of a dandelion which gives us a realization of his ability to penetrate the spontaneous existence of natural forms.

The seed falls to the earth. The Holy Ghost rouses, saying, "Come!" And out of the sky come the rays of the sun, and out of the earth comes dampness and dark and the death-stuff. They are called in, like those bidden to a feast. The sun sits down at the hearth, inside the seed; and the dark, damp death-returner sits on the opposite side, with the host between. And the host says to them: "Come! be merry together!" So the sun looks with desirous curiosity on the dark face of the earth, and the dark, damp one looks with wonder on the bright face of the other, who comes from the sun. And the host says: "Here you are at home! Lift me up, between you, that I may cease to be a Ghost. For it longs me to look out, it longs me to dance with the dancers."

So the sun in the sea, and the earthly one in the

seed take hands, and laugh, and begin to dance. And the treading of their feet is like the running of the little streams, down into the earth. So from the dance of the sun-in-the-seed with the earthy dance-returner, green little flames of leaves shoot up, and hard little trickles of roots strike down. And the host laughs, and says "I am being lifted up! Dance harder! Oh wrestle you two, like wonderful wrestlers, neither of which can win!"⁶

It was when Lawrence extended his philosophy of spontaneity to the life of men, and his anti-intellectualism to the realm of metaphysics and religion, that he became unacceptable and even crass. It was well enough for him to cry out "Sum ergonon cogito!" as he did in one of his poems. But he was not only refuting Descartes famous dictum by so doing, he was also deliberately denying the intellectual powers of man's soul. In his rejection of abstractionism and idealism he could truly say that "Being is not ideal, as Plato would have it..." But in his reaction he went to the other extreme, contending that only the material is existential: "Being is not ideal...nor spiritual. It is a transcendent form of existence, and as much material as existence is. Only the matter suddenly enters the fourth dimension."⁷ Lawrence's philosophy was not a materialism. But in his desire to posit of being a primarily existential character he tended to a conception of being as a sort of matter once-removed from nature, a state of energy which

6 Selected Essays, p. 67.

7 Selected Essays, p. 67.

would have its principal transformation into the world of natural, material existence. Remembering that earlier (in the letter to his sister Ada) he had replaced the concept of God for a 'shimmering impulse', it would seem that this 'energetic' conception of being was what was meant by referring to being as the 'transcendent existence of matter in the fourth dimension.' For Lawrence, there was a cleavage between being and knowing; knowledge was an imperfection, an unnecessary and regretful deformity which had entered into the make-up of man. Knowledge was the wedge which had penetrated the crust of existence, and was in danger of draining it of its pulp. Being, the existence of all things, was only by default--and then only in the case of human beings--knowing or intellectual.

Perhaps the most effective expression of this antinomy which Lawrence believed divided being and knowing is found in The Rainbow, where Lawrence symbolically juxtaposed the two concepts. As Father William Tiverton has pointed out in his D.H. Lawrence and Human Existence, Lawrence intended the rose to symbolize the possibility of men reaching the absolute.

Away from time, always outside of time! Between east and west, between dawn and sunset, the church lay like a seed in silence, dark before germination, silenced after death. Containing birth and death, potential with all the noise and transition of life, the cathedral remained hushed, a great involved seed, whereof the flower would be radiant life inconceivable, but whose beginning and

whose end were the circle of silence. Spanned round with the rainbow, the jewelled gloom of folded music upon silence, light upon darkness, fecundity upon death, as a seed folds leaf upon leaf and silence upon the root and the flower, hushing up the secret of all between its parts, and the death out of which it fell, the life into which it has dropped, the immortality it involves, and the death it will embrace again. 8

But even in this passage it appears that Lawrence could not conceive of an Existence Which gives existences their meaning, their germination and repose. He says the seed silences "the death out of which it fell...and the death it will embrace again." Denying meaning by denying the transcendent Existence which informs existence, he finds acceptable only his own symbol of the Rainbow, the existent act of the Rainbow which "...gathered, mysteriously, from nowhere... took presence upon itself...bended and strengthened itself till it arched indomitable, making great architecture of light and colour and the space of heaven...its arch the top of heaven." 9

The unsatisfactory nature of Lawrence's metaphysics of existence becomes apparent. As Jacques Maritain remarks, existence without essence and consequently without meaning, is inconceivable. Contrasting authentic, existential intellectualism with existentialism he says:

Let it be said right off that there are two fundamentally different ways of interpreting the word existentialism. One way is to affirm the primacy of exis-

8 The Rainbow, p. 189.

9 Ibid., p. 467.

tence, but as implying and preserving essences or natures and as manifesting the supreme victory of the intellect and of intelligibility. This is what I consider to be authentic existentialism. The other way is to affirm the primacy of existence, but as destroying or abolishing essences or natures and as manifesting the supreme defeat of the intellect and of intelligibility. This is what I consider to be apocryphal existentialism, the current kind which 'no longer signifies anything at all.' I should think so! For if you abolish essence, or that which esse posits, by that very act you abolish existence, or esse. Those two notions are correlative and inseparable. An existentialism of this sort is self-destroying. 10

So it is with Lawrence's Rainbow. What he found objectionable in the Rose symbol, that "there was no time nor life nor death, but only this timeless consummation..."¹¹--a misinterpretation which contains smatterings of Puritanism and emotional evangelism and is certainly not truly Christian--gives way to a complete meaninglessness in his symbol of the Rainbow. It is the rainbow, rising from nothing and destined to arch back to a farther horizon of non-being, that finds no 'time nor life nor death'. This is so because, not being, it does not even find itself in time.

But if one can, for the moment, imagine the Rainbow of human existence which Lawrence propounded, he will realize that deprived of its sustenance of intelligibility, the Rainbow is forced to arch itself by sheer act. Having no intellectual or intelligible substance, and therefore no meaning,

10 Existence and the Existent, p. 3-4.

11 The Rainbow, p. 190.

it rises from nothing and descends to nothing, existing meanwhile by will-power, relating only to itself, achieving its highest level by means of the power which it can exert upon itself. So it is with human existence, one must conclude, and the result is a sort of Nietzschean philosophy of the superman striving to a more complete existence by the power of his will. It is in the light of this dependence upon the act that one is forced to understand the spontaneity Lawrence so often declared to be necessary. What other relationship is possible than of existence to itself, and thus to the almighty act, by which the existent progresses and perfects himself, when the very intellectual current of spiritual relationships has been cut off?

But this coming into full, spontaneous being is the most difficult thing of all. Man's nature is balanced between spontaneous creativity and mechanical-material creativity. Spontaneous being is subject to no law. But mechanical-material existence is subject to all the laws of the mechanical-physical world. Man has almost half his nature in the material world. His spontaneous nature just takes precedence.

The only thing man has to trust to in coming to himself is his desire and his impulse. But both desire and impulse tend to fall into mechanical automatism; to fall from spontaneous reality into dead or material reality. 12

In this passage from the essay "Democracy" it is apparent Lawrence makes spontaneity and mechanical-materialism the only two alternatives. He leaves out of consideration that intelligibility which informs matter and illumines the intellect.

When the choice is thus narrowed, the result is the grim determination just to exist, to move on from existential state to existential state which is expressed in his essay on Walt Whitman:

The Open Road. The great home of the Soul is the open road. Not heaven, not paradise. Nor 'above'. Not even 'within'. The soul is neither 'above' nor 'within'. It is a wayfarer down the open road.

Not by meditating. Not by fasting. Not by exploring heaven after heaven, inwardly, in the manner of the great mystics. Not by exaltation. Not by ecstasy. Not by any of these ways does the soul come into her own.

Only by taking the open road.

Not through charity. Not through sacrifice. Not even through love. Not through good works. Not through these does the soul accomplish herself.

Only through the journey down the open road.

The journey itself, down the open road. Exposed to full contact. On two slow feet. Meeting whatever comes down the open road. In company with those that drift in the same measure along the same way. Towards no goal. Always the open road.

Having no known direction even. Only the soul remaining true to herself in her going. 13

This is the philosophy of existential existentialism reduced to its basic triteness and naivté. It is well enough to say that one exists and that is all there is to it. But by so doing one denies the most subtle and meaningful areas of that very existence. The human existent demands hope; he wants meaning and has an intellectual soul. With such an existentialist philosophy as Lawrence had, it would seem that

13 Ibid., p. 269.

his condemnation of Gerald Crich in Women in Love was out of place. Gerald, for all Lawrence might have known, was perhaps only following his own 'Open Road.' Gerald Crich destroyed himself by refusing to listen to the deeper voices of his spirit he had walled in with a succession of acts of the will. How far removed from Gerald's error was this expression of Lawrence's existentialism, which would find the final glory of the existent in his ability to progress through the spasm of life between nothing and nothing by an act of the will?

WORSHIP

The difference, of course, between an abstractionist, idealist philosophy such as Gerald Crich represents, and the existential philosophy which Lawrence developed lies in the fact that the existential approach to reality is basically a religious one--one in which the whole being of a man is involved in the fullness of its subjectivity, rather than the mind alone. To quote Jacques Maritain again,

Normally and necessarily, according to the laws inscribed in our being, there are among men and even in the same man...two attitudes or rather tensions, two fundamentally different postures of the mind. The first I call the posture of cause-seeking. This attitude is characterized by a certain theoretical universality or detachment from self for the purpose of knowing: the sapiential mien or bearing...The other I shall call the posture of saving

my all, the attitude of dramatic singularity or supreme struggle for the salvation of self, the imprecatory mien or bearing, that of the man who wills his God, or rather is willed by Him: the bearing of Jacob, say, wrestling with the Angel. 14

Later, Maritain makes fundamentally the same relation of this second, imprecatory attitude of mind to Kierkegaardian existentialism that can be made to Lawrence:

Clearly, the second of these two attitudes, postures, or tensions which I have just distinguished, the posture of saving my all was that of existential existentialism lived and exercised...In this very fact lay the grandeur of its testimony, the power of its shattering strength, and the value of its intuitions. 15

With Lawrence however it was no longer a case of finding some grounds on which the declaration of the primacy of existence could meet in perfect unity with the notion of the Christian God, the Supreme Essence. The problem was rather one of finding a God.

Lawrence's conception of God was the one which Maritain derides when he says,

The divine plan is not a scenario prepared in advance, in which free subjects would play parts and act as performers. We must purge our thought of any idea of a play written in advance, at a time prior to time-- a play in which time unfolds, and the characters of time read, the the parts. On the contrary, everything is improvised, under the eternal and immutable direction of the almighty Stage Manager. 16

In disowning this conception of God--one which has its origins

14 Existence and the Existent, p. 124.

15 Ibid., p. 125.

16 Ibid., p. 116.

in modern times from the hands of the idealists--Lawrence was asserting a truth, defending really the primacy of existence. If God were just a palimpsest on which the lives of men and women are to be written for the duration of time, then Lawrence's objection would have been well-founded. Lawrence was right in recognizing that the ideal means nothing except in its relation to existence. His mistake was believing that existence can form no idea, has no intellectual nature, or intellegible substance. He was unable to conceive of God as Perfect Existence, and refused to accept a God who was merely ideal.

Denying existence of a God Whom he believed could not be existential, Lawrence eliminated also the possibility of a loving God:

There is that which we cannot love, because it surpasses either love or hate. There is the unknown and the unknowable which proounds our own limitation and ratification. We can only know that from the unknown, profound desires enter in upon us, and that the fulfilling of these desires is the fulfilling of creation. We know that the rose comes to blossom. We know that we are incipient with blossom. It is our business to go as we are impelled, with faith and pure spontaneous morality, knowing that the rose blossoms, and taking that knowledge for sufficient. 17

We know that it is of the essence of love to give itself, and by so giving, to be fulfilled. Lawrence's concept of love, however dramatically and validly it might have

worked itself out novelistically, was one which was deprived of the notion of Grace. Love of God could only be conceived by Lawrence as a giving--a loss of the integrity of the human personality. Here too the origins of error can be found in an idealist conception of God, which has deprived Him of the Existential quality of Love. The fact that Lawrence could not reach beyond this fallacy, and was repelled by the emotionalism which it so often entails, was another reason for his rejection of God:

Now myself, brought up a Nonconformist as I was, I just was never able to understand the language of salvation. I never knew what they were talking about, when they raved about being saved, and safe in the arms of Jesus, and Abraham's bosom, and seeing the great light, and entering into glory: I just was puzzled, for what did it mean? It seemed to work out as getting rather drunk on your own self-importance, and afterwards coming dismally sober again and being rather unpleasant. That was all I could see in actual experience of the entering-into-glory business. The term itself, like something which ought to mean something but somehow doesn't, stuck on my mind like an irritating burr, till I decided that it was just an artificial stimulant to the individual self-conceit. How could I enter into glory, when glory is just an abstraction of a human state, and not a separate reality at all? 18

A person's acceptance or rejection of Christianity must finally be made on his acceptance or rejection of the person of Christ. This fact provides the explanation for Lawrence's refusing the Christian religion. With his belief in the purely existential perfectability of man he only saw

Christ as a man who had betrayed his humanity by allowing Judas to turn Him over to the Jews to be crucified. Unable to accept Grace as the supernatural perfection of nature, he believed that Christ's was no love at all, but a misdirected benevolence. A discussion among several characters in Aaron's Rod clearly shows Lawrence's attitude towards Christ.

"I reckon Christ's the finest thing time has ever produced,"...

"But you don't want crucifixions ad infinitum!" said Lilly.

"What? Why not?"

"Once is enough--and have don."

"Don't you think love and sacrifice are the finest things in life," said Jim...

"Depends what love, and what sacrifice," said Lilly.

"If I really believe in an Almighty God, I am willing to sacrifice for Him. That is, I'm willing to yield my own personal interest to the bigger creative interest. But it's obvious Almighty God isn't mere Love."

Further on the betrayal of Christ by Judas enters into the discussion, and Lilly, who speaks for Lawrence in the novel, says,

"...A thing which sets itself up to be betrayed! No, it's foul. Don't you see it's the Judas principle you really worship. Judas is the real hero. But for Judas the whole show would have been manqué...anything which turns on a Judas climax is a dirty show, to my thinking. I think your Judas is a rotten, dirty worm, just a dirty little self-conscious sentimental twister...A traitor is a traitor--no need to understand any further. And a system which rests all its weight on a piece of treachery makes that treachery not only inevitable but sacred. That's why I'm sick of Christianity. 19

19 D.H. Lawrence, Aaron's Rod, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1922, p. 96-7.

The Man Who Died is a short novel in which Christ is portrayed as a man who has tried to do something beyond his human ability. When Christ meets Mary Magdalene on Easter morning he tells her:

"I wanted to be greater than the limits of my hands and feet, so I brought betrayal on myself. And I know I wronged Judas, my poor Judas. For I have died, and now I know my own limits. Now I can live without striving to sway others any more...I gave more than I took, and that...is woe and vanity. So Pilate and the high priests saved me from my own excessive salvation. Don't run to excess now in living, Madelaine. It only means another death." 20

Christ rises from the dead only to decide that he could not love mankind without the loss of his own integrity, and by the final page of the book he has discovered that human existence necessarily implies humanness, but in this case it is a humanness strangely tied up with Lawrence's own doctrine of phallicism and his insistence on the primacy of the 'dark blood' of the soul.

Denying any supernatural origins for his religious impulse, primarily because of his refusal to accept God as the primary Existent, Lawrence eliminated the reality of Grace and conceived of Christ as a man who had rejected the requirements of his human existence and supplanted in their stead an unbalanced, self-destroying humanitarianism.

Most unacceptable of all for Lawrence were the wounds on Christ's risen body. They seemed to signify a suffering

which was the very denial of the beauty of human existence. The peculiar quality of Lawrence's existentialism--which while it did not optimistically believe that every existent would achieve perfection, at least seems to have been unaware of evil, and unable to accept the fact that there are metaphysical imperfections in existents--was a further impetus to his refusal to accept Christianity. Jacques Maritain's remark, made in a letter to Jean Cocteau, would have seemed so much nonsense to Lawrence:

...man has lost the power of attaining his natural perfection; it is a supernatural perfection that offered him; and "on the road to natural perfection he meets with sin." He is an inevitably scarred creature: either he bears the wounds of the old Adam, or those of the Crucified One. 21

Lawrence had assimilated enough of the Darwinian and Schopenhaurian theorizings of his time to believe that man was a further stage in a progressing evolutionary process.

Every gleam of heaven that is shown--like a dandelion flower, or a green beetle--quivers with strange passion to kindle a new gleam, never yet beheld. This is not self-sacrifice: it is self-contribution: in which the highest happiness lies. (...)

One cycle of perfection urges to kindle another cycle, as yet unknown. (...)

It is always conquest, and it always will be conquest. If the conquered by an old, declining race, they will have handed on their torch to the conqueror: who will burn his fingers badly, if he is too flippant. And if the conquered be a barbaric race, they will consume the fire of the conqueror, and leave him flameless, unless he watch it. But it is always conquest, conquered and conqueror,

21 Jacques Maritain and Jean Cocteau, Letters Between Jacques Maritain and Jean Cocteau, New York, Philosophical Library, 1948, p. 96.

for ever. The Kingdom of heaven is the Kingdom of the conquerors, who can serve the conquest for ever, after their own conquest is made. 22

Like all fundamentally religious men, Lawrence's need was to worship, to pay the final homage to someone or something whose being was more perfect than his own. With his denial of the possibility of spiritual existence--the possibility of the fullness of existential being existing in a spiritual substance--Lawrence turned his gaze to the existent. There he divined the faint throbbings of life: the dark blood flowing up from the depths of existence. As early as 1913 he had written to a friend, telling him,

My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and a bridle. What do I care about knowledge? All I want is to answer to my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind, or moral, or what-not. I conceive a man's body as a kind of flame, like a candle flame, forever upright and yet flowing; and the intellect is just the light that it sheds on to the things around. 23

By his 'belief in the blood' Lawrence hoped to pay his deference to the deepest existence he perceived within himself. But by cutting off the 'light of the intellect' Lawrence left the blood of the passions and appetites deprived of their deepest existential meaning. He was worshipping a strange god indeed:

22 Selected Essays, p. 70-1

23 Stories, Essays and Poems, p. 271.

"It is not I who guide my soul to heaven. It is I who am guided by my own soul along the open road, where all men tread. Therefore, I must accept her deep motions of love, or hate, or compassion, or dislike, or indifference. And I must go where she takes me, for my feet and my lips and my body are my soul..." 24

It is not surprising that Lawrence's religion of the blood found its mystic counterpart in the ithyphallicism which he proposes in some of his later writing. In A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, a long essay which is by turns an incisive statement of the Christian concept of the ritualistic aspects of marriage, and a declaration of an unacceptable extension of the marriage relationship to the realms of mysticism, Lawrence makes it clear that his religion of the blood was also a phallic religion.

The great saints only live, even Jesus only lives to add a new fulfilment and a new beauty to the permanent sacrament of marriage.

But--and this but crashes through our heart like a bullet--marriage is no marriage that is not basically and permanently phallic, and that is not linked up with the sun and the earth, the moon and the fixed stars and the planets, in the rhythm of days, in the rhythm of months, in the rhythm of quarters, of years, of decades of centuries. 25

If, as Lawrence says in this essay, man is 'bleeding at the roots', Lawrence's solution of remmersing man in the fecundity of the earth is as deadening as the condition against which he spoke, the condition of abstract sterility. There is that in man which cannot find its satisfaction in the fer-

24 Selected Essays, p. 274.

25 D.H. Lawrence, A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, London, Mandrake Press, 1950, p. 40-1.

tility of the soil and the phallic rites which he proposes. The most hardy trees eventually rot at the roots, and man has his few glimpses of eternity, in truth and love, which are as undeniable as his kinship with the wheeling stars and recurring seasons.

Lawrence's construction of a mystic marriage relationship was an attempt to find some equivalent for the religious impulse he recognized existed so strongly in himself.

Marriage is no marriage that is not a correspondence of blood. For the blood is the substance of the soul, and of the deepest consciousness. It is by blood that we are; and it is by the heart and the liver that we live and move and have our being. In the blood, knowing and being, or feeling, are one and undivided; no serpent and no apple has caused a split. So that only when the conjunction is of the blood, is marriage truly marriage. The blood of man and the blood of woman are two eternally different streams that can never be mingled. 26

It is the forcing of this relationship upon his characters in Aaron's Rod, The Virgin and the Gipsy, The Lost Girl, and The Flumed Serpent, that makes the novels so unsatisfactory as works of art. The reverent marriage relationship which in The Rainbow and Women in Love was juxtaposed to the irreverent one and was thus basically justified, becomes a god in the later novels, and consequently an unacceptable deus ex machina by which all problems are solved. In an earlier poem Lawrence had recognized the fact that sexual experience was far from the culmination of man's being, was not the act by which men become gods.

You are the call and I am the answer,
 You are the wish, and I the fulfilment,
 You are the night, and I the day.

What else? it is perfect enough.
 It is perfectly complete,
 You and I,
 What more--?

Strange how we suffer in spite of this! 27

Sigrid Undset notes the fact that however deeply Lawrence longed to find his religious impulses satisfied by his phallicism, the characters in the novels belie his hopes. The author superimposes his beliefs on the lives of the men and women in the novels, and wishes the reader to accept these beliefs. But he himself had earlier told us: "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale."²⁸ The tale belies the doctrines which Lawrence would have us consent to.

Lawrence is seldom convincing when he tries to force the creatures born of his fancy to realize his own gospel of a new and saving kind of abandonment--a dark and mystical communion of the blood which is just as much the expression of the human instinct of death and destruction as of the will to life...But Lawrence dreamed of a sexual act in which the individuals die from their old ego and are reborn to a new life, each as master of his own soul, but united with his mate in profound tenderness, saved from all lust of power involved in sexual feeling, cleansed of all the elements of petty vanity which are a part of all erotics, but with their manly or womanly self-consciousness intensified. But the people who live in his books are in everlasting revolt against his new religion--irreclaimably timid, bitter, and suspicious men and women who are incapable of abandoning

27 D.H. Lawrence, Selected Poems, ed. by Richard Aldington, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1950, p. 31.

28 Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 3.

themselves to another human being without regretting it and immediately trying to recover themselves. 29

By rejecting the idealism and abstractionism which had objectified existence in order to exploit it or to deny it the myst ry and depths of its own subjectivity, Lawrence was primarily interested in affirming the primacy and wonder of existence. His confusion was basically that which has resulted in the meaninglessness of the atheistic existentialism of our own day. For like them, Lawrence would have denied existence of its es ence, and human existents of their intellectual nature. The logical conclusion of Lawrence's denial of intellectuality is that existence is merely a succession of meaningless acts, made with the intention of affirming sheer existence. But, though his existentialism was not the existentialist intellectualism which Jacques Maritain equates of Thomist philosophy in his Existence and the Existent, neither did it go the lengths of modern atheistic existentialism. In spite of his denial of the intellect, Lawrence lived close enough to a tradition which accepted at least the concept of meaning in life to have avoided the belief that all existence merely declares a meaningless liberty. However much his philosophical attitude might have led to this same free act which the atheistic existentialists proclaim, Lawrence could not believe that existence was meaningless--even if it only found its meaning in the pro-

duction of some more perfect future race of men and women.

Two centuries of Puritanical Christianity and rationalism had their effect on Lawrence. The Christianity which he rejected was a specious one, which had deprived itself of the understanding of both the nature of human existence and the nature of God, in its attempt to find some rational rule by which the mystery of existence could be finally penetrated and formalized. But Lawrence himself was not immune to the errors his generation inherited, and though he realized that existence can never be formalized or rationalized into a completely comprehensible pattern, he could not conceive that existence has living form and is legitimately attainable by the intellectual powers. Even more important is the fact that he could not understand that God, though spiritual, is Existence itself.

Lawrence was not being facetious when he claimed he was fundamentally a religious man. He realized there were mysteries of existence, beyond his own self. But by denying the validity of the knowable aspect of existence, and believing the Christian God was ideal and therefore not Existent, he turned to the unknowable, dark springs of his emotions, the dark blood of his own existence, and the passional experiences of phallicism. He was truly walking after strange gods in his search for a God to worship, a God who would allow the

the priority of existence, who would protect and assert the necessity of reverence for the mystery of existence.

But for D.H. Lawrence, existence was forever unknown and unknowable. Only a small light distinguished the point in the sky where existence arched from nothing back into nothingness. The dark gods he worshipped were gods which, had Lawrence accepted the reality of meaning and Christian hope, he would have recognized to be the gods of despair.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the writings of D.H. Lawrence and to extract from them proof that his vision, his particular concern, was a reverential one. If one were to phrase a question which would not be unlike the one which Lawrence implicitly posed in his work, it would be, "How can man achieve a relationship with the world of nature and of men in which no violence is done to beauty and mystery?"

The first chapter concerned itself with a study of two of Lawrence's first three novels. In this chapter it was seen how in The White Peacock the Hardyian attitude of Fate was superseded by Lawrence's unfatalistic, reverent attitude towards nature. This novel also manifested the concern with the marriage relationship which Lawrence was later to develop more fully. In examining Sons and Lovers the problem of the dichotomy of spiritual and passional affection which resulted in Paul Morel's tragedy was remarked. This cleavage had its roots in Lawrence's belief that it was not of the essence of being to be intelligible, nor to the well-being of man to be possessed of the intellectual faculty which divided his life so completely. At this state of his life, however, the cleavage was dramatically rather than philosophically investigated. It was also seen that by the

time Sons and Lovers was written, Lawrence had already formed a concept of God as a 'shimmering impulse'--a notion which he believed would allow for a reverential rather than an abstracted, idealistic attitude towards life.

In the second chapter, Lawrence's two masterpieces were examined. In both of these novels, the marriage relationship was seen to have provided the dramatic crisis in which was determined the integrity and fundamentally reverent attitude of the characters, or their undoing. It cannot be denied that what was later so unacceptable in Lawrence's attitude towards marriage--his belief it was the ultimate religious experience--is not absent from these two novels. But in neither The Rainbow nor Women in Love does this religious attitude make itself obtrusive. Perhaps the most incisive aspect of both these books is the insight into the irreverence of modern society which they present. Also important is the fact that they demonstrate Lawrence's comprehension of the nature of the deeper, unconscious needs of the soul of man, and his dramatic grasp of the truth that modern man has cut himself off from the needs of the soul by living only on the level of the abstract and the self-willed act.

It is hoped these chapters have made apparent the basically reverential nature of Lawrence's genius: his regard for the mystery and integrity of existence. This reverence for existence is what can most importantly be derived from

Lawrence's writing. It is the only attitude which finally allows for great poetry and art, as was remarked in the first chapter, and it was Lawrence's basic vision.

Lawrence's needs, however, were of the man as well as of the artist. He wanted a religion which would confirm his recognition of mystery, which would secure the roots of existence in an infinitely fertile soil. In the third chapter the nature of Lawrence's anti-intellectualist philosophy of existence was discussed, and it was seen that in rejecting the sterility of an idealist and abstractionist approach to reality, he denied the knowable essences of existences. Having been raised in a religion which tended to consider God as a great moral principle, or a cold abstracti n existing in the ether, Lawrence soon abandoned this religion for his own brand of belief, which would allow a more warm-hearted deference to be paid to actual existence. Deprived of the concept of Grace, Lawrence was unable to accept the person of Christ, whom Lawrence could only believe had been unbalanced in His love of mankind. The result of this inability to accept Christianity was Lawrence's religion of the blood and his belief in the phallic rite as being the final religious experience of man.

This thesis has been written in the hope of its being in some measure an exoression of the reverential spirit which dominates Lawrence's writing. There is no doubt that D.H.

Lawrence's metaphysics and his religious attitudes are finally unacceptable. But his immediate vision was one which can find sympathy with Christianity. His desire was to bring men to the vision of existence which he had seen, to tell them that the heart of existence was nourished by the blood of mystery and beauty. Lawrence was an honest man, and he was prepared to worship whatever god would allow the preservation of the depths of the existence he revered. The tragedy is that the only god he found was a dark and unknowable and unloving god. That in order to affirm the mystery of existence, Lawrence had to affirm the inaccessibility of Existence.

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An examination of the main symbols and direction of the action of Women in Love, made in the attempt to demonstrate that the novel is primarily to be considered as a work of art, rather than as a piece of autobiography. This series is an unusually intelligent examination of Lawrence's intentions and his achievement in this novel.

Maritain, Jacques, Existence and the Existent, tr. by Lewis Galantieri and Gerald B. Phelan, New York, Pantheon, 1948, 149 p.

An explanation of the existential intellectualism of Thomistic metaphysics, and a comparison of this philosophy with atheistic existentialism. This work proved invaluable for an understanding of the nature of Lawrence's existentialism.

Tedlock, E.W. Jr., The Frieda Lawrence Collection of D.H. Lawrence Manuscripts: A Descriptive Bibliography, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1948, xxiv-333 p.

A descriptive bibliography, particularly useful for a lengthy comparison of the three Lady Chatterley's Lover manuscripts, and for establishing dates of several stories, essays and poems.

Tiverton, William, pseud., D.H. Lawrence and Human Existence, London, Rockliff, 1951, xv-140 p.

A rather short examination of the body of Lawrence's writings in an attempt to evaluate it from a Christian point-of-view. The evaluation, while neither precise nor sufficiently penetrating, marks a stage of progress in the revival which Lawrence's work is having, and is a sincere attempt to extract the true value from his work.

Undset, Sigrid, "D.H. Lawrence", from Men, Women and Places", tr. by Arthur G. Chater, New York, Knopf, 1939, 248 p.

A short essay on Lawrence, paying particular attention to the value of Lawrence's work. An unusually fine piece of criticism.

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich, Liturgy and Personality, New York, Longmans, Green, 1943, 218 p.

An examination of the relationship of the liturgical life to the human personality. Particularly important for its insights into the attitude of reverence and for its comprehension of the relation of human life to existences as symbols and mysteries.