

"A Question of Relationship":
The Flower of Consciousness
in the Fiction of D.H. Lawrence
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ABSTRACT

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An unusual sensitivity to nature and an exceptional power of transforming that sensitivity into artistic expression are among the most frequently remarked traits of D.H. Lawrence's genius. But few critics have examined the individual phenomena so transformed. This study makes an effort to correct that neglect by focusing on Lawrence's treatment of flowers in his fiction. Daniel Stiffler has opened the way with his dissertation, "'Say It With Flowers': A Study of Floral Imagery in the Novels of D. H. Lawrence," but much work can still be done. Because Lawrence conceived of the flower as "the most perfect expression of life" and believed with Ursula Brangwen that art is "only the truth about the real world," my emphasis is upon Lawrence's fictional flowers as representatives of his philosophy of life, a philosophy of complementary opposites. Arguing that the female aspect of his philosophy is the "root" of unconscious awareness and that the male aspect is the "blossom" of language or "verbal consciousness," I describe the flower as a perfect expression of the union between the female and male aspects of life. But because such union is never fully achieved, the flowers in Lawrence's

fiction demonstrate the dynamic tension between the female and male aspects, as they approach a moment of balance.

Though H. M. Daleski argues that Lawrence's fiction records a struggle to heal the "breach" in his own nature as the "male principle" within himself separated from the more intrinsic "female principle," I try to demonstrate that Daleski's description is simplistic and that the very character of the flower as a symbolic model indicates that Lawrence's consciousness was by nature perennially growing away from itself, withering back to its "root" source, and then growing outward once more.

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I. Introduction

i. Criticism and Lawrence's Flowers

Few readers have failed to notice the unusual vividness with which Lawrence treats nature. Forster called it the power of "irradiating nature from within, so that every colour has a glow and every form a distinctness . . ." (144). Auden spoke of it as agape, remarking that "whenever he [Lawrence] writes about animals or plants, the anger and frustration which too often intrude in his descriptions of human beings vanish, agape takes their place, and the joy of vision is equal to the joy in writing" (qtd. in Andrews 48). And Dorothy Van Ghent considers that "among all English novelists, Hardy and Lawrence have the most faithful touch for the things of nature and the greatest evocative genius in bringing them before the imagination" (252).

Yet beyond the immediate recognition of Lawrence's power of transforming nature into art--whether it is called "irradiating nature from within," or "agape," or "evocative genius"--relatively little attention has been given to the particular elements transformed. For the most part, they are treated collectively: "the things of nature."

I think a closer attention is due these "things." This study makes the effort, by focusing on flowers. Why flowers? First, because Lawrence

himself was unusually attentive to them: he "spent much of his spare time painting flower studies in oils and water colours," recalled Jessie Chambers from her first years of acquaintance with Lawrence (62). His interest was intense and discriminating. One might say that he brought to flowers the sensibilities of both artist and scientist; he had a passionate feeling for their beauty, and a particularized curiosity about the details of their growth and propagation. Indeed, noting that "when Lawrence chooses a flower for his art, he does so with an awareness of both its botanical nature and its symbolic presentation," Daniel Stiffler argues that "flowers remained in the forefront of Lawrence's artistic consciousness all his life" (11, 153). And second, flowers came to occupy a unique place in Lawrence's philosophy: "every impulse that stirs in life, every single impulse, is either male or female, distinct, except the being of the complete flower, of the complete consciousness, which is two in one, fused," he wrote in "Study of Thomas Hardy" (Phoenix 443-444).

ii. The Symbolic Flower

It is my intention in this thesis to trace the "unfolding" of Lawrence's symbolic flower of "complete consciousness" as it is represented by the artistic flowers employed in his fiction. This is a legitimate comparison because Lawrence believed that "the flower is the most perfect expression of life" (Nehls III: 297) and shared Ursula

Brangwen's opinion that "the world of art is only the truth about the real world" (Women in Love 422). So the flowers in Lawrence's art should reflect the "truth" about life, as Lawrence understood that truth. But Lawrence was too skeptical to believe that the flower of "complete consciousness" was ever fully realized in life--such a realization would no longer be life at all, but the achievement of a transcendent, other-worldly state of being--which means that his flowers reveal the dynamic, delicately poised tension which Lawrence saw as characteristic of the organic life of nature. His fictional flowers are animated by a rhythmic growth and contraction of their vitality. They do not inevitably register the same effects, but repeatedly readjust the complementary aspects of their being. Lawrence was tightly bound by a paradox, which is a part of this readjustment: he hated and feared female domination, and celebrated independence for the male, but was himself essentially the poet of a female awareness. His mission was his frustration, since the independent male inevitably spoke female truths. As Daleski contends:

Lawrence, though believing intensely in himself as a male, was fundamentally identified with the female principle, as he himself defines it in his essay on Hardy. The consequent breach in his nature made it imperative for him to try to reconcile the opposed elements within himself, and . . . his work was a lifelong attempt to effect such a reconciliation.
(13)

This persistent effort at reconciliation took great courage, as the "breach" in Lawrence's nature was so deep.

My study of Lawrence's flowers, in his life and in his art, develops this way: chapter one documents biographical instances of Lawrence's

passionate and precise interest in flowers, utilizing a comparison with another artist and naturalist--Thoreau--and then outlines the shape flowers took in his thinking, particularly their representation as the unity of "'male' and 'female' principles" (Daleski 13). Following this representation, chapter two turns to the fiction. Primary attention is given to the novels. Certain stories and novellas cluster around the novels, as do "Old Adam," "New Eve and Old Adam," and "Shades of Spring" around Sons and Lovers, or "The Woman Who Rode Away," "The Princess," and even "St. Mawr" around The Plumed Serpent. So that on occasion it is illuminating to refer to the shorter works, but since as Graham Hough suggests, "it is never . . . in the short stories that a new phase of Lawrence's development opens," (168), I will stay close to the novels. Increasing the magnification, chapter three follows the evolution of but a single flower, the lily--certainly one of the most prominent of Lawrence's flowers. Chapter four, "The Lawrencean Critic," tries to apply Lawrence's own courage of reconciliation, and recommends what I see as the fundamental responsibility--and delight--of Lawrencean criticism, and indeed, of literary criticism as a discipline.

Chapter II: Lawrencean Consciousness

"A flower is the most perfect expression of life."

--D. H. Lawrence to Brewster Ghiselin, 1929

i. Two Modes of Knowing

"The most serious omission in the book," writes Harry T. Moore disapprovingly of Studies in Classic American Literature (1923), "is Thoreau" (The Priest of Love 409). But Thoreau can rest more easily in his grave for the neglect, for I suspect Lawrence's rhetoric would have chased him, for his hermitic existence and spiritual idealism, 'round and 'round Walden pond. Nevertheless, in some respects the two men are kindred spirits.

Like Thoreau, Lawrence rebuked science for its habit of analyzing and tabulating the world, "on the score that it diminished men's sense of wonder and blunted their sensitiveness to the great mystery" (Huxley xiv). But both men, apparently contrary to their shared dislike, were zealous naturalists, with tireless interest in the details of any countryside in which they found themselves. (Indeed, it was from kneeling

in wet snow to count tree-rings that Thoreau contracted the pneumonia which killed him.)

As a consequence of their interest, both men--though Lawrence less assiduously--were collectors: Thoreau scouring freshly plowed farmland every spring for arrowheads, Lawrence in his wide travels seasonally gathering flowers, just as Richard Lovat Sommers, in the last pages of Kangaroo, "kept jumping out from among the flowers [with which he had loaded Harriet, and the sulky] to plunge into the brake for a new flower" (364). His enthusiasm, the narrator troubles to tell us, yielded seven species of "wattle, or mimosa . . . the national flower of Australia. There are said to be thirty-two species" (362).

The inclusion of such botanical information would not have surprised Jessie Chambers, who found Lawrence's "intimacy with nature . . . a constant revelation": "there seemed no flower nor even weed whose name and qualities Lawrence did not know" (110). Other women testified to the same thing. Catherine Carswell recalled an occasion during the war when Lawrence sent her

the very exquisite present of a shoe-box containing perhaps twenty different kinds of wild flowers, carefully packed in damp moss, many of them having their roots attached. Here were yellow rock roses--'pure flowers of light,' milkworts, wood-avens, mountain violets, aconites, woodruff and forget-me-nots. . . . With my box of Derbyshire flowers there was a small floral guide, tinily written by Lawrence, describing each plant and making me see how they had been before he picked them for me, in what sorts of places and manner and profusion they had grown, and even how they varied in the different countrysides. (106-107)

And Millicent Beveridge went "walking with him once in the hills near Florence at the height of the Tuscan spring, and . . . as they went he named and discoursed upon at least thirty varieties [of flowers]" (Carswell 106-107).

The unusual breadth and exactness of Lawrence's knowledge of flowers, and particularly his familiarity with their names, came so easily to him that he was sometimes impatient with the ordinary ignorance of his companions: "'what an ignoramus you are!'" he chided Dorothy Brett, when she could not identify the flower he had picked. "'It is the old Greek asphodel,'" he instructed her. "'Asphodel is so lovely a name, and the flower is lovely, too!'" (Brett 276-277). Asked what they called the wild mignonette, a group of boys "gave the usual dumb-bell answer," snorts Lawrence, "'It is a flower!'" (Etruscan Places [composed 1927] 21). On "confident knowledge" from a school-mistress that he would find snowdrops, Lawrence went hiking up the mountain behind the Church of San Tommaso. What he found was her mistake: "she meant Christmas roses all the while." In this case though, his irritation was assuaged by the profusion of primroses" everywhere in nests of pale bloom upon the dark, steep face of the cleft . . ." (Twilight in Italy [1916] 35, 36).

There was no challenging his knowledge, either, as Jessie Chambers well knew. "'How do you know what it [the flower] is?'" she had asked once, skeptically (33). Lawrence's retort is interesting, in its stubbornness suggestive of Levi-Strauss' "savage thought," in which the experience of seeing is wedded to the act of giving a name to that experience: "the moment of observation and that of interpretation" are one (223). For in reply to her question, Lawrence could only insist: "'I

do know." Questioned again he could only add emphasis, and a trace of anger: "'I know because I know. How dare you ask me how I know,' he answered with heat'" (Chambers 33-34). Much later in life, Lawrence provided a more complete answer, or at least an explanation for the heat of his answer. He knew, because his knowing was not divided from his perception, by a self-awareness of knowing. In his terms, it wasn't "savage thought" at work, but art; that "supremely delicate awareness and atonement--meaning at-oneness, the state of being at one with the object" ("Making Pictures" [composed 1929], Phoenix II 605). Hence Aldous Huxley's remark that Lawrence "seemed to know, by personal experience, what it was like to be a tree or a daisy or a breaking wave or even the mysterious moon itself" (xxx). Lawrence in a sense became what he saw, or what he saw revealed what it was in itself, in him. So that when he stumbled upon "the frail, lovely little camellia flowers on long stems, here on the bushy and splendid flower-stalls of the Ramblas in Barcelona," Lawrence "saw them like a vision" ("Making Pictures," Phoenix II 604-605). That is, he saw the camellias with such acute sensitivity that his awareness was momentarily but wholly fulfilled in them--as the flowers received their fulfillment in his awareness, the "vision."

It is exactly here that Lawrence parts company with Thoreau. Just as Robert Frost condemned Thoreau's style of prose as "conceited" (Barry 78), so, I believe, Lawrence would accuse Thoreau's mode of knowing as conceited, because it never loses consciousness of "self," but imposes its "I" upon all that is seen and felt. We are never purely aware of Nature in Thoreau's writings, Lawrence might insist, because we cannot escape awareness of his presence in Nature. When Thoreau declares in

Walden, with characteristic lustiness, that "I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life . . . to drive life into a corner and reduce it to its lowest terms . . ." (67), Lawrence would certainly rebuke him, as Rupert Birkin rebuked Hermione for a "conceit of consciousness," an awful need to get control of experience, "to clutch things": "you have only your will and your conceit of consciousness, and your lust for power, to know" (Women in Love 35). Thoreau would have "the lovely little camellia flowers" by the throat, whereas Lawrence would nurture them in his "supremely delicate awareness." While Thoreau seems to derive his power from the great capacity of self-consciousness to vivify the surrounding world with the quality of its own energy (hence Thoreau's pleasure in the undisturbed world of nature, where his self-consciousness could work with greater freedom), Lawrence seems to derive his power from the very loss of self-consciousness in the presence of "the vision itself: the visionary image" ("Making Pictures," Phoenix II 605). Perhaps it might be said that Lawrence lost himself in vision, but Thoreau found himself.

But of course the disagreement is more difficult than this. Lawrence was a writer too, with self-conscious aims and notable energy in accomplishing them. He was not simply a cross-legged imbiber of visionary camellias. While he praises the collier who "stands looking down at a flower with that odd, remote sort of contemplation which shows a real awareness of the presence of beauty," he allows that favored individual the contemplation of "the incipient artist" only ("Nottingham and the Mining Countryside" [composed 1929], Phoenix 137 [emphasis added]). The complete artist has something more: the power to transform "real

awareness" which is largely an unconscious, intuitive at-oneness, into consciously controlled forms of expression. For Lawrence this meant transformation into language, primarily. The "struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art," Lawrence insists in his Foreword to Women in Love. "It is a very great part of life. . . . It is the passionate struggle into conscious being" (VIII).

ii. Female Root and Male Blossom

The separate but conjoined identities of "supremely delicate awareness" and "struggle into verbal consciousness" are aspects of that "most striking feature of Lawrence's Weltanschauung," its "dualism" (Daleski 13); a dualism characteristically expressed in terms of maleness and femaleness:

Because the source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and the meeting and mingling of these two: man-life and woman-life, man-knowledge and woman-knowledge, man-being and woman-being. (Huxley 198)

Even a flower--especially a flower, as the most perfect expression of life -- illustrates the "interchange and the meeting and mingling of male and female." As Lawrence wrote in the abandoned Foreword to Sons and Lovers (1913), woman is "the Flesh" of life, the source of all vitality,

that quivering, shimmering flesh of flesh which is the same, unchanged for ever, a constant stream, called if you like rodoplasm, the eternal, the unquestionable, the infinite of the Rose, the Flesh, the Father--which were more properly the Mother. (Huxley 102).

The man is produced of the woman, like "stamens" that "turn into exquisite-coloured petals. That is, they [the men] can beat out the stuff of their life thin, thin, thin, till it is a pink or a purple petal, or a thought, or a Word." Man makes the Word, "a flutter of petals": "And the Flowers of the World are Words, are utterance . . ." (Huxley 101, 102).

The same division between woman as source or "rodoplasm," and man as "stamens," the maker of words, is expressed with greater precision in "Study of Thomas Hardy" (composed 1914):

In woman man finds his root and establishment. In man woman finds her exfoliation and florescence. The woman grows downwards, like a root, towards the centre and the darkness and the origin. The man grows upwards, like the stalk, towards discovery and light and utterance. (Phoenix 514)

The female root or pistil, I take it, is the "supremely delicate awareness" of the "incipient artist." It is the awareness of life in its most elemental state, undisturbed by the least ripple of conscious interpretation. It is "at-oneness," the feeling of inseparable communion with "the lovely little camellia flowers" first, but then, as the root grows downwards, the sensation of communion with the fertile darkness from which all camellias spring. It is awareness of the "dark sun" behind the

"bright" one, the "god-stuff" from which all gods are made (The Plumed Serpent 134, 161). The male stalk is "the struggle into verbal consciousness," the effort to bring to the surface and make explicit the nature of the "at-oneness" of the female root. It is the conscious activity of "discovery and light and utterance" nourished by the unconscious communion with the "centre and the darkness and the origin."

But while the flower is a beautiful expression of "man-being and woman-being" working in concert, it is continually endangered by its own structure. Friction is as intrinsic to the relationship between man and woman as is harmony. Woman, as the root of darkness, the origin of "quickness," threatens to overwhelm the colorful but evanescent utterances of the man. Man, the wordmaker, is tempted to idolize the "flutter of petals" he has created, thus separating himself from the female root. He takes "for his God the accomplishments of his work, the Uttered Word" ("Foreword" to Sons and Lovers, Huxley 101).

As a consequence of this, the most vivid flowers in Lawrence's fiction (unlike those in his descriptive writings) are those which are poised at the moment of balance between the mutually dependent but independently destructive energies of maleness and femaleness. They exist best under tension. Indeed, the same may be said for Lawrence's fiction as a whole. Tension is vital to it, and the greater the tension, the greater the art. Conversely, when this tension relaxes, the quality of his art deteriorates. But it was a difficult tension, which Lawrence spent his life trying to reconcile. The male verbal consciousness grows out of the female centre and darkness and origin. But the nature of that growth demands an ever-increasing separation between the female darkness

and the male light of utterance, at the same time that the male light is necessarily a derivative of the female darkness. One might say that as a man, Lawrence spoke for the woman, but as a woman, he knew this was not possible. He was both Paul Morel, who "kneeled on one knee, quickly gathering the best blossoms, moving from tuft to tuft restlessly," and Clara, who gathered none of the flowers, because she didn't like "corpses." "I don't believe in it," she objects, "they look better growing" (Sons and Lovers 294-295).

iii. Critical Difficulties and Clues

It is my contention that Lawrence, as his fiction matures, moves away from Clara and the feminine root toward Paul and the flowering of male utterance, but recovers a balance in Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928). We can trace this movement by studying the flowers in his fiction. But there are two substantial difficulties with this. First, the flower of complete consciousness transcends both its elements. In the symbolic rose, there is both "the pure passion for oneness" and "the pure passion for distinctness and separateness . . . the two passions in their perfect singleness transported into one surpassing heaven of a rose-blossom" ("Love" [1918], Phoenix 154).

In the same way, a perfectly achieved union of female at-oneness and male utterance in art would be difficult to dissect because the union both achieves and transcends either element. Success in Lawrence's art must

remain the only evidence that both elements are present, in equal proportion, because the art is successful. Bad art is much easier to dissect, because neither element--feminine nor masculine--is really itself; has not achieved "perfect singleness," so one is resigned to describing approximations, traces, hints of the presence of each element.

Second, we can never see the female centre and darkness and origin directly, but only in translation, as the male discovery and light and utterance--the flutter of petals which we know as Lawrence's novels and stories. As an unconscious awareness, the female can never be known as it is itself, but only as it is revealed in the male verbal consciousness. There is only indirect evidence, either in a comparison of the manner in which female and male characters respond to flowers--if they are fair representatives of the philosophical gender division--or by tracing the narrator's treatment of flowers.

Nevertheless, there are a few things to look for. Occasionally there is unmistakable difference, where the man shows a marked interest in the naming of flowers, and the woman is either indifferent to such knowledge, or positively contemptuous of it. Richard Lovat Sommers' diligent search for the species of Australian wattle has been noted. In "The Man Who Loved Islands" (composed 1926), a hermitic figure, alone on his windy outcropping, "began to make a list of the flowers," an activity he finds "absorbing." He identifies numerous blooms: winter aconite, blackthorn, wind flowers, "bladder campion, orchids, stitchwort, celandine." Discovering the golden saxifrage, "so inconspicuous in a damp corner," he showed it "in real triumph to the widow's daughter," who shows only a

passing interest. But for him "the name sounded splendid." The passion for naming expands to include everything. Watching the sea birds,

his old impulse came over him, to send for a book, to know their names. In a flicker of the old passion, to know the name of everything he saw . . . The names of these birds! He must know their names, otherwise he had not got them, they were not quite alive to him. (Short Stories III: 741)

Lawrence's own passion for naming only serves to sharpen the note of scorn in this passage. By contrast, Helena in The Trespasser (1912) "knew hardly any flower's name, nor perceived any of the relationships nor cared a jot about an adaptation or a modification" (75). And the writer's wife in "Two Blue Birds" (composed 1926) scoffs to herself: "What absurd names flowers had!"--the narrator adding that "she would rather have called them blue dots and yellow dots and white frills. Not so much sentiment after all!" (Short Stories II: 750). Less biting but still a bit skeptical is Ursula's reaction to Anthony Schofield's descriptions of "the pink primulas nodding among their leaves, and cinerarias flaunting purple and crimson and white." His knowledge is meticulous, but she finds his seriousness amusing: "she asked about everything and he told her very exactly, and minutely, in a queer pedantic way that made her want to laugh" (The Rainbow [1915] 413). Her awareness of flowers is of a different order: in the "Classroom" chapter of Women in Love (1920), she finds that "the little red pistillate flowers [of the catkin] had some strange, almost mystic-passionate attraction for her" (31). Alvina in The Lost Girl (1920) is lifted from her despair by the

spring flowers. They "uttered the earth in magical expression . . . cast a spell on her, bewitched her and stole her own soul away from her" (335).

If a distinction can be made between male characters who name flowers and female characters who have no interest in naming them, it would seem legitimate to identify a masculine disposition in the narrator from the presence of many flower names in the narrative, and the inclusion of botanical information. A solely masculine narrator would be content with the names of flowers only, or merely botanical information. Likewise, if Lawrence's female characters, indifferent or disrespectful of male verbal consciousness, indulge in fanciful descriptions of flowers, so it follows that a female disposition in the narrator can be identified from fanciful, sentimental, or merely ingenious descriptions of flowers in the narrative. Further, because the female aspect of consciousness is characterized by its desire for at-oneness, the female narrator may seek to achieve this at-oneness through anthropomorphism, through bestowing her own, human qualities upon the non-human nature of flowers. For Lawrence, this was a grievous violation because it did not recognize the "otherness" of flowers. Among Lawrence's characters, this ominous tendency of the female awareness becomes an effort to caress, hug, or even eat flowers.

One thing more. In "The Novel" (composed 1925), Lawrence fulminates against novelists who hold "a didactic purpose, otherwise a philosophy, directly opposite to their passional inspiration" (Phoenix II 417). Such division ruins a novel. The moments of "passional" art-- when the writing is "quick" and we know the "felt but unknown flame" which "stands behind all the characters, and in their words and gestures"--are interrupted by

"didactic bits," the appearance of a "stale old purpose" (417). It is not that a novel has no purpose, but the purpose, the philosophy, should flicker evenly with the "felt but unknown flame" of passionate inspiration: in the greatest novels "the purpose and the inspiration" are "almost one" (418). It seems to me that the "quickness" in a novel, its "felt" experience, is part of the feminine root, and that the philosophy, or purpose, is an aspect of male florescence. Given these distinctions, the presence of the female root, the "felt but unknown flame," will impart a sensation of vibrant life, of vividly realized experience. When male "purpose" is present, the sensation of life is augmented by a meaning, at its most prominent a didacticism.

But the evidence is not always clear. The confusion of gender present in Lawrence's work has been both the exasperation and the delight of much Lawrencean criticism. Daleski points out that Lawrence's father, in a passage from Studies in Classic American Literature, is "identified, incompletely . . . but indisputably, with blood-consciousness, which is a property of the female principle; his mother, in turn, is identified with mind-consciousness, a property of the male principle" (36). Indeed, the problem of gender is so knotty with paradox that I doubt it can ever be completely unravelled. But perhaps I can loosen some of the tangle, beginning with The White Peacock (1911).

Chapter III: The Unfolding Flower

"Every impulse that stirs in life, every single impulse, is either male or female, distinct, except the being of the complete flower, of the complete consciousness, which is two in one, fused."

--"Study of Thomas Hardy"

i. The White Peacock

Often representative of a woman's beauty, gentleness, or virtue, flowers have had a long association with femininity--the Roman deity of flowers was a goddess, Flora. Homer depicts Persephone, the goddess of springtime, "gathering flowers, roses, crocuses, and beautiful violets / all over a soft meadow, irises too, and hyacinths she picked, / and narcissus" ("Hymn to Demeter" 6-8, trans. Athanassakis), before she is seized by Pluto and taken down to Hades. Her return to earth each year "causes the coming of spring; so her association with flowers is made even more clear" (Stiffler 4). In Paradise Lost, Eve chooses flowers to decorate her "blissful Bower": "With Flowers, Garlands, and

sweet-smelling Herbs / Espoused Eve deckt first her Nuptial Bed" (IV. 709-710). And in The Rape of the Lock Belinda's hand of Ombre shows "four fair Queens whose hands sustain a Flow'r, / Th' expressive Emblem of their softer pow'r" (III. 39-40).

Given the traditional associations of flowers, Lawrence's first novel is certainly feminine. The White Peacock (1911) is laden with flowers: there are "over three hundred and fifty references" to them (Stiffler 17). Had the publisher agreed, even the book's title would have been derived from a flower, for Lawrence had suggested "'Tendrils,'" explaining that "'Tendrils' is what 'George' is always putting forth. He's like white bryony, that flourishes tendrils hysterically for things that are out of reach" (Boulton I: 167). It is arguable that it was in part because of the rich profusion of flowers present in The White Peacock that early reviewers supposed the book's author was a woman. (Indeed, an early acquaintance of Lawrence called him "a woman in a man's skin" [Daleski 8rbrk.]). Later critics still found the narrator somewhat effeminate--Harry T. Moore describes Cyril Beardsall as "a rather vague, sensitive, and namby-pamby young man" (The White Peacock viii).

But the femininity of The White Peacock is not only implied by the simple presence of flowers in the book, but demonstrably evident in the narrator's treatment of them. Late in his career, Lawrence repudiated "most women" because they "love flowers as possessions, and as trimmings."

They can't look at a flower, and wonder a moment, and pass on. If they see a flower that arrests their attention, they must at once pick it, pluck it. Possession! A possession! Something added on to me! ("Nottingham and the Mining Countryside," Phoenix 137)

Wordsworth is condemned for exactly this possessiveness. Quoting several stanzas of his poetry, Lawrence complains that Wordsworth "didn't leave it [the primrose] with a soul of its own."

It had to have his soul. And nature had to be sweet and pure, Williamish. Sweet-Williamish at that! Anthropomorphized! Anthropomorphism, that allows nothing to call its soul its own, save anthropos: and only a special brand, even of him! (" . . . Love Was Once A Little Boy" [1928], Phoenix II 449)

The narrator of The White Peacock also tries to possess flowers by anthropomorphizing them. Cyril, startled by a peacock inside the old Hall Church, transfers his fright to the flowers; he "could fancy the smothered primroses and violets . . . waking and gasping for fear" (148). Other flowers are just as sweetened. Bluebells become "stately barbaric hordes" (129); bellflowers are "spinning idylls" (228); snowdrops have "white mute lips . . . pushed upwards in a bunch" (261), or are drooped . . . so silent and sad" (129). Daffodils, a favorite flower for tender treatment, are pictured "lifting their heads and throwing back their yellow curls . . . to show a modest sweet countenance, others still hiding their faces, leaning forward pensively . . ." (157-158). And when Cyril retreats somberly to Nethermere pond, he finds that "the daffodils under the boat-house continued their golden laughter, and nodded to one another in gossip," while others of them "told haunted tales in the gloom" (305).

Just as the narrator anthropomorphizes flowers in an effort to possess them, so characters within the narrative try to consummate

feminine "at-oneness" with flowers by fondling them. Discovering a cluster of peonies, "Lettie stooped, taking between both hands the silken fulness of one blossom that was sunk to the earth." Beside her, Marie exclaims: "'But aren't the flowers lovely!'" adding, "'I want to hug them'" (231). Significantly, the female possessiveness expressed in the actions of these characters and in the anthropomorphizing of flowers by the narrator, is dimly resented by the narrator himself--even while he is guilty of the violations he laments. Musing upon the "hosts of little white flowers . . . like a holy communion of pure wild things, numberless, frail, and folded meekly in the evening light," Cyril sighs that "we have lost their [the flowers'] meaning. They do not belong to us, who ravish them" (129). Yet he himself has ravished them, in his personifications of them. Further, he would ravish them again, for the sight of Lettie and Emily "touching" the flowers "with their fingers . . . symbolize[s] the yearning" he feels--the yearning to possess the flowers. Yet Cyril concludes by describing the snowdrops as "conquered flowerlets" (129). He recognizes that the flowers are possessed, conquered, but not that he himself is participating in that conquest.

But I have argued in chapter one that the naming of flowers is a male interest--and many flowers are named in The White Peacock, as Cyril has named the snowdrops. Indeed, the novel explicitly identifies at least seventy-nine separate varieties of flowers. So that although the rich presence of flowers in the book suggests femininity, and the narrator's lavish descriptions of flowers demonstrate it, there is still present, with remarkable frequency, the male flowering of utterance. But it is an utterance that is sometimes a borrowed one. "The true heart of the

world is a book," Lawrence wrote to May Holbrook in 1908. "The essence of things is stored in books" (Boulton I: 96). As a consequence of this attitude, the narrator of The White Peacock soaks his flowers in a honeyed bath of novels, poetry, folklore. Unable to summon his own utterance, he substitutes the utterance of literature. Hence, peonies "'are like a romance--D'Annunzio--a romance in passionate sadness'" (231-232). "Dusty hazel catkins" prompt the quotation of a Christina Rossetti poem (127). Walking through a wood "knee-deep" in forget-me-nots, and "intoxicated" by the color of bluebells and purple hyacinths, George and Lettie wish for "'fauns and hamadryads!'" "'If you were a faun, I would put guelder roses round your hair, and make you look Bacchanalian,'" Lettie tells George, ruffling his hair (214). Cyril, stirred by this impressionistic comparison, relates a legend about peonies in which a handsome young man, "brown and strong," tragically shot his lover, in the morning mists. Her arms filled with flowers, she "sank down in their tryst place," and the young man, unawares, thought "she was only talking to the flowers." But stooping low, he found the peonies "full of blood" (232).

The key to evaluating whether the flower of complete consciousness is present in The White Peacock is to be found in Cyril's wishing that he "had their [the flowers'] language, to talk to them distinctly" (158). Like the artistic imagination which conceived him as its representative, Cyril has both the desire for male utterance and the yearning to experience female at-oneness. But as yet his utterance is borrowed, and this weakness has allowed the female "centre and . . . darkness and . . . origin" to exceed its boundaries, supplanting authentic male utterance with fanciful, anthropomorphic descriptions, and inhibiting the

experience of its own, true femaleness. There is a flower of consciousness in The White Peacock, but it is a confused flower, and a muddled consciousness.

ii. The Trespasser

If the flower of consciousness is muddled in The White Peacock, in The Trespasser (1912) it is diseased. The female root of centre and darkness and origin in Lawrence's first novel is enlarged and the blossom of male utterance weakened, but in his second novel the root is badly swollen and the male utterance has become mere derivative, rather than functioning as the creative expression of the root; the visible form of the invisible awareness. This imbalance is deathly: Siegmund commits suicide at the end of the novel. The problem is evident in a passage describing Helena as "the earth in which his [Siegmund's] strange flowers grew."

But she herself wondered at the flowers produced of her. He was so strange to her, so different from herself. What next would he ask of her, what new blossom would she rear in him then. He seemed to grow and flower involuntarily. She merely helped to produce him. (69)

The parallel with the excerpt from "Study of Thomas Hardy" is clear: Helena is root, Siegmund is floescence. But there are ominous implications here. Helena is not being honest with herself. She does

not "merely . . . produce" Siegmund. Earlier, the narrator had remarked that

For centuries a certain type of woman has been rejecting the 'animal' in humanity, till now her dreams are abstract, and full of fantasy, and her blood runs in bondage, and her kindness is full of cruelty. (64)

Helena is cruel to Siegmund in just this way. "She clothed everything in fancy," the narrator says. "The pink convolvuli were fairy horns, or telephones from the day fairies to the night fairies. . . . That was her favourite form of thinking. The value of all things was in the fancy they evoked" (75-76). The value of Siegmund is in the fancy he evoked. And the narrator is an accomplice to Helen's cruelty, describing Siegmund swimming into a sea-cave as if he were "creeping into it like a white bee into a white, virgin blossom that had waited, how long, for its bee." The sexual connotations are evident, but Siegmund's diminutive size is unnatural. In his impotent condition, "the sun and the white flower of the bay" are seen as "breathing and kissing him dry, holding him in their warm concave, like a bee in a flower, like himself on the bosom of Helena . . ." (38). Now a tiny creature couched on a massive blossom, Siegmund is psychically dead. This death is symbolic of the destruction of the flower of complete consciousness, because for Helena--as for the narrator--"the dream was always more than the actuality" (64). The female root knows no visible form, only the fertile darkness below the surface of consciousness. Therefore, the root dreams a form, invents a reality, but in so doing it deprives itself of the genuine form, the beauty of a

reality which only male utterance can provide. For this reason, it is not surprising that Leo Gurko should complain of The Trespasser's "erratically verbalized emotional sludge " with its "sentences . . . atrocious enough to kill literature outright" (qtd. in Stiffler 31). Male utterance, supplanted by a dreaming female notion of utterance, is bound to cause an "atrocious" mutation.

Because of the unwholesomeness of the flowering in The Trespasser, I do not see the book as "almost an irrelevance," as Graham Hough does (17), though it is a bad book. Lawrence himself later rebuked it as "horribly poetic: Convent Garden market, floral hall" (Boulton I: 167). Rather, the unhealthy flower of consciousness in the novel is directly responsible for the vivid energy of the flowers in Sons and Lovers (1913).

iii. Sons and Lovers

"I shall never do anything decent til I can grow up and cut my beastly long curls of poetry," Lawrence wrote disgustedly in 1910 (Boulton I: 167), and among the beastly long curls he cut away were the anthropomorphizing of flowers in The White Peacock and the fanciful floweriness in The Trespasser. In cutting those curls, his awareness deepened and his vision cleared, making flowers "the most powerful of the 'vital forces'" in Sons and Lovers (Spilka 45). Just how far he has come is best shown by comparing a field of cowslips, first from The White Peacock and then from Sons and Lovers:

The field was all afroth with cowslips, a yellow, glittering, shaking froth on the still green of the grass. We took our shadows across the fields, extinguishing the sunshine on the flowers as we went. The air was tingling with the scent of blossoms. (207)

The field itself was coarse, and crowded with tall, big cowslips that had never been cut. Clusters of strong flowers rose everywhere above the coarse tussocks of bent. It was like a roadstead crowded with tall, fairy shipping. (294)

The first passage offers a kind of impressionistic rendering, a swoon into light and shadow and scent. The cowslips themselves, a "yellow, glittering, shaking froth," have only a hazy identity. But in the passage from Sons and Lovers, we can see the cowslips. The field is "coarse," the flowers are "tall" and "crowded," and have "never been cut." They stand in "clusters" "above the coarse tussocks of bent." This is the language that Cyril Beardsall wished he knew so that he could "talk to the flowers distinctly." It is a language which is the expression of the flowers as they "distinctly" are, or rather, the flowers become distinctly themselves through accurately expressive language. The female root of at-oneness is so intimate that it is mute, not knowing how to express the depth of its awareness. The male stalk experiences a detachment of its consciousness from the female root, because it must grow away from that root in an effort to bloom. The detachment is the emerging of language, and together with female awareness becomes complete consciousness. Notably, the last sentence of the passage from Sons and Lovers is a vestigial female fancy: the field of cowslips is described as looking

"like a roadstead crowded with tall, fairy shipping." Here, the accuracy of male expression has been supplanted by the inaccuracy of a feminine comparison. Unable to say what the field does look like, the female awareness depends upon a fanciful ingenuity to supply a simile.

The complete consciousness which Lawrence has achieved can be further illustrated by extending the quotation of passages from the two novels:

'Look at the cowslips, all shaking with laughter,' said Emily, and she tossed back her head, and her dark eyes sparkled among the flow of gauze. Lettie was on in front, flitting darkly across the field, bending over the flowers, stooping to the earth like a sable Persephone come into freedom. George had left her at a little distance, hunting for something in the grass. He stopped, and remained standing in one place.

Gradually, as if unconsciously, she drew near to him; and when she lifted her head, after stooping to pick some chimney-sweeps, little grass flowers, she laughed with a slight surprise to see him so near.

'Ah!' she said. 'I thought I was all alone in the world--such a splendid world--it was so nice.'

'Like Eve in a meadow in Eden--and Adam's shadow somewhere on the grass,' said he.

'No--no Adam,' she asserted, frowning slightly, and laughing.

'Who ever would want Streets of Gold,' Emily was saying to me 'when you can have a field of cowslips! Look at that hedge-bottom that gets the south sun--one stream and glitter of buttercups.' (The White Peacock 207-208)

'Ah!' cried Miriam, and she looked at Paul, her dark eyes dilating. He smiled. Together they enjoyed the field of flowers. Clara, a little way off, was looking at the cowslips disconsolately. Paul and Miriam stayed close together, talking in subdued tones. He kneeled on one knee, quickly gathering the best blossoms, moving from tuft to tuft restlessly, talking softly all the time. Miriam plucked the flowers lovingly, lingering over them.

He always seemed to her too quick and almost scientific. Yet his bunches had a natural beauty more than hers. He loved them, but as if they were his and he had a right to them. She had more reverence for them: they held something she had not.

The flowers were very fresh and sweet. He wanted to drink them. As he gathered them, he ate the little yellow trumpets. Clara was still wandering about disconsolately. Going towards her, he said:

'Why don't you get some?'

'I don't believe in it. They look better growing.'

'But you'd like some?'

'They want to be left.'

'I don't believe they do.'

'I don't want the corpses of flowers about me,' she said.

'That's a stiff, artificial notion,' he said. 'They don't die any quicker in water than on their roots. And besides, they look nice in a bowl--they look jolly. And you only call a thing a corpse because it looks corpse-like.'

'Whether it is one or not?' she argued.

'It isn't one to me. A dead flower isn't a corpse of a flower.' Clara now ignored him. (Sons and Lovers 294-295)

The difference in the two passages is the distraction in the first and the concentration of the second. The consciousness which was muddled in The White Peacock, and therefore divided in its attention, has become in Sons and Lovers a consciousness which is harmonious, organizing all its effects more purposively. For in the first passage--apart from the indistinctness of the flowers as a "flow of gauze"--the narrator's attention to cowslips is led away by other things: chimney-sweeps, buttercups, larks, wood-pigeons, peewits, eggs. But in the second passage, there is no leading away. For as long as the scene continues, only cowslips exist in the field. Again, in The White Peacock, the distractions of natural objects are accentuated by distractions in the

dialogue. Conversation leads away to indeterminate conclusions. Emily's opening exclamation is neither endorsed nor refuted. When George and Lettie meet in conversation, their talk proceeds from "a splendid world" to "Adam's shadow" to "Streets of Gold" to "old Jews and filthy lucre"--an empty destination. In Sons and Lovers there are no such distractions. The characters are drawn tightly together, like iron filings to a magnet. Miriam exclaims, as did Emily, but then she looks at Paul, who smiles back. Clara is but "a little way off."

Paradoxically, this kind of concentration reveals a greater tension than is present in Lawrence's first novel. The characters do not happily share a pleasure in the field of cowslips, as they did in The White Peacock, but instead conflict in their responses to the flowers. Paul argues with Clara over them, and shortly after this passage ends, argues with Miriam:

'I think,' said Miriam, 'if you treat them [the cowslips] with reverence you don't do them any harm. It is the spirit you pluck them in that matters.'

'Yes,' he said. 'But no, you get 'em because you want 'em, and that's all.' (295)

Even the narrator argues. Paul picks the flowers quickly, "moving from tuft to tuft restlessly"--a style which Miriam considers "too quick and almost scientific." Yet the narrator defends Paul against Miriam, saying that Paul's "bunches of flowers had a natural beauty more than hers." Such argument is not present in The White Peacock because the consciousness of that book is so "namby-pamby." Its fuzziness allows potential tensions to exist in close proximity without becoming visible.

But in Sons and Lovers, the greater clarity bares those tensions. For Lawrence, the flowering of complete consciousness is a dynamic process, rather than a static achievement and is therefore a "trembling instability of the balance" between the two aspects of itself. The more nearly this trembling instability becomes unison, the more it excites tension, so the very tension in Sons and Lovers is evidence that the consciousness which it expresses is very close to (and also very far from) completeness.

iv. The Rainbow

As I have argued, the tension between the two aspects of flowering consciousness reflects the relationship between female awareness and male utterance. Relationship is necessary if utterance is to remain vital, but utterance is in danger, both of being consumed by the darkness of female awareness and becoming separated from that awareness by the demands of its own need for detachment. It was the threat of being consumed that led Lawrence to try a new form of utterance in The Rainbow (1915).

"One sheds one's sicknesses in books," Lawrence wrote to Arthur McLeod in 1913 (Zytaruk and Boulton II: 90), and flowers are a potent carrier of sickness in Sons and Lovers. They are a point of transfusion between mother and son. In a famous scene, Mrs. Morel is shoved from the house by her drunken husband. Distraught with the confrontation, she is suddenly overcome by the "tall white lilies . . . reeling in the moonlight."

She touched the big, pallid flowers on their petals, then shivered. They seemed to be stretching in the moonlight. She put her hand into one white bin: the gold scarcely showed on her fingers by moonlight. She bent down to look at the binful of yellow pollen; but it only appeared dusky. Then she drank a deep draught of the scent. It almost made her dizzy.

Mrs. Morel leaned on the garden gate, looking out, and she lost herself awhile. She did not know what she thought. Except for a slight feeling of sickness, and her consciousness in the child, herself melted out like scent into the shiny, pale air. After a time the child, too, melted with her in the mixing-pot of moonlight, and she rested with the hills and lilies and houses, all swum together in a kind of swoon. (60)

Finally given entrance into the house again, she looks in the mirror and "smiled faintly to see her face all smeared with the yellow dust of lilies" (62). Sanford Pinsker describes Paul's "specialness" as beginning from this episode, in an "Immaculate Conception," where "pollen (rather than semen) plays a significant role" (91-92). The consequence is alarming: Paul betrays an almost genetic weakness for the power of lilies. For just as Mrs. Morel, pregnant with Paul, is made "almost . . . dizzy" by the scent of lilies "reeling in the moonlight," so Paul, as a young man, at night, in the same garden, is made "drunk" by the "rocking, heavy scent of the lilies" (355). As a further link, Mrs. Morel--alone among the women of Lawrence's fiction--possesses that masculine interest in the naming of flowers: "she knew every weed and blade" in her garden (215). And Paul is the flower she knew best.

So that Lawrence, laboring over "The Sisters," rid his work of flowers as "'vital' forces" in an effort to rid himself of their

sickness. Surely having in mind those lilies with the "rocking, heavy scent," he wrote in 1914 to Edward Garnett:

I have no longer the joy in creating vivid scenes, that I had in Sons and Lovers. I don't care much more about accumulating objects in the powerful light of emotion, and making a scene of them. I have to write differently. . . . (Zytaruk and Boulton II: 142)

Indeed, he did write differently. In The Rainbow, flowers are not the vital presence they were in Sons and Lovers, nor are they the pivot of action. They do not glow with "the powerful light of emotion," do not spark "vivid scenes." The mentions of lilies are incidental. Cowslips turn up but once, with appleblossoms, as a "perfume" in the wind. Iris--that powerful and darkly phallic "something" with the "brutal" scent which Paul found while "hunting round" in the moonlight--is gone altogether. Daffodils, the occasion of sharp irritation between Paul and Miriam, squeak in the night and are forgotten on a dresser when Tom Brangwen embraces Lydia Lensky.

But if flowers are not seen, they are felt. In the letter to Edward Garnett previously quoted, Lawrence went on to say that

I write with everything vague--plenty of fire underneath, but, like bulbs in the ground, only shadowy flowers that must be beaten and sustained, for another spring. (143)

Lawrence has changed his form of male utterance, to be free of the female sickness of flowers, but the change becomes an expression of a still deeper attachment to the female root, his sole nourishment: he goes

"underneath" and his writing becomes like "bulbs in the ground." Although flowers do not bloom as vividly in The Rainbow as they did in Sons and Lovers, they exert a powerful influence of a different sort. In numerous passages, the narrative itself becomes flowerlike, describing the emotional fluctuations of characters in terms of an opening and closing blossom and adopting for the purpose the metaphor of a growing flower.

For example, one warm Sunday morning Anna and Fred Brangwen are accompanied to church by their cousin Will. There is "something of the cavalier" about Will, and Anna feels the attraction he finds in her. Along the road, "the sun shone brightly on little showers of buttercup." But this detail of landscape is transformed moments later in the church, where the sun becomes the expression of Will's love and Anna becomes the buttercup upon which that sun shines. For while Anna is seated in her pew with Will beside her, the sun "came streaming from the painted window above," and she glows in its warmth and light: "she sat amid illumination, illumination and luminous shadow all around her, her soul very bright. . . . She sat in a glowing world of unreality, very delightful" (110).

In a longer passage, a little episode in which Lydia Lensky watches bees "tumbling into the yellow crocuses" grows into a prolonged description of her relationship with Tom Brangwen, a description in which she herself becomes a flower, opening or closing as Tom--like the sun--approaches her or turns away. The narrator, sympathetic to her plight, speaks in a rhythmic cadence suggestive of the time-lapse photography of a blooming and fading flower. As Lydia watches the bees in the crocuses, she becomes metamorphosed. Her attention to the flower is so profound that she begins to feel "like somebody else, not herself,

a new person, quite glad." Gradually, she is translated into the world of nature, becoming a flower surrounded by primal forces: she experiences the weight of "great moving masses" and feels "like a flower that comes above-ground to find a great stone lying above it." In her condition, people become merely "looming presences." Only Tom matters, and she waits for him as a flower waits for the dawning sun. She feels herself "lying open like a flower unsheathed in the sun, insistent and potent with demand," and when he turns to her she enjoys "the blue, steady livingness of his eyes . . . like morning." When he is indifferent she "lapses," when he is attentive she revives: "she felt herself opening, unfolding, asking, as a flower opens in full request under the sun . . . unfolded she turned to him . . . she was as new as a flower that unsheathes itself and stands always ready, waiting, receptive" (54-56).

The two passages illustrate the remarkable flower of consciousness which Lawrence has achieved in The Rainbow. It is a consciousness rooted in the female centre and darkness and origin, which is made intelligible by the blossoming of the male verbal consciousness, the expression of the female root. Anna and Lydia's deepest emotional experiences emerge and bloom in the very texture of the language used to describe those experiences. Indeed, characters in The Rainbow are largely representations of "psychological processes" presented "in terms of natural ones," the similarity suggesting not just "a metaphorical resemblance between the two, but an actual fundamental connection" (Sanders, The World of the Five Major Novels 79). As "psychological processes," the characters in the novel are essentially inarticulate, relying upon the narrator to speak what they feel. Hough notes the

absence of dialogue: "in The Rainbow as a whole the ratio of descriptive passages to dramatic scenes remains staggeringly disproportionate" (52). The descriptive passages frequently include darkness, for there is much darkness in the novel, a rich, windy darkness through which the Brangwens move like moles, intently aware of their own, inner darkness: Tom finds Lydia's eyes "darker than darkness" (92). After kissing Anna, Will "seemed to be hidden in a tense, electric darkness" (116). Later, the two are "together in a darkness, passionate, electric . . . the darkness potent with an overwhelming voluptuousness" (216). Ursula and Skrebensky dance in the "wonderful rocking of the darkness" (318), and when they kiss under the oak tree Ursula "passed away as on a dark wind, far, far away, into the pristine darkness of paradise, into the original immortality" (451).

These aspects of The Rainbow--the rich presence of darkness, the inarticulateness of the characters and the at-oneness of their "psychological processes" with natural ones--are aspects of the female root, which grows downwards toward the centre and darkness and origin, and is unable to verbalize its intimate sensation of "felt life" (to borrow a phrase from Henry James). And as I have argued in chapter one, the female root perennially threatens to overwhelm the evanescent male utterance, the "Word, which blossoms for a moment and is no more" ("Foreword to Sons and Lovers," Huxley 98).

v. Women in Love

Ironically, the threat which the female root poses for the male blossom of utterance is most endangering when the flower of complete consciousness has been most nearly realized, for in that realization male utterance best expresses the female root, bringing the sense of its underlying presence powerfully to the surface. And because this realization and its threat marks The Rainbow, Women in Love (1920) attacks as life-destructive the very things which in its sister novel are life-giving, in an effort to preserve the necessary detachment and freedom of male florescence. The darkness which is "passionate," "electric," and "voluptuous" in The Rainbow becomes cold and deadening in Women in Love: during the Criches' water-party, Birkin expostulates on the "river of darkness," the "dark river of dissolution . . . the black river of corruption" which "ends in universal nothing" (164). Lawrence dramatically underscores Birkin's gloomy philosophy with the drowning of Diana in the cold, dark depths of Willy Water. When the lake is drained, her body is found in the mud at the bottom, along the "horrible raw banks of clay, that smelled of raw rottenish water" (181). The inarticulate, essentially female characters of The Rainbow are exchanged for exceptionally articulate, notably male characters in Women in Love. Birkin even scornfully rebukes himself as "nothing but a word-bag" (180). At Breadalby the dinner conversation is so sharp and antagonistic that Ursula becomes dismayed by the "ruthless mental pressure, this powerful, consuming, destructive mentality that emanated from Joshua and Hermione

and Birkin and dominated the rest" (83). And the at-oneness with natural processes which is the essential vitality of characters in The Rainbow becomes an invital condition in its sequel, Women in Love, which only dangerous characters represent. Gudrun knows at-oneness. "Seated like a Buddhist" beside Willy Water, she is "absorbed in a stupor of apprehension of surging water plants." She could

feel their turgid fleshy structure as in a sensuous vision, she knew how they rose out of the mud, she knew how they thrust out from themselves, how they stood stiff and succulent against the air.(111)

Her "vision" includes Gerald Crich, whom she sees, like the "surging water plants," as "start[ing] out of the mud" (112). Yet Gudrun and Gerald, though linked in this way to each other and to natural processes, are both destructive, possessive energies and are spoken of by Birkin as "fleurs du mal . . . pure flowers of dark corruption" (164).

Birkin labors throughout Women in Love to dispel Gudrun's kind of intense apprehension. It is female, root, expression of "the blood of destructive creation" (164), and must be dissociated from the male blossom of utterance, of rational consciousness. He accomplishes this dissociation by an insistence upon "fact," because facts demonstrate the existence of an objectively verifiable, free-standing reality which the female at-oneness--given the intrinsic nature of its awareness--has no knowledge of. Marching into Ursula's classroom during her lesson sketching catkins, he insists that "it's the fact you want to emphasise, not the subjective impression to record." He demonstrates:

What's the fact?--red little spiky stigmas of the female flower, dangling yellow male catkin, yellow pollen flying from one to the other. Make a pictorial record of the fact (30)

But the insistence upon fact is a dangerous strategy for it requires a disassociation, finally, from the very source of vital life and being. Hence, as a consequence of his strategy, Birkin becomes exhaustively, wickedly intellectual. Daniel Weiss argues that he is "merely, perhaps totally his [Lawrence's] dialectic personified" (103). The argument has merit, for Birkin has no feeling for flowers. Responding to Birkin's neat, taxonomic dissection of the catkins, Hermione asks fretfully whether "when we have knowledge, don't we lose everything but knowledge?"

If I know about the flower, don't I lose the flower and have only the knowledge? Aren't we exchanging the substance for the shadow, aren't we forfeiting life for this dead quality of knowledge? And what does it mean to me after all? What does all this knowing mean to me? It means nothing.

Birkin savagely rebukes her, complaining of "your conceit of consciousness and your lust for power, to know" (35), but he has deflected her question, and not answered it. In fact, Birkin has lost the flower, and it is he who is guilty of a "conceit of consciousness," just as much as she. This is demonstrated by Birkin's actions after Hermione has tried to kill him with the "jewel stone." The incident has climaxed a protracted antagonism over mental knowledge and the "lust to know," and Birkin, to escape the pressure of argument (and to ease the pain in his

head), walks up into the hills, hoping to find relief in the beauty of nature. Momentarily, it works:

He was happy in the wet hill-side, that was overgrown and obscure with bushes and flowers. He wanted to touch them all, to saturate himself with the touch of them all. He took off his clothes, and sat down naked among the primroses, moving his feet softly among the primroses, his legs, his knees, his arms right up to the arm-pits, lying down and letting them touch his belly, his breasts. It was such a fine, cool, subtle touch all over him, he seemed to saturate himself with their contact. (100)

But even though Birkin has taken off all his clothes to insure that his saturation in the flowers will be satisfying, he is abruptly disappointed: "they [the flowers] were too soft." His busy mind needs something with more sting to quiet it:

He went through the long grass to a clump of young fir-trees, that were no higher than a man. The soft sharp boughs beat upon him, as he moved in keen pangs against them, threw little cold showers of drops upon his belly, and beat his loins with their clusters of soft-sharp needles. There was a thistle which pricked him vividly, but not too much, because all his movements were too discriminate and soft. To lie down and roll in the sticky, cool young hyacinths, to lie on one's belly and cover one's back with handfuls of fine wet grass, soft as a breath, soft and more delicate and more beautiful than the touch of any woman; and then to sting one's thigh against the living dark bristles of the fir-boughs; and then to feel the light whip of the hazel on one's shoulders, stinging, and then to clasp the silvery birch-trunk against one's breast, its smoothness, its hardness, its vital knots and ridges (100)

Again, Birkin seems happy. Reflecting that "this was good, this was very good, very satisfying," his thoughts rise to an exclamation of enjoyment:

Nothing else would do, nothing else would satisfy, except this coolness and subtlety of vegetation travelling into one's blood. How fortunate he was, that there was this lovely, subtle, responsive vegetation, waiting for him, as he waited for it; how fulfilled he was, how happy! (100)

But Birkin's fulfillment is unconvincing. It is very far from the unselfconscious fulfillment of the Brangwen men who, in their intoxicated existence amid nature, know "the intercourse between heaven and earth" and feel "the teeming life of creation, which poured unresolved into their veins" (The Rainbow 8, 9). There is nothing "unresolved" about Birkin's relation to nature: it is exactly understood, distinctly conscious of itself. His insistence upon fact, and the consequent disassociation with the root of female awareness has had its effect. He would like to convince himself that he knows at-oneness with the flowers, but it is primarily a matter of telling himself that this is so rather than feeling that it is so from experience. He insists that he "wanted nobody and nothing but the lovely, subtle, responsive vegetation," but his insistence is mocked by the obsessions of his conscious mind: he walks into town fuming over the "old ethic, of the human being, and of humanity." He is nearly frantic to separate himself from this "old ethic" and return to nature, but the very process of arguing that separation prevents it. He is not aware of flowers but aware of his "dread . . . of mankind, of other people! It amounted almost to horror, to a sort of dream terror" (101). Indeed, Birkin's ceaseless mental activity bears a resemblance to the

"niggling analysis, often self-analysis" which Lawrence condemns as the common trait of "most of our modern literature" ("Pornography and Obscenity," [1929], Phoenix 180). Birkin is analytical about his relationship with Hermione, with Gerald, with Ursula, and is even analytical about his supposed saturation in flowers. The "outstanding feature" of such "conscious activity," Lawrence goes to say, "is that there is no real object, there is only subject. . . . The author never escapes from himself, he pads along within the vicious circle of himself" (180). Birkin is in danger of falling into this "vicious circle." He is a "word-bag," male utterance separating itself from essential rapport with the root of female awareness, even when his words are meant to champion that awareness. His flower of consciousness is a large bloom with a small root.

vi. Post-War Works

Florence Lever has said that "flowers and trees gradually recede into the background and take a more conventional place as setting in the later books [of Lawrence]" (qtd. in Innis 116). The comment is accurate and reflects the dissociation between the female root of at-oneness and the male blossom of utterance. Indeed, the dissociation is aptly symbolized by Lawrence's departure from England to write novels abroad. It may be said that in doing so he withdrew not only from a geographical territory but from an artistic one. He left the country of his heart, and in doing

so lost connection with his female root of origin. Rootless, he drifted from continent to continent, able to take hold briefly here and there long enough to "sprout" books, but books which like the seed in the parable, "immediately sprang up" but soon "withered away," having "no root." Birkin's insistence upon fact; his demand for the "sheer, perfected singleness" of the verbal consciousness as a means of preserving it from the threatening presence of the female centre and darkness has meant that flowers become merely fact, or fact whose interest is a rhetorical one. For example, returning surreptitiously to his home, Aaron Sisson

went lingering down the garden path, stooping to lift the fallen carnations, to see how they were. There were many flowers, but small. He broke one off, then threw it away. The golden rod was out. Even in the little lawn there were asters, as of old. (Aaron's Rod [1922] 119)

Though Aaron has been described as nostalgic for his garden, he evinces only the most ordinary sort of interest, not at all the rapt attention of the collier standing "in his back garden with that odd, remote sort of contemplation which shows a real awareness of beauty." And as I have argued in chapter one, the use of names by themselves, without further description to capture the beauty and evocative power of flowers, is a male tendency.

In "St. Mawr" (1925) there is an extended passage, rich with flowers, which seems to be pervaded by the intimate female awareness so lacking in Aaron Sisson's merely verbal notation. Walking on her ranch in the Rockies, Lou Witt becomes ecstatic with the wild excess of life around her, particularly the abundance and beauty of flowers: she finds "curious

columbines," the "beautiful rosy-blue" bluebells, herb-honeysuckle with its "tangle of long drops of pure fire-red," "blue-leaved thistle-poppy with its moon-white flowers," "dark blue" harebells (148). Here indeed there seems to be present the female penchant for describing the "subjective impression" which flowers evoke. Yet in fact the entire passage is framed by a metaphysical context, the scaffolding of a philosophy--which is male. "There is no Almighty loving God" Lou thinks to herself, almost savagely. "What nonsense about Jesus and a God of Love, in a place like this!" (147-148). The crux here is whether the metaphysic has emerged from Lou's ecstasy over flowers, or her ecstasy is a consequence of the metaphysic. Stiffler suggests the latter when he says that the flowers in this passage "represent Lawrence's view of the great life-force engaged in constant struggle" (120 [emphasis added]). I would argue that the floral descriptions are demonstrably shaped by the belief that "there was no merciful God in the heavens" and that life is "bristling" with "an undertone of savage sordidness." Flowers are seen as "fang-mouthed" or as having "fierce red stars." Cactus flowers have spines "the devil himself must have conceived"; mariposa lilies are "defenseless." It is one thing to believe life is savage, but another to actually see flowers as shapes of savagery, to envision sunflowers as "strangling and choking the alfalfa" (148).

Again, this is a consequence of Birkin's disassociation of the blossom of male utterance from the female root of awareness. His insistence upon fact becomes "the vicious circle of himself." Unable to escape, the male consciousness trapped within itself in this way invents its own philosophy, its own metaphysic, without verification from the real

sense of contact with centre and darkness and origin which only the female awareness can provide. Such a philosophy or such a metaphysic once turned on the world can only see reflections of itself because it has no other reference. Often this will result in a haughty pride, for everything seen in the world will naturally "prove" the metaphysic.

The most conspicuous example of this disastrous conclusion in the Lawrence canon is The Plumed Serpent (1926), a book Daleski calls "sad testimony to what happens when art is 'subdued to a metaphysic'" (252). The novel does not originate in the root of female unconsciousness but in the exfoliation of male consciousness, which is thus obligated to construct an approximation of the female root which will agree with the shape and color of its own blossom. Such an inversion is unnatural, and The Plumed Serpent betrays this unnaturalness. As Eliseo Vivas argues, "the book was not conceived dramatically but conceptually," Lawrence having written it "with the explicit intention of proposing a program for the regeneration of Mexico and the world" (67, 65). This is applied art, the work of a male consciousness so confined to its own interpretation of reality that it has lost any sense that it is confined, but confidently writes out its interpretation on the basis of a kind of remembered nourishment from the female root. Frieda Lawrence aptly calls The Plumed Serpent "'desiccated swelled head'" (qtd. in Stiffler 122). Reflective of the unnatural inversion of consciousness which has taken place in this book, prominent mentions of flowers are largely doctrinaire. Their place in the narrative is didactic. The flowers do not first emerge as beautiful or interesting elements of nature which then accrue meaning as Lawrence's writing takes shape around them, but instead their meaning

comes first--their place in nature is important only because it is useful to the didactic purpose at work. For example, as Don Ramon is musing over his religious transformation of Mexico, he describes the "one mystery":

And the mystery is one mystery, but men must see it differently. The hibiscus and the thistle and the gentian all flower on the Tree of Life, but in the world they are far apart; and must be. And I am hibiscus and you are a yucca flower, and your Caterina is a wild daffodil, and my Carlota is a white pansy. . . . But the Tree of Life is one tree, as we know when our souls open in the last blossoming.
(273)

Though the hibiscus is "easily the most-mentioned flower in The Plumed Serpent" (Stiffler 131), the thistle, gentian, yucca, daffodil, and white pansy have no other mentions at all outside this passage. Their importance is essentially a symbolic one, almost devoid of connection with their intrinsic beauty in the natural world. This is not characteristic of Lawrence at his best, when he seems not "'to distinguish between the reality and the metaphor or symbol which makes it plain to us'" (qtd. in Van Ghent 248). Here, the reality and the symbol are plainly distinguishable. Ramon himself makes a distinction between the flowers growing together on his symbolic "Tree of Life" and growing apart "in the world." The schism is apparent. Reality and symbol, which ought to function in unison, function separately. The female unconsciousness, with its authentic connection to centre and darkness and origin--the fundamental reality--has become dissociated from the male consciousness, with its predilection for explicit meanings. Even the hibiscus demonstrates this schism. Stiffler notes that Ramon "chooses" this flower

"for himself," after "identifying" each of his disciples "with his or her own flower" (131, 130). Ramon has consciously settled upon flowers which will appropriately symbolize the traits of his followers, and his position as the messiah of Mexico, just as Lawrence himself consciously settled upon them as symbols, rather than allowing his female awareness to first develop an at-oneness with the flowers, which then emerge as symbols when the male verbal consciousness expresses the female at-oneness.

vii. Lady Chatterley's Lover

I have argued that The Plumed Serpent is the consequence of a dissociation which begins in Women in Love as the male verbal consciousness gradually separated from the antecedent female unconsciousness. With the eventual dissociation of the male and female elements, and finally their inversion in The Plumed Serpent, it became imperative that the male consciousness, now in control, restore the female unconsciousness to an awareness of itself. For it is only by doing this that the male consciousness can again become an authentic expression of the female at-oneness. But this restored balance has its cost. The new flower of consciousness shows a more deliberate arrangement of its elements, betrays less tension, and excites a smaller interest.

In Lady Chatterley's Lover, the necessity of restoring the female unconsciousness to an awareness of itself is demonstrated when Connie Chatterley, unhappy about her life with Clifford and her affair with

Michaelis, examines her naked body in the bedroom mirror. She is disturbed by what she sees: "her body was flattening and going a little harsh. . . it was a little greyish and sapless." Her front, especially, "made her miserable. It was already beginning to slacken, with a slack sort of thinness, almost withered, going old before it had ever really lived" (65, 66). She is losing her rich fullness. Indeed, she is a withered root. As such, she can only produce withered blossoms. Clifford "was absolutely dependent on her, he needed her every moment" (15), yet her contact with him is lifeless; no vitality is transferred. Stiffler notes that Clifford is associated with the orchid, a flower "which, in England, can only be grown in an artificial environment" (137). And if Connie must be present to sustain Clifford, though her presence can only yield a kind of hot-house blossom in him, so she must be present to sustain Clifford's voluble Cambridge companions, nourishing equally unhealthy blooms in them. While she remains quiet, they depend upon her to stimulate their conversation: "even their talking they could not do, without her silent presence." But it is largely vacuous conversation. Connie "quite liked the life of the mind" and is pleased with her importance in nourishing it, but she is dismayed by the flowers she has borne: "what cold minds!" she shudders to herself. "They [Charlie May, Tommy Dukes, Arnold Hammond] all alike talked at something, though what it was, for the life of her she couldn't say" (34).

Again, Connie is a withered root, nurturing only pale, sickly blossoms of the male verbal consciousness. She requires a man who can restore her to authentic femaleness so that she in her turn can restore health to the male bloom of utterance. The man who accomplishes this in

Connie is the gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors. In his book The Creation of "Lady Chatterley's Lover," Michael Squires concentrates upon Lawrence's development of the "male and female elements in the keeper's psychology" (64), and it is the presence of "female elements" in Mellors which initiates Connie's restoration. Partly female himself, he is able to transfer back to Connie the femaleness she has lost. This is clear from the episode when she discovers Mellors behind his cottage washing, "utterly unaware." She sees him "naked to the hips, his velveteen breeches slipping down over his slender loins," and the sight becomes a "visionary experience" for Connie, which she "received" like a "shock . . . in her womb" (62). The experience has been so transforming because Connie has been impregnated by a realization of the femaleness she has so far suppressed: later on, when Connie recalls her "visionary experience," she likens Mellors' "thin, white body" to the "lonely pistil of an invisible flower!" (79). This is significant, for in "Study of Thomas Hardy" Lawrence identifies the pistil as female. Like a flower's root, it is "the centre," the "swivel," around which the male "stamens" are "close-clasping" (Phoenix 444). Ursula Brangwen had felt an "almost mystic-passionate attraction" for the "little red pistillate flowers" of the catkins (Women in Love 31), because she recognized in the "pistillate" bloom a symbol of her own essential nature as a woman. In the same way, Connie recognizes in Mellors the centre and origin which intrinsically belong to the female, and from which the male derives. And in this recognition, Connie revives. The thought of the gamekeeper stimulates her. As she walks through a wood rich with flowers--daffodils, celandines, hazel-rods, wind-flowers, anemones, primroses--she exclaims:

"Ye must be born again! I believe in the resurrection of the body!" (79).
The female root in her is again alive and growing.

Once this female root has revived, it becomes a source of nourishment to the blossom of male utterance. Connie anticipates this when she declares, inspired by the crocus, that "I too will emerge and see the sun!" (79). The flower of complete consciousness is achieved only in a relationship between male and female, so that Connie can "emerge" only as she is linked to Mellors. And because she is now a healthy root, she has the power to join with him and inspire the bloom of verbal consciousness.

Squires argues that Lawrence achieved in Mellors a "remarkable fusion of male and female elements" (76), but I would suggest that the gamekeeper is initially more feminine, but as Lady Chatterley's Lover develops he becomes more masculine. Early in the novel he is silent, withdrawn, secretive in his cottage among the oak trees: "all he wanted on earth was to be alone" (82). And while it is true that he abhors contact with a woman, fearing the "female will" (83), it is also true that his stillness, his silence, his private intentness, are themselves feminine attributes, absolutely different from the excessively male consciousness of Clifford and his friends, with their habit of "turning everything into words" (87). Hence, Mellors talks in dialect as reaction, and as a way of preserving his solitude.

But as his relationship with Connie develops, Mellors comes more fully to command male utterance, so that the novel concludes with the full bloom of his verbal consciousness. From the flower of his union with a woman, or rather, as the completion of his flowering union with her,

Mellors is emboldened to preach out against "the industrial problem," trusting that while "nothing lies in the future but death and destruction, for these industrial masses," there still survives "the little glow" of passion between him and Connie. Despite the grim character of the world at large, their flower of complete consciousness--including sexual consciousness--wavers like a "little forked flame" (281, 282).

Indeed, Lady Chatterley's Lover exhibits in small the flowering consciousness which takes place in Lawrence's fiction as a whole. For just as Connie is able to nourish the bloom of male verbal consciousness, once she recovers the authentic female root of centre and darkness and origin, so Lawrence had first to establish the character and domain of female unconsciousness, before seeking ever clearer expression of that unconsciousness in the male capacity for conscious utterance. His first novels, The White Peacock and The Trespasser, struggled with the distinction between male and female, and it was not until Sons and Lovers that the distinction began to emerge. With that emergence came the problem of knowing where to locate the balance between female root and male blossom, and successive novels locate the balance differently--it was, after all, a "trembling instability." But the tendency was to move along a scale toward male expression and away from female awareness--as in the last pages of Lady Chatterley's Lover, which becomes a pamphlet for political and sexual reform, rather than an integration of artistic awareness and philosophical intention, a melding of "passional quickness" in the female root with intellectual purposiveness in the male blossom

IV. Transforming the Lily

"But the day of white lilies was over."

--The Lost Girl

1. Unbalanced Consciousness

In chapter two, I described Lawrence's symbolic flower of consciousness as composed of a feminine root, intimately in contact with the centre and darkness and origin of life, and a male stalk or blossom, the vivid expression of the feminine root. The struggle into verbal consciousness translates what is a dark, sensuous awareness into "Flowers of the World"--conscious articulations of the feminine unconsciousness. Together, the feminine root and the male blossom enjoy the flower of a healthy, creative life. Woman and man are in harmony, for

in the woman is the eternal continuance, and from the man, in the human race, comes the exclamation of joy and astonishment at new self-revelation, revelation of that which is Woman in man. ("Foreword" to Sons and Lovers Huxley 103)

But I argued that this ideal balance is threatened by its very structure. The harmonious relationship between female and male elements can become an uncomfortable tension if either the feminine root of awareness overwhelms the masculine blossom of utterance, or the masculine verbal consciousness, demanding detachment from the feminine source of vitality, develops blossoms which are false because they have lost connection with that feminine vitality. Most often, for Lawrence, the balanced flower of consciousness is upset when the woman, positioned at the dark source of life, mute and fertile, tries to usurp the man's place as consciousness, and dictates to him the mode of his comprehension and expression. Yearning for "the spoken world beyond," as the Brangwen women do (The Rainbow 8), the usurping female awareness is dangerous, exercising control in the man's realm without his natural capacities for consciousness. For his part, the man under such control can no longer speak truly; can no longer realize his genuine self, because when he touches the woman he does not touch the root, but a lie, a false consciousness. The woman is a menace, the man a coward. They are both lost, and the flower is dead.

Worse, the catastrophe that woman has become disengaged from her natural "dark sensual body of life" (Women in Love 35) becomes a virtue. This is the means of man's subjection. He is denied what he must have, and grovels obscenely at the altar of her virtue--the ritual denial of access to the female root working into an ecstasy of sexual asceticism: Major Apsley "religiously worshipped" Daphne Beveridge. Returned from the war physically scarred and emotionally hollow, he

suddenly knelt at her feet, and kissed the toe of her slipper, and kissed the instep, and kissed the ankle in the thin, black stocking.

'I knew,' he said in a muffled voice. 'I knew you would make good. I knew if I had to kneel, it was before you. I knew you were divine, you were the one--Cybele--Isis. I knew I was your slave. I knew. It has all been just a long initiation. I had to learn how to worship you.' ("The Ladybird," The Short Novels 39)

Major Apsley is worshipping an inversion. Daphne ought to nourish him from underneath, as the sensuous, emotional root of his being, but instead he treats her as "divine," an invented deity who bestows approval on him as reward for appropriate behavior. She does not nurture, but judge him. In this case, Daphne, though excited by "the grandeur of her own pale power" over Basil, is wise enough to be sickened by his "outpouring adoration-lust. . . she recoiled from him" (39, 42).

For Lawrence, then, the effort of the female awareness to take control in the man's realm is a primary evil because it stifled the sensual body and caused a withered consciousness. The female was no longer the dark root of nourishment but "a picked blossom" of purity (Mr. Noon 174) and the man, a mockery of himself, can only express his worship of that blossom. Given his objections, it is no wonder Lawrence felt so bitterly about the lily, a flower which "all nations agree in considering . . . the symbol of purity and modesty" (Carruthers 188-189). From Edmund Spenser to Henry James, the associations are much the same: Una in The Faerie Queene is "All lily white, withoutten spot, or pride" (I. XII. 22), and in The Portrait of A Lady, Madame Merle's "great idea" was to be "tremendously irreproachable--a kind of full-blown lily--the incarnation of propriety" (454).

Such fixed associations were distinctly antithetical to Lawrence's thinking. The rose is beautiful because it is "only a running flame, emerging and flowing off, and never in any sense at rest, static, finished" (Beal 85). Mankind's great mistake was substituting a "finished" blossom for the evanescent "flutter of petals." As Brewster Ghiselin recalls, Lawrence drew upon the lily to accent his belief, observing that "what was wrong with all the religions was that they had always 'plucked the lily,' had found one or another symbol and had clung to it, refusing to relinquish it as its vitality was exhausted" (Nehls III:297). "Vitality" derived from the genuine female root; the "plucked lily" was the spurious substitute.

It is revealing to trace Lawrence's treatment of the lily in his fiction, for it becomes evident that he gradually wrested the flower away from its long-standing literary associations and made it a prominent symbol in his own, contradictory philosophy. By changing the connotations of the symbol, I would argue that Lawrence intended to correct the unbalanced flower of consciousness, returning the female to her vitality in the earth and the male to his function as verbal consciousness. The process of this transformation entailed a danger, however: if literary tradition employed the lily as a symbol of female virtue, Lawrence nearly made of it a male abstraction--utterance without root. Yet Lawrence does rescue the flower of consciousness in a later work, "The Ladybird."

Several kinds of lilies appear in Lawrence's fiction, among them the madonna lily, water lily, tiger lily, mariposa lily, lilies of the valley, and Christ's "lilies of the field." And while I recognize that Lawrence, with his naturalist's eye, perfectly understood the botanical differences

between them--though as Stiffler astutely notes, some critics of Lawrence have not (43-44)--I would argue that the effort to reestablish the appropriate position of male and female in the flower of consciousness was more important to Lawrence than preserving botanical distinctions. Therefore, I group different lilies together when they reflect a single theme.

ii. "Goose Fair" through Sons and Lovers

The first mention of lilies in Lawrence's fiction occurs in a very early short story, "Goose Fair" (composed 1909). Lois, a girl of "superior culture," is shown late at night in her bedroom, reading Sesame and Lilies. The title is not incidental. A collection of lectures by John Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies dwells upon the "separate characters" of man and woman. Chapter two, "Of Queen's Gardens," or "Lilies," attends to the woman.

She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good, instinctively, infallibly wise,-- not for self-development, but for self-renunciation; wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fail from his side; wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service (147)

The woman is not to "set herself above her husband," but actually she has no need to. She is above him:

In all Christian ages which have been remarkable for their purity of progress, there has been absolute yielding of obedient devotion, by the lover to his mistress. . . chivalry, I say, in its very first conception of honorable life, assumes the subjection of the young knight to the command--should it even be the command in caprice--of his lady. (141-142)

Lawrence, quite likely with Sesame and Lilies in mind, wrote to Blanche Jennings in 1908 condemning the "Ruskinite[s]." "What devil was it that decreed that above all things men (and women supremely) must to themselves seem superbly virtuous? The deep damnation of self-righteousness . . . lies thick all over the Ruskinite . . ." (Boulton I:80-81).

Lois is filling her head with such "self-righteousness." Musing upon her qualities of enduring and incorruptible goodness and especially, I would argue, upon the "absolute yielding of obedient devotion, by the lover to his mistress," she is primed for putting Ruskin's notions into practice. But idealism, enforced upon life, is perverse--and "Goose Fair" records the destruction of one man by the lily-like virtue of a woman. Will Selby, Lois's fiance, an innocuous if bumbling young man, neglects to stand duty over his father's warehouse, during an episode of violent labor unrest. The same night that Lois meditates upon Ruskin, the Selby business is burned to the ground. Lois, now "superbly virtuous" in her own eyes, is contemptuous of Will's ineffectiveness, and punishes him for the slight to her honor: "'I believe everybody thinks you set the place

on fire," she tells him, as she "drew herself up in cold condemnation." Will, bitterly chastened, ceases his blithe recital of an afternoon fracas with a peasant girl and her geese. Lois's "revenge" is "complete." She has made him her "abject" knight, even if he is smudged. "Curiously enough," the narrator concludes,

they walked side by side as if they belonged to each other. She was his conscience-keeper. She was far from forgiving him, but she was still farther from letting him go. And he walked at her side like a boy who has to be punished before he can be exonerated. He submitted. But there was a genuine bitter contempt in the curl of his lip. (Complete Short Stories I:243).

Will Selby is only the first of the Lawrencean men to be suppressed by a woman. George Saxton in The White Peacock (1911) is another. The interesting aspect of his deterioration is that George is psychically feminine, although, with his heavy, rugged physique, thoroughly "manly." He is an embodiment of the gamekeeper Annabelle's motto that one should "'be a good animal, true to your animal instinct'" (147), like the Brangwen men who "faced inwards to the teeming life of creation, which poured unresolved into their veins" (The Rainbow 9). With his simple satisfaction in farm life, the enjoyment of work which keeps him close to nature's rhythms, he is a feminine root--but Meg wants to make something of him, see his mark in the world. George's deterioration is largely the effect of Meg's forcing of her desire upon him. It is clearly ominous that George, stopping his dog-cart at Meg's house just before her marriage to him, should find her standing behind "tall madonna lilies" which "rose in clusters" (239). George's buoyant mood becomes darkened

by traces of argument: he is ready with the marriage license, but Meg, "in fine expostulation," cries that she was just going to make pudding, and that her hands are stained with goose-berries. Meg prods George into announcing the marriage to her "gran'ma," an old woman, shrivelled and bitter, who dislikes him. Her farewell is wicked:

Dunna let me clap eyes on thee again, tha ungrateful
'ussy, tha ungrateful 'ussy! Tha'll rue it, my
wench, tha'll rue it, an' then dunna come ter me--
--. (242)

Driving to the wedding George sat "with a shut mouth, scowling," as Meg "wept awhile to herself, woefully." And in the midst of all this, Cyril Beardsall, accompanying the pair, notes: "I could smell the white lilies where I sat" (240). It is an omen. Once married, George begins to withdraw from nature, the source of his joy in life. He wears stiff collars, stays indoors, tries to fit the station his wife has picked for him. But the friction against his nature is exhausting. George becomes drunken and sluggish. Late in the novel, Cyril visits him in his decline--notably, Cyril is first driven from his old haunt, Nethermere Pond, by two swans looking "like grand double water-lilies," that "charg[ed]" him "insolently" (305). As these lily-like birds have taken something from Cyril, so Meg--in ostrich feathers--has taken something from George. He is slovenly, hair awry. It is mid-morning before he is out of bed, and not before a necessary bottle of beer. Meg rules him:

. . . there was a certain immovable confidence in her.
She was authoritative, amiable, calm. She wore a
handsome dress of dark green, and a toque with

opulent ostrich feathers. As she moved about the room she seemed to dominate everything, particularly her husband, who sat ruffled and dejected, his waistcoat hanging loose over his shirt. (311).

In "Goose Fair," association between the lily and the woman of perverse power is indirect, in The White Peacock connection is drawn tighter by the appearance of the lily itself on the day of marriage--in Sons and Lovers (1913), the identification is complete. The flower is the woman. Louisa Lily Denys Western--nicknamed "Gyp" by William Morel, but known to the narrator as "Lily"--is the woman who, in part, kills Paul's older brother. She is a Ruskin lily, twisted. Visiting the Morel family, with all the aura of London about her, she "queened it," playing "the grand lady at first," to great advantage:

When she went with William to chapel, he in his frock coat and silk hat, she in her furs and London-made costume, Paul and Arthur and Annie expected everybody to bow to the ground in admiration. And Morel, standing in his Sunday suit at the end of the road, watching the gallant pair go, felt he was father of princes and princesses. (163)

But she is empty-headed, understanding "nothing but love-making and chatter" (175). Her sole talent is a skill at insinuating her influence.

On the second day [of her visit], when Lily said, 'Oh, Annie, do you know where I left my muff?' William replied:

'You know it is in your bedroom. Why do you ask Annie?' And Lily went upstairs with a cross, shut mouth. But it angered the young man that she made a servant of his sister. (164)

Still worse, she makes a servant of William. His wages are ample, but still she demands all he has: "'she's no idea of money, she's so wessel-brained,'" he complains to his mother (176). He feels burdened, but obligated. Concluding that "' I can't give her up now'" (177), William travels back to London with his Lily, and in the struggle to satisfy her wants, becomes ill and finally dies "in a dreadful paroxysm "(181). It is true that William's death is not entirely attributable to Lily. He suffers in the strain between her and his mother. The two women engage in a battle of possession for him and it shows: "he was pale, and his rugged face, that used to be so perfectly careless and laughing, was stamped with conflict and despair" (176). laughing, was stamped with conflict and despair" (176).

Yet if "Gyp" is a destructive lily, so is Mrs. Morel. Losing her first son, she is a still bitterer foe over her second--and her weapon becomes the lily. In chapter three, I quoted the passage in which Mrs. Morel, driven from the house by her drunken husband, has her consciousness "penetrated" by the "tall white lilies . . . reeling in the moonlight." A "deep draught of the scent" made her "almost dizzy," and leaning upon the garden gate she finds herself--and her unborn child Paul--"melted . . . in the mixing-pot of moonlight, and she rested with the hills and lilies and houses, all swum together in a kind of swoon" (59-60). I argued from this that flowers in Sons and Lovers "are a potent carrier of sickness" in the book, because they are "a point of transfusion between mother and son": As a young man, Paul shows a kind of "genetic" weakness for the influence of lilies. He, like his mother, is made "drunk" by the "rocking, heavy scent of the lilies" (355). The connection between lilies

and perverse female power, which chapter four seeks to demonstrate, only strengthens the sense of the flower as a carrier of sickness.

But there is a compounding of powers present in Mrs. Morel's awareness of the lily. Dorothy Van Ghent observes that she is

literally a vessel of the life force that seems to thrust itself at her in nature from all sides, but she is also in rebellion against it and the perfume of the pollen-filled lilies makes her gasp with fear. (248)

She is the "rebellious vessel" of a "phallic power" (249). Accenting this observation, Stiffler points out that "the most powerful phallic image in the scene is the calla lily" because "it has one of the largest phalli in the plant kingdom" (43-44). Mrs. Morel's feminine at-oneness with nature, particularly with the lilies, has a result which seems to belie Lawrence's philosophic scheme, where the female root, as centre and darkness and origin, is the source of life. For Mrs. Morel, as she "melted together" with the "hills and lilies and houses," does not contact a feminine force, but a phallic one. Lawrence regards the woman, the female unconsciousness, as not itself the fundamental source of vitality, but rather as the channel through which the still more fundamental, phallic power of nature can become known to the masculine verbal consciousness. Mrs. Morel is as it were between father and son. Impregnated by a phallic energy, she transfers to her child a degree of the same energy: influenced by the "heavy, rocking scent of the lilies" as his mother was, Paul discovers in a dark field the purple iris which "stood stiff in the darkness." Returning home, Paul is full of strength:

"the male was up in him, dominant." Significantly though, Paul's declaration of strength--"I shall break off with Miriam, mother"--is exactly what Mrs. Morel has desired (356). Male expression has not yet recovered the phallic power of nature, but is still inhibited by feminine control.

iii. The Rainbow and Women in Love

The sense of a deeply-rooted, tranquil feminine awareness of life through which the phallic power of nature rises, like a sap, into the masculine verbal utterance helps to explain some of the gender complexities in The Rainbow (1915). Because the Brangwen women "looked out from the heated, blind intercourse of farm-life, to the spoken world beyond" and "strained [their] eyes to see what man had done in fighting outwards to knowledge . . . how he uttered himself in his conquest" (8, 9), one would suppose that they are masculine. I think not. They are in-between. They themselves do not know "the spoken world" and have not "uttered" themselves in conquest. They are the demiurge between "farm-life" and that outer world, that conquest. They promote the "struggle into verbal consciousness," their connection with one kind of life matched by their yearning for another. The Brangwen men, "indisputably female" in Daleski's opinion, are the "soil": they know "the intercourse between heaven and earth," and "the teeming life of creation, which poured unresolved into their veins" (8, 9). Married to

these men, the Brangwen women "face outwards" to a second kind of man, indisputably male in my opinion, who utters, and fights toward knowledge, and is "dominant and creative." The in-between position of woman is right and proper. Her impropriety, the impropriety which Lawrence often associated with lilies, is in dictating what utterance, what conquest, the man is to make. Because she "strain[s] to hear," she thinks she does hear. But she doesn't. What she does is to impose a formula for success. Incapable of appreciating the full dimension and power of "dominant and creative" male florescence, she substitutes something smaller. The vicar is closely observed, to discover the secret of his power: "what was it . . . that raised him above the common man as man is raised above the beast? . . . It was education and experience, she decided" (10). It becomes a matter of fine appearances for her: the sight of "the squire's lady at Shelly Hall, who came to church at Cossethay with her little children, girls in tidy capes of beaver fur, and smart little hats" (10), quickens her admiration, and the mien of "lean, eager men" like the vicar and Lord William, who "had the power of thought and comprehension" (11), inspires her awe.

Because feminine awareness is so intimately at-one with the phallic power of nature, but is without the natural vent of masculine verbal consciousness, it can become dangerous, an anarchic force: while dancing with Skrebensky in the "wonderful rocking darkness," Ursula becomes aware of the moon--as did Mrs. Morel--and it excites in her "a strange rage . . . a rage to tear things asunder (319). Later in the evening, "a sudden lust seized her, to lay hold of him [Skrebensky] and tear him and

make him into nothing" (321). And while it is the moon which initiates Ursula's rage, flowers also participate. Walking home she

turned with a great offering of herself to the night that glistened tremendous, a magnificent godly moon white and candid as a bridegroom, flowers silvery and transformed filling up the shadows. (323-324) ;ls 1

It is true that these flowers are not named as lilies, but they are present with the moonlight, as lilies were for Mrs. Morel, and are reflective of a comparable power. "Silvery and transformed," they represent Ursula's own transformation, as she is wedded to the power of nature, a power so savage it threatens to destroy her male counterpart.

When Ursula kissed Skrebensky after the dance, she "took him":

. . . hard her kiss seized upon him, hard and fierce and burning corrosive as the moonlight Till gradually his warm, soft iron yielded, yielded, and she was there fierce, corrosive, seething with his destruction, seething like some cruel, corrosive salt around the last substance of his being, destroying him, destroying him in the kiss. (322)

Because of Ursula's natural capacity, as the feminine root of awareness, to register the tremendous power of Nature, but unable to give form to that power--as the male verbal consciousness is able to do--she overwhelms Skrebensky with a "fierce, corrosive, seething" destructiveness. It is the female centre and darkness and origin, bursting from its subterranean depths like a volcano.

It is exactly this destructiveness which obsesses Birkin in Women in Love (1920). Because it is feminine in nature, Birkin's technique for controlling it is to become its spokesman, for the power of the male consciousness is in giving expression to the female unconsciousness. He masters the unleashed powers of the feminine root by making it explicit, and by condemning a cluster of symbols that represent of that power,

including the lily. During an interlude with Ursula at the Criches' water-party, Birkin "sniff[s] the air." "Very sensitive of scents, and quick in understanding them," he announces that the smell of a marsh nearby is "alarming." Undismayed by Ursula's puzzled laughter, Birkin launches into his description of the "river of darkness" which "seethes and seethes," "putting forth lilies and snakes and the ignis fatuus, and rolling all the time onward."

You see it rolls in us just as the other ["the silver river of life"] rolls--the black river of corruption. And our flowers are of this--our sea-born Aphrodite, all our white phosphorescent flowers of sensuous perfection, all our reality, nowadays. . . . When the stream of synthetic creation lapses, we find ourselves part of the inverse process, the blood of destructive creation. Aphrodite is born in the first spasm of universal dissolution--then the snakes and swans and lotus--marsh-flowers--and Gudrun and Gerald--born in the process of destructive creation. (164)

The very act of verbally expressing this "process of destructive creation" is the means of overcoming it. Will Selby, George Saxton, Paul Morel, and Anton Skrebensky are acted upon by a female power, and the experience distorts them, just as the root of feminine awareness can distort the blossom of masculine verbal consciousness. But Birkin escapes the fate of his predecessors through his expostulation, bringing female power up to the light of consciousness, where it cannot consume him. This is even true though Birkin himself considers that the "process of universal dissolution" is inevitable and will continue until it ends in "universal nothing--the end of the world if you like" (164-164). By giving voice to this process, which goes on in the female without interference, since

she is the channel of awareness, the male consciousness can preserve itself. From identifying Gudrun and Gerald as "pure flowers of dark corruption--lilies," Birkin insures that they will not corrupt him, who will remain a "'rose, warm and flamy'" (164).

iv. Aaron's Rod through "The Ladybird"

Writing in "The Crown" (composed ca. 1915), Lawrence declared that "corruption, like growth, is only divine when it is pure, when all is given up to it," for complete corruption "will at last break down for us the deadened forms, and release us into infinity" (Phoenix II 403). It was in an effort to break down those "deadened forms" that Birkin spoke so vehemently, prophesying that once the process of "dissolution" had been completed, a "new cycle of creation" could begin. But his denunciation is so thorough, destroying not only the "deadened forms" but also the very root of female centre and darkness and origin, that the "new cycle of creation" necessarily revives an old Lawrencean truth: the flower of consciousness is nourished in darkness, the source of vitality. Hence, the lily in Aaron's Rod (1922) is no longer a "pure flower of dark corruption" but a flower that is "lovely," growing in a darkness that is not destructive, but fertile. Aaron Sisson, seated on Argyle's balcony, contemplates "the lovely full sunlight" which

caught the facade of the cathedral sideways, like the tips of a flower, and sideways lit up Giotto's tower,

like a lily stem, or a long, lovely pale pink and white and green pistil of the lily of the cathedral. Florence, the flowery town . . . Florentine, the flower-souled. Flowers with good roots in the mud and muck, as should be: and fearless blossoms in air, like the cathedral and the tower and the David. (228)

These are certainly more subdued flowers than the "reeling" lilies of Sons and Lovers or the "silvery and transformed" ones of the The Rainbow. They are neatly symbolic, too, having both "good roots in the mud and muck" and "fearless blossoms in air." In effect, the new cycle of creation has revived an old Lawrencean truth, but at the expense of old Lawrencean power. Since the flower of consciousness is now initiated by the male verbal consciousness, it is safe from the "fierce, corrosive, seething" dangers implicit in the female root of awareness, but also safe from the energy of that awareness. There is now orderliness, where once there was disorderliness: Mrs. Morel lost herself in a "mixing pot" of "hills and lilies and houses," and even Birkin tumbled together lilies, snakes, ignis fatuus, Aphrodite, swans, the lotus, Gudrun, and Gerald. But Rawdon Lilly's comprehension of things is unconfused. For him, the cathedral of Florence is beautiful because, like a "'pinky white lily with dark tigery marks,'" it is

heavy . . . in its own substance: earth-substance, risen from earth into the air: and never forgetting the dark, black-fierce earth--I reckon here men for a moment were themselves, as a plant in flower is for the moment completely itself. (228)

Where Mrs. Morel experiences the vitality of the lily, Rawdon Lilly extracts a reason for its vitality. His understanding of the flower is

utilitarian, an analogy for the proper organization of elements in man's psyche. There is no tension in the analogy; it is an academic comparison--unlike the highly charged connection between Ursula and her "silvery and transformed" flowers.

Just as Rawdon Lilly has drained lilies of their vitality except as expository devices, so Gilbert Noon glibly fulminates about lilies, but their meaning for him is primarily an intellectual one. They are representative of life, but they do not act upon him as if they were live personalities, as they act upon Mrs. Morel. He is not a "rebellious vessel" of a force he cannot deny and is frightened to embrace, but is the comfortable exponent of a theory of life which nearly destroys Anton Skrebensky, and does destroy Gerald Crich. "Lily!" exclaims Gilbert to himself:

"A lily has a ferocious tangle of roots underearth. Ach, in the cold, horrible earth its roots probe and fight and suck . . . let us have the whole party: the tangle of deep, unspeakable passions, the rage of downward shooting desires! Ah, all the terrible and unspeakable things that happen to a lily of the valley as it wrestles and writhes in the corrosive sod. . . . Damn it, he didn't want to be a picked blossom, like the rest of cultured civilised people. Picked blossoms, stuck in a nice aesthetic jar: there they are, while the water goes stagnant and rots. Picked blossoms! Myriads of sweet lilies--in blue vases. Damn the female lilies in blue vases. He wanted a lily with her roots deep down in the muck, fast, gripped, triumphant rooted in the muck. Then she could wither and grow old, and yet not die. Unlike one of these picked, spiritual, cultured lilies, that wither once and for all in a vase of putrifying water. Pah. (Mr. Noon [composed 1920-21] 174)

But Gilbert himself is a "picked" lily. Voluble and scornful, he is the male consciousness functioning apart from the vital nourishment of a female root, like Mr. Noon itself, which is more expository than "passional." It is not a book warmed by the "felt but unknown flame," but one interrupted by a succession of "didactic bits."

I argued in chapter three that after the flower of consciousness withered in Aaron's Rod and The Plumed Serpent, because of the extreme dissociation of male and female elements, a new flower was achieved in Lady Chatterley's Lover, but of different character. For while the flower in "Study of Thomas Hardy" symbolizes the female root of centre and darkness and origin as the source from which the male blossom of consciousness derives its vitality, in the flower of consciousness which merges between Oliver Mellors and Connie Chatterley, the male initiates the return to authentic female awareness before that awareness can in its turn nourish masculine utterance.

Similarly, in "The Ladybird" (1923), Count Dionys, who feels a "'sacred duty to hold the lives of other men in my hands, and shape the issue'" (The Short Novels 49), restores in Daphne Beveridge an awareness of her own root in darkness, and in doing so revives himself. Adored by her husband Basil as "an Aphrodite of the foam" (37), and "more goddess than child . . . White, white and immortal!" (41), Daphne has become that lily-like incarnation of ideal beauty which Lawrence believed to be so deadly because it was not founded in a genuine sensuous vitality, but purchased at the cost of thwarted desire. The male consciousness, deprived of the nourishing female root, conceives a deity that rules with devastating success: Lois, a "Ruskinite" lily, rules Will Selby; Meg,

half-hidden in lilies on her wedding-day, rules George Saxton; Lily Western demands a satisfaction that kills William Morel, and Mrs. Morel impregnates Paul with the power of the tall, reeling lilies. Daphne has as good an opportunity to rule, for Basil "can't help kneeling'" before her (41), but she is uncomfortable with dominion: "to her shame and heaviness, she knew she was not strong enough, or pure enough, to bear this awful out-pouring adoration-lust" (42). Just as the male consciousness in Count Dionys desires to recover the authentic female awareness in Daphne, so Daphne is less compelled by the virginal ideal of purity which empowered earlier Lawrencean women, but desires to recover her feminine root. She is susceptible to Count Dionys, who restores her. He is not interested in the "'white plucked lily'" of her body, but in her "'lily root.'" "'Ah, yes, you will know it all your life, that I know where your root lies buried, with its sad, sad quick of life," he tells her (35). He unearths that "quick of life" by his mysterious singing, and she becomes his "'wife in darkness'"

he had found this wonderful thing after she had heard him singing: she had suddenly collapsed away from her old self into this darkness, this peace, this quiescence that was like a full dark river flowing eternally in her soul . . . deep inside her she only feared for this love of hers for the Count: this dark, everlasting love that was like a full river flowing for ever inside her. (67)

It is significant that Daphne's love is described as "a full dark river." Evidently, too, her "lily root" is watered in that river. For Birkin, who sought freedom from the spectre of female control, both lilies and dark waters were destructive, part of the "spasm of universal

dissolution." But Birkin's descendants, Rawdon Lilly and Gilbert Noon, though living in the "new cycle of creation," make clear that the male consciousness, though firmly in control and safe from the threat of "fierce, corrosive, seething" female energies, is incomplete, and requires connection with the river of darkness and the lily root. As a consequence, though Count Dionys makes clear his vital need for nourishment from the female root--telling Daphne that he leaves his "'soul in your hands and in your womb'" (67)--it is Dionys himself who has restored Daphne to her feminine centre and darkness and origin, so that she can then nourish his male florescence of consciousness.

The transformation of the lily--from its representation in Lois as a Ruskinite lily, to its association with Count Dionys, prophet of the dark, sensuous "quick of life"--is a measure of Lawrence's remarkable creative power. As it were, he stole into the very temple of literary tradition, working loose from its pedestal a blossom heavily wreathed with ideals of virginal purity and modesty. Returning to his sacred grove with the prize, Lawrence set about reshaping it into a flower of uniquely individual character. It is arguable that it was the very sanctity of the lily which so attracted his iconoclastic energies. For like Yeats, who believed that the symbols of poetry are endowed with a magical power, Lawrence was impelled by the conviction that to change the nature of a symbol was to change the nature of the reality to which that symbol referred. Hence, to transform the lily was to transform the deadened forms which it represented. Indeed, the same may be said of Lawrence's treatment of flowers in general. Encrusted with a body of values venerable from centuries of use, flowers challenged Lawrence's

revolutionary imagination, and his recreation of them--both in his fiction and in his philosophy--is a unique accomplishment in English literature.

V. Conclusion

"And this perfected relation between man and his circumambient universe is life itself, for mankind."

--"Morality and the Novel"

For Lawrence, the flower was the most perfect expression of life because it was a symbol of completely realized union between fundamental opposites: the darkness of female unconsciousness and the light of male consciousness; the mute knowledge of the female united with the spoken knowledge of the male. This study has tried to identify those flowers in Lawrence's fiction which best imitate the blooming of this symbolic flower. In closing, I would suggest a corollary: the flower that blooms in the artist is matched by the blooming of a complementary flower in the critic. If Lawrence can argue that van Gogh, in painting sunflowers, "reveals, or achieves, the vivid relation between himself, as man, and the sunflower, as sunflower, at that quick moment of time" ("Morality and the Novel" [composed ca. 1925], Phoenix 527), the critic likewise achieves a "vivid relation between himself" and the fiction of Lawrence, "at that quick moment of time." In both cases--for the artist, as well as for the

critic--"it is a question, practically, of relationship" ("A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover,"

[composed 1929], Phoenix II 510) It is important to understand this, for the achieving of such relation is the essential task and delight of Lawrencean criticism, I believe.

"If authors were islands, Lawrence would be one of the most carefully scrutinized pieces of real estate on earth," observes Scott Sanders. "Most of what can usefully be said about him has already been said many times over" ("D. H. Lawrence and the Resacralization of Nature" 159). While I concede the justice in his remark and recognize the tone of facetiousness in his analogy, I think he implies a mistaken notion. For the task of criticism is not, in fact, to say "useful" things about Lawrence. Or rather, such things are "useful" only when they aid in the more fundamental opportunity, which is to keep the relationship with Lawrence alive, for in doing so we honor both the life in him and the life in ourselves. If criticism is only a matter of saying "useful" things, then the moment everything useful has been said, interest ceases because the relationship with Lawrence has become history. But this would be travesty, for Lawrence relentlessly pleaded for a living relationship with the world: "we must get back into relation, vivid and nourishing relation to the cosmos and the universe" ("A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover," Phoenix II 510). Significantly, it is a relationship which is "momentaneous"--to use one of Lawrence's favorite words--evanescent as the blooming of a flower, and so must always be refreshed and renewed.

Lawrence energetically sought to effect this "vivid and nourishing relation" in his art, and so criticism ought to energetically seek just

such a relation with the world of Lawrence's art--above all, "at the living moment" ("Morality and the Novel," Phoenix 527). Lawrencean criticism, if it is authentic, cannot be redundant, cannot be "said many times over," because "the living moment" is always coming into being and passing away. If the criticism is fixed, it is not Lawrencean. "The relation between all things changes from day to day, in a subtle stealth of change," Lawrence insists ("Morality and the Novel" Phoenix 527); similarly, criticism is equally susceptible to the "subtle stealth of change." Perspectives change, conceptions alter--and so the relation with Lawrence continuously evolves, or unfolds. If not, criticism would have finished its task, and the next paper on Lawrence could only inscribe old truths more deeply.

Perhaps Sanders has mistaken the difference between what criticism says and what it does. What criticism says has to do with the themes and techniques of Lawrence's art--its structure, emphases, peculiarities of style, or with its traditions, influences, or biographical parallels. What criticism does, what Lawrencean criticism ought especially to do, is to renew "that delicate, for ever trembling and changing balance between me and my circumambient universe" ("Morality and the Novel," Phoenix 528). Robert Frost has remarked that literature is "words that have become deeds" (Barry 17), and criticism is as much a deed, too. Anticipating Sanders, Lawrence observes that "the Word is uttered, most of it. . . . We are "Word-perfect" but "Deed-demented." Only when criticism recognizes that it is more than words, a "Deed of life" ("A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover," Phoenix II 510), can it really fulfill its function.

It is a deed of life that is "visionary." Van Gogh's painting of the sunflower "is for ever incommensurable with the canvas, or the paint, or van Gogh as a human organism, or the sunflower as a botanical organism." It is in between both organisms; it is a "vision." Criticism ought to be visionary like this. Sanders seems to approach Lawrence with what Wolfgang Iser calls "single-meaning" criticism, which takes "for granted the compilation of meaning," believing there is an "objective, definable meaning of the text" (23)--what can be said about Lawrence. But the "compilation of meaning" is not the same as visionary criticism, which experiences relation with the Lawrencean world. Relation is the pith of Lawrence, and criticism only knows Lawrence when it knows this pith. Though Iser is concerned with the affective possibilities of any work of literature, his remarks are peculiarly relevant to a reading of Lawrence's work. For just as Lawrence argues that the relation between man and the cosmos "is life itself," so Iser posits that the life of a book is neither in the text nor in the reader but between them both, its "actualization is clearly the result of an interaction between the two" (21). It is this "actualization" which is the heart of Lawrencean criticism--"compilation of meaning" is only the fruit of this living relationship. The act of criticism, like the act of reading, is the experience of meaning as a "dynamic happening," rather than the search for meaning as a "definable entity" (Iser 22). This is a crucial distinction, for what else can save us from transforming Lawrence's own paradoxical ambivalence toward "reason, ideas, even language itself" (Sanders, "D. H. Lawrence and the Resacralization of Nature"160), into a cynical view that nothing else "useful" can be said about him, or that

nothing should have been said in the first place, or even that Lawrence himself said too much?

Ironically, it is Lawrence's deep pleading for relation which has drawn attention to his "dualism" as "the most striking aspect" of his "Weltanschauung" (Daleski 13). Though the terms of Lawrence's dualism are his own, the presence of dualism in his work is inherited. He felt the sharp oppositions inherent in our very culture: "everywhere in Western thought there is a division into two equal terms . . . opposites" (Huntley 2). What is striking is the courage with which Lawrence, following a long tradition of writers and thinkers, sought to combine his opposites in "a tertium quid which is greater than the sum of the two parts" (Huntley 2). Hence, the great symbolic beauty of a flower: the rare, light, ephemeral blossom was an effortless reconciliation of frictions as old as history.

By getting back into "vivid nourishing relation" with the "circumambient universe" of Lawrence's work, we get back into relation with the cosmos of Western literature--but only when we know that literature as experience, "momentaneous" sense of connection, a "vision," rather than as a "compilation of meaning." And in renewing literature this way, we recreate ourselves: "the significance of the work, then, does not lie in the meaning sealed within the text, but in the fact that the meaning brings out what had previously been sealed within us" (Iser 157).

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