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DIONYSUS, PAN AND HERMES: GREEK MYTH AND  
METAPHYSICS IN THE WORK OF D.H. LAWRENCE

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THE SAILING OF DIONYSUS

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Frontispiece Illustration: The Sailing of Dionysus, from *The Athenian Drama: Euripides*, translated by Gilbert Murray, fifth edition (London, 1911), III; lxviii.

## ABSTRACT

### Dionysus, Pan and Hermes: Greek Myth and Metaphysics in the work of D.H. Lawrence

This study shows ancient Greek myth and pre-Socratic metaphysics to be deeply embedded in the symbolic language Lawrence used to express what he called the complete imaginative experience of life.

The Introduction provides an overview of previous studies which have considered various aspects of Greek influence on Lawrence. Subsequent chapters clarify and expand upon these previous studies by identifying, explicating, and tracing the development of the Greek influences, as evident in allusions, metaphors and themes in selected novels and stories. Particular attention is paid to the interrelationship between the gods Dionysus, Pan and Hermes in Lawrence's work.

In Chapter One, an examination of *The White Peacock* reveals, beneath the profusion of classical allusions, a more serious use of myth linked to a radical vitalism. In Chapters Two and Three, the discussion of the stories "England, My England", "Tickets, Please", "The Blind Man" and "The Ladybird" shows how Lawrence used and developed the traditional oppositions between Dionysus and Apollo, Pan and Christ to express the perpetual dual between darkness and light, mind and body, love and power. Chapter Four discusses *Kangaroo* and "The Border Line" and traces Lawrence's journey towards an image of Pan deeply influenced by the landscapes of Australia and America. Lawrence develops a fierce, dark, phallic, and ultimately non-human god to illustrate the rise of Hermetic power after the collapse of the love-ideal. Chapter Five looks at *St. Mawr* and *The Plumed Serpent*, tracing the spiritual journey from an England where men have lost the power of Pan, into the desert of a primitive, pre-classical New Mexican world, to a new classical age in a Mexico that is the Lawrentian equivalent of ancient Greece. Chapter Six finds the importance of the ancient Greeks to Lawrence confirmed by his statements in *Apocalypse*.

REFERENCES TO LAWRENCE'S WORKS

The first reference to each work is given in full in a footnote, and all later references are indicated in the text by an abbreviated title, followed by the page number, both enclosed by parentheses. In the case of *The White Peacock*, *St. Mawr*, *The Plumed Serpent* and *Apocalypse*, I have used the available Cambridge editions, which are clearly the best scholarly texts. I have used the Phoenix edition of *Kangaroo* (1955) as it is considered to be more reliable than the later Penguin edition. For "England, My England", "Tickets, Please", "The Blind Man" and "The Border Line", I have used Penguin's *Selected Short Stories* (1982), and for "The Ladybird", the Penguin English Library edition of *The Complete Short Novels* (1982). Further description of the editions used will be found in the bibliography.

ABBREVIATIONS

- A      *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation*
- CSN    *The Complete Short Novels*
- K      *Kangaroo*
- PS     *The Plumed Serpent*
- SM     *St. Mawr and Other Stories*
- SSS    *Selected Short Stories*
- WP     *The White Peacock*

## INTRODUCTION

These early Greeks have clarified my soul.<sup>1</sup>

Equilibrium argues either a dualistic or a pluralistic universe. The Greeks, being sane, were pantheists and pluralists, and so am I.<sup>2</sup>

D.H. Lawrence was an eclectic writer. In the foreword to *Fantasia of the Unconscious* written in 1921, he referred to himself as an "amateur of amateurs" rather than a scholar:

I am no "scholar" of any sort. But I am grateful to scholars for their sound work. I have found hints, suggestions for what I say here in all kinds of scholarly books, from the Yoga and Plato and St John the Evangel and the early Greek philosophers like Herakleitos down to Frazer and his "Golden Bough", and even Freud and Frobenius. Even then I only remember hints - and I proceed by intuition.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst acknowledging this eclecticism, I shall focus on the hints and suggestions that Lawrence found in ancient Greek literature and philosophy. I shall cite Gilbert Murray's translations of the Greek tragedians, particularly the plays of Euripides,<sup>4</sup> Murray's *Four Stages of Greek Religion*,<sup>5</sup> John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*,<sup>6</sup> and Hesiod's *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*<sup>7</sup> as his most significant sources. In general, I will demonstrate how the myths and metaphysics

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1. Letter to Bertrand Russell, (14? July 1915), *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, edited by George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton, II (Cambridge, 1981), p.364.

2. "Him With His Tail In His Mouth" In *Phoenix II*, edited by Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore, (London, 1968), pp.427-435 (p.431).

3. *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1971), pp.11-12.

4. *The Athenian Drama: Euripides*, translated into English Rhyming Verse by Gilbert Murray, fifth edition (London, 1911), III.

5. *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, (New York, 1912), revised as *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, second edition (New York, 1925). Lawrence read both versions.

6. *Early Greek Philosophy*, second edition (London, 1908).

7. *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, (London, 1915).



of the early Greeks provided Lawrence with a metaphorical frame-work for his own philosophical theories. In particular, I shall show how Lawrence revitalised the gods of ancient Greece in order to express what he called "complete imaginative experience, which goes through the whole soul and body".<sup>8</sup> Lawrence believed that art and religion were essentially the same. He wanted to restore to the modern world the vital religious roots he felt had been lost or suppressed by a lifeless, dreary, isolated, unimaginative, narrowly monotheistic Christianity. Lawrence considered himself to be a pluralist and a pantheist.<sup>9</sup> His many gods illustrated different sides of one God, as manifested in human lives. Lawrence was also a pragmatist who knew that mankind needed myths. I will show, by the close analysis of selected works of fiction in the light of what Lawrence wrote in *Apocalypse*, how Lawrence used the gods of the Greeks, notably Dionysus, Hermes and Pan, as metaphors for the different aspects of one, whole life-force.

Several writers have already considered the subject of Greek myth and metaphysics in Lawrence's work. Keith Sagar has recognised the influence of the early Greeks on Lawrence's poetry.<sup>10</sup> Other previous studies, however, have been partial in the sense that they have looked only at one aspect of Greek influence or have been limited to general observations rather than a detailed analysis of texts. In 1959, John B. Vickery approached the subject through a sketch of Lawrence's extensive use of material from anthropology and comparative religion, but his thorough analyses of "England, My England", "The Virgin and the Gypsy" and "The Fox" were deeply flawed.<sup>11</sup> Vickery went astray because he based his interpretations on the claim that Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* was one of Lawrence's most important sources and failed to take into

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8. *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation*, edited by Mara Kainins, (Cambridge, 1980), p.50.

9. See note 2 above.

10. *D.H. Lawrence: Life Into Art*, second edition (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1985). See especially Chapter Six, "Little Living Myths": Birds, Beasts and Flowers, pp.194-245.

11. "Myth and Ritual in the Shorter Fiction of D.H. Lawrence", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 5, no.1 (Spring 1959), 65-82.

account Lawrence's criticism of Frazer. Charles Rossman, in his 1976 article "Myth and Misunderstanding D.H. Lawrence", showed how Vickery's analysis of "England, My England" in the near allegorical terms of the *The Golden Bough* actually reversed the theme of the tale.<sup>12</sup>

Patricia Merivale, in the 1964 article later incorporated into her book *Pan the Goat-God: his Myth In Modern Times*, showed Lawrence to be the chief creator of the modern Pan myth.<sup>13</sup> Merivale's detailed studies placed Lawrence's use of the Pan myth in the context of literary tradition and in relation to contemporary writers such as E.M. Forster. Merivale, however, only took account of the overt references to Pan in Lawrence's work, and she failed to link the myths associated with Dionysus and Hermes to what she called Lawrence's "new Gothic" Pan.

Wallace G. Kay has explained the appeal of the god Dionysus to writers such as Lawrence and French novelist Jean Giono, and has allied the myth of Dionysus to the myth of Pan.<sup>14</sup> Like Merivale, Kay observed that Lawrence's Pan was not sweetly pastoral, but a frightening, awesome, powerful, life-giving god. Kay defined the cult of Dionysus in terms of symbolic seasonal renewal, with the god as the personified idea of a recurrent death and rebirth. In his later article he added a further element: the concept of inspiration brought about by some kind of ritual communion with the god. Kay described Dionysian awareness as an intensely positive, joyful affirmation of the flux of life with all its problems, citing Friedrich Nietzsche as the source of this idea. Nietzsche interpreted the mythical union of the diametrically opposed gods Apollo and Dionysus at Delphi as the need for balance between conscious control and unconscious creative instinct. As emphasised by Kay, in Nietzsche's later works the term "Dionysian" stood for the

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12. "Myth and misunderstanding D.H. Lawrence", *Bucknell Review*, 22 (1976), 81-101 (p.88).

13. "D.H. Lawrence and the Modern Pan Myth", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language: A Journal of the Humanities*, 6 (1964), 197-305; *Pan the Goat God: his Myth In Modern Times*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969).

14. "The Cortege of Dionysus: Lawrence and Giono", *Southern Quarterly*, 4 (1966), 159-171; "Dionysus, D.H. Lawrence and Jean Giono: Further Considerations", *Southern Quarterly*, 6 (1968), 394-414.

union of the two elements, the Dionysian and the Apollonian, as against Socratic rationalism. James C. Cowan, who also endorsed the idea of "Dionysian" meaning the synthesis of Apollonian and Dionysian elements in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, warned against a simplistic reading of Lawrence in the context of opposing forces as articulated by Nietzsche.<sup>15</sup> Cowan emphasised the fact that Lawrence never advocated an imbalance on the side of Dionysus, but pleaded for a balanced polarity between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in every area of his thought. Several other writers have noted the influence of Nietzschean ideas on Lawrence, most recently and importantly J.B. Foster.<sup>16</sup> Kay's considerations of the symbolic significance of Dionysus to Lawrence were most valuable and sound. These considerations did not, however, encompass the associated myth of Hermes, nor extend to any detailed literary analyses.

In 1968, T.A. Smailes, recognised the significance of two complementary myths, Greek and Germanic, surrounding Gudrun's conflict with Gerald in *Women in Love*.<sup>17</sup> Smailes saw the character of Gerald as both Greek Hermes and German Nibelung. The evidence Smailes gave for identifying the character of Gerald with Hermes was good, but he failed to notice or to mention the fact that Gerald was also linked with Dionysus in the novel, thus over-simplifying Lawrence's use of myth.

In 1977, Charles L. Ross demonstrated the use that Lawrence made of Greek tragedy in shaping the narrative practice of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*.<sup>18</sup> Ross cited evidence in Lawrence's letters and literary criticism, and the memoirs of Jessie Chambers and Helen Corke, to attest the formative influence of Gilbert Murray's translations of the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Most importantly, he drew attention to the fact that Lawrence analysed the

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15. "D.H. Lawrence's Dualism: The Apollonian-Dionysian Polarity and The Ladybird" in *Forms of Modern Fiction*, edited by Alan Warren Friedman, (London, 1975), pp.73-99.

16. *Heirs to Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism*. (Princeton, 1981). See also Colin Milton, *Lawrence and Nietzsche: A Study in Influence*. (Aberdeen, 1987).

17. "The Mythical Bases of *Women in Love*", *D.H. Lawrence Review*, 1 (1968), 129-136.

18. "D.H. Lawrence's Use of Greek Tragedy: Euripides and Ritual", *D.H. Lawrence Review*, 10 (1977), 1-19.

Greek tragedies in the light of a specific school of criticism, namely the Cambridge Classical Anthropological School as represented by Jane Ellen Harrison in *Ancient Art and Ritual*.<sup>19</sup> He also gave reasons why, of the three tragedians, Euripides was an especial mentor and model, suggesting that Lawrence may have recognised a similarity between the historical and artistic context in which Euripides wrote and his own.<sup>20</sup> Ross connected the character of Gerald in *Women in Love* with the figure of Pentheus in Euripides' *The Bacchae*, claiming that this play held a special fascination for Lawrence.

As Ross noted, George Ford first drew attention to the Euripidean origin of Lawrence's story "Tickets, Please" in 1965.<sup>21</sup> In 1975, E. Kegel-Brinkgrieve gave a detailed exposition of how "Tickets, Please", based on *The Bacchae*, enacted the eternally tragic subject of the destructive power of Dionysus, showing how Lawrence transposed the drama of Greek theatre to the human heart.<sup>22</sup>

The appeal that the early Greek philosophers held for Lawrence has been observed in passing by a number of critics, notably Emile Delavenay.<sup>23</sup> In 1984, Daniel J. Schneider emphasised the deep influence of John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy* on Lawrence's thinking, tracing the origins of Lawrence's major "philosophical" ideas on polarity and the balance of opposites to the theories of the early Greek philosophers, particularly Heraclitus and Empedocles.<sup>24</sup> Apart from an occasional reference to *Women in Love*, however, Schneider confines his discussion to Lawrence's prose essays.

I will draw together the various strands of Greek influence on Lawrence, expanding upon the observations of previous writers by a close critical

19. Lawrence read *Ancient Art and Ritual*, (London, 1912) alongside Murray's translations of *The Athenian Drama*, and in his preface to the first edition of *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, Murray states his own "great and obvious" debt to Miss Harrison.

20. Euripides wrote *Hippolytus*, *The Trojan Women* and *The Bacchae* during the Peloponnesian Wars. Ostracised by the Athenians for outspoken criticism and pacifism, he died in exile in Macedonia, where he had written *The Bacchae*.

21. *Double Measure: A Study of the Novels and Stories of D.H. Lawrence*, (New York, 1965), p.94.n.

22. "The Dionysian Tramline", *Dutch Quarterly Review*, 5 (1875), 180-194.

23. *D.H. Lawrence: The Man and His Work: the Formative Years: 1885-1919*, (London, 1972).

24. "D.H. Lawrence and the Early Greek Philosophers", *D.H. Lawrence Review*, 17 (1984), 97-109.

examination of certain stories and novels. The stories and novels have been selected in order to show Lawrence's developing use of Greek myth as a significant part of his symbolic language.<sup>25</sup> I shall pay particular attention to the interrelationship between the gods Dionysus, Hermes and Pan in Lawrence's work, an association not fully recognised by previous critics. Finally, I shall look at his last theoretical prose work, *Apocalypse*, in order to understand why Greek myth and metaphysics appealed so much to Lawrence.

Chapter One, *The White Peacock*, will show how Lawrence's first novel attempted to reveal the physical "reality" beneath a picturesque "idyll" whilst retaining the magic of myth. Alongside a profusion of classical allusions and anthropomorphic, anthropocentric descriptions of nature, we discover a more serious use of myth, and a radical vitalism which emphasises the interrelationship of life and death. The novel opposes Christianity to paganism, and within the novel we perceive an allegory for the history of the idea of classical, pastoral idylls, from paganism, through Greek idealism, to the spirituality without physical passion of a Christian Protestantism. George, the fallen hero, dies not through lack of life but from excess of it, illustrating how, from the very beginning, Lawrence advocated a balance between Dionysian and Apollonian forces. Annable, the gamekeeper who is Lawrence's first Pan figure, is a full-blooded Pan, not Arcadian or Edwardian, or reduced to a mere mental idea. Lawrence links the Pan myth to the idea of life being grounded in death, as demonstrated by the seasonal cycle. The death of his first Pan is followed by his re-birth in the natural world.

Both the stories looked at in Chapter Two, "England, My England" and "Tickets, Please", are concerned with the loss of equilibrium and illustrate the destructive power of untempered Dionysian forces. In "England, My England" Lawrence sees the First World War as a madness caused by loss of balance and

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25. I have deliberately omitted *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, partly because so much attention has been given to these novels in previous "myth criticism", and also because a detailed study of these two novels could not have been contained within the bounds of my thesis.

we can see how his apocalyptic vision is linked with Greek myth. The death and re-birth theme continues with Egbert as both tragic hero and unnamed Pan figure. Lawrence makes much use of the traditional symbolic association with Pan and Dionysus of the pine-tree and the snake in this story. In both stories he uses the myths to explore the relationship between love and power. "Tickets, Please" illustrates well the kind of use Lawrence made of myth and previous literary tradition. Whilst the story is based on *The Bacchae*, there is no simple equation of characters and there are many ironic differences between Lawrence's story and Euripides' play. An important image in the story originates in an illustration of "The Sailing of Dionysus", first seen by Lawrence in Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides. That this picture had great symbolic significance for Lawrence, incorporating in a single image so many of his most sacred themes, will be confirmed by later allusions in *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent*.

In Chapter Three I examine two stories involving a Lawrentian triad of two men and one woman who are deeply affected by the First World War, "The Blind Man" and "The Ladybird". In both stories Lawrence continues to develop his divine trinity of Dionysus, lord of destruction and creation, Hermes, guide to the underworld, and Pan, the son of Hermes in traditional myth. In "The Blind Man" we find an ironic reversal of Christian miracle when the physically blind Maurice lays hands upon the the Apollonian Bertie in order to repair a spiritual blindness. Lawrence attempts to cleanse the Pan myth of what he felt to be vulgar accretions, and the unnamed Pan in "The Blind Man" is not a goatly old satyr but a chthonian power associated with Greek representations of the horse as a noble creature. In the figure of Maurice Pervin, Lawrence combined the natural sensuality of Pan, the underworld power of Hermes and the violent force of Dionysus. Count Dionys of "The Ladybird", a story in which we find an intensive and overt use of myth, is another Dionysian Pan figure changed or re-born after the War. In this story Lawrence links the Greek Hermes with the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus, the founder of alchemical occult science. He makes his usual

condemnation of the goddess Aphrodite, and puts forward Persephone as a better female role-model. The female figure, Daphne, is seen to be the pivot balancing the scales between light and darkness.

Chapter Four traces Lawrence's journey towards an image of "the oldest Pan" deeply influenced by the landscapes of Australia and America.<sup>26</sup> Both *Kangaroo* and "The Border Line" concern the collapse of the love-ideal. In *Kangaroo*, Lawrence uses the image of "The Sailing of Dionysus" as a metaphor for the marriage of Somers and Harriet, and to illustrate the rise of Hermetic power from the ashes of a burned out love. Lawrence's persona, Richard Lovat Somers, is a "Hermes-cum-Dionysus wonder", a symbolic fusion of the Greek and Egyptian Hermes with a Dionysus stripped of his female and Bacchic associations.<sup>27</sup> This male self-image is vigorously de-bunked by Harriet. In *Kangaroo*, Lawrence relates the nightmare of the War years in terms of a chthonic underworld of fear and the primitive desire for revenge, instincts he believed the Greeks acknowledged but Christianity denied. The direction of Lawrence's symbolic journeys towards Pan oscillated between north and south, in keeping with his theories on balance, polarity and the seasonal cycle. Count Dionys in "The Ladybird" was associated with Sicily and the south. In "The Border Line", the pull is northwards. The tree of life in winter is not the Dionysian vine of a southern, female principle, but the pine-tree of a fiercely male, northern Pan. Lawrence attempted to restore the wonder, power and meaning of the oldest pagan symbols, fully realising the paradox that their meaning depended on their mystery. The oldest Pan, as described in the "Pan in America" essay and presented in "The Border Line", incorporates the oldest Dionysus and the oldest Hermes, and is non-human.

In Chapter Five, I look at *St. Mawr* and *The Plumed Serpent* as quests for "real" as against artificial life heavily reliant on the symbolism of ancient Greek religion. In *St. Mawr*, a story influenced by Euripides' *Hippolytus*, the spirit of Pan

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26. "Pan in America" in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence*, edited by Edward D. McDonald, (New York, 1936), pp.22-31 (p.26).

27. *Kangaroo*, Phoenix edition (London, 1923), p.176.

resides in a horse that leads Lou Witt to New Mexico. The physical and spiritual movement is now southwards, away from the northern winter, and the balance of power rests with the women. Strength of human character in this story clearly resides in Lou and her mother, whilst the males are shown to be corrupt, weak or powerless. Lou goes into the desert of a primitive, pre-classical New Mexican world to consult the Apollo mystery of the inner fire. The new religion of Quetzalcoatl in *The Plumed Serpent* represents a new classical age in a Mexico which is the Lawrentian equivalent of ancient Greece. Ramon, the religious leader, is seen in symbolic terms as a messenger of the gods, a Mexican John the Baptist and a Mexican Hermes. In human terms he is a pragmatic pantheist and pluralist who recognises all the gods of the world as different manifestations of the same mystery, and who knows that men need gods. Cipriano is a small, dark, phallic Pan. The most compelling numinous scenes in the novel contain manifestations of the old European gods, the gods of the Greeks. The ship of Dionysus, Lawrence's Ark, sails across Lake Sayula with the message that the new word of God is not "love" but "tenderness".

Lawrence always claimed that his philosophical theories arose out of his novels.<sup>28</sup> As regards the creative process, he believed that the imagination had a vital role in the acquisition of knowledge. In his final prose work, *Apocalypse*, the subject of my final chapter, Lawrence equated the creative impulse with the religious impulse, claiming that the will-to-create was the primary human motive. To Lawrence, art was religion without dogma and truth was a matter of feeling rather than a mental construct. In *Apocalypse*, he insists that the early Greek scientists' poetical visions of the universe were truer than the deadly descriptions of modern science, and that the ancient, pantheistic, polytheistic experience of the divine was superior to the narrow monotheism of Christianity. To the old Greeks, everything was *theos*. To Lawrence, God is an imaginative experience.

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28. "This pseudo-philosophy of mine - "polyanalytics", as one of my respected critics might say - is deduced from the novels and poems, not the reverse" (*Fantasia*, p.15).



Just as Aeschylus had brought back the Erinyes to the Athenians in *The Oresteia*, Lawrence wished to restore the dark roots of the Christian religion. In *Apocalypse* he reminds us that the early churches' conception of Christ was not of a gentle Jesus, but of Jesus as Hermes. In an attempt at reconciliation with Christ and the love ideal Lawrence reconstructs a whole image of Christ as a symbol of sensitive power. As *Apocalypse* makes very clear, the myths, metaphors and metaphysics of ancient Greece were a vital source for the symbolic language Lawrence needed to articulate the "complete imaginative experience" of life.<sup>29</sup>

My thesis will confirm the generally acknowledged Greek influences on Lawrence, and contribute detailed evidence of those influences by way of a close analysis of texts. I shall show Greek myth and metaphysics to be deeply embedded in Lawrence's symbolic language, and to be an important source of his recurrent themes. In particular, I believe that my exposition of the interrelationship between the gods Dionysus, Hermes and Pan, and of the symbolic significance of the illustration "The Sailing of Dionysus" in his work, will provide new insights into Lawrence's "imaginative experience".

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29. See note 8 above.

## CHAPTER 1: *The White Peacock*

"They are spinning idylls up there. I don't care for idylls, do you?" declares Agnes D'Arcy to George when Leslie and his friends picnic in the Strelley hayfields. "Oh you don't know what a classical pastoral person you are -".<sup>1</sup> D.H. Lawrence's first novel abounds with self-conscious classical allusions and he referred to it later as "a decorated idyll running to seed in realism".<sup>2</sup> George, in fact, had been passionately aroused by a painting called "The Idyll" shown to him by Lottie. A reproduction of this painting, by Maurice Greiffenhagen (1862-1931), was given to Lawrence for Christmas 1908 by Blanche Jennings and he wrote to her of its "intoxication".<sup>3</sup> Lawrence cared very much for "The Idyll", of which he made many copies. *The White Peacock* is decorated with names, human and divine, Greek and Roman, from classical literature and pastoral poetry: Hippomenes, Atalanta, Narcissus, Pluto, Orpheus, Persephone, Apollo, Io, Juno, Venus, Minerva, Paris, Circe, Daphnis, Amaryllis, Damoetus, Nais. There are quotations from Horace, Virgil and Theocritus. Miss D'Arcy continues:

"One doesn't see the silly little god fluttering about in our hayfields, does one? Do you find much time to sport with Amaryllis in the shade? - I'm sure it's a shame they banished Phyllis from the fields" (*WP*, p.228)

and we perceive that Lawrence also felt that it was a shame. It is as though he couldn't resist alluding to his youthful forays "into the mythical fields of literature".<sup>4</sup> But alongside the literary decorations from the young writer's myth-kitty, gleaned

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1. D.H. Lawrence, *The White Peacock*, edited by Andrew Robertson, (Cambridge, 1983), p.228. Further references to which are given in abbreviated form after quotations in the text.

2. Letter to Sydney Pawling, 18 October 1910, *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, edited by James T. Boulton, 1 (Cambridge, 1979), p.184.

3. Letter to Blanche Jennings, 31 December 1908, *Letters*, 1, p.103.

4. Letter to Blanche Jennings, 26 October 1908; *Letters*, 1, p.85.

largely from Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury* and Richard Garnett's *The International Library of Famous Literature*, we find attempts at a more serious use of myth. His understanding and portrayal of Pan was far more developed than Agnes D'Arcy's notion of a "silly little god" fluttering about in the fields. Pan was never an Arcadian or Edwardian vision to Lawrence and Annable, the Pan of *The White Peacock*, is no fairy figure. There is a sense in which *The White Peacock* is an adolescent novel, expressing the confusion between childhood and maturity, between idyllic visions and an adult awareness of underlying realities, an awareness that "if we move the blood rises in our heel-prints" (*WP*, p. 13). Lawrence wrote to Blanche Jennings about the first version of the novel:

Laetitia was written during the year that I changed from boyhood to manhood, my first year in college. It is a frightful experience to grow up, I think, it hurts horribly; but when you have got over it, it is delightful.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of the chapter entitled "The Scent of Blood", Cyril, the narrator of the novel, describes the changed consciousness of his sister Lettie and himself; a change that was precipitated by the death of their father. The transitional consciousness that Cyril attributes to Lettie also describes Cyril's double awareness:

We had lived between the woods and the water all our lives, Lettie and I, and she had sought the bright notes in everything. She seemed to hear the water laughing, and the leaves tittering and giggling like young girls; the aspen fluttered like the draperies of a flirt, and the sound of the wood-pigeons was almost foolish in its sentimentality.

Lately, however, she had noticed again the cruel pitiful crying of a hedgehog caught in a gin, and she had noticed the traps for the fierce little murderers, traps walled in with a small fence of fir, and baited with the guts of a killed rabbit. (*WP*, p.44)

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5. Letter to Blanche Jennings, 1 September 1908. *Letters*, I, p.72.

Jessie Chambers considered that "Cyril and Lettie are each aspects of Lawrence".<sup>6</sup> Cyril's descriptions of his intimacy with Nature are often sentimental and anthropomorphic. In the first chapter he declares "The bracken held out arms to me, and the bosom of the wood was full of sweetness," (*WP*, p.6). The descriptive passage after Annable's funeral is full of pathetic fallacy, with peewits keening in sorrow and elm-flowers whispering in sympathy. Cyril's descriptions of George at harvest-time in "The Scent of Blood" and "A Poem of Friendship" chapters betray an attraction for the male body, an attraction that Lawrence openly admits in a private letter to his confidante of the time.<sup>7</sup> The image of George, "the noble, white fruitfulness of his form", naked, with his hair rubbed into curls, "stood in white relief against the mass of green" (*WP*, p.222), is like a classical statue of a Greek god. The suggestion of a classical background gives the bathing scene respectability in the same way that a classical context allowed the Victorians to portray naked women in their paintings. Cyril professes a moment of perfect love, "more perfect than any love I have known since, either for man or woman" (*WP*, p.223). Five years later, Lawrence was to write to Henry Savage:

I should like to know why nearly every man that approaches greatness tends to homosexuality, whether he admits it or not: so that he loves the *body* of a man better than the body of a woman - as I believe the Greeks did, sculptors and all, by far.<sup>8</sup>

Lettie, like Agnes D'Arcy, sees George as a pastoral figure: "You are picturesque," she said, a trifle awkwardly, "Quite fit for an Idyll" (*WP*, p.48). George, unlike Cyril and Lettie, is unsentimental about the natural and necessary processes of life and death. He casually discards a nest of field bees after his curiosity is satisfied, he drowns a wounded cat "out of mercy" (*WP*, p.13), he kills the rabbits and mice in the corn fields. He is a man of action rather than reflection. The others join in the rabbit chase but then feel guilty about it and

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6. E.T. (Jessie Wood), *D.H. Lawrence: A Personal Record* (Cambridge, 1980), p.118.

7. Letter to Blanche Jennings, 30 July (-3 August) 1908, *Letters*, I, pp.65-69.

8. Letter to Henry Savage, 2 December 1913, *Letters*, II, p.115.

question the killing; Cyril runs but cannot kill. George is critical of this sort of "finicking" and compromise, declaring that if you run at all "you should be able to run to death. When your blood's up, you don't hang half-way" (WP, p.52). As a farmer, George is responsible for both life and death. The mowing of the fields is almost like a ritual sacrifice: "He lifted the knife", "The bed of the knife fell, and the grass shivered and dropped over" (WP, p.223). Cyril's description is heavily poetic:

Later, when the morning was hot, and the honeysuckle had ceased to breathe, and all the other scents were moving in the air about us, when all the field was down, when I had seen the last trembling ecstasy of the harebells, trembling to fall; when the thick clump of purple vetch had sunk; when the green swaths were settling, and the silver swaths were glistening and glittering as the sun came along them, in the hot ripe morning we worked together turning the hay, tipping over the yesterday's swaths with our forks, and bringing yesterday's fresh, hidden flowers into the death of sunlight. (WP, p.224)

The last phrase of this passage, as Michael Black discerns, encapsulates a major theme of the entire novel:

It is a beautiful and subtle touch: "into the death of sunlight" enacts the paradox of the farmer as lord of life. What he brings to fruition he also brings to its appointed death; the sun which ripens also withers, as it rots the overripe fruit or the animal carcass. The whole system coheres and is natural;

As a mower, George assumes "a priest-like or even god-like function as ally of the sun".<sup>9</sup>

Life is grounded in death. From the very beginning, Lawrence was concerned with the inter-relationship between the processes of creation and dissolution, a theme he was to explore in great depth in *Women in Love*.<sup>10</sup> The organic cycle, from seed to harvest, and especially from full ripeness to decay, is presented as a sacred truth in *The White Peacock*. In "The Scent of Blood"

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9. Michael Black, *D.H. Lawrence: The Early Fiction*. (London, 1986), p.72.

10. Colin Clarke in the *River of Dissolution: D.H. Lawrence and English Romanticism*. (London, 1969), considers dissolution, disintegration and decay as necessary and positive processes in his discussion of *Women in Love*.

chapter, in the old garden, "there was a plum-tree which had been crucified to the wall" and the ripe plums are "great mist-bloomed, crimson treasures, splendid globes". The pond at the edge of this garden is "moving with rats" (*WP*, p.53). Lush growth requires predators to ensure that the natural balance is preserved. The image of crucifixion suggests a religious significance. It is a powerful scene. In the "Pastorals and Peonies" chapter, after George has drunk deeply from the water trough fed by a natural spring, he washes his hands in the water and stirs up the mud:

He put his hand to the bottom of the trough, bringing out a handful of soft silt, with the grey shrimps twisting in it. He flung the mud on the floor where the poor grey creatures writhed. (*WP*, p.229)

At the end of this chapter George sits "casting up the total of discrepancies",

"And all day," he said "Blench has been ploughing his wheat in, because it was that bitten off by the rabbits it was no manner of use, so he's ploughed it in: an' they sat with idylls, eating peaches in our close." (*WP*, p.233)

And all day, whilst the young ladies had sat in their elaborate gowns on cushions of hay, listening to the affected and whimsical drawl of Freddy Crèsswell "who had just taken his M.A. degree in classics", George had been scything in the far bottom corner of the field "where the ground was marshy, and the machine might not go" (*WP*, p.226). The awareness of "discrepancies" and the struggle to come to terms with harsh facts of life and death counter-balances the sentimentality of pretty idylls. Lawrence is concerned to look underneath the surface picture, to show what lies beneath the mossy stones. The image of the grey shrimps writhing in the silt at the bottom of the water-trough is echoed in the vision of the socialist at the Marble Arch Corner:

For him the world was all East-end, and all the East-end was as a pool from which the waters are drained off, leaving the water-

things to wrestle in the wet mud under the sun, till the whole of the city seems a shuddering struggle of black-mudded objects deprived of the elements of life. (*WP*, pp.281-282)

His radical vitalism extends to human life. Meg's baby is described as a flower and thus is linked with the natural world:

The sun glistened on his smooth hair as on bronze dust, and the wandering blue eyes of the baby followed the bees. Then he made small sounds, and suddenly waved his hands, like ruffled pink holly-hock buds. (*WP*, p.273)

Lettie sees George as a "great firm bud of life" (*WP*, p.48). As a man, George is subject to the same laws of nature as the corn in the field or the fruit on the tree. Lettie tells him, prophetically, that he is "gross with good-living and heavy sleeping" and that he lacks the suffering necessary to maturity:

"You never grow up, like bulbs which spend all summer getting fat and fleshy but never wakening the germ of a flower. . . . Things don't flower if they're overfed. You have to suffer before you blossom in this life. When death is just touching a plant, it forces it into a passion of flowering." (*WP*, p.28)

Towards the end of the novel, feeling that he has failed to make something of himself and having failed to take Lettie as his mate, George says of himself:

"I'm like corn in a wet harvest - full, but pappy, no good. Is'll rot." (*WP*, p.288)

And in the end George is a tragic figure, a drunkard, "lamentably decayed":

Like a tree that is falling, going soft and pale and rotten, clammy with small fungi, he stood leaning against the gate, while the dim afternoon drifted with a sweet flow of thick sunshine past him, not touching him.

He stands watching other men stacking the sheaves with the "exquisite, subtle rhythm" he once had, in "horror and despair" (*WP*, pp.323-324).

Michael Black poses the question:

A farmer can clear his pond out, and kill the rats, but what do you do with what Annable called "human rot"? (*The Early Fiction*, p.74)

It is a question that Lawrence does not attempt to answer in this first novel. Later, in his "Study of Thomas Hardy" essay of 1914, the answer seems to be "do nothing".

He writes of *The Return of the Native*:

What is the real stuff of tragedy in the book? It is the Heath. It is the primitive, primal earth, where the instinctive life heaves up. There, in the deep, rude stirring of the instincts, there was the reality that worked the tragedy. Close to the body of things, there can be heard the stir that makes and destroys us. The (earth) heaved with raw instinct, Egdon whose dark soil was strong and crude and organic as the body of a beast. Out of the body of this crude earth are born Eustacia, Wildeve, Mistress Yeobright, Clym, and all the others. They are one year's accidental crop. What matter if some are drowned or dead, and others preaching or married: what matter, any more than the withering heath, the reddening berries, the seedy furze and the dead fern of one autumn of Egdon. The Heath persists. Its body is strong and fecund, it will bear many more crops beside this. Here is the sombre, latent power that will go on producing, no matter what happen to the product. Here is the deep, black source from whence all these little contents of lives are drawn. And the contents of the small lives are spilled and wasted. There is savage satisfaction in it: for so much more remains to come, such a black, powerful fecundity is working there that what does it matter!<sup>11</sup>

The valley of Nethermere does not have the dark power of Egdon Heath, but the idea of rampant growth and the unstoppable life-force recurs time and again. When George and Cyril come across an old deserted farm, George is bitter, feeling that this "is what the Mill will come to". The place is "choked with a growth of abnormal weeds", a jungle of six-foot nettles and huge rats (*WP*, pp.60-61). And in the final Hardy-esque scene, when George leans on the gate in the stackyard, there is a sense of life flowing on regardless. With the "handsome movement" George had once,

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11. *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, edited by Bruce Steele, (Cambridge, 1985), p.25.



the two men worked in an exquisite, subtle rhythm, their white sleeves and their dark heads gleaming, moving against the mild sky and the corn. (WP, p324)

In the Hardy study, Lawrence distinguishes between what he calls "pure tragedy" which comes from the "working of the natural law", as found in Euripides and "the most splendid Aeschylus", and the pathos which comes from the transgression of social laws (pp.50-51). Hardy's Wessex novels, according to Lawrence, fall into the latter, lesser, category. *The White Peacock* was an attempt at Greek tragedy. George's growth and subsequent decay is seen in the context of a general, eternal, immutable, natural tragic principle of growth and decay.

Annable, the gamekeeper, "was a man of one idea: - that all civilisation was the painted fungus of rottenness". "He hated any sign of culture" and would presumably have been very critical of Cyril and Lettie's efforts to educate George. But Cyril wins Annable's respect when he is found "watching some maggots at work in a dead rabbit" (WP, p.146). Annable is Lawrence's first Pan figure. In the chapter "Strange Blossoms, and Strange New Budding", his entrance as Pan is carefully prefaced by a numinous scene:

As I talked to Emily I became dimly aware of a whiteness over the ground. She exclaimed with surprise, and I found that I was walking, in the first shades of twilight, over clumps of snowdrops. the hazels were thin, and only here and there an oak tree arose. All the ground was white with snowdrops, like drops of manna scattered over the red earth, on the grey-green clusters of leaves. There was a deep little dell, sharp sloping like a cup, and white sprinkling of flowers all the way down, with white flowers showing pale among the first inpouring of shadow at the bottom. The earth was red and warm, pricked with the dark, succulent green of bluebell sheaths, and embroidered with grey-green clusters of spears, and many white flowerets. High above, above the light tracery of hazel, the weird oaks tangled in the sunset. Below, in the first shadows, drooped hosts of little flowers, so silent and sad; it seemed like a holy communion of pure wild things, numberless, frail, and folded meekly in the evening light. (WP, pp.128-129)

Christopher Pollnitz considers that it is worth comparing this passage with Coleridge's poem "The Snow-Drop":

By contrast, Lawrence's own sense of a Presence which disturbed was embodied from the outset not in "the Mind of Man" but in wild nature, and he pursued this sense with a relentlessness that sharpened the sentimental primitivism of his own first novel.<sup>12</sup>

Cyril describes the snowdrops as "forlorn little friends of dryads". They remind Emily of mistletoe and she says that they "belong to some old wild lost religion", and perhaps were the Druid "symbol of tears". Lettie insists that they mean "more than tears". This search for symbolic meaning shows Lawrence's early awareness of the difference between things simply "standing for" something or other, and a symbol as a mysterious "complex of human experience" (A, p.49). In the later theoretical works, *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *Apocalypse*, Lawrence wrote of old, lost knowledge being remembered in the form of myth. Lettie says that the snowdrops "belong to some knowledge we have lost, that I have lost, and that I need", and she feels afraid (WP, p.129). Leslie dismisses her feelings as "fancies", but as if in answer to her question,

"Do you think, Cyril, we can lose things from off the earth - like mastodons, and those old monstrosities - but things that matter - wisdom?"

the presence of Pan is revealed in the form of the keeper:

He stood in the rim of light, darkly: a fine, powerful form, looming above us. He did not move, but like some malicious Pan looked down on us (WP, p.130):

The keeper had been a curate who had married a Lady. The attraction had been physical, sexual:

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12. "I Didn't know his God": The Epistemology of "Fish", *D.H. Lawrence Review*, 15 (1982), 1-50 (p.8).

"God! - we were a passionate couple - and she would have me in her bedroom while she drew Greek statues of me - her Croton, her Hercules!" (WP, p.150)

But she had refused to have his children, and had grown tired of him, of his body;

"She began to get souly. A poet got hold of her, and she began to affect Burne-Jones - or Waterhouse - it was Waterhouse - she was a lot like one of his women - "Lady of Shalott", I believe. At any rate she got souly, and I was her animal - son animal - son boeuf." (WP, pp.150-151)

So he left her and was later presumed dead: "I read a little obituary notice on myself in a Woman's paper she subscribed to" (WP, p.151). The obituary was written by the Lady herself and, like a Pre-Raphaelite painting, contained a moral message "as a warning to other young ladies of position not to be seduced". The Christian parson then turns pagan, the curate is re-born as Pan. "The church is rotten", says Cyril, in the abandoned churchyard where Annable tells his story (WP, p.149). The Hall church is "dank, evil-smelling", "black and melancholy", rotting in "obscurity" (WP, p.147). The story of Annable and the Lady Chrystabel can be read as an allegory for the Christian church's puritanical rejection of the body. Before he begins to tell his tale, Annable says, "The moon looks like a woman with child. I wonder what Time's got in her belly." (WP, p.149). At the end of his life, in *Apocalypse*, Lawrence wrote about the pagan birth-myth which lay behind the birth of the Christian messiah. And, here in his first novel, we find first mention of the great cosmic Mother, the great woman goddess with child, standing on the crescent of the moon. This great female symbol, which Lawrence used many times and most notably in *Women in Love*, was driven into the wilderness:

Since she fled, we have had nothing but virgins and harlots, half-women: the half-women of the Christian era. (A, p.121)

Sexual rejection has made Annable an embittered and angry man. To him, the peacock that perches and defecates on the statue of an angel in the churchyard is "the soul of a woman", "the very soul of a lady":

"Just look!" he said "the dirty devil's run her muck over that angel. A woman to the end, I tell you, all vanity and screech and defilement." (WP, pp.148-149)

The Lady Chrystabel, the souly or dreaming woman, is symbolised as a white peacock. After the initial, pagan passion in the wilderness, she became idealistic and spiritual, losing interest in Annable's living body. She began drawing him as a Greek statue and seeing sex as something bestial. Allegorically, paganism was replaced by Greek idealism and finally by Christian Protestantism. As Lawrence wrote in 1929, "the great crusade against sex and the body started in full blast with Plato", and the crusade for "ideals" and "spiritual" knowledge culminated in Christianity. And the loss of sacred sexual relationship had cosmic significance:

The Christian religion lost, in Protestantism finally, the togetherness with the universe, the togetherness of the body, the sex, the emotions, the passions, with the earth and sun and stars.<sup>13</sup>

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence's major work against doing the dirt on life by knowing only the "white" form of sex as he called it in "A Propos" (p.508), a gamekeeper and his Lady became central characters. The alternative titles that Lawrence had in mind for both his first and last novels indicate the link between them. *The White Peacock* might have been called *Tendrils*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Tenderness*.<sup>14</sup> These titles also reflect a development and change of emphasis, from plant-life to human-life; from young shoots tentatively reaching out for support, to a mature relationship of gentle touch.

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13. "A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" in *Phoenix II*, pp.487-515 (p.512).

14. See Keith Sagar, *D.H. Lawrence: A calendar of his works*, (Manchester, 1979), p.15 and p.169.

Emily says that Annable "seems to lack something", and agrees with Leslie that he has "no soul" (*WP*, p. 132). Cyril tells us that he was "a thorough materialist" who scorned all religion and mysticism (*WP*, p. 146). Believing, like Rousseau, that civilisation was a "fall" from nature, he considered that to "Do as th' animals do" was naturally good. Annable tried to live like an animal. He referred to his children as a "lovely little litter" and a "pretty bag o' ferrets", bred to be "natural as weasels" and to run wild "like a bunch o' young foxes" (*WP*, pp. 131-132). He also referred to them as "brats". Annable was "fundamentally very unhappy" (*WP*, p. 147). He was unable to lose his memories and his human consciousness. The destructiveness of the dualistic split and the crucial importance of balance became one of Lawrence's major themes. The underside of Annable's natural family life is shown in the poverty and chaos of the Kennels, where his woman struggles to control their brood. Overwrought and exhausted, she is driven to hysterical child-beating. Annable never lifts a hand to help, living "like a stranger to his own flesh an' blood" and lording it over them. He calls her "Proserpine" but she believes herself to be nothing more than a "sludge bump" to him (*WP*, pp. 134-135). Cyril thinks Annable "rather a fine fellow" (*WP*, p. 132), but, as Lettie says, "it's always the woman that bears the burden" (*WP*, p. 135). Lawrence, we recall, told Sydney Pawling that his first novel was "a decorated idyll running to seed in realism".<sup>15</sup> In *The White Peacock*, he attempted to show the harsh realities that lay behind the myths, the muck beneath the magic. But he wanted to retain the magic and the myths. Later, Lawrence would develop a style and a symbolic language capable of expressing both. In *Sons and Lovers*, which he began writing in the autumn of 1910, after going through the final proofs of *The White Peacock*, symbolic scenes are very skilfully woven into the main fabric of "realism". By the time of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* his visionary style was fully developed.

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15. See note 2 above.

When Annable is killed, his face is like that of an animal, his lips "drawn with pain and death, leaving the teeth bare" (*WP*, p.154). The morning of his funeral is full of images of new life:

It was a magnificent morning In early spring when I watched among the trees to see the procession come down the hillside. The upper air was woven with the music of the larks, and my whole world thrilled with the conception of summer. The young pale wind-flowers had arisen by the wood-gate, and under the hazels, where perchance the hot sun pushed his way, new little suns dawned, and blazed with real light. There was a certain thrill and quickening everywhere, as a woman must feel when she has conceived. (*WP*, p.155)

The valley is full of sunshine, humming bees, nesting birds, trotting lambs, mating swans, budding trees, and bursting daffodils. The death of Pan is followed, most emphatically, by re-birth. In later works, Lawrence was less heavy-handed in the treatment of re-birth, his central theme. And the re-birth of Pan in Nature, as in his 1924 story "The Border Line", would become less sweetly sylvan and much more fearsome.

The relationship of Annable and Lady Chrystabel stands as a kind of portent or prophesy of what might have been the relationship between George and Lettie, if they had married. Lettie is physically attracted to George, but she marries Leslie who has a higher social standing. The "subtle sympathies of her artist's soul" (*WP*, p.97) are responsive to the natural world. In "The Scent of Blood" chapter, when Leslie is attempting to propose marriage, she is profoundly affected by the rising moon: "I feel as if I wanted to laugh, or dance. Something rather outrageous" (*WP*, p.54). She breaks free from Leslie to dance a wild polka with George, on the wet grass, under the "low hung yellow moon":

It was a tremendous, irresistible dancing. Emily and I must join, making an inner ring. Now and again there was a sense of something white flying near, and a wild rustle of draperies, and a swish of disturbed leaves as they whirled past us. Long after we were tired they danced on.

At the end, he looked big, erect, nerved with triumph, and she was exhilarated like a Bacchante. (*WP*, pp.55-56)

This dancing, coming as it does after the chasing and killing of the rabbits and mice, shows Lettie's sensitivity to natural forces. She is influenced by the moon and is susceptible to the Dionysian passion portrayed in Euripides play *The Bacchae*. Lawrence was to use scenes of ritual dancing, associated with the moon, again and again in his work. We think especially of the dancing of Anna, when pregnant, and of Ursula with Skrebensky in *The Rainbow*, and of Ursula with Gudrun in *Women in Love*. In *The Plumed Serpent*, the great cyclic movements and pulsating rhythms of the dancing at Sayula have a religious significance, and the scene in the Mexican plaza is infused with timeless, primeval, bacchic sensuality. *The Bacchae* was of great importance to Lawrence, and he was to base his 1918 story "Tickets Please" on this Greek drama. The god Dionysus was probably of greater importance to him than Pan. In the Lawrentian pantheon, Dionysus, Pan and Hermes, were inextricably linked. And he was especially interested in the organic relationship between Dionysus and Hermes, symbolising the relationship between life and death. These gods were to make a significant appearance in *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent*. In *The White Peacock*, after George has begun courting Meg, and just before Lettie is to be married, George and Lettie walk in the wood together. The description of the wood is a lush and extravagant purple passage. Lettie is winsome, wistful and yearning. She romanticizes, "If there were fauns and hamadryads!", and poetizes "If you were a faun, I would put guelder roses round your hair, and make you look Bacchanalian" (*WP*, p.214). And she embroiders the moment with excruciating pathetic fallacy:

"Look!" she said "It's a palace, with the ash-trunks, smooth like a girl's arm, and the elm-columns, ribbed and bossed and fretted, with the steel shafts of beech, all rising up to hold an embroidered care-cloth over us; and every thread of the care-cloth vibrates with music for us, and the little broidered birds sing; and the hazel bushes fling green spray round us, and the honeysuckle leans down to pour out scent over us. Look at the harvest of bluebells - ripened for us! Listen to the bee, sounding

among all the organ-play - if he sounded exultant for us!" (WP, p.215)

This anthropocentric attitude is not limited to Lettie, for the narrator continues,

He watched, as if fascinated, a young thrush with full pale breast who hopped near to look at them - glancing with quick, shining eyes.

The Dionysian exhilaration of Lettie dancing with her natural mate has become something intellectualised, mental. Before going into the wood, Lettie and George walked by the Kennels, taken over now by a fussy "mouse voiced woman" and her "Christian Herald" reading husband. In contrast to the muck and squalor of Annable's pagan family, the place is now a Christian home, "clean and sparkling":

Unfortunately the effect was spoiled by green and yellow antimacassars, and by a profusion of paper and woollen flowers. There were three cases of woollen flowers, and on the wall, four fans stitched over with ruffled green and yellow crepe paper, adorned with yellow paper roses, carnations, arum lilies, and poppies; there were also wall pockets full of paper flowers; while the wood outside was loaded with blossom. (WP, pp.212-213)

What is natural has become artificial. Just as the flowers of the house-proud woman at the Kennels are made by art in imitation of "real" flowers, Lettie substitutes poetic artifice for natural or "real" feeling. She declaims in Latin, lines from Virgil and Horace. Significantly, the lines from Horace's *Odes* are those spoken by Juno, goddess of marriage and queen of all the gods. In Roman myth Juno is married to Jupiter, in Greek myth she is Hera, wife of Zeus. Her symbol is the peacock. Lettie does not respond sexually when George takes her in a long passionate embrace and kisses her on the mouth:

In the end it had so wearied her, that she could only wait in his arms till he was too tired to hold her. (WP, p.215)



When Leslie had stayed a night at her home, Lettie's behaviour the next morning suggested sexual failure. And when Leslie is convalescing after his accident she tells him she thinks it would be best if they did not marry after all, crying "I can't - we can't be - don't you see - Oh, what do they say, - flesh of one flesh" (WP, p. 196). But she does marry Leslie, and on the following New Year's Eve when she meets George again, the nature of Lettie's relationship to Leslie becomes clear. Leslie worships Lettie as a goddess. Before their marriage he had stroked Lettie's white arm, saying that it reminded him of Io, the white moon-cow goddess who was nurse to the infant Dionysus in Greek myth. And now Lettie is Junoesque, queening it over her husband who kneels before her to tie her shoe-laces or take off her shoes. Lettie, like the Lady Chrystabel, has become a peacock:

Leslie knelt down out her feet. she shook the hood back from her head, and her ornaments sparkled in the moonlight. Her face with its whiteness and its shadows was full of fascination, and in their dark recesses her eyes thrilled George with hidden magic. she smiled at him along her cheeks while her husband crouched before her. Then, as the three walked along towards the wood she flung her draperies into loose eloquence and there was a glimpse of her bosom white with the moon. she laughed and chattered, and shook her silken stuffs, sending out a perfume exquisite on the frosted air. When we reached the house Lettie dropped her draperies and rustled into the drawing room. There the lamp was low-lit, shedding a yellow twilight from the window-space. Lettie stood between the firelight and the dusky lamp glow, tall and warm between the lights. As she turned laughing to the two men, she let her cloak slide over her white shoulder and fall with silk splendour of a peacock's gorgeous blue over the arm of the large settee. There she stood, with her white hand upon the peacock of her cloak, where it tumbled against her dull orange dress. She knew her own splendour, and she drew up her throat laughing and brilliant with triumph. (WP, pp.254-255)

The moon, the woman, the whiteness, the worship: all combine to create the complex of meaning contained in and around the symbolic white peacock.

Lawrence used symbolism, into which he incorporated colour and gesture and ancient myth, in order to express the unspoken feelings and non-verbal aspects of experience he called "blood-knowledge". In the symbolic language of *The White Peacock* the colours white and red symbolize the contrast and conflict

between mind and body, between spirituality and the call of the blood. Gesture and touch are as significant as the spoken word, as in the above scene:

The soft outreaching of her hand was like the whispering of strange words into the blood, and as she fingered a book the heart watched silently for the meaning. (WP, p.255)

Colour and gesture and ancient myth combine in the vivid symbolic scene in the bottom garden at the end of the "Pastorals and Peonies" chapter:

There in the green shade, between the tall gooseberry bushes, the heavy crimson peonies stood gorgeously along the path. The full red globes, poised and leaning voluptuously, sank their crimson weight onto the seeding grass of the path, borne down by secret rain, and by their own splendour. The path was poured over with red rich silk of strewn petals. The great flowers swung their crimson magnificence grandly about the walk, like crowds of cardinals in pomp among the green bushes. We burst into the new world of delight. As Lettie stooped, taking between both hands the silken fulness of one blossom that was sunk to the earth, George came down the path, with the brown bull-calf straddling behind him, its neck stuck out, sucking zealously at his middle finger. (WP, p.231).

George calls the blood red peonies "pyeenocks", a word which echoes peacocks. With obvious sexual significance Lettie crouches "with a red flower between her hands, glancing sideways unseen to look at the calf" suckling "the seductive finger":

Then he returned, rubbing his sticky finger dry against his breeches. he stood near to Lettie, and she felt rather than saw the extraordinary pale cleanness of the one finger among the others. She rubbed her finger against her dress in painful sympathy. (WP, p.231)

In a complex of feeling, Lettie is fascinated, attracted, embarrassed and repulsed by this phallic finger. She declares that the peonies are like "a romance in passionate sadness".

in an ironical voice, speaking half out of the conventional necessity of saying something, half out of a desire to shield herself, and yet in a measure express herself. (WP, p.232)

Then Cyril tells the tale of the peonies, which according to legend, were brought from the Hall long ago by the man who owned the farm when it was a mill.

"He was brown and strong, and the daughter of the Hall, who was pale and fragile and young, loved him. When he went up to the Hall-gardens to cut the yew hedges, she would hover round him in her white frock, and tell him tales of the old days, in little snatches like a wren singing, till he thought she was a fairy who had bewitched him. He would stand and watch her, and one day, when she came near to him telling him a tale that set the tears swimming in her eyes, he took hold of her and kissed her and kept her. They used to tryst in the poplar spinney. She would come with her arms full of flowers, for she always kept her fairy part. One morning she came early through the mists. He was out shooting. She wanted to take him unawares, like a fairy. Her arms were full of peonies. When she was moving beyond the trees he shot her, not knowing. She stumbled on, and sank down in their tryst place. He found her lying there among the red pyeenocks, white and fallen. He thought she was just lying talking to the red flowers, so he stood waiting. Then he went up, and bent over her, and found the flowers full of blood. It was he set the garden here with those pyeenocks - -" (WP, p.232)

George and Lettie look at each other, trembling. But whilst Lettie says that the story has a beautiful ending, George asks "what's the good of death - what's the good of that?" (WP, p.233). Lettie puts art before life, but George sees the tragic waste that Lawrence meant us to see in this tale which can be traced back to Greek myth. Keeping the fairy part, seeing life as a dream, love as ideal rather than erotic, is fatal. The messages are repeated in layer after layer of the novel. The myth of the peonies is like a kernel to the fruit. The parts of *The White Peacock* may not be so well integrated as in *The Rainbow*, but the attempt at an organic structure is clear.

When Cyril returns to Nethermere in the penultimate chapter, he feels like an outcast:

I wanted to be recognised by something. I said to myself that the dryads were looking out for me from the wood's edge. but as

I advanced they shrank, and glancing wistfully, turned back like pale flowers falling in the shadow of the forest. I was a stranger, an intruder. (WP, p.306)

Keith Sagar has written on the development of "The Shades of Spring" story from this episode, where Cyril returns to Nethermere to find that Emily is about to marry Tom Renshaw.<sup>16</sup> *The White Peacock* episode has dryads peeping in the woods and the descriptions of nature are anthropomorphic and anthropocentric. "A Modern Lover", probably written soon after this, at the end of 1909, has ironic distance and perspective according to Sagar. Re-written as "The Soiled Rose" in December 1911, the lover is called Syson and the rival has become a gamekeeper, Pilbeam, who is overtly identified with Pan. But all references to Pan were removed in the March 1911 revision. This, writes Sagar, was because Lawrence realised that the story would not sustain their weight. The story was revised again in July 1914, when the title was changed to "The Shades of Spring". In this final version Syson says to his old love, now called Hilda, "You keep a real idyllic atmosphere - your belt of straw and ivy buds".<sup>17</sup> And the allusion to *The Bacchae* is indeed made with ironic distance and perspective. Also, there is a very significant conversation between Syson and Hilda on the gods:

"They did well," she said at length, "to have various altars to various gods, in old days."

"Ah yes!" he agreed. "To whom is the new one?"

"There are no old ones," she said. "I was always looking for this."

"And whose is it?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said, looking full at him. ( *The Prussian Officer*, p.105)

The removal of overt references to Pan, I would suggest, was not so much that the story would not sustain their weight as a deliberate refusal to name Pan. To name something is to gain power over it, to know it, and Lawrence came to believe that to name Pan was to deny him. To Lawrence, "not knowing" meant

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16. *Life Into Art*. (Middlesex, 1985), pp.18-26.

17. "The Shades of Spring", in D.H. Lawrence, *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*, edited by John Worthen, (Cambridge, 1983), pp.98-112 (p.103).

not reducing something to a mere mental idea. In *The White Peacock*, after Cyril has talked with Annable in the churchyard, he tells us:

I turned with swift sudden friendliness to the net of elm-boughs spread over my head, dotted with soft clusters winsomely. I jumped up and pulled the cool soft tufts against my face for company, and as I passed, still I reached upward for the touch of this budded gentleness of the trees. The wood breathed fragrantly, with a subtle sympathy. The firs softened their touch to me, and the larches woke from the barren winter-sleep, and put out velvet fingers to caress me as I passed. Only the clean, bare branches of the ash stood emblem of the discipline of life. I looked down on the blackness where trees filled the quarry and the valley bottoms, and it seemed that the world, my home-world, was strange again. (*WP*, p.152)

After *The White Peacock*, Lawrence always made the world strange, and Cyril's sentimental intimacy with nature was left firmly behind in Nethermere.

## CHAPTER 2: "England, My England" and "Tickets, Please"

The title-story of Lawrence's *England, My England* collection has been subject to two major misunderstandings, firstly in relation to history, secondly in relation to myth. Both misunderstandings relate to Lawrence's writing methods. Harry T. Moore's account of the story's genesis completely misses the elements of the story that have to do with Lawrence's own life and feelings in 1915. Moore believed the story to be a "cruel portrait" and "mean little sketch" of Percy Lucas, the brother-in-law of Viola Meynell.<sup>1</sup> Lawrence was living in a cottage lent to him by Viola, on the Meynell estate in Greatham, Sussex, when the first version of the story was written. After hearing of Percy Lucas' death in 1916, he wrote to Catherine Carswell wishing the story at the bottom of the sea and declaring that "Lucas was, somehow, a spiritual coward". He immediately qualified this by continuing "But who isn't? I ought never, never to have gone to live at Greatham".<sup>2</sup> 1915, the year that ended with the suppression of *The Rainbow*, was a difficult year for Lawrence financially, maritaly, and psychologically. The fact that the eldest Lucas daughter had been lamed by falling over a sickle in the grass is a real-life incident that Lawrence used in his story, but the character and situation of Egbert in "England, My England", and the expression of regret at having gone to live at Greatham, have more to do with Lawrence's own history than that of Percy Lucas.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Harry T. Moore, *The Priest of Love*, (London, 1974), p.221, p.269 and p.270.

2. Letter to Catherine Carswell, 16 July 1916; *Letters*, II, p.635.

3. Barbara Lucas has refuted Harry Moore's claim that Egbert is a "portrait" of her father on the grounds that Lawrence's contact with Percy was minimal. During Lawrence's time at Greatham, according to Barbara, Percy Lucas was already in the army and his family was living in London. She dismisses Moore's account of real-life sources as "a wild goose chase", arguing that Lawrence simply used "the *pattern* of Percy, and his wife, and his children, and his in-laws, and his cottage, *and the accident*". "Apropos of 'England, My England'", *Twentieth Century*, 169 (March, 1961), 288-293 (p.292).

In January 1915, he wrote to Lady Cynthia Asquith, telling her of the "rather beautiful" cottage at the foot of the downs where he and Frieda were "quite alone". He tells her "We have no history, since we saw you last", "less than no history" because "The War finished me: it was the spear through the side of all sorrows and hopes". What he calls "my autobiography" of the winter of 1914-15 "in the tomb", is written in the symbolic language of a very personal death and resurrection.<sup>4</sup> He wrote to S.S. Kotellansky, or Kot as he called him, a few days later:

I have got a new birth of life since I came down here. Those five months since the war have been my time in the sepulchre. Do you remember coming down to Barrow-in-Furness and finding war declared? - I shall never forget those months in Bucks - five months, and every moment dead, dead as a corpse in its grave clothes. It is a ghastly thing to remember. Now I feel the waking up, and the thrill in my limbs, and the wind blows ripples in my blood as it rushes against this house from the sea, full of germination and quickening.

And he told Kot that Lady Ottoline Morrell was coming to visit, bringing Bertrand Russell:

We are going to struggle with my Island Idea - Ranimim - But they say, the island shall be England, that we shall start our new community in the midst of this old one, as a seed falls among the roots of the parent.<sup>5</sup>

During 1915 Lawrence planned the founding of a new order, the gathering together of a group of people, a commune of "Princes" who were to live by "the best they know" with the ideal of a "*lived, practised*" religion. His February letter to Lady Ottoline placed emphasis on "individual freedom and common effort towards good", and on feeling part of a greater whole, part of the body of God:

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4. Letter to Lady Cynthia Asquith, (31 January 1915), *Letters*, II, pp.267-269.

5. Letter to S.S. Kotellansky, (5 February 1915), *Letters*, II, pp.276-277.

And each man shall know that he is part of the greater body, each man shall submit that his own soul is not supreme even to himself.

At the beginning of the year he wrote against notions of individual power and personal supremacy:

The great serpent to destroy is the Will to Power: the desire for one man to have some dominion over his fellow man. Let us have *no* personal influence, if possible - nor personal magnetism, as they used to call it, nor persuasion - no "Follow me" - but only "Behold".<sup>6</sup>

Come July, he had radically changed his mind, writing to her that he did not believe in democracy. During the months in the Greatham cottage Lawrence became convinced of the necessity for "leadership". His July letters to Lady Ottoline and Bertrand Russell indicate that his reading of John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy* helped clarify the ideas on "leadership" which would feature most notably in his later novels, *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent*. He wrote to Russell:

I have been wrong, much too Christian, in my philosophy. These early Greeks have clarified my soul. I must drop all about God.

You must drop all your democracy. You must not believe in "the people". One class is no better than another. It must be a case of Wisdom, or Truth. Let the working classes *be* working classes. That is the truth.

There must be an aristocracy of people who have wisdom, and there must be a Ruler: a Kaiser: no Presidents and democracies. I shall write out Herakleitos, on tablets of bronze.

"And it is law, too, to obey the counsel of one."<sup>7</sup>

His letter to Lady Ottoline repeated the link between his ideas on political leadership and the early Greek philosophers:

I don't mean a "tyranny" in the state: but I *don't* believe in the democratic electorate. The working man is not fit to elect the ultimate government of the country. And the holding of office

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6. Letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 1 February 1915, *Letters*, II, p.272.

7. Letter to Bertrand Russell, (14? July 1915), *Letters*, II, p.364. See also letter to Russell (16 July 1915), pp.365-366, where Lawrence writes again of chosen patricians, a Dictator and a Dictatrix.



*shall not rest upon the Choice of the Mob: it shall be almost immune from them.*

I shall write out all my philosophy again. Last time I came out of the Christian Camp. This time I must come out of these early Greek philosophers. I am so sure of what I know, and what is true, now, that I am sure I am stronger, in the truth, in the knowledge I have, than all the world outside that knowledge. So I am not finally afraid of anything.<sup>8</sup>

Many of the letters written to Russell and Lady Ottoline, and to Mary Cnaan, during the spring of 1915 concerned the need to free men from the bonds of "the modern industrial capitalistic system".<sup>9</sup> He advocated the nationalisation of land and industries, and a wage for all men and women until the day they died, whether they worked or not. Money, or the lack of it, was very much on his mind, as letter after letter to J.B. Pinker makes clear:

My dear Pinker,

Do be getting me some money, will you? I heard the wolf scratch at the door today.<sup>10</sup>

He was threatened with bankruptcy because of Frieda's divorce costs. Lawrence and Frieda's marriage was going through a difficult patch because Frieda was fretting over her children, and Lawrence felt pushed aside by this. He told Kot that friends were looking for separate rooms in Hampstead for Frieda, and in a letter to Lady Ottoline he even appeared to be wavering in his monogamous ideal. He wrote to Kot, Russell and Lady Ottoline, of fighting the powers of darkness, of evil, and of wanting to kill. He felt caught up in the destructive madness of war. The hope that he had felt about the war on first coming to Greatham in January, had dissipated by early summer. It had been a false spring. As he would say later, he had set his rainbow in the sky too soon. A few weeks before starting to write "England, My England" in June 1915, Lawrence wrote to Lady Ottoline:

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8. Letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, (19 July 1915), *Letters*, II, p.367.

9. Letter to Bertrand Russell, 12 February 1915, *Letters*, II, p.283.

10. Letter to J.B. Pinker, 24 February 1915, *Letters*, II, p.293. See also letters to Pinker 23 April 1915, p.327, and 29 May 1915, pp.348-349, and letter to Russell (29 April 1915), pp.327-328.

It would be nice if the Lord sent another Flood and drowned the world. Probably I should want to be Noah. I am not sure.

I've got again into one of those horrible sleeps from which I can't wake. I can't brush it aside to wake up. You know those horrible sleeps when one is struggling to wake up, and can't. I was like it all autumn - now I am again like it. . . .

And when I see a snake winding rapidly in the marshy places, I think I am mad.

It is not a question of me, it is the world of men. The world of men is dreaming, it has gone mad in its sleep, and a snake is strangling it, but it can't (sic) wake up.<sup>11</sup>

The patch of "savage England" where Egbert and Winifred have their "old and forgotten" cottage in "England, My England" is "marshy, snake-infested", secluded "amid the savage peace of the commons" with "the spirit of place lingering on primeval".<sup>12</sup> In his 1918 essay entitled "The Spirit of Place" Lawrence declared "All art partakes of the Spirit of Place in which it is produced".<sup>13</sup> Comparing what he called "art-speech" to esoteric symbolism, he wrote:

whereas the authorized symbol stands always for a thought or an idea, some mental *concept*, the art-symbol or art-term stands for a pure experience, emotional and passional, spiritual and perceptual, all at once. The intellectual idea remains implicit, latent and nascent. Art communicates a state of being - whereas the symbol at best only communicates a whole thought, an emotional idea. (*Symbolic Meaning*, p. 19)

A work of art is "a subtle and complex *idea* expressed in symbols" and the artist "writes as a somnambulist, in the spell of pure truth as in a dream" (*Symbolic Meaning*, p. 19 and p. 18). "England, My England" expresses the state of being Lawrence felt and universalised at the beginning of the nightmare of the First World War.

The first paragraph of the story is a good example of Lawrence's mature style. As in the beginning of "Odour of Chrysanthemums", a keenly evoked

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11. Letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 14 May 1915. *Letters*, II, pp.339-340.

12. "England, My England" in *Selected Short Stories*, pp.231-258 (p.231).

13. "The Spirit of Place" in *The Symbolic Meaning*, edited by Armin Arnold, (London, 1962), pp.15-31 (p.16). This version of Lawrence's essay first appeared in the *English Review* for November 1918 and is twice as long as the later version in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, published in 1923.

naturalistic description contains, unobtrusively, the suggestions and signs crucial to the symbolic meanings of the whole story:

He was working on the edge of the common, beyond the small brook that ran in the dip at the bottom of the garden, carrying the garden path in continuation from the plank bridge on to the common. He had cut through the rough turf and bracken, leaving the grey, dryish soil bare. But he was worried because he could not get the path straight, there was a pleat between his brows. He had set up his sticks, and taken the sights between the big pine-trees, but for some reason everything seemed wrong. He looked again, straining his keen blue eyes, that had a touch of the Viking in them, through the shadowy pine-trees as through a doorway, at the green-grassed garden-path rising from the shadow of alders by the log bridge up to the sunlit flowers. Tall white and purple columbines, and the butt-end of the old Hampshire cottage that crouched near the earth amid flowers, blossoming in the bit of shaggy wildness round about. (SSS, p.231)

The crucial sentence is "He had set up his sticks, and taken the sights between the big pine-trees, but for some reason everything seemed wrong". In the following paragraph there is the sound of children's voices, high and girlish, didactic and domineering, and people pander to them. The children are spoiled, the man's heart is hard with disillusion, and in the narrative space between the first cry of "If you don't come quick, nurse, I shall run out to where there are snakes" to its reiteration almost half-way through the story we learn why it is that "everything seemed wrong" in "this flamy garden which had been a garden for a thousand years, scooped out in the little hollow among the snake-infested commons" (SSS, p.231 and p.243). The description of Egbert's amateurish attempts at path-making contains within it the idea that Egbert's life is all wrong. The frown is to become his symbolic stigma. The look "through the shadowy pine trees as through a doorway" is a look into the past; the background to Egbert's life, and further back into the ancient history and myth of the place, the past of Pan, to whom the pine tree was sacred.

Egbert had married Winifred and had come to live in this cottage on her father's estate. He was an aristocratic southerner, fair and slim and agile like an

English archer. She was a "strong-limbed,thick-blooded" northerner, ruddy as "a flame in sunshine", with a "hawthorn robustness" the thorn-stem to Egbert's English rose. They were a beautiful, passionate young couple. To Winifred, Egbert was a "higher being", a living poem, and "She was the very warm stuff of life to him" (SSS, p.232-233). Financially, things were not so rosy:

He had about a hundred and fifty pounds a year of his own - and nothing else but his very considerable personal attractions. He had no profession: he earned nothing. but he talked of literature and music, he had a passion for the old folk-music, collecting folk-songs and folk-dances, studying the morris-dance and the old customs. Of course in time he would make money in these ways.

Meanwhile youth and health and passion and promise. (SSS, p.233)

The early days at Crockham, alone together in the secret "old den" of a cottage, "dark, like a lair where strong beasts had lurked and mated", had been wonderful, marvellous. It was as though the flame of their passion was fanned by "influences" in the thick, timbered walls of the old cottage itself, haunted by the "hot blood-desire of by-gone yeomen". The young couple became spell-bound by the spirit of place:

They became different, there was a curious secret glow about them, a certain slumbering flame hard to understand, that enveloped them both. They too felt that they did not belong to the London world any more. Crockham had changed their blood: the sense of snakes that lived and slept even in their own garden, in the sun, so that he, going forward with the spade, would see a curious coiled brownish pile on the black soil, which suddenly would start up, hiss, and dazzle rapidly away, hissing. One day Winifred heard the strangest scream from the flower-bed under the low windows of the living room: ah, the strangest scream, like the very soul of the dark past crying aloud. She ran out, and saw a long brown snake on the flower-bed, and in its flat mouth the one hind leg of a frog was trying to escape, and screaming its strange, tiny, bellowing scream. She looked at the snake, and from its sullen flat head it looked at her, obstinately. She gave a cry, and it released the frog and slid angrily away.

That was Crockham. The spear of modern invention had not passed through it, and it lay there secret, primitive, savage as when the Saxons first came. And Egbert and she were caught there, caught out of the world. (SSS, p.234)

We recall that Lawrence described the War as "the spear through the side of all sorrows and hopes".<sup>14</sup> The passionate dream that was Crockham before the spear of modern invention had passed through, was Crockham before the War. In April 1915, at Greatham, Lawrence was in the process of writing the philosophy that was to become "The Crown". The snake-and-frog incident, as described in Chapter 5 of "The Crown", seems to be a real-life incident that he found profoundly disturbing and thus, symbolic:

One day there was a loud, terrible scream from the garden, tearing the soul. Oh, and it was a snake lying on the warm garden bed, and in his teeth the leg of a frog, a frog spread out, screaming with horror. We ran near. The snake glanced at us sharply, holding fast to the frog, trying to get further hold. In so trying, it let the frog escape, which leaped convulsed, away. Then the snake slid noiselessly under cover, sullenly, never looking at us again.

We were all white with fear. But why? In the world of twilight as in the world of light, one beast shall devour another. The world of corruption has its stages, where the lower shall devour the higher, ad infinitum.<sup>15</sup>

The snake is "the spirit of the great corruptive principle" (*Phoenix II*, p.407) at work in the Crockham garden.<sup>16</sup> In myth the snake is one of the creatures traditionally associated with Dionysus.

Egbert loves the old cottage and "he had come to fill it with flowers" (SSS, p.232). He works hard in the garden but unfortunately, achieves very little. He is a complete amateur, and whilst he greatly admired the "old enduring things" of the past, he is incapable of making anything except "little temporary contrivances". His little terraces and paths will not hold together for very long. And Winifred is uncritical:

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14. See note 4 above.

15. "The Crown" in *Phoenix II*, pp.364-415 (p.408).

16. In Lawrentian terms, the snake is not evil, but an agent of change, a symbol of the eternal flux of life and death, and therefore, a force for good. To "corrupt" in this sense, means to de-compose or break down static, fixed forms of life.

Town-bred, everything seemed to her splendid, and the very digging and shovelling itself seemed romantic. But neither Egbert nor she yet realised the difference between work and romance. (SSS, p.235)

To Winifred's father also, the young couple's life was "like a chapter of a living romance" (SSS, p.235). Egbert refuses the "bondage" of paid work, so Godfrey Marshall pays for the things Egbert and Winifred could not otherwise afford. As Egbert turns to the past, to the old music and dances and customs, refusing to take an active part in the modern world of business and industry, so Winifred turned to the past in the sense of looking to her father for support. Their life is fed and sustained by the the past. Like Egbert, Lawrence also "loved the past". In *Twilight in Italy*, the 1912-1913 travelogues revised in 1915, looking "at all the peace of the ancient world still covered in sunshine" and comparing the beauty of rural Italy with the black ugliness of industrial England, he wrote:

the past seemed to me so lovely that one must look towards it, backwards, only backwards, where there is peace and beauty and no more dissonance.<sup>17</sup>

Like Egbert, Lawrence had escapist dreams. Escape back to Italy was very much on his mind in the summer of 1915. He told Lady Ottoline "I would like to be remote, in Italy, writing my soul's words" rather than in England thinking about giving some public lectures.<sup>18</sup> But, unlike Egbert, Lawrence knew that it was not possible to live in a romantic idyll, unconscious of the modern world, and believed that "it is better to go forward into error than to stay fixed inextricably in the past" (*Twilight in Italy*, p.60). Egbert's belief that he could just disappear down a forsaken side-track of the world was fatal. In the letter to Catherine Carswell after Percy Lucas' death, Lawrence wrote:

Don't look to the past for justification. The Peloponnesian war was the death agony of Greece, really, not her life struggle. I am just

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17. *Twilight in Italy*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1960), p.60.

18. Letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, (12 July 1915), *Letters*, II, p.363.

reading Thucydides - when I can bear to - it is too horrible to see a people, adhering to traditions, fling itself down the abyss of the past, and disappear.

We must have the courage to cast off the old symbols, the old traditions: at least, put them aside, like (sic) a plant in growing surpasses its crowning leaves with higher leaves and buds. There is something beyond the past. The past is no justification. Unless from us the future takes place, we are death only.<sup>18</sup>

He goes on to say that the answer is not in procreation: "It is not in children, the future lies".<sup>19</sup> After the birth of their first daughter Joyce, a "wild little daisy-spirit", who is fair and slim like her father, "a little cowslip child" and "a little poem in herself", things are never quite the same again between Egbert and Winifred. "There came a slight unease of money-strain. Egbert was living on his father-in-law" (SSS, p.236). Although Winifred still felt physical passion for her husband, that became of secondary importance to the responsibility of motherhood. The blood-ties with her father and own family were strengthened after the birth of the child, and Egbert "was gradually, unconsciously excluded from the circle" (SSS, p.237). So it went. Egbert became even less inclined to come to grips with life. To Winifred he became a mere accessory, whilst her father stood "firm in the landscape of her life like a tower of strength, like a great pillar of significance" (SSS, p.237). When her mother suggests that Egbert is like a lily of the field, Winifred remembers that Jesus said "Consider the lilies *how they grow*" (SSS, p.238). The trouble with Egbert is that he has ceased to grow. And he has never grown up. A Peter Pan figure, he plays with his garden and plays with the past. Full of pent-up sexual desire, he becomes bitter, and "a wicked look began to come on his face" (SSS, p.239). Godfrey Marshall, in contrast to his son-in-law, has a "robust, sap-like faith" and the unconscious yet vital capacity for growth:

In a dark and unquestioning way, he had a sort of faith: an acrid faith like the sap of some not-to-be exterminated tree. Just a blind acrid faith as sap is blind and acrid, and yet pushes on in growth and in faith. Perhaps he was unscrupulous, but only as a

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19. See note 2 above, pp.634-635. See also *Twilight in Italy*, p.52: "The children are not the future. The living truth is the future".

striving tree is unscrupulous, pushing its single way in a jungle of others.

In the end, it is only this robust, sap-like faith which keeps men going. He may live on for many generations inside the shelter of the social establishment which he has erected for himself, as pear-trees and currant-bushes would go on bearing fruit for many seasons, inside a walled garden, even if the race of men were suddenly exterminated. But bit by bit the wall-fruit-trees would gradually pull down the very walls that sustained them. Bit by bit every establishment collapses, unless it is renewed or restored by living hands, all the while. (SSS, pp.240-241)

But "Egbert could not bring himself to any more of this restoring or renewing business", so eventually the pillars of the English social establishment would crumble just as the pillars of the Italian lemon gardens had fallen into ruins. Egbert had failed to take up "the old smoky torch of paternal godhead" still burning in his father-in-law. Godfrey Marshall had "a certain will-to-power" and "a certain primitive dominion" and the "old red glow" of personal magnetism (SSS, p.241). These qualities, the very things that Lawrence told Lady Ottoline he did not want in his ideal society,<sup>20</sup> are absent in Egbert:

Egbert's power lay in the abnegation of power. He was himself the living negative of power. Even of responsibility. (SSS, p.242)

Power entails responsibility. In the attempt not to influence his children Egbert abstained from assuming any responsibility for them. So Winifred tried to take up the torch:

She would have ruled them passionately, with indulgence, with the old dark magic of parental authority, something looming and unquestioned and, after all, divine: if we believe in divine authority.

But Egbert turned this "old dark, Catholic blood authority" into "a sort of tyranny" (SSS, p.243). The children adored their father, and turned to him emotionally and spiritually. Lacking the "great natural power" and "true male strength" of her

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20. See note 6 above, p.272. The favourable light in which Godfrey Marshall's qualities are shown, seems to contradict these supposed ideals.



father, Winifred merely commanded the children's behaviour. In "the battle between liberty and the old blood-power" the love and liberty of Egbert had won, but it was an empty and bitter victory (SSS, p.242). To Winifred the mother, Crockham had become a place full of danger and menace, and the children played on those anxieties. "And so it was" that Joyce cried out defiantly and disobediently, "If you don't come quick, nurse, I shall run out to where there are snakes" (SSS, p.243).

These Lawrentian themes of organic growth, and the relationship between love and power, are a far cry from John B. Vickery's reductive account of the story:

In *England, My England* the gradual transformation of the passionate idyll of Egbert's and Winifred's marriage into a savage combat that culminates with World War I and Egbert's death is Lawrence's version of the myth of the dying god and the rites of expulsion that accompany the scapegoat.<sup>21</sup>

Vickery sees the story as a version of a primitive myth, with Egbert as a phallic divinity and Winifred as a fertility goddess in a sacred marriage, the source of which was Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Charles Rossman has criticised Vickery's "mythic interpretation, with its archetypal (near allegorical) view of fictional character as emblem", noticing that Vickery distorts details and misses vital conflicts of character.<sup>22</sup> The scene where Egbert's daughter is cut by the sickle is regarded by Vickery as a "rite of passage" from phallic deity to rejected scapegoat. Rossman claims, against Vickery, that rather than a phallic deity Egbert is simply a passionate and irresponsible youth clinging to lusty adolescence, who carelessly and purposelessly drifts into the war. Vickery takes what Lawrence called "art-speech" to be esoteric symbolism, thus reducing the story to the static, dead thought-forms Lawrence always spoke against. Rossman,

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21. "Myth and Ritual in The Shorter Fiction of D.H. Lawrence", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 5 (Spring, 1959), 65-82 (p.71).

22. "Myth and Misunderstanding D.H. Lawrence", *Bucknell Review*, 22 (1976), 81-101 (p.88).

In his turn, misses the complexities of Lawrence's characters and the wealth of symbolic meaning in the story. The incident with the sickle is a crucial turning-point in the story, not as Vickery saw it but rather the reverse: Egbert undergoes a psychic death and re-birth, becoming a phallic symbol after this incident, not before. Egbert's carelessness in leaving the sickle lying about causes the "accident" that maims Joyce, his beloved first-born child. "But then it was an accident - it was an accident. Why should he feel guilty?" (SSS, p.244). Rossman dismisses the event as an accident, and consequently underestimates its significance. The so-called accident is the inevitable fruit of Egbert's failure to take responsibility. Now, Egbert and Winifred become tragic figures, and the tragedy, ironically, makes something of Egbert. He has exposed himself "to opposition and final castigation", so that Winifred, the anguished "*Mater Dolorata*", now has something "to resist" (SSS, p.239 and p.244). Winifred turns to the Church for comfort during the "long crucifixion" of Joyce's suffering. There followed "a dark and bitter time" of guilt which changed her soul forever: "Ah, how had she, Winifred, dared to be so wicked, so wicked, so careless, so sensual" (SSS, p.248). She gives her soul to the church and, renouncing sexual passion, sacrifices her body to the duty of motherhood. As a wife she feels only "a certain bitterness towards the man with whom she had known such sensuality and distraction" (SSS, p.249). Egbert's life becomes unbearable; he is marked forever:

there was a little frown between his brows as if he had been cleft there with a hatchet: cleft right in, for ever, and that was the stigma. (SSS, p.249)

Ostracized by his family, and with no real home, he "felt his heart go wicked" and die:

The sense of frustration and futility, like some slow, torpid snake, slowly bit right through his heart. Futility, futility, futility: the horrible marsh-poison went through his veins and killed him. (SSS, p.249)

Unlike the frog, Egbert does not escape the symbolic snake-spirit of the great corruptive principle. And Egbert himself becomes a symbol of a greater destruction in the world of men. The "old dark marsh-venomous atmosphere" of Crockham is the atmosphere of England at war in 1915.<sup>23</sup> Egbert's shirts are torn and his flesh is exposed to the elements. The heather flowers on the common are "like a sprinkling of sacrificial blood". As Winifred takes refuge in the Church, Egbert takes refuge in the pagan past:

His heart went back to the savage old spirit of the place: the desire for old gods, old, lost passions, the passion of the cold-blooded, darting snakes that hissed and shot away from him, the mystery of blood-sacrifices, all the lost, intense sensations of the primeval people of the place, whose passions seethed in the air still, from those long days before the Romans came. The seethe of a lost, dark passion in the air. The presence of unseen snakes.

A queer, baffled, half-wicked look came on his face. (SSS, p.250)

In "The Crown", Lawrence's developed theory of dualism included the whole of time; there were "two eternities", the infinite past and the infinite future:

We cannot say they are one and the same. They are two and utterly different. If I look at the eternity ahead, my back is towards the other eternity, this latter is forgotten, it *is* not. Which is the Christian attitude. If I look at the eternity behind, back to the source, then there is for me one eternity, one only. And this is the pagan eternity, the eternity of Pan. This is the eternity some of us are veering round to, in private life, during the past few years. (*Phoenix II*, p.409)

Restless, outcast, with "the little, baffled, half wicked smile curled on his face",

Egbert is no longer Peter Pan, but a true Pan figure:

His presence was almost an anguish to Winifred. she prayed against it. That little cleft between his brow, that flickering, wicked, little smile that seemed to haunt his face, and above all, the triumphant loneliness, the Ishmael quality. And then the erectness of his supple body, like a symbol. The very way he stood, so quiet, so insidious, like an erect, supple symbol of life, the living body, confronting her downcast soul, was torture to

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23. On 3 June 1915, Lawrence wrote to David Garnett "I still feel gassed by the war". *Letters*, II, p.353.

her. He was like a supple living idol moving before her eyes, and she felt if she watched him she was damned. (SSS, p.251)

Winifred associates Biblical names, Ishmael, Baal and Ashtaroath, with Egbert. We do not find the name of Pan in "England, My England" but Egbert "belonged to the god Pan, to the absolute of the senses" as surely as the beautiful, sad, and sinister "Il Duro", the Pan of *Twilight in Italy* (p.116). To Winifred, Egbert's "unsheathed presence" is like "another revelation" which annulled her Christian faith, "the whole great law of sacrifice, by which she had elected to live" (SSS, pp.251-252). Egbert is "a supple symbol of life", "a gleaming idol", a phallic symbol. The child Joyce, now seven, has grown into a "wild little thing", with "almost maenad courage" (SSS, p.250). She has the same "flamy, restless spirit" as her father, and the two of them seem to have "a tacit understanding" and "weapon-like kinship":

It was he who had all the glamour for her. He and she were like members of some forbidden secret society who know one another but may not recognize one another. Knowledge they had in common, the same secret of life, the father and the child. (SSS, p.251)

Joyce, with her "wild, almost maenad temper", was a follower of her father as the maenads were followers of Dionysus in *The Bacchae*. And she was led to destruction. The secret of life is the knowledge of death. The father and the child have both felt the touch of death; Joyce's almost fatal leg injury broke her father's heart. The gods "of the knowledge of death" are named in "The Crown": "Aphrodite is on the one side, the great goddess of destruction in sex, Dionysus in the spirit" (*Phoenix II*, p.402). We do not find the names of Aphrodite or Dionysus in "England, My England", just as we do not find the name of Pan, but we sense their presence. In "The Lemon Gardens", Lawrence wrote of how the secret of the attraction to Italy lay in phallic worship: "the Italian is attractive, supple, and beautiful, because he worships the Godhead in the flesh" (*Twilight in Italy*, p.52).

Envious of this southern sensuality, we attempt to go back to it, but it is not possible to get back to the original position of "the divinity of the flesh". Phallic worship has become "Aphrodite-worship":

The flesh, the senses, are now self-conscious. They know their aim. Their aim is in supreme sensation. They seek the maximum of sensation. They seek the reduction of the flesh reacting upon itself, to a crisis, an ecstasy, a phosphorescent transfiguration in ecstasy. (*Twilight in Italy*, p.42)

When he first came to Crockham, Egbert saw himself as "a sort of epicurean hermit" (SSS, p.236). In other words, he was devoted to refined sensuous enjoyment. Those wonderful, passionate, marvellous early days when Winifred "had all his tall, supple, fine-fleshed youth to herself, for herself," were days of self-conscious phallic worship (SSS,p.234). Egbert and Winifred had set out to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh, like the Italian,

But our habit of life, our very constitution, prevents our being quite like the Italian. The phallus will never serve us as a Godhead, because we do not believe in it: no Northern race does. Therefore, either we set ourselves to serve our children, calling them "the future", or else we turn perverse and destructive, give ourselves joy in the destruction of the flesh. (*Twilight in Italy*, p.52)

Winifred, of northern blood, turned to Christianity, her children, and the future. Egbert, the southerner, turned to Pan, the past, and death. In "The Crown" the snake is seen as the symbol of dissolution:

And the process is that of the serpent lying prone in the cold, watery fire of corruption, flickering with the flowing-apart of the two streams. His belly is white with the light flowing forth from him, his back is dark and brindled where the darkness returns to the Source. He is the ridge where the two floods flow apart. (*Phoenix II*, p.388)

The separation of Winifred from Egbert, in this story suffused with the sense of snakes and unnamed gods, symbolizes the light taking leave of the darkness, and returning to the light in a universal process of dissolution.

The climax of "the progressive activity of dissolution within the soul", the reductive sensationalism described in "The Crown", is "degradation and death" (*Phoenix II*, p.398). And the ultimate sensation is the collective activity of war. When the great war broke out, Egbert's instinctive reaction was the same as that of his father-in-law: "He recoiled inevitably from having his feelings dictated to him by the mass feeling" (SSS, p.252). This reaction against war, it is implied, was the natural reaction of all well-bred, pure-blooded Englishmen. Egbert's attitudes to the aggressive nationalism and mob-spirit of war reflect Lawrence's own feelings. The thought of putting himself into the power of spiritually inferior men, "to be ordered about by petty *canaille*", deters Egbert from joining up. It seems apparent that, in revising "England, My England" for the 1922 collection, under that title, Lawrence brought his experiences of 1916-1917 to the story. The *canaille* who were responsible for the humiliating army medical examinations at Bodmin and Derby and for his expulsion from Cornwall were to be vividly described in "The Nightmare" chapter of *Kangaroo* in 1922. Eventually, impelled by Godfrey Marshall's sour and resentful "It is the best thing you could do", Egbert does join up. "In the thick, gritty, hideous khaki his subtle physique was extinguished as if he had been killed" and "an ugly little look came on to his face, of a man who has accepted his own degradation" (SSS, p.254). In their last time together at Crockham, when Egbert has a week-end's leave, Winifred gives herself to him "in a little passion of duty and sacrifice, willing to serve the soldier, if not the man" (SSS, p.254). At the end of the summer, when he is sent to Flanders, into action, Egbert is, in the Lawrentian sense, already a dead man: "He seemed already to have gone out of life, beyond the pale of life" (SSS, p.255). In "The Crown" Lawrence wrote:

We go into a war like this in order to get once more the final reduction under the touch of death. That the death is so inhuman, cold, mechanical, sordid, the giving of the body to the grip of cold, stagnant mud and stagnant water, whilst one awaits for some falling death, the knowledge of the gas clouds that may lacerate and reduce the lungs to a heaving mass, this, this sort of self-inflicted Sadism, brings almost a final satisfaction to our civilized and still passionate men. (*Phoenix II*, p.400)

In the long description of the small, unimportant action in which he is killed Egbert gives himself up "to the flux of death, to analysis, to introspection, to mechanical war and destruction" (*Phoenix II*, p.392):

Mechanism, the pure mechanical action of obedience at the guns: Pure mechanical action at the guns. It left the soul unburdened, brooding in naked darkness. In the end, the soul is alone, brooding on the face of the uncreated flux, as a bird on a dark sea. (SSS, p.256)

At the very beginning of the story Egbert looked at the primitive cottage through the pine-trees sacred to Pan. Now he stands and looks at "the white church among the trees beyond". In an apocalyptic vision, he sees three horse-men appear on the crest of a ploughed field and "a crucifix knocked slanting". He hears the "sharp cry from the officer overhead" echoing the cry of his daughter in the Crockham garden, and then "in his soul was the echo of the new, deep sound, deeper than life":

And in confirmation came the awful faint whistling of a shell, advancing almost suddenly into a piercing, tearing shriek that would tear through the membrane of life. He heard it in his ears, but he heard it also in his soul, in tension. (SSS,p.256)

The shriek of the shell echoes the shriek of the child when she fell on the sickle, the "snake" Egbert had left in the grass. The incident was like a prophecy of the future. The first shell falls "away beyond": "He only noticed a twig of holly with red berries fall like a gift on to the road below" (SSS, p.256). But the Germans get the aim and Egbert is hit in the head. As he drifts in and out of consciousness, he becomes

aware of the full horror of his wound and experiences the sensations of an agonizing death:

Bit by bit, like a doom, came the necessity to know. He was hit in the head. It was only a vague surmise at first. But in the swinging of the pendulum of pain, swinging ever nearer and nearer, to touch him into an agony of consciousness and a consciousness of agony, gradually the knowledge emerged - he must be hit in the head - hit in the left brow; if so, there would be blood - was there blood? - could he feel blood in his left eye? Then the clanging seemed to burst the membrane of his brain, like death-madness.

Was there blood on his face? Was hot blood flowing? Or was it dry blood congealing down his cheek? It took him hours even to ask the question: time being no more than an agony in darkness, without measurement. (SSS, p.257)

The final sensation, the last ecstasy, is "one great lapse into the thick darkness of blood in agony" before the soul "like the tiniest little light out on a dark sea, the sea of blood" gutters out and consummation comes (SSS, p.258). Egbert's fate was "to have known the moment of death! And to be forced, before dying, to review it" (SSS, p.257). His review slips into the language of "The Crown":

There had been life. There had been Winifred and his children. But the frail death-agony effort to catch at straws of memory, straws of life from the past, brought on too great a nausea. No, no! No Winifred, no children. No world, no people. Better the agony of dissolution ahead than the nausea of effort backwards. Better the terrible work should go forward, the dissolving into the black sea of death, in the extremity of dissolution, than that there should be any reaching back towards life. To forget! To forget! Utterly, utterly to forget, in the great forgetting of death. To break the core and the unit of life, and to lapse out on the great darkness. Only that. To break the clue, and mingle and commingle with the one darkness, without afterwards or forwards. Let the black sea of death itself solve the problem of futurity. Let the will of man break and give up. (SSS, p.258)

At the moment of death Egbert sees a colossal horse looming above him in the glare of a terrible light.<sup>24</sup> Lawrence saw the War as an apocalypse, and the

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24. As Paul Fussell has described in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1975), many myths, legends, visions and "re-birth" experiences were generated during the War. The Angel of Mons, reputed to have appeared in the sky during the British retreat from Mons in August 1914, originated in an Arthur Machen story (Fussell, p.115-116).



death of Egbert in "England, My England" is symbolic of a universal and divine destruction. The story ends with the image of Egbert's dead face and, seemingly, without any sign of re-birth for mankind. For the answer to the question "Are we really doomed, and smiling with the wonder of doom?", we must look once more to the work where the question is both posed and answered, "The Crown":

Even if we are, we need not say: "It is finished." It is never finished. That is the one time when Jesus spoke a fatal half-truth, in his *Consummatum Est!* Death consummates nothing. It can but abruptly close the individual life. But Life itself, and even the forms men have given it, will persist and persist. (*Phoenix II*, p.403)

Lawrence used apocalyptic symbols throughout his work. He considered the titles "Dies Irae" (Day of Wrath) and "The Latter Days" for *Women in Love*, and his last prose work was to be called *Apocalypse*. Just before he is hit by the shell Egbert repeats to himself the words spoken to Christ by a scribe: "Whither thou goest I will go" (SSS, p.256). The idea of resurrection was as important to Lawrence as the idea of apocalypse. Egbert follows Christ into death, but death consummates nothing. "England, My England" ends on a half-truth. Many more men would die but Lawrence held on to the hope that the First World War was not like the Peloponnesian war, that it was a life struggle rather than a death agony: "All Greece died. It must not be so again, we must have more sense"<sup>25</sup>

War is a loss of balance, a madness. "The Greeks made equilibrium their goal"<sup>26</sup> and their civilisation ended when they lost sight of that goal. Lawrence's radical dualism, along with his instinctive pantheism and pluralism, was endorsed by the ancient Greek philosophy, religion and myth that he read about in Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*, Gilbert Murray's *The Four Stages of Greek Religion*, and Murray's translations of Greek drama. As he wrote in 1925:

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25. See note 2 above, p.635.

26. "Him With His Tail In His Mouth" In *Phoenix II*, pp.427-435 (p.431).

Equilibrium argues either a dualistic or a pluralistic universe. The Greeks, being sane, were pantheists and pluralists, and so am I. (*Phoenix II*, p.431)

Sanity lies in the right balance or equilibrium between power and love, light and darkness, male and female, north and south, past and future, body and mind, the lion and the unicorn. In his 1919 essay "The Two Principles" Lawrence would call this balanced relationship "polarity". Imbalance, the victory or triumph of one over the other, meant destruction. "Now, in Europe" he wrote in "The Crown",

both the lion and the unicorn are gone mad, each with a crown tumbled on his bound-in head. And without rhyme or reason they tear themselves and each other, and the fight is no fight, it is a frenzy of blind things dashing themselves and each other to pieces. (*Phoenix II*, p.371)

The War is here envisaged as a Dionysian frenzy. The most famous literary description of Dionysian frenzy occurs in Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Charles L. Ross has claimed that "of all Euripides' plays, *The Bacchae* exercised a special fascination over Lawrence" and that the story "Tickets, Please" "literally rewrites the famous scene in which Pentheus is set upon by the maddened women of Thebes".<sup>27</sup>

"Tickets, Please", originally called "John Thomas", was written at Mountain Cottage, Middleton-by-Wirksworth, in November 1918, along with "The Blind Man" and "The Fox". The story, set in a Midlands town during the First World War, is naturalistic rather than mythic in style, and is devoid of any overt reference to Euripides' play or Greek myth. As in "England, My England", we do not find any mention of the names of the gods. At first sight, this tale of a flirtatious inspector of trams and the young conductresses who want to take him down a peg or two seems a far cry from the tragic drama. Gilbert Murray wrote an introductory essay to the edition of Euripides' plays read by Lawrence, entitled "*The Bacchae* in

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27. "D.H. Lawrence's Use of Greek Tragedy: Euripides and Ritual", *D.H. Lawrence Review*, 10 (1977), 1-19 (p.11).

relation to certain currents of thought in the Fifth Century", in which he describes

*The Bacchae* as follows:

It is much what we should call a Mystery Play. Dionysus, the young god born of Zeus and the Theban princess Semele, travelling through the world to announce his godhead, comes to his own people of Thebes, and his own receive him not. They will not worship him simply and willingly; he constrains them to worship him with the enthusiasm of madness. The King, Pentheus, insults and imprisons the god, spies on his mystic worship, is discovered by the frenzied saints and torn limb from limb; his own mother, Agave, being the first to rend him.<sup>28</sup>

In *The Bacchae*, "Euripides exposes the tragically irreconcilable clash between *nomos* (or convention in the broadest sense) and *physis* (or instinct)" (Ross, p.9). The social law and order of Apollo is represented by Pentheus, natural instinct by Dionysus. Whilst Lawrence's story is also concerned with this opposition, the opposed elements are not clearly split into two characters. There is no Pentheus figure and no Dionysus figure in "Tickets, Please", unlike "The Blind Man" written at the same time, and the later dualism stories, "The Ladybird" (1921) and "The Border Line" (1924). Lawrence uses *The Bacchae* as a basis to his story, but his so-called rewriting involves many ironic differences.

The first very obvious major contrast in the story is not between characters, but between the tram-line that rushes "up hill and down dale" and the external landscape. It seems that the single-line tramway system itself is Dionysian, being full of warm, vibrant, animate life in contrast to the stark, grimy, cold, sordid, ugly and "black industrial countryside". The bold, "green and creamy coloured tram-car" plunges and rushes to the terminus where it "seems to pause and purr with curious satisfaction" before swooping, bouncing and breathlessly slithering and sidling to a standstill. The tram-car is "perky, jaunty, somewhat dare-devil, green as a jaunty sprig of parsley out of a black colliery garden" and it is packed with "living people", colliers howling hymns and blasphemies.<sup>29</sup> In the second

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28. *Euripides*, translated into English Rhyming Verse by Gilbert Murray, fifth edition (London, 1911), p. liv.  
29. "Tickets, Please" in *Selected Short Stories*, pp.289-300 (p.289).

paragraph of the story the tram is likened to a running horse: "The ride becomes a steeplechase. Hurray! we have leapt in a clear jump over the canal bridges - now for the four-lane corner" (SSS, p.289). This metaphor, in conjunction with the rhythm and movement of the first paragraph, suggests a connection with the last verse of the first chorus of maidens in Murray's translation of *The Bacchae*:

Hither, O fragrant of Tmolus the Golden,<sup>30</sup>  
 Come with the voice of timbrel and drum;  
 Let the cry of your joyance uplift and embolden  
 The God of the joy-cry; O Bacchanals, come!  
 With pealing of pipes and with Phrygian clamour,  
 On, where the vision of holiness thrills,  
 And the music climbs and the maddening glamour,  
 With the wild white Maids, to the hills, to the hills!  
 Oh, then, like a colt as he runs by a river,  
 A colt by his dam, when the heart of him sings,  
 With the keen limbs drawn and the fleet foot a-quiver,  
 Away the Bacchanal springs!  
 (Euripides, p.86)

There is an ironic difference, however, between the lyrical singing and springing of the Bacchanals and the roaring colliers in the jam-packed tram. As there is between the vision of a colt running free by a river and a steeplechase by a canal. We are given the impression that this tram-service, "the most dangerous in England", is the last outpost of joy and life in a dismal war-time society. It is an impression full of humour and pathos: the peril, adventure and wild romance of the tram-car, driven recklessly by young men too crippled or delicate for active service, conducted by "fearless young hussies" who have left hearth and home to take on a war-time role (SSS, p.290). Common to both sets of women is their fearlessness and the fact that they are not in their usual domestic place. E. Kegel-Brinkgrieve, in his detailed exposition of "Tickets, Please" in relation to the archetypal myth of *The Bacchae*, notes the "crucial function" of the First World War. The "emancipation" of the girls is due to the War, and their description as

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30. One of many epithets associated with the god Dionysus. As Jane Ellen Harrison explained in her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, (Cambridge, 1908), the young and old forms, the Father and Son, of the waxing and waning divinity in the religion of Dionysus take on a perplexing number of names: Sabazios, Dionysos, Bacchus, Iacchus, Zagreus (p.537).

sailors aboard a ship "illustrates the feeling of not being hampered by social laws and conventions".<sup>31</sup> The metaphor of the ship also suggests the ship of Dionysus. Lawrence became very fond of the illustration called "The Sailing of Dionysus" in Murray's *Euripides*. He used the image of the ship of Dionysus very explicitly at the end of "The Spirit of Place" essay, and would use the image again in *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent*. The step of the tram-car is described as "Thermopylae", the narrow straits where a sea-battle was fought in fifth century Greece. The ship of Dionysus in "Tickets, Please" is a ship of war. These are not the pine-clad hills of Thebes, flowing with milk and honey. The girls "in their ugly blue uniform, skirts up to their knees, shapeless old peaked caps on their heads" (SSS, p.290), present a very different spectacle to the Theban women with the sunrise streaming on their long white robes and dappled fawn-skins girded with live snakes, who pressed "Wreathed ivy round their brows, and oaken sprays / And flowering bryony" (*Euripides*, p.115). The conductresses carry ticket-machines, not the sacred thyrsus.

John Thomas, the chief inspector of the tram-service, is young and good-looking. "His face is ruddy, his small brown moustache is weathered, he has a faint impudent smile" (SSS, p.291). He is a flirt, a cock-of-the-walk, and his nickname is "Coddy" which, like his proper name, is slang for penis. His ruddy cheeks suggest the "wine-red cheeks" of Dionysus. "There is considerable scandal about John Thomas in half a dozen villages. He flirts with the girl conductors in the morning, and walks out with them in the dark night, when they leave their tram-car at the depot" (SSS, p.291). In *The Bacchae*, Pentheus believes rumours that the main purpose of the women involved in the worship of Dionysus is to indulge in sexual promiscuity, and that the stranger (Dionysus in human form) is a corrupting influence:

mine ear  
Was caught by this strange rumour that our own

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31. "The Dionysian Tramline", *Dutch Quarterly Review*, 5 (1975), 180-194 (p.180).

Wives, our own sisters, from their hearths are flown  
 To wild and secret rites; and cluster there  
 High on the shadowy hills, with dance and prayer  
 To adore this new-made God, this Dionyse,  
 Whate'er he bel - And in their companies  
 Deep wine-jars stand, and ever and anon  
 Away into the loneliness now one  
 Steals forth, and now a second, maid or dame,  
 Where love lies waiting, not of God! The flame,  
 They say, of Bacchios wraps them. Bacchios! Nay,  
 'Tis more to Aphrodite that they pray.

They tell me, too, there is a stranger come,  
 A man of charm and spell, from Lydian seas,  
 A head all gold and cloudy fragancies,  
 A wine-red cheek, and eyes that hold the light  
 Of the very Cyprian. Day and livelong night  
 He haunts amid the damsels, o'er each lip  
 Dangling his cup of joyance!  
 (*Euripides*, pp.89-90)

Pentheus expects to see wild orgies when he goes to spy upon the women. The rumours, however, are untrue. Pentheus is quite mistaken in his beliefs about Dionysus and his followers, as Teiresias "sees" and understands: "in the wildest rite / Cometh no stain to her whose heart is white" (*Euripides*, p.93). The messenger reports the truth about the women seen sleeping beneath the trees, "like wild things flung at ease" and,

all most cold  
 In purity - not as thy tale was told  
 Of wine-cups and wild music and the chase  
 For love amid the forest's loneliness.  
 (*Euripides*, p.114)

The scandal about John Thomas and the tram girls, on the other hand, is basically true. Not that they are involved in any wild orgies. Walking out with John Thomas merely involves a little innocent kissing and cuddling. But the game of love is played for excitement and sensation, not passionate oneness with Nature: "Tis more to Aphrodite that they pray".

Annie Stone keeps John Thomas at arms length for many months, but her resistance is lowered at the Statutes fair, in November, at Bestwood. Lawrence's

description of the fair emphasises the artificiality and superficial excitement of it all.<sup>32</sup> The cocoanuts in the cocoanut shies are "artificial war-time substitutes", the switchbacks are "not nearly so exciting as a tram-car actually", the lighting is electric, the kisses in the cinema are "simulated" (SSS, pp.292-293). Fried potatoes are the food of the fair-ground. The earth does not gush with magic springs of milk and wine, nor run with sweet honey. The mechanical delights of the fair make an ironic contrast to the natural pleasures of the Bacchanals on the fragrant mountain, dancing in the dark until dawn, feeling the dew on their throats and the wind in their hair. Annie responds to John Thomas's advances despite herself, so long as he is "fairly discreet". He is utterly at ease, however, whilst she feels a conflict, as the following sentence illustrates: "He was perfectly happy; she was afraid her hat was on one side, but she was excited" (SSS, p.292). With the phrase "after all" the narrator mimics Annie making excuses to herself for her behaviour:

After all, he had a wonderfully warm, cosy way of holding a girl with his arm, he seemed to make such a nice fit. And, after all, it was pleasant to be so held: so very comforting and cosy and nice. He leaned over her and she felt his breath on her hair; she knew he wanted to kiss her on the lips. And after all, he was so warm and she fitted in to him so softly. After all, she wanted him to touch her lips. (SSS, p.293)

So Annie walks out with John Thomas. The fun of the fair and "all the arts of love-making" demanded no real emotion, but the relationship between Annie and John Thomas starts to develop:

There was no mistake about it, Annie liked John Thomas a good deal. She felt so rich and warm in herself whenever he was near. And John Thomas really liked Annie, more than usual. The soft, melting way in which she could flow into a fellow, as if she melted into his very bones, was something rare and good. He fully appreciated this. (SSS, p.293)

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32. Lawrence wrote humourously and at length about such simulated sexuality in the first part of *Mr Noon* (1920).

Annie wants more than just physical intimacy, "a mere nocturnal presence". She starts to take an "intelligent interest" in him and to demand that he should become "an all-round individual to her". This frightens him off. She gets possessive. He leaves her. Annie had "prided herself that he could not leave her" and had been "so very sure of holding him", but "here she made a mistake" (SSS, p.293). This pride before a fall amounts to hubris. Pentheus believed he could hold Dionysus by force, but the god could not be contained behind bars. Annie has some of the characteristics of a Pentheus.

*The Bacchae* and "Tickets, Please" are both tales of revenge. Gilbert Murray writes of the changing sympathies of the audience to *The Bacchae*: "The sympathy of the audience is with Dionysus while he is persecuted; doubtful while he is just taking his vengeance; utterly against him at the end of the play" (*Euripides*, p.liv). Similarly, we sympathise with Annie in her desolation and misery and understand her determination to get her own back on John Thomas when he flaunts the fact that he is enjoying pastures new. And we sympathise with her in the initial stages of the attack because of his refusal to declare the fact that he had arranged to walk her home. But when the scene turns ugly, we recoil from the horror of mass hysteria and mob violence. This final scene in the "Ladies only" waiting-room, in "the darkness and lawlessness of war-time" (SSS, p.295), is most reminiscent of *The Bacchae*. The trap has been laid by Annie, and she leads the attack. She is the first to strike. Now more like Pentheus than Dionysus, John Thomas attempts to assert his authority, demanding "get back to your senses", and we appreciate the full irony of this phrase when the girls become maenads, literally getting back to their "senses". The violence escalates:

Their blood was now thoroughly up. He was their sport now. They were going to have their own back, out of him. Strange, wild creatures, they hung on him and rushed at him to bear him down. His tunic was torn right up the back. Nora had hold at the back of his collar, and was actually strangling him. Luckily the button burst. His tunic was torn off his back, his shirt-sleeves were torn away, his arms were naked. The girls rushed at him, clenched their hands on him and pulled at him: or they rushed at



him and pushed him, butted him with all their might: or they struck him wild blows. He ducked and cringed and struck sideways. They became more intense. (SSS, p.297)

The scene keeps its hold on the ordinary world by use of local idiom such as "they were going to have their own back, out of him" and a detail such as the bursting button. John Thomas is bleeding and torn. He is described as an animal at bay, a struggling animal, as an animal laying defeated and at the mercy of his captors. The Theban maenads suckle young fawns and wolf cubs but become ferocious hunters, tearing cattle to pieces when feeling threatened. Pentheus is torn to pieces by Queen Agave and her band when they see him spying on them. Like the Theban women, the tram girls are in a Dionysian frenzy: "Their faces were flushed, their hair wild, their eyes glittering strangely" (SSS, p.297); they are endowed with "unnatural strength and power" and are "filled with supernatural strength" (SSS, p.298). Some of the girls start to laugh, to giggle wildly and helplessly. But this fails to break the tension. Annie's tone of voice is "secret and deadly":

"You ought to be *killed*, that's what you ought," said Annie tensely. "You ought to be *killed*." And there was a terrifying lust in her voice.

"You've got to *choose!*" she cried, as if it were some terrible menace, and as if it hurt her that she could not exact more. (SSS, p.298)

The original demand was for him to choose a girl to walk home with, but this has escalated to the demand that he choose a wife. John Thomas, however, illustrates the nature of real power: "He was cunning in his overthrow. He did not give into them really - no, not if they tore him to bits" (SSS, p.299). The girls do not literally tear John Thomas to bits, but Annie's bitterness and agony when he chooses her is equal to that of Agave in *The Bacchae* when she discovers that she has dismembered her own son. As Charles L. Ross explains,

Lawrence is more concerned with the pathos of the normal consciousness or self, and the tenuous rebirth of a new self, than with literal death. Therefore the sparagmos becomes in his practice a rending of the psyche, sometimes but not inevitably followed by an access of new life. (Ross, p.11)

"Tickets, Please" ends in a dumb and stupified silence with no promise of new life to follow, nor any reconciliation as in "The White Stocking", an earlier story where emotional provocation leads to violence. "It was a silence of the end" (SSS, p.299). Gilbert Murray remarks upon the significant silence of the Greek chorus at the end of *The Bacchae* (Euripides, p.lvi).

The revenge on John Thomas has cost a terrible price. "Tickets, Please", like *The Bacchae*, illustrates the unbalanced horror that ensues when emotions are scorned or perverted. The actions of Annie and the other girls parallel those of Agave and the Wild White Maids. But there is no simple equation of characters. In some ways John Thomas is like Dionysus, in other ways he resembles Pentheus. Similarly, Annie's personality contains elements of Pentheus whilst her actions are Dionysian. The more rounded characters are in keeping with a naturalistic story as against the abstractions of Greek drama. We are left with no prospect of a future relationship between Annie and John Thomas. Ironically, the price of revealing true feeling has been the killing of any chance of building on it. Annie must live on tortured by the knowledge that John Thomas chose her. John Thomas has had the smile knocked off his face. We feel that there will be no more flirtatious fun on the foot-board of the trams. The chief inspector of trams is not of the ilk of later Lawrentian nocturnal presences, such as Count Dionys of "The Ladybird". John Thomas was interested only in superficial sexual gratification. He sheered off from a deep and whole relationship with Annie, even though he recognised the different quality of their intimacy. His darkness denied her light. *The Bacchae* recognises the necessity for balance, as the following couplet indicates:

Love thou the Day and the Night;  
Be glad of the Dark and the Light;  
(*Euripides*, p.98)

In the symbolic language of "The Crown", the unicorn of light fights the lion of darkness and overthrows him, but it is an empty victory. And the result would be the same "if the lion really destroyed, killed the unicorn":

Would not the lion at once expire, as if he had created a vacuum around himself? Is not the unicorn necessary to the very existence of the lion, is not each opposite kept in stable equilibrium by the opposition of the other? (*Phoenix II*, p.366)

War-time is a time of darkness, but the answer does not lie in the triumph of the light, for this would be as destructive as the unmitigated darkness. On the field of battle that is the whole of history, immortal and mortal, the opposed forces *must* fight yet not win:

This is a terrible position: to have as a *raison d'être* a purpose which, if once fulfilled, would of necessity entail the cessation from existence of both opponents. They would both cease to be, if either of them really won in the fight which is their sole reason for existing. This is a troublesome thought. (*Phoenix II*, p.366)

"Tickets, Please" shows the implications of this "terrible position" for human relationships. At the time of writing the story, Lawrence wrote to Katherine Mansfield: "I begin to despair altogether about human relationships - feel one may as well turn into a sort of lone wolf, and have done with it".<sup>33</sup>

Lawrence integrated Greek myth with Christian tradition and incorporated both into his own theories about the nature of the world. "England, My England" and "Tickets, Please" both serve to illustrate how his use of myth was neither decorative nor superfluous. In "England, My England" myth enriches his own symbolic language, and in "Tickets, Please" naturalism is unobtrusively

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33. Letter to Katherine Mansfield, 5 December 1918. *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, edited by James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson, III (Cambridge, 1984), p.303.

grounded in myth. Common to both stories is the background of the First World War. In traditional myth, Dionysus represents both creation and destruction. Lawrence felt that creative, natural Dionysian passion had become mere mechanical sensation. The scales had tipped toward destruction. The ship of Dionysus had become an iron ship of war, a ship of death. At the end of "The Spirit of Place" essay, he wrote of his hope for a "mystic transubstantiation":

We wait for the miracle, for the new soft wind. Even the buds of iron break into soft little flames of issue. So will people change. So will the machine-parts open like buds and the great machines break into leaf. Even we can expect our iron ships to put forth vine and tendril and bunches of grapes, like the ship of Dionysos in full sail upon the ocean.

It only wants the miracle, the new soft, creative wind: which does not blow yet. Meanwhile we can only stand and wait, knowing that what is, is not. (*Symbolic Meaning*, pp.30-31)

### CHAPTER 3: "The Blind Man" and "The Ladybird"

"The Blind Man" and "The Ladybird" share a common theme: the opposition of two males in relation to one woman. We can see the same "abstract design" in the earlier story that James C. Cowan saw in "The Ladybird":

a Lawrentian triad in which two male figures, the one of light, the other of darkness, compete for the soul of modern woman.<sup>1</sup>

"The Blind Man", as previously mentioned, was written in England at the same time and place as "Tickets, Please", in November 1918. Lawrence wrote "The Ladybird" at Fontana Vecchia, Taormina, Sicily, in December 1921, at the same time as he revised "England, My England". Whilst "The Blind Man" and "The Ladybird" are both grounded in Greek myth, only the latter contains overt allusions to mythical figures. Both stories concern the aftermath of the War.

Maurice Pervin, the husband of Isabel in "The Blind Man", is a big and heavily built figure of country stock and provincial blood, passionate and sensitive, with quick, acute feelings but a slow mind. He is the Dionysian blind man of the title, reliant on touch and "immediate contact in darkness".<sup>2</sup> Maurice has a mark on his brow like the stigma of Egbert in "England, My England". But unlike Egbert, Maurice came back from the battle-fields of Flanders. He came back disfigured, blinded, but alive. Isabel's life-long friend the bachelor Bertie Reid is "just the opposite" to Maurice. He is an intellectual, a barrister and man of letters, small and slightly built, quick and ironical, sentimental but "not so very fine" emotionally (SSS, p.303). Bertie is, therefore, an Apollonian figure, representing

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1. "D.H. Lawrence's Dualism: The Apollonian-Dionysian Polarity and *The Ladybird*", *Forms of Modern British Fiction*, edited by Alan Warren Friedman, (London, 1975), pp.73-99 (p.79).

2. "The Blind Man" in *Selected Short Stories*, pp.301-317 (p.301).

law, the public life and the light of the mind. The story begins with Isabel waiting for both men, and the first sentence encapsulates their symbolic opposition:

Isabel Pervin was listening for two sounds - for the sound of wheels on the drive outside and for the noise of her husband's footsteps in the hall. (SSS, p.301)

The sound of wheels is mechanical and external, whereas the sound of footsteps is vital and internal. During the year that he has been home from the War, Maurice and Isabel have been almost entirely alone together:

Life was still very full and strangely serene for the blind man, peaceful with the almost incomprehensible peace of immediate contact in darkness. With his wife he had a whole world, rich and real and invisible.

They were newly and remotely happy. He did not even regret the loss of his sight in these times of dark, palpable joy. A certain exultance swelled his soul. (SSS, p.301)

But this unspeakably intimate "connubial felicity" has been increasingly under strain:

Sometimes, after months of this intensity, a sense of burden overcame Isabel, a weariness, a terrible ennui, in that silent house approached between a colonnade of tall-shafted pines. Then she felt she would go mad, for she could not bear it. And sometimes he had devastating fits of depression, which seemed to lay waste his whole being. It was worse than depression - a black misery, when his own life was a torture to him, and when his presence was unbearable to his wife. The dread went down to the roots of her soul as these black days recurred. In a kind of panic she tried to wrap herself up still further in her husband. (SSS, pp.301-302)

The linking of the word "panic" with pine-trees and roots, madness and dread, suggests the panic terror traditionally associated with the god Pan. Isabel's first child had died in infancy, during the War. Now she is heavily pregnant with her second child and she is afraid that the demands of motherhood will conflict with the demands of her blind husband:

If only she could feel that he, too, would be at peace and happy when the child came! She did so want to luxuriate in a rich, physical satisfaction of maternity. But the man, what would he do? How could she provide for him, how avert those shattering black moods of his, which destroyed them both? (SSS, p.302)

Lawrence's description of the pregnant state is remarkably sensitive to the female experience:

She wanted to be able to bear her child in peace, to nod by the fire and drift, vaguely, physically, from day to day. (SSS, p.304)

The little note from Bertie had disturbed Isabel's calm composure, "a sort of mask she wore over her whole body", and she felt "a fluttering agitation of re-awakening" from the sleepy lethargy of maternity. In the past, Maurice and Bertie had not liked each other, so she had let her friendship lapse. Surprisingly, Maurice had suggested the visit that Isabel now awaited, racked with restlessness and doubt.

As she waits, a fir-tree imposes itself on Isabel's consciousness, through the window glass. Fir-trees, like pine-trees, are the sacred trees of Pan. Then, through the looking-glass, the facial expressions Lawrence always associated with Pan are recognized in Isabel's reflection:

Her nerves were hurting her. she looked automatically again at the high, uncurtained windows. In the last dusk she could just perceive outside a huge fir-tree swaying its boughs: it was as if she thought it rather than saw it. The rain came flying on the window panes. Ah, why had she no peace? These two men, why did they tear at her? Why did they not come why was there this suspense?

She sat in a lassitude that was really suspense and irritation. Maurice, at least, might come in - there was nothing to keep him out. She rose to her feet. Catching sight of her reflection in a mirror, she glanced at herself with a slight smile of recognition, as if she were an old friend to herself. Her face was oval and calm, her nose a little arched. Her neck made a beautiful line down to her shoulder. With hair knotted loosely behind, she had something of a warm, maternal look. Thinking this of herself, she arched her eyebrows and her rather heavy eyelids, with a little flicker of a smile, and for a moment her grey eyes looked

amused and wicked, a little sardonic, out of her transfigured Madonna face. (SSS, pp.304-305)

The phrase used in relation to the fir-tree, "it was as if she thought it rather than saw it", recalls the white church that "seemed like a thought only" to Egbert on the battle-field in "England, My England" (SSS, p.256). The fir-tree manifests the idea of Pan in the same way that the white church symbolized Christian ideas. Seeing her calm and maternal mask reflected in the mirror, Isabel re-adjusts her image. It is an indication of self-knowledge. Just for a moment, the devilish look of Pan flickers over the angel face of the Madonna. The description of Isabel's reflection also bears an unmistakable resemblance to the Mona Lisa. In "The Crown", Lawrence declared that Leonardo da Vinci knew about the endless flux of life and death: "It is Mona Lisa's ironic smile" (*Phoenix II*, p.403). Isabel's "little flicker of a smile" reflects that knowledge. Isabel and Maurice live in rooms at the front of the Grange.<sup>3</sup> The rear premises are occupied by the Wemhams who are farmers. Unlike the romantic idyll that was sustained by London money in "England, My England", in "The Blind Man" "the handsome rooms in front" depend upon agriculture. This symbolic relationship of front to back permeates the story, and is vividly expressed in the contrast between Isabel's dining-room and the farm kitchen:

A woman had lighted a tall lamp beside the table, and spread the cloth. The long dining-room was dim, with its elegant but rather severe pieces of old furniture. Only the round table glowed softly under the light. It had a rich, beautiful effect. The white cloth glistened and dropped its heavy, pointed lace corners almost to the carpet, the china was old and handsome, creamy-yellow, with a blotched pattern of harsh red and deep blue, the cups large and bell-shaped, the teapot gallant. (SSS, p.304)

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3. The Grange was partly based on the rented vicarage at Upper Lydbrook, Ross-on-Wye, in the Forest of Dean, where Lawrence stayed with Catharine Carswell and her husband between 26 and 31 August 1918.



Isabel looks at her dining-table "with superficial appreciation" before looking out through the windows at the fir-tree. After smiling at herself in the mirror she walks down the hall to the farmstead at the back. The visible glamour of the dining-room is replaced by the overwhelming "scent of dairy, and of farm-kitchen, and of farm-yard and of leather" as Isabel enters the farm premises.

The farm-people were at tea, seated a little distance from her, round a long, narrow table, in the centre of which stood a white lamp. Ruddy faces, ruddy hands holding food, red mouths working, heads bent over the tea-cups: men, land-girls, boys: it was tea-time, feeding-time. (SSS, p.305)

The elegant front room where Isabel the book-reviewer pursues her literary activities relates to the back kitchen where the farm-workers are like beasts at a trough, as a flower to its roots and light to darkness.

Maurice is still able to help out on the farm, despite his blindness, and he gains great satisfaction from this menial work. In the "Education of the People" essays, begun in the same month that he wrote "The Blind Man" and finished two years later in Taormina, Lawrence wrote that the point about "handwork" was "that it should not be mindwork". Maurice's blindness is no handicap in the work about the farm, milking the cows, attending to the pigs and horses, pulping the sweet turnips. Such jobs "are a question of knowing, by direct physical contact".<sup>4</sup> When Isabel goes out to the stable to look for him, she goes into deeper and deeper darkness and she has the experience of being blind. The stable is "a simple well of darkness", smelling of "hot animal life", but with "no sign of a light anywhere":

she was aware of the presence of the dark hindquarters of the horses, though she could not see them, and she was afraid. Something wild stirred in her heart. (SSS, p.306)

In the darkness, Maurice is indistinguishable from the horses:

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4. "Education of the People" in *Phoenix*, pp.587-635 (p.653).

She could hear and feel her husband entering and invisibly passing among the horses near to her, in darkness as they were, actively intermingled. The rather low sound of his voice as he spoke to the horses came velvety to her nerves. How near he was, and how invisible! The darkness seemed to be in a strange swirl of violent life, just upon her. She turned giddy. (SSS, p.307)

The sound of Maurice's voice "seemed like a touch" and "whilst he was so utterly invisible she was afraid of him". In the stable Maurice seemed to be part of a dark, Dionysian life-force. When he walks back to the house the blind man is described as a dark tower. Isabel balances against her husband as if he were the trunk of a tree:

She could feel the clever, careful, strong contact of his feet with the earth, as she balanced against him. For a moment he was a tower of darkness to her, as if he rose out of the earth. (SSS, p.307)

This description is also suggestive of a phallic herm, the sacred stone or pillar which was the primitive origin of the god Hermes, guide to the underworld and the father of Pan. At the end of the story Maurice is described as "a strange colossus" (SSS, p.317). The blind man's powerful, muscular legs with massive thighs and knees ally him physically with the "animal grossness of the back" (SSS, p.308). Maurice seems to be half man, half horse, like a centaur. Pan's lower half is traditionally that of a goat, but Lawrence wished to strengthen the image of the god, in order to make Pan more noble. As the Dean would say in *St. Mawr*, six years later,

"I have always found it difficult to see the Great God Pan in that goat-legged old father of satyrs. He may have a good deal of influence - the world will always be full of goaty old satyrs. But we find them somewhat vulgar. Even our late King Edward. The goaty old satyrs are too comprehensible to me to be venerable, and I fail to see a Great God in the father of them all"<sup>5</sup>

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5. *St. Mawr and Other Stories*, edited by Brian Finney. (Cambridge, 1983). pp.64-65.

In *St. Mawr*, of course, Pan was to become all horse.

In Edwardian literature the Great God Pan had become the Great Goat Pan, either sentimental and benevolent or vulgar and malevolent.<sup>6</sup> As a literary motif, "the Plutarchan formula, "Pan is dead," along with its child, the Arcadiac formula, "Pan is still alive," had been subject to over-use in the period 1890-1914; then the metaphor fell into relative obscurity.<sup>7</sup> Lawrence, as Patricia Merivale has established, was a major exception to the trend. But Merivale's hypothesis, that Lawrence only began using the Pan myth with any seriousness in 1924, when it "had been out of fashion for ten years", is quite wrong.<sup>8</sup> Lawrence did not forget about Pan during the 1915-1924 period, before what Merivale calls the "Pan cluster" of 1924-1926. In 1915, Lawrence had written to E.M. Forster, criticising the image of Pan in Forster's "The Story of a Panic":

Don't you see Pan is the undifferentiated root and stem drawing out of unfathomable darkness, and my Angels and Devils are old-fashioned symbols for the flower into which we strive to burst.<sup>9</sup>

He accuses Forster of confusing Pan with universal love: "You give Pan great attributes of Christ". Lawrence saw Pan as a chthonian power, the son of Hermes. He restored the god to potency by re-establishing his source in darkness and by showing him to be a creative-destructive force. The Lawrentian Pan has the attributes of Dionysus and Hermes, rather than Christ, and is closer to the image of

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6. Gilbert Murray, in his *Five Stages of Greek Religion* relates how the blind Homer "purified" the image of the god Hermes: "Now this phallic stone post was quite unsuitable to Homer. It was not decent; it was not quite human; and every personage in Homer has to be both. In the *Iliad* Hermes is simply removed, and a beautiful creation or tradition, Iris, the rainbow-goddess, takes his place as the messenger from heaven to earth. In the *Odyssey* he is admitted, but so changed and castigated that no-one would recognize the old Herm in the beautiful and gracious youth who performs the gods' messages. I can only detect in his language one possible trace of his old Pelasgian character" (p.77). Lawrence reverses the Homeric "purification" by returning to Pan the phallic power removed by Homeric classicism.

7. Patricia Merivale, "The "Death of Pan" In Victorian Literature", *Victorian Newsletter*, 23 (Spring, 1963), 1-3 (p.3).

8. Patricia Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God: his Myth in Modern Times*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p.194.

9. Letter to E.M. Forster, 3 February 1915, *Letters*, II, p.275.

Pan presented by G.K. Chesterton in his *Life of Blake*. Patricia Merivale has described Chesterton's conception of Pan,

equated with the supernatural, with a primitive Greek sense of wonder, associated with Dionysus, sex, wine, and what Chesterton calls the "mysticism of the forest" (*Victorian Newsletter*, p.3)

But Merivale fails to connect this with the Lawrentian Pan, and generally neglects the Pan myth in Lawrence's work unless it is signposted by overt allusions. In *Maurice*, the blind man, Lawrence conflates the natural sensuality of Pan with the underworld power of Hermes and the violent force of Dionysus.

Maurice has a small head but large, intelligent hands. He has a "new way of consciousness", relying on the "sheer immediacy of blood-contact with the substantial world", tactile rather than visual consciousness. With Dionysian force, when Maurice touches his wife's cheeks "the touch had an almost hypnotising effect on her" (SSS, pp.308-309). Both Bertie and Isabel are "a little afraid, and deeply disturbed" by Maurice (SSS, p.311), and agree that something in his presence "seems to put one's mind to sleep" (SSS, p.314). Bertie Reid is all mind. Little and dark, with his thin, wispy hair, big forehead, sad eyes, odd short legs and thin white fingers, he is the complete physical opposite of Maurice. Bertie fears physical intimacy. "Unable ever to enter into close contact of any sort", his relationship with women is chivalrous and platonic rather than sexual. He is like a brother to Isabel rather than a lover. Bertie is successful in the public world and he associates creativity with mental activity; the only life is the life of the mind. This is made clear when he questions Maurice about the effects of his blindness and Maurice replies that "There's a good deal when you're not active":

"Is there?" said Bertie. "What exactly? It always seems to me that when there is no thought and no action, there is nothing." (SSS, p.313)

Maurice insists that there is "something", although he is unable to say what it is, just as the "something strange" in Maurice's presence is "indefinable" (SSS, p.311). As the Dean would say in *St. Mawr*, what is comprehensible cannot be worthy of religious reverence. The "rich positivity" of Maurice's life is a return to the life of the body, to the root and the well-head and the source of life:

All that dark, concentrated, complete, all-containing surge of which I am the fountain; and of which the well-head is my loins, is urging forward, like a plant to flower or a fountain to its parabola.\*<sup>10</sup>

But, as Lawrence explained to Forster, "no plant can live towards the root" and it would be stupid and perverse to believe that the source was everything. The lapping tide of Maurice's life is subject to violent storms:

at times the flow would seem to be checked and thrown back. Then it would beat inside him like a tangled sea, and he was tortured in the shattered chaos of his own blood. He grew to dread this arrest, this throw-back, this chaos inside himself, when he seemed merely at the mercy of his own powerful and conflicting elements. How to get some measure of control or surety, this was the question. (SSS, p.309)

The posing of this question shows that it would be quite wrong to think that Lawrence was "not in the least concerned with reconciling the Apollonian and the Dionysian".<sup>11</sup> "Simplistic reading", as James C. Cowan explains,

tends to attribute to Lawrence a one-sided, exclusively Dionysian sexual ecstasy, primitive religiosity, and intellectual irrationalism.

Whilst Lawrence believed that it was necessary to reassert the Dionysian forces to correct the imbalance of decadent and sterile Apollonian forces, he did not advocate an imbalance on the opposite side:

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10. See note 9 above.

11. George A. Panichas, "D.H. Lawrence and the Ancient Greeks", *English Miscellany*, 16 (1965), 195-214 (p.196).

In every area of his thought - historiography, theology, psychology, literary criticism - Lawrence makes his plea for a balanced polarity between the Apollonian and the Dionysian; and the effect of much of his fiction derives from the dialectical tension between the two. (Cowan, p.78)

In a letter to Katherine Mansfield, Lawrence wrote that the end of "The Blind Man" was "queer and ironical".<sup>12</sup> The final scene, between Maurice and Bertie in the barn, is in the tradition of the sinister Pan who appeared in the horror stories of Arthur Machen, E.F. Benson and Saki. A typical touch of Lawrentian naturalism occurs when Maurice accidentally knocks off Bertie's hat as he stretches out his hand to touch him:

"I thought you were taller," he said, starting. Then he laid his hand on Bertie Reid's head, closing the dome of the skull in a soft, firm, grasp, gathering it, as it were; then, shifting his grasp and softly closing again with a fine, close pressure, till he had covered the skull and the face of the smaller man, tracing the brows, and touching the full, closed eyes, touching the small nose and the nostrils, the rough, short moustache, the mouth, the rather strong chin. The hand of the blind man grasped the shoulder, the arm, the hand of the other man. He seemed to take him, in the soft, travelling grasp. (SSS, p.316)

The laying on of hands seems both religious and sexual. "The lawyer stood almost annihilated" after this physical assault. Then Maurice asks Bertie to touch his scarred eyes:

Now Bertie quivered with revulsion.. yet he was under the power of the blind man, as if hypnotised. He lifted his hand, and laid the fingers on the scar, on the scarred eyes. Maurice suddenly covered them with his own hand, pressed the fingers of the other man upon his disfigured eye-sockets, trembling in every fibre, and rocking slightly, slowly, from side to side. he remained thus for a minute or more, whilst Bertie stood as if in a swoon, unconscious, imprisoned. (SSS, p.316)

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12. Letter to Katherine Mansfield, 5 December 1918. *Letters*, III, p.303.

In a potent reversal of Christian miracle, bringing darkness to light, the blind man attempts to make Bertie see, as he sees, the god in things, with what Cartwright called "the third eye" in *St. Mawr*:

In the daytime you see the thing. But if your third eye is open, which sees only the things that can't be seen, you may see Pan within the thing, hidden: you may see with your third eye, which is darkness. (*SM*, p.65)

To Maurice, knowledge is a question of sensual contact rather than mental understanding:

"Oh, my God," he said, "we shall know each other now, shan't we? We shall know each other now."

But Bertie is struck mute with terror and is unable to answer this declaration of blood-knowledge, with its Hebraic undertone of carnal acquaintance.

He had an unreasonable fear, lest the other man should suddenly destroy him. (*SSS*, p.316)

Traditionally, as Cartwright would explain in *St. Mawr*, if you ever saw Pan with the naked eye you died. Lawrence uses the traditional myth to suggest that Bertie, left haggard, with sunken eyes that are glazed with misery, has been touched by death:

He could not bear it that he had been touched by the blind man, his insane reserve broken in. He was like a mollusc whose shell is broken. (*SSS*, p.317)

Traditional myth is seamlessly incorporated here, without overt allusions to any gods, into the Lawrentian theory of necessary reduction as expounded in "The Crown". Maurice's touch has broken the shell of Bertie's ego. It is a divine act, a revelation of the god in him:

The spirit of destruction is divine, when it breaks the ego and opens the soul to the wide heavens. (*Phoenix II*, p.402)

For Bertie "the near touch of death may be a release into life" (*Phoenix II*, p.399). Maurice, of course, had his brush with death in the War. His blindness released a new flow of positive life and "a new way of consciousness substituted itself in him" (SSS, p.309). When Bertie first arrived at the Grange Maurice had felt desolate and excluded from the "life circle" that seemed to exist between Bertie and his wife. Hearing their voices "he seemed shut out - like a child that is left out".

He hated Bertie Reid, and at the same time he knew the hatred was nonsense, he knew it was the outcome of his own weakness. (SSS, p.310)

At the end of the story "Maurice was actually filled with hot, poignant love" for Bertie. He has outgrown the hatred and the weakness, and as Isabel says, he'll be happier now. Maurice is elated by the blossoming of this passionate friendship:

The new delicate fulfilment of mortal friendship had come as a revelation and surprise to him, something exquisite and un hoped for. (SSS, p.317)

It is like a flower on the tree of his life. The blind man, like the god Dionysus, is imbued with both the spirit of destruction and of creation.

Behind the story of "The Blind Man" lies the idea of another kind of knowledge, as explained in the "Education of the People" essay:

The body is not an instrument, but a living organism. And the goal of life is not the idea, the mental consciousness is not the sum and essence of a human being. Human consciousness is not only ideal; cognition, or knowing, is not only a mental act. Acts of emotion and volition are acts of primary cognition and may be almost entirely non-mental. (*Phoenix*, p.618)



In keeping with the theme, the name of Pan is hidden, for a name implies a mental concept. As Lawrence wrote later,

When Pan was greatest, he was not even Pan. He was nameless and unconceived, mentally.<sup>13</sup>

In "The Blind Man", Lawrence used the Pan myth in conjunction with the relationship between body and mind. In "The Ladybird", he focusses on the relationship between body and soul and makes more use of the traditional conflict between Pan and Christ than the conflict between Pan and Apollo. This later work, which Lawrence called a novelette and which has since been called, variously, a long story, a short novel and a tale, is like a prose-poem in the cumulative impact of its symbolism. Again, we do not find the name of Pan, but we do find the names of many other gods, Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Phrygian and Syrian. In the introduction to the Penguin edition, Melissa Partridge finds this rich broth of mixed myth problematical:

Nowhere else in his fiction does Lawrence make such full use of classical mythology, or expect so much esoteric knowledge from his readers. The device is hardly successful. Classical references which began as metaphors have taken on a life of their own. Lawrence uses similar allusions very beautifully and movingly in his late poetry, but in a work of fiction with a story to tell, with some residue of moral and psychological realism, the mythic and realistic elements become incongruous. (CSN, p.25)

Partridge's sweeping dismissal of "The Ladybird" as "hardly successful" can be challenged. Lawrence's use of myth was eclectic, and any development was idiosyncratic. Thus, a familiarity with his essays is probably more essential than detailed knowledge of classical myth. The esoteric knowledge required by readers of "The Ladybird" may largely be found in "The Two Principles" essay of

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13. "Pan In America" in *Phoenix*, pp:22-31 (p.24).

1919.<sup>14</sup> In the foreword to *Fantasia of the Unconscious* written in 1921, Lawrence called himself "an amateur of amateurs" rather than a scholar:

I am no "scholar" of any sort. But I am very grateful to scholars for their sound work. I have found hints, suggestions for what I say here in all kinds of scholarly books; from the Yoga and Plato and St John the Evangel and the early Greek philosophers like Herakleitos down to Frazer and his "Golden Bough", and even Freud and Frobenius. Even then I only remember hints - and I proceed by intuition.<sup>15</sup>

What he says in *Fantasia* and the earlier *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* revolves around the theory of cosmic polarity, developed from "The Two Principles" essay. The universe is visualised as "a vast dual polarity between sun and moon" (*Fantasia*, p.157). In "The Ladybird", myth is interwoven with metaphysics in an attempt at a fictional realization of this vision. We find strong hints of Nietzsche and Jung. The theme of death and resurrection is also on a cosmic scale, seeming to focus on the gods themselves as much as the human protagonists. Significantly, "The Ladybird" is a tale of aristocrats. "The years 1916 and 1917 were the years when the old spirit died for ever in England".<sup>16</sup> After the War, even the gods are born again.

The opening exclamation "How many swords had Lady Beveridge in her pierced heart!" (*CSN*, p.206) recalls Lawrence's description of the impact of the War as a "spear through the side of all sorrows and hopes".<sup>17</sup> It also brings to mind the crucifixion of Christ. The beginning of the tale is suffused with the agony of a world at war, a world blighted with suffering and sickness and death. Lady Beveridge had once been called "the soul of England", and she had a Christian soul. Even though "death seemed to be mowing with wide swathes through her family", she held on to her belief in love and charity. But this "little, unyielding

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14. *Phoenix II*, pp.227-237.

15. See Introduction, note 3.

16. "The Ladybird" in *The Complete Short Novels*, pp.206-275 (p.207).

17. See Chapter 2, note 4 above.

Mater Dolorosa" was being beaten. During the last years of the War, such Christian humanism was becoming unfashionable:

Society was beginning to jeer at this little, worn bird of an out-of-date righteousness and aesthetic. (CSN, p.207)

This "little, worn bird" of Christian love is to be replaced by a different aristocratic symbol, the symbolic ladybird of the title. But Lady Beveridge will not give up without a struggle. In the late autumn of 1917, stricken by the loss of her youngest son, "she felt she *must* give in and just die" but she rises up and visits the sick and wounded German prisoners. Amongst the officers and gentlemen in the hospital, she discovers an old friend, Count Dionys Psanek. He lies mortally ill, shot through the chest. "He might be dead" (CSN, p.207). The fine lines of his face had once been "fired with a keen male energy":

Now the yellowish swarthy paste of his flesh seemed dead, and the fine black brows seemed drawn on the face of one dead. The eyes, however, were alive; but only just alive, unseeing and unknowing. (CSN, p.208)

After visiting the wounded men, Lady Beveridge goes to visit her daughter, Lady Daphne, who has also been hurt by the War. Before war broke out she had been a great beauty,

Now, sorrow, pain, thwarted passion had done her great damage. Her husband was missing in the East. Her baby had been born dead. Her two darling brothers were dead, and she was ill, always ill. (CSN, p.209)

Daphne "was threatened with phthisis". Her consumption is symbolic of a universal spiritual sickness, the "terrible pneumonia tearing the breast of the world" (CSN, p.212). The cause of Daphne's illness, and therefore of the universal sickness, is a destructive victory of mind over body. Daphne has a dualistic parentage. She has inherited her father's blood:

The earldom had begun with a riotous, daredevil border soldier, and this was the blood that flowed on.

But "she had been brought up by her mother to admire only the good" and had married Basii Apsley, a poor man, an "adorable" commoner rather than an aristocratic daredevil. This thwarting of her naturally passionate nature had led to the frustration, anger and bitterness that had shattered her nerves:

And yet, her whole will was fixed in her adoption of her mother's creed, and in the condemnation of her handsome, proud, brutal father, who had made so much misery in the family. Yes, her will was fixed in the determination that life should be gentle and good and benevolent. Whereas her blood was reckless, the blood of daredevils. Her will was the stronger of the two. But her blood had its revenge on her. So it is with strong natures to-day: shattered from the inside. (CSN, pp.210-211)

Lawrence himself, of course, was consumptive and was deeply affected by the battleground of his own parents' marriage. He tried to shed the latter, psychological sickness, in *Sons and Lovers*, where he wrote his childhood experience into the "fearful, bloody battle" between the Morels:

His nature was purely sensuous, and she strove to make him moral, religious.<sup>18</sup>

In later years he came to feel that he had done his father an injustice in *Sons and Lovers*.<sup>19</sup> The stress placed on the body and the passions in later works can be seen as an attempt to redress the balance. The recurring theme of a mother who tries to turn her children against their father reflects Lawrence's own struggle to come to terms with the irreconcilable differences between Lydia and Arthur Lawrence. To compound the sense of self-division Lawrence also felt divided

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18. *Sons and Lovers*. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1948), p.23.

19. See Harry T. Moore, *The Priest of Love*, pp.11-12.

between his working-class roots and his aristocratic inclinations.<sup>20</sup> in

"Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious" he wrote:

The individual psyche divided against itself divides the world against itself, and an unthinkable progress of calamity ensues unless there be a reconciliation. (*Fantasia*, p.240)

Lawrence's theory of cosmic polarity between opposed principles had its roots in a very personal quest for psychic equilibrium. In "The Ladybird", Lady Beveridge and Basil Apsley belong to the negative pole of the moon; Lord Beveridge and Count Dionys belong to the positive sun-pole. Daphne is "the arch which spans the duality" of the two poles (*Fantasia*, p. 159). Daphne's father, the English Earl, is a natural aristocrat whose pagan power and passion has been beaten down by the democratic Christian philanthropy of his wife.

He was a passionate man, with a passionate man's sensitiveness, generosity, and instinctive overbearing. But *his* dark passionate nature and his violent sensitiveness had been subjected now to fifty-five years' subtle repression, condemnation, repudiation, till he had almost come to believe in his own wrongness. His little, frail wife, all love for humanity, she was the genuine article. Himself, he was labelled selfish, sensual, cruel, etc., etc. So by now he always seemed to be standing aside, in the shadow, letting himself be obliterated by the pallid rabble of the democratic hurry. That was the impression he gave, of a man standing back, half-shamed, half-haughty, semi-hidden in the dark back-ground. (*CSN*, p.258)

Lawrence's description of the victory of love over power seems to owe much to Nietzsche's idea of the transvaluation of values, the idea that what was originally considered as naturally "good" was conceived as "bad" by Christian morality.<sup>21</sup>

There are other hints of Nietzsche in "The Ladybird". In *On the Genealogy of*

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20. In a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell he confided, "I would give a great deal to have been born an aristocrat", (11? February 1915), *Letters*, II, p.281.

21. Nietzsche wrote about master and slave morality and the transvaluation of values in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Both books were available in the English translation of *The Complete Works*, edited by Oscar Levy, (London and New York, 1909-1913). See also Colin Milton, *Lawrence and Nietzsche: A Study in Influence* and J.B. Foster, *Heirs to Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism*.

*Morals* he wrote: "All instincts which do not discharge themselves outwardly turn *inwards*", which describes the nature of Daphne's sickness. Also, in this work, Nietzsche contrasted the blonde Aryans with the "dark, black-haired aboriginals".<sup>22</sup> Lady Beveridge describes Count Dionys as dark and "aboriginal" rather than "Aryan" (CSN, p.209). But Lawrence reverses the Nietzschean order of things. In "The Ladybird", the dark and aboriginal Count is the god-like aristocrat, whilst the golden-haired Basil Apsley is the commoner.

When Daphne and her mother talk about Count Dionys, it is clear that he is a changed man. Daphne remembers him as he was before the War, a dapper little dandy, "and an amazingly good dancer, small, yet electric", but "a little comical" and "a bit like a monkey". Neither Daphne nor her mother had ever thought of him as beautiful. But now Lady Beveridge finds "something remote and in a sad way heroic in his dark face", something primitive and ages old "and, yes, a certain beauty," (CSN, pp.213-214). Daphne and her mother go to visit the Count dressed in sable and sealskin coats, the furs of dead animals. Dionys turns away from them in evident fear, and "Daphne noticed how his fine black hair grew uncut over his small, animal ears". As he keeps his face averted,

She felt suddenly stifled in her closed furs, and threw her coat open, showing her thin white throat and plain black slip dress on her flat breast. He turned again unwillingly to look at her. He looked at her as if she were some strange creature standing near him. (CSN,p.215)

There is much eye imagery in "The Ladybird". The Count's eyes are full of darkness and fear and pain, "wide-open, very black and of no legible expression" (CSN,p.214). Daphne's eyes are heavy with nervous exhaustion, full of sadness, "dull, languid, almost glaucous" with "slightly reddened rims" (CSN, p.210). Their eyes are the windows to their souls. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, Lawrence

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22. *A Nietzsche Reader*, selected and translated by R.J. Hollingdale, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1977), p.117 and p.111.

wrote that the face was the great window of the self, and that the eyes were the third great gateway to the psyche, after the mouth and the nose:

Here the soul goes in and out of the body, as a bird flying forth and coming home. (*Fantasia*, p.63)

Later, in "The Ladybird", Count Dionys uses the image of the bird when he tells Daphne that he has lost his soul in the War:

The continual explosions of guns and shells! It seems to have driven my soul out of me like a bird frightened away at last. (*CSN*, p.221)

According to *Fantasia* (pp.63-66), Dionys has the dark, apprehensive look of the savage, the "subjective" vision of the Egyptian, the "sensual way of beholding". In contrast, Daphne's eyes show the strain of looking into the light, trying always to comprehend, in the "objective", spiritual, modern way of seeing. Dionys' face is almost hidden behind a black beard, "coming up strange from under his chin and from his throat, up to the socket of his ear", which makes him seem more like an animal than a human-being. As Daphne realised,

the bonds, the connexions between him and his life in the world had broken, and he lay there a bit of loose, palpitating humanity, shot away from the body of humanity. (*CSN*, p.217)

Count Dionys wishes to be dead:

"Why did they not let me die?" he said. "I wanted death now."  
(*CSN*, p.215)

When Daphne asks if she can do anything for him, he says he wants to be put underground:

"If I could be buried deep, very deep down, where everything is forgotten! But they draw me up, back to the surface. I would not

mind if they buried me alive, if it were very deep, and dark, and the earth heavy above." (CSN, p.217)

Daphne had also felt that hope was a curse, a torment and an "insult to one's soul" rather than a blessing: "Why could it not all be clean disaster, and have done with it?" (CSN, p.211). When Lady Beveridge spoke of the sick world getting better, she "spoke from the heart" (CSN, p.212). But Daphne did not share her mother's New Testament vision of Christian healing. She wished instead for an apocalyptic end to all the suffering:

"Everyone I see suffering these same awful things, it makes me wish for the end of the world. And I quite see that the world won't end -" (CSN, p.212)

Before visiting the Count, Daphne had received confirmation that her husband Basil was still alive. He was wounded and imprisoned, but "his wounds were healing" (CSN, p.214). During the winter the Count lies on his sick bed like a dead man and Daphne continues with her visits:

He neither read nor talked during the long winter nights and the short winter days. He only lay for hours with black , open eyes, seeing everything around with a touch of disgust, and heeding nothing.

Daphne went to see him now and then. She never forgot him for long. He seemed to come into her mind suddenly, as if by sorcery. (CSN, p.219)

A dynamic connection has been made between them.

There is an early suggestion of the Plutonic myth in Dionys' wish to be underground, and in his request that Daphne should not "bring flowers into this grave" (CSN, p.218). At the turning of the year, Dionys feels life quicken again and he wishes for the sun on his face:

So that when in February there came a blue, bright morning, the morning that suggests yellow crocuses and the smell of a mezereon tree and the smell of damp, warm earth, Daphne hastily got a taxi and drove out to the hospital.



"You have come to put me in the sun," he said the moment he saw her.

"Yes, that's what I came for," she said. (CSN, p.220)

Dionys tells Daphne that he is "a subject of the sun" and that he belongs to "the fire-worshippers". He asks her to let him wrap her "water-gold" hair round his hands, like a bandage:

"You know, it is the hermetic gold - but so much of water in it, of the moon. That will soothe my hands." (CSN, p.221)

The relationship between Dionys and Daphne is a dynamic contact between the sun-principle and the moon-principle, "and these principles are known to us in immediate contact as fire and water" (*Fantasia*, p. 157). The Lawrentian alchemy links cosmological science with the poetry of myth in a phrase like "hermetic gold". He fuses the myths associated with the Greek Hermes, messenger of the gods and guide to the underworld, together with the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus, the founder of alchemical occult science. We recall that when she first visited Dionys, Daphne wore "a dull gold cap with wings" (CSN, p.214), which is very suggestive of the hat worn by the Greek Hermes in some illustrations. She is associated with the Egyptian Hermes by her "hermetic gold" hair. Daphne is both a conductor of souls and a conductor of electricity. She is the earth wire, who will "complete the circuit of the opposing currents" between her two men (CSN, p.257). Both men are associated with Dionysus.<sup>23</sup> Daphne remembers the "love-days" of the honeymoon, with her husband "the Dionysos, full of sap, milk and honey and northern golden wine" (CSN, p.234). Count Dionys is overtly connected with Dionysus by his name. But then he says,

We should all have new names now. I thought of a name for myself, but I have forgotten it. No longer Johann Dionys. That is shot away. (CSN, p.216)

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23. An early story written in October 1915, called "The Thimble", describes the honeymoon of the couple who Lawrence would develop into Daphne and Basil as "a sort of Bacchic revel before death", *Phoenix II*, pp.53-63 (p.53).

He is the complete physical opposite to the tall, golden Basil that Daphne remembers. Lady Beveridge described the Count as small, sallow and "smorto, you know the Italian word" (CSN, p.213). Count Dionys has the qualities of a southern, rather than a northern Italian, however. He is not so much a Pan-like Il Duro as a Sicilian.

At the time of writing "The Ladybird", Lawrence was reading the works of the Sicilian novelist Giovanni Verga, whom he described as "extraordinarily good - peasant - quite modern - Homeric".<sup>24</sup> In January 1922, he began translating Verga's *Mastro-don Gesualto*, and in the introduction to his translation wrote of the Sicilians being "the nearest descendants of the classic Greeks", and soulless as Dionys.<sup>25</sup> Lawrence admired the passion and colour of the landscape in Verga's stories:

we feel at once the undying beauty of Sicily and the Greek world, a morning beauty, that has something miraculous in it, of purple anemones and cyclamens, and sumach and olive trees, and the place where Persephone came above world, bringing back spring. (*Phoenix II*, p.286)

The whole of the Sicilian man's life was spent out of doors, "in the splendour of the sun and the landscape, and the delicious elemental aloneness of the old world", and Lawrence considered that it was perhaps because of that lovely outside world that the Sicilians, like the old Greeks, never became introspective:

They had not been driven to *that* form of compensation. With them, life pulses outwards, and the positive reality is outside. There is no turning inwards. (*Phoenix II*, p.286)

In February, Daphne had come to put Dionys in the sun. In a sense, she restores him to life. She gives him back his manhood and his soul. The Sicilians and the

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24. Letter to Edward Garnett, 10 November 1921. *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, edited by Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton and Elizabeth Mansfield, IV (Cambridge, 1987), p.115.

25. "Introduction to *Mastro-don Gesualdo*, by Giovanni Verga" in *Phoenix II*, pp.279-288 (p.284).

ancient Greeks, according to Lawrence, had "no insides", no concept of the "inner Jesus" (*Phoenix II*, p.284). But unlike the Greek, the Sicilian was "dreadfully godless", lacking the "bright and busy gods outside":

The tragedy is, he has no heroic gods and goddesses to fix his imagination. (*Phoenix II*, pp.284-285)

When the Count tells Daphne that he has lost his soul in the War, he assures her that it will come back. He thanks her for being so good to him whilst he is soulless, saying "Your soul is so quiet and heroic" (*CSN*, p.221). When introduced to the Count, Daphne's husband says, in commiseration, "prison is prison, even if it were heaven itself" and the Count tells him "Lady Apsley has been the one angel of my heaven" (*CSN*, p.249). The Christian heaven and the Christian concept of soul are associated with imprisonment, and the idea of escaping or breaking free from confinement is a symbolic theme in "The Ladybird". The Count, of course, is a prisoner-of-war. When Daphne visits him one beautiful spring day, to find him sitting out of doors, she asks him whether he is liking the world any better. He questions her concept of "the world" and describes England in terms of confinement and claustrophobia:

"Is this the world - all those little red-brick boxes in rows, where couples of little people live, who decree my destiny -?"

"You don't like England?"

"Ah, England! Little houses like little boxes, each with its domestic Englishman and his domestic wife, each ruling the world because all are alike, so alike -"

"But England isn't all houses."

"Fields then! Little fields with innumerable hedges. Like a net with an irregular mesh, pinned down over this island, and everything under the net." (*CSN*, p.226)

The Count's feelings appear to have a direct biographical source. In the winter of 1921, Lawrence was considering taking up Mabel Dodge Sterne's offer of a home in Taos, New Mexico. His letters of the time are full of restless discontent and of

travel plans. He was sick and tired of England and even of Europe.<sup>26</sup> Earl Brewster was trying to persuade Lawrence to join himself and Achsah in Ceylon, and in the event Lawrence went to Taos via Ceylon and Australia. He told Brewster, in a November letter, that he had been reading Verga's novels and stories. He wrote also that he had been "in a hell of a temper for three weeks" and that if he had not his own stories to amuse himself with he "should die, chiefly of spleen". His mood is revealed very clearly in this letter:

it is a world of canaille: absolutely. Canaille, canaglia, Schweinhunderei, stink-pots. Pfuil - pish, pshaw, prrr! They all stink in my nostrils.

That's how I feel in Taormina, let the Ionian sea have fits of blueness if it likes, and Calabria twinkle like seven jewels, and the white trumpet-tree under the balcony perfume six heavens with sweetness. That's how I feel. A curse, a murrain, a pox on this crawling, sniffing, spunkless brood of humanity.

So, what's it like in Ceylon? I'd much rather go to Mars or the Moon. But Ceylon if there's nothing better. Is everybody there as beshitten as here? I'll bet they are.<sup>27</sup>

The angry mood and impulse to break free objectified in "The Ladybird" had already been expressed six years earlier, in "The Crown", where he had written:

if we are to break through, it must be in the strength of life bubbling inside us. The chicken does not break the shell out of animosity against the shell. It bursts out in its blind desire to move under a greater heavens.

And so must we. We must burst out, and move under a greater heavens. (*Phoenix II*, p.415)

In "The Ladybird", the Count decides that his new name shall be "Psanek" which means "an outlaw" (*CSN*, p.223). He expresses a desire to be free, to be outside the law, and rejects Daphne's Christian remedy of spiritual freedom within physical confinement:

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26. See Letter to Earl and Achsah Brewster, (29 September 1921): "my heart and soul are broken in Europe"; to S.S. Kotellansky, (10 November 1921): "I feel very sick with England. It is like a dead dog that died of a love disease like syphills"; to Thomas Seltzer, 9 January 1922: "I am so tired of Europe - really tired in my bones", *Letters*, IV, p.90, p.114 and p.157.

27. Letter to Earl Brewster, 2 November 1921, *Letters*, IV, pp.108-109.

"If I were free! If I were outside the law. Ah, Lady Daphne, how does one get outside the law?"

"By going inside oneself," she said. "Not outside."

His face took on a greater expression of disgust.

"No, no. I am a man, even if I am little. I am not a spirit, that coils itself inside a shell. In my soul is anger, anger, anger. Give me room for that." (CSN, p.227)

The Count regains his soul, but it is deep and dark and earthy rather than a spirit on a higher plane, cthonic rather than metaphysical. We recall the wrong-headedness of Winifred in "England, My England", who loved Egbert as a higher being, "a *higher* being, mind you. Not a deeper" (SSS, p.233). Count Psanek's soul is full of anger rather than love, and as that anger makes strong roots so his belief grows "in the power of my red, dark heart" (CSN, p.239). His deliverance is a matter of physical passion rather than spiritual enlightenment. His god is the God of Destruction. "The Blind Man" ended with an image of the cracked shell of one man's ego. In "The Ladybird" the symbolic breaking open of one man is extended to "the world of man":

God has put the hammer in my breast - the little eternal hammer.  
Hit - hit - hit! It hits on the world of man. It hits, it hits! And it hears  
the thin sound of cracking. The thin sound of cracking. Hark!  
(CSN, p.239)

This God is also a prisoner, "a prisoner of peace" within the Christian religion with its doctrine of love. The Count's hammer strikes at the Christian concept of man as a spirit trapped inside a body. Lawrence refused to see the body as mere clothing for the soul. The first shirt that Daphne makes for Dionys "fitted the spirit, if not the flesh", and she says "I'd rather it had been the reverse for once" (CSN, p.229). The thimble with which she sews the shirts was given to her by the Count before the War. It is decorated with a snake and a scarab beetle, Lawrentian symbols of dissolution. The metal thimble, which is "too heavy", sheathes the living finger-tip which will later touch Dionys with divine passion. After his exclamatory words as a

disciple of the God of Destruction, Dionys says to Daphne, "Do I not know you, Lady Daphne? Do I not? Do I not?". This rhetorical question, like that spoken by Maurice to Bertie in "The Blind Man", is invested with the Hebraic sense of knowledge. But Lawrence uses this meaning ironically. Dionys does not mean carnal knowledge of her body but blood-knowledge of her soul:

"Not the white plucked lily of your body. I have gathered no flower for my ostentatious life. - But in the cold dark, your lily root, Lady Daphne. Ah, yes, you will know it all your life, that I know where your root lies buried, with its sad, sad quick of life." (CSN, p.239)

Dionys is "a man invested with awful secret knowledge" of dark, invisible fire:

"we've got the world inside out. The true living world of fire is dark, throbbing, darker than blood. Our luminous world that we go by is only the white lining of this." (CSN, p.231)

Like the Sicilian, he is a subject of the sun, but he is a subject of the *dark* sun, glowing with a "dark flame of life" (CSN, p.249). The yellow sunshine is only "the inside-out of it all". The old Greeks had "bright and busy gods outside" (*Phoenix II*, p.284). In an inside-out world Dionys is like an old Greek with both a soul and a god, rooted in the true living world of darkness.

The names of the gods in "The Ladybird", apart from Dionysus, are actually goddesses and are used in relation to Daphne. Daphne, according to Carl Kerényi, was the name of a nymph, daughter of a river-god and Earth who was loved by Apollo. The myth associated with her tells how, when pursued by the god, she begged Mother Earth to save her and was turned into a sacred laurel-tree.<sup>28</sup> The narrator tells us, however, that "with her splendid frame, and her lovely, long, strong, legs she was Artemis or Atlanta rather than Daphne" (CSN, p.210). Artemis and Atlanta were both virgin huntresses. Artemis was the twin-sister of Apollo. At one of her festivals, phallic masqueraders worshipped Artemis by a

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28. Carl Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks*. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1958), pp.124-125.

surname which meant the same as Daphnaia, "Laurel-Maiden", and she had other surnames referring to the moon. "When the moon shone, Artemis was present, and beasts and plants would dance" (Kerényi, p.132). Daphne's husband sees her as a moon-goddess of many names, Greek and Roman, Phrygian, Syrian and Egyptian. When he returns from the War, Basil Apsley is not the golden god that Daphne remembered. She anticipates that he will be a changed man:

Ah, he had been through awful fire of experience. He would be something new, a stranger lover who had been through terrible fire, and had come out strange and new, like a god. Ah, new and terrible his love would be, pure and intensified by the awful fire of suffering. A new lover - a new bridegroom - a new, superhuman wedding- night. (CSN, p.240)

But she is unprepared for the fearful truth. On the telephone, his voice is terribly altered, "like cold blue steel", with "a new icy note that went through her veins like death" (CSN, p.240). In the flesh, he looks like death:

His face was gaunt, and there was a curious deathly sub-pallor, though his cheeks were not white. the scar ran livid from the side of his mouth. It was not so very big. But it seemed like a scar in himself, in his brain, as it were. In his eyes was that hard, white, focussed light that fascinated her and was terrible to her. He was different. He was like death; like risen death. She felt she dared not touch him. White death was still upon him. She could tell that he shrank with a kind of agony from contact. "Touch me not, I am not yet ascended unto the Father." - Yet for contact he had come. (CSN, p.243)

He has come back apparently whole, but he has come back from the dead as a pure, Christ-like, spirit. His cold "white, uncanny fire" is at the opposite pole to the flamy, dark fire of Dionys. Before he had gone to war, Basil had called his wife "an Aphrodite of the foam" in poetry (CSN, p.241). On his return he calls her Aphrodite and "Venus of the foam" again. To Basil, Daphne is "moon-mother of the world", and he calls her by the names of the moon-goddesses, Cybele, Isis, Astarte (CSN, p.244). When he asks her whether she will still be able to love him with his scar,

Daphne hides her sick horror and answers him "yes". Basil kneels and kisses her feet again and again:

She was frightened - almost horrified; but she was thrilled deep down to her soul. She really felt she could glow white and fill the universe like the moon, like Astarte, like Isis, like Venus. The grandeur of her own pale power. The man religiously worshipped her, not merely amorously. She was ready for him - for the sacrament of his supreme worship. (CSN, p.244)

But Daphne is soon filled with misgiving about this sacrificial love, this religious worship. Count Dionys had told Daphne that true love was dark, and that "white love was like moonshine, harmful, the reverse of love" (CSN, pp.232-233). After Basil's home-coming, Daphne becomes fretful and nerve-worn once again, confirming the Count's words. Basil's "curious priestly ecstasy which made him more than a man or a soldier, far, far more than a lover to her" is spiritual rather than physical (CSN, p.247). The trouble comes from the confusion of spiritual passion with physical passion. Spiritual sex was a profanity to Lawrence.<sup>29</sup> Basil's love-making makes Daphne ill:

Afterwards, after his love, she had to bear herself in torment. To her shame and her heaviness, she knew she was not strong enough, or pure enough, to bear this awful out-pouring adoration-lust. It was not her fault she felt weak and fretful afterwards, as if she wanted to cry and be fretful and petulant, wanted someone to save her. She could not turn to Basil, her husband. After his ecstasy of adoration-lust for her, she recoiled from him." (CSN, p.247).

Daphne begins to yearn for Count Dionys. When she thought that he would soon be leaving England for ever, "then the last spark seemed to die in her":

She felt her soul perish, whilst she herself was worn and soulless like a prostitute. A prostitute goddess. And her husband, the gaunt, white, intensified priest of her, who never ceased from being before her, like a lust. (CSN, p.248)

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<sup>29</sup> In a later letter to Dorothy Brett Lawrence declared this "sex in the head" to be "an evil and destructive thing". (726 January 1925), *The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, edited by Harry T. Moore, 2 (London, 1962), p.828.



Aphrodite is the goddess of prostitutes, born from the foam which gathered around the severed phallus of Ouranos. She appears often in Lawrence's works, symbolising self-conscious sensation as against natural passion in sex. In ancient myth, Aphrodite, Hermes and Persephone were closely linked in tales that were full of ambiguities and ambivalences. Carl Kerényi tells the "widely known tale" which regarded Aphrodite and Hermes to be brother and sister, "children of Ouranos, the night-sky, and Hemera, the brightness of day". Indeed, the two "must clearly have been twins" (Kerényi, p.152). There were also tales that identified the goddess of love with the goddess of death. Aphrodite had surnames that meant "the black one" and "the dark one", and "under the name of Persephaessa she is invoked as the Queen of the Underworld" (Kerényi, p.71). Lawrence's Daphne, like Aphrodite and Hermes, had a dualistic parentage. In her relationship with Basil she is Aphrodite. When she first met Dionys she was associated with Hermes, and she is to become Persephone, his Queen of the Underworld.

Basil draws attention to Daphne's "wonderful Proserpine fingers":

"They are immortal as February and snowdrops. If you lift your hands the spring comes." (CSN, p.247)

In the early spring, Count Dionys comes to stay at Thoresway, Daphne's ancestral home. Here, he feels "his soul heavy with its own fate" and sees "the glamour of this England of hedgerows and elm-trees":

And the charm of the old manor around him, the garden with its grey stone walls and yew hedges - broad, broad yew hedges - and a peacock pausing to glitter and scream in the busy silence of an English spring, when celandines open their yellow under the hedges, and violets are in the secret, and by the broad paths of the garden polyanthus and crocuses vary the velvet and flame, and bits of yellow wallflower shake raggedly, with a wonderful triumphance, out of the cracks of the wall. (CSN, p.264)

Here, when contemplating her fascination for "the curious feeling of intimacy across a breach", Daphne reveals herself as a forerunner of Lady Chatterley:

There was a gamekeeper she could have loved - an impudent, ruddy-faced, laughing, ingratiating fellow; she could have loved him, if he had not been isolated beyond the breach of his birth, her culture, her consciousness. Her *consciousness* seemed to make a great gulf between her and the lower classes, the unconscious classes. She accepted it as her doom. She could never meet in real contact anyone but a super-conscious, finished being like herself, or like her husband. Her father had some of the unconscious dark blood-warmth of primitive people. But he was like a man who was damned. And the Count, of course. The Count had something that was hot and invisible, a dark flame of life that might warm the cold white fire of her own blood. But - . (CSN, pp.264-265)

Her hesitation is the doubt of the conventional, day-light world, a hesitation at the prospect of breaking the social law. But Daphne does answer the Count's call, and with those Proserpine fingers she touches the god in him. Their coming together is made possible in terms of myth. Daphne is bewitched by the Count's supernatural singing in the night and is called across the border of this world. Continuing the symbolism of souls that are like birds on wings, his singing is "bat-like". The bat, of course, is a winged creature of the night. Compelled by this "uncanny peeping", a sound audible only to herself, Daphne goes to Dionys. His final song sounds like death and is "utterly inhuman". It is his swan-song. At first, Daphne's presence embarrasses Dionys. He is "startled out of his mood of the song into the day-mood of human convention" (CSN,p.268). But then the spell envelops them. Darkness answers to darkness and deep to deep:

The darkness flowed about them thick like blood, and time seemed dissolved in it. They sat with the small, invisible distance between them, motionless, speechless, thoughtless.

Then suddenly he felt her finger-tips touch his arm, and a flame went over him that left him no more a man. He was something seated in flame, in flame unconscious, seated erect, like an Egyptian King-god in the statues. Her finger-tips slid down him, and she herself slid down in a strange silent rush, (CSN, p.269)

Daphne prostrates herself before him. In an ironic allusion to Mary Magdalen washing the feet of Christ, the prostitute-goddess wets the feet of her lord with her tears. Just as Basil had worshipped Daphne, now Daphne worships Dionys in a reversal of roles. Dionys takes Daphne as Pluto took Persephone, "into the underworld". Unable to offer her any future together in the day-time world, he lays claim to her only in the dark of night and the eternal darkness of the after-life. In what is a deliberate intertwining of the Hades of Plutonic myth with the Christian hell of Dante's *Inferno*, Dionys is to:

Take her into the underworld. Take her into the dark Hades with him, like Francesco and Paolo. And in hell hold her fast, queen of the underworld, himself master of the underworld. Master of the life to come. Father of the soul to come after. (CSN, p.270)

The next morning, Daphne is care-free and her face has "a delicate look of virginity that she had never had before". She has been purified rather than soiled by her night of unconscious sensuality with Dionys:

She had always been Aphrodite, the self-conscious one. And her eyes, the green-blue, had been like slow, living jewels, resistant. Now they had unfolded from the hard flower-bud, and had the wonder, and the stillness of a quiet night. (CSN, pp.270-271)

Basil notices that she has changed and is puzzled by the difference it makes to how he feels toward her. His ecstatic desire for her seems to have left him, but he makes love to her out of habit, not knowing what else to do. As a dutiful wife, she submits to him, but is visibly upset. He watches her with the Count:

Then she seemed so meek - so maidenly - so different from what he had known of her. She was so still, like a virgin girl. And it was this quiet, intact quality of virginity in her which puzzled him most, puzzled his emotions and his ideas. He became suddenly ashamed to make love to her. (CSN, p.271)

Basil loses his sexual desire for Daphne, who now seemed like a sister to him:

The excitement of desire had left him, and now he seemed to see clear and feel true for the first time in his life. She was like a dear, dear sister to him. He felt that she was his blood-sister, nearer to him than he had imagined any woman could be. So near - so dear - and all the sex and the desire gone. He didn't want it - he hadn't wanted it. This new pure feeling was so much more wonderful. (*CSN*, p.272)

Basil is associated with the god Apollo by his poetry, his idealism. Now Daphne can be his Artemis, the sister of Apollo in myth. This new Platonic relationship, "a higher plane of love" rather than a deeper, is truer to the "higher state of consciousness" Basil claimed to have reached after going through the ordeal of the War (*CSN*, p.250). Daphne is to remain the wife of Basil in the eyes of the world whilst belonging, body and soul, to Dionys, as "the night wife of the ladybird" in this life and the next (*CSN*, p.270).

At their first meeting, Basil and Dionys had a philosophical discussion. Basil, the risen Christ, had stood for democracy and love, whilst Dionys expounded the Lawrentian theory of natural aristocracy and sacred power. Whilst Basil had thought that dynamic contact between people was essential in order to remain in touch with reality, Dionys believed in the solitary contemplation of things happening deep in one's own soul. When Daphne comes to Dionys, he hesitates before acting:

Two things were struggling in him, the sense of eternal solitude, like space, and the rush of dark flame that would throw him out of his solitude towards her. (*CSN*, p.269)

In the end, it is Dionys who makes the dynamic contact, whilst Basil declares that he intends to fulfil himself by "brooding through eternity" (*CSN*, p.275). They both agree that they will be happy in their own way, each man following his own inmost need as free men, each helped by thoughts of immortality. The tale ends with the supposition that the pagan "death and the after-life" and the Christian "eternity" amount to the same thing. "The Ladybird" is a tale of reconciliation, full

of checks and balances. In "The Two Principles" essay, Lawrence wrote about a world created not by "some will or idea, some sheer abstraction" but arising from "some universal living plasm, plasm which has no origin and no end, but is life eternal and identical".<sup>30</sup> Lawrence's dualism was not that of Plato or Christianity, splitting the universe and man in two. God, in "The Two Principles", is conceived as a self-conscious, *living* plasm or ether, which filled the universe:

The living ether divided itself as an egg-cell divides. There is a mysterious duality, life divides itself, and yet life is indivisible. When life divides itself, there is no division in life. Only a new life-stage is created. It is a new life-state, a new being which appears. So it is when an egg divides. There is no split in life. (*Phoenix II*, p.229)

Life, to Lawrence, was "an unbroken oneness, indivisible" within which there was inanimate matter but "no utterly immaterial existence, no spirit". The distinction was not between material life and a transcendent spirit but between "living plasm and inanimate matter", between the quick and the dead (*Phoenix II*, p.230).

According to the cosmology of "The Two Principles", the material universe was established on the mutual attraction and opposition of the two elements, fire and water: "So we must look for life midway between fire and water". Lawrence refers to the universe as a bird in eternal flight, and to the plasm of potential life as "the body of a bird between the wings" of fire and water (*Phoenix II*, p.231). In the light of this essay, we can see the full significance of the symbolic winged creatures, the living souls, of "The Ladybird". There is constant play, in the story, between "inside" and "outside". In the perfect living creature, as described in "The Two Principles", "fire and water must exquisitely balance, commingle, and consummate" (*Phoenix II*, p.231). This mysterious process is externalized in "The Ladybird". Daphne is the arch spanning the duality between the fire of Dionys and the icy waters of Basil, and the two men are external symbols of her inner duality. Lawrence's "David" essay, written in Florence in November 1919, in

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30. "The Two Principles" in *Phoenix II*, pp.227-237 (p.230).

between "The Two Principles" and "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious", is totally concerned with the perfect balance of Michelangelo's David, the "Dionysus and Christ of Florence".<sup>31</sup> The David, in Lawrence's opinion, expresses the momentary consummation of the two eternal elements of fire and water, "forming the perfect embodiment of the human soul":

Pride of life! The perfect soul erect, holding the eternal elements consummate in itself. Thus for one moment the young lily David. For one moment Dionysus touched the hand of the Crucified: (*Phoenix*, p.63)

Lawrence calls the lily, "the flower of adolescence" (*Phoenix*, p.61). Daphne, the lily that blossoms in "The Ladybird", is a Lawrentian David, holding the lily-balance between the Dionysian fire and Christian water. Michelangelo's David is a statue, concrete art, embodying one soul holding the two elements "clipped together in one lily-flame" (*Phoenix*, p.62). "The Ladybird" is a fiction, a literary discourse, where the elements are externalized and the expression of the perfect balance involves three souls. In their philosophical discussion, Basil and Dionys argued about the real aim of all action. Dionys believed that constructive or destructive dynamic contact between human beings was only the means to an end, such as the building of a cathedral or a war. To him, the cathedral or the war was what mattered. Basil, on the other hand, considered the dynamic contact itself to be the life-impetus. Daphne, significantly, agreed with Basil:

It was curious that, while her sympathy at this moment was with the Count, it was her husband whose words she believed to be true. The contact, the emotional contact was the real thing, the so-called "aim" was only a by-product. Even wars and cathedrals, in her mind, were only by-products. The real thing was what the warriors and cathedral-builders had had in common, as a great uniting feeling: the thing they felt for one another: and for their women in particular, of course. (*CSN*, pp.252-253)

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31. "David" in *Phoenix*, pp.60-64 (p.61). For the relevance of this essay to *Aaron's Rod*, see R.E. Pritchard, "The Way to Freedom ... Furtive Pride and Sinking Singleness" in *D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Study of the Major Novels and Other Writings*, edited by A.H. Gomme, (Sussex, 1978), pp.94-121 (p.112).

It is clear that Lawrence also believed that "the emotional contact was the real thing". Michelangelo's statue is like a cathedral, but Lawrence's novelette shows the flux and flow of dynamic contact. To Lawrence, life mattered more than art. The novelette has, however, been seen to be un-novelistic. F.R. Leavis, for example, remarks on the "pronounced frame-effect" and positive conclusiveness of "The Ladybird", which "must affect us as something like an attempt to conjure the actual world, with its tests and problems, away".<sup>32</sup> These qualities can perhaps be better understood in the context of the image of the statue of David, Lawrence's model of perfection.

"Do they not say that life is a search after God, Lady Daphne?" says Dionys (CSN, 238). Lawrence's search led him to believe that the ancient pagan gods were aspects of the one God. He used the "outside" gods to express inner, psychic realities. In ancient myth the same god might be both husband and son to one goddess, and this reflects not an incoherent muddle but an external, objective symbolism for internal moods. Dionysus, whether the golden Dionysus of *The Bacchae*, or in his dark aspect as Dionysus Zagreus of whom Herakleitos said "Hades and Dionysus are one", is a god particularly suited to the task for he was known as the god who entered you. One name that does not appear amongst the many names of the gods in "The Ladybird" is the name of Pan. Patricia Merivale does not consider Dionys to be a fully-developed Pan-male. She writes:

Count Dionys, in "The Ladybird", has a good many attributes of the Pan figures; that he derives his divine powers from Dionysus, or rather from Pluto, god of the underworld, and not from Pan, seems to be chance rather than fundamental necessity. (*Pan the Goat-God*, p.203)

Merivale is wrong on two counts. Firstly, whilst unnamed, Pan's presence in "The Ladybird" can be discerned in the physical animality of the Count, in his piping

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32. *D.H. Lawrence: Novelist*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1964), p.65 and p.75.

song which is bewitching as Pan's syrinx, and in the fact that Daphne "never saw him as a lover" (CSN, p.273). But the association of Dionys with Pan is deeper than the "good many attributes" admitted by Merivale. When he lay close to death in the hospital Dionys declared that he had "a devil" in his body that would not let him die. The ensuing dialogue between Daphne and Dionys seems to contain an implicit allusion to the Christian devil whose origin was the pagan Pan:

"Surely it is not a devil which keeps you alive," she said. "It is something good."

"No, a devill!" he said.

She sat looking at him with a long, slow, wondering look.

"Must one hate a devil that makes one live?" she asked.

He turned his eyes to her with a touch of a satiric smile.

"If one lives, no -" he said. (CSN, p.219)

Dionys does live, and the power to live derives from Pan. Dionys seems most Pan-like when he peels and eats the sweet chestnuts in the scene where he speaks of cracking open the world of man, re-calling the final scene of "The Blind Man". Secondly, Merivale's use of the word "chance" implies that Lawrence's use of the gods was arbitrary. In fact, as has hopefully been established here, the use of the god Dionysus in "The Ladybird" was a matter of careful and conscious choice.

In a letter to Earl Brewster, Lawrence wrote: "the east seems to me the world to meditate in, Europe the world to *feel* in, America the world to act in".<sup>33</sup>

During the winter of 1921-1922, he could not make up his mind whether to go east or west. In the new year he resolved to go west, to Taos, telling Brewster:

I feel I can't come - that the east is not my destiny. More and more I feel that meditation and the inner life are not my aim, but some sort of action and strenuousness and pain and struggling through. All the things you don't believe in I do. And the goal is not that men should become serene as Buddh(a) or as gods, but that the unfleshed gods should become men in battle. God made man is the goal. The gods are uneasy until they can become men. And men have to fight a way for the new incarnation.<sup>34</sup>

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33. Letter to Earl Brewster, (18? October 1921), *Letters*, IV, p.103.

34. Letter to Earl Brewster, 2 January 1922, *Letters*, IV, p.154.



In February, Lawrence sailed for Ceylon after all. "The Ladybird" reflects his indecision between east and west, contemplation and action. Eventually, of course, he went to Taos where he felt those "new gods in the flesh" and wrote *The Plumed Serpent*. But, as Dionys told Daphne in "The Ladybird": "It is not only a world of men," (CSN, p.223). The new incarnation of Pan in two stories of 1924 was to be non-human.

#### CHAPTER 4: *Kangaroo* and "The Border Line"

Lawrence's journey to the New World, via the East and the Antipodes, was a journey towards "the oldest Pan" (*Phoenix*, p.26). The profound effect of the images of this journey and of the landscapes of Australia and America are reflected in the novels and stories of 1922-1925. In February 1922, Lawrence and Frieda sailed for Ceylon. During the passage through the Suez Canal, Lawrence wrote to his mother-in-law from the R.M.S. "Osterley", "one felt oneself near the gates of the old Paradise". He felt that he was crossing a very significant border:

Yes, it is a borderland. - Next morning we were just in the Red Sea - There stood Mount Sinai, red as old, dried blood, naked as a knife, and so sharp, so unnaturally sharp, delined, like a "poignard" (dagger) that was stuck (dipped) in blood, and has long since dried again, and is a bit "rusted", and always there, like something dreadful, between man and his lost paradise. All is Semitic and cruel - naked, sharp, no tree, no leaf, no life: the murderous will and iron of idea and ideal - iron, will, and ideal - so stand these terrible shores of this Red Sea, that is hot as an oven, without air. It is a strange exit, through this Red Sea - bitter. Behind lies at last Jerusalem, Greece, Rome, and Europe - fulfilled and past, a great terrible dream. With the Jews it began, with the Jews it ends. You ought to see Sinai, then you could know it. The ideal has been wicked to man: and Jahveh is father of the ideal, and Zeus and Jupiter and Christ are only sons. And thank God Sinai and Red Sea are past and fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

Lawrence uses this image of Mount Sinai, which recurs in a letter to Koteliarsky written on the same day, in the symbolic "blood-dusky presence" of Strasburg Cathedral in "The Border Line".<sup>2</sup> The letter also indicates how Lawrence came into contact with Australians on this voyage, was getting on with his translation of Verga's *Mastro-don Gesualdo*, and felt "the curious sense that nothing is real except just this ship - nothing exists except just this ship".<sup>3</sup> His Australian novel,

1. Letter to Baroness Anna von Richthofen. (7 March 1922). *Letters*, IV, pp.211-212.

2. "The Border Line" In *Selected Short Stories*, pp.370-390 (p.378).

3. Letter to S.S. Koteliarsky. (7 March 1922). *Letters*, IV, p.208.

*Kangaroo*, was to be full of symbolism associated with ships and the sea.<sup>4</sup> He wrote to Rosalind Baynes that he believed Australia to be "a good country, full of life and energy", and that he intended to go there if he found Ceylon did not suit him.<sup>5</sup> Lawrence did not like Ceylon, or soulless Buddhism, at all. He hated the oppressive, sticky, imprisoning heat of the tropics, writing to Robert Mountsier from Kandy,

Here it is monstrous hot, like being in a hot bell-glass. I don't like it a bit. I don't like the east. It makes me feel sick in my stomach: seems sort of unmanly.<sup>6</sup>

After six weeks, the Lawrences sailed for West Australia. There, he wrote *Kangaroo*, which he described to Mary Canaan as:

an Australian novel with no women in it; more political, you might say - more a thought adventure if you like.<sup>7</sup>

In *Kangaroo*, he wrote of an unmanly Jew who looked like Buddha, a would-be godlike leader of men who became "a great Thing, a horror" as Mount Sinai and Strasburg Cathedral were horrors, "a Kangaroo of Judah, instead of Lion of Judah: Jehovah with a great heavy tail and a belly pouch" (K, pp.213-214).

Richard Lovat Somers, writer of poems, essays and articles on "Democracy", a true Englishman by blood and education, is in many respects David Herbert Lawrence himself. In the chapter entitled "Bits", Lawrence tells us, as he told Mary Canaan, that the novel is a "thought-adventure" as well as "a record of emotion-adventures". The novel is a journey of self-discovery:

Man is a thought-adventurer. Man is more, he is a life-adventurer. Which means he is a thought-adventurer, an

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4. See Marilyn Schaur Samuels, "Water, Ships and the Sea: Unifying Symbols in Lawrence's *Kangaroo*", *University Review*, 37 (1970), 46-57.

5. Letter to Rosalind Baynes, (8 March 1922), *Letters*, IV, p.213.

6. Letter to Robert Mountsier, 3 April 1922, *Letters*, IV, p.220.

7. Letter to Mary Canaan, 5 December 1922. *Letters*, IV, p.353.

emotion-adventurer, and a discoverer of himself and of the outer universe. A discoverer. (K, pp.284-285)

A great deal of *Kangaroo* consists of the internal thought-speech of Somers: "He preached, and the record was taken down for this gramophone of a novel", where "chapter follows chapter, and nothing doing" (K, p.286 and p.289). It is a self-conscious novel. As in *Mr Noon*, the narrator addresses the reader directly: "I hope, dear reader, you like plenty of conversation in a novel: it makes it so much lighter and brisker" (K, p.288). Although Lawrence had told Mary Canaan that there were no women in the novel, there are wives who function in relation to the men and one woman who plays a vital role. Somers' wife, Harriet, is an essential foil to Somers the "preacher and blatherer" (K, p.277). She de-bunks the worst excesses of her philosophizer husband with shrieks of mocking laughter. The wife of neighbour Jack Callcott, Victoria, is again significant in her relation to Somers. Her sexual interest in him provokes a reaction that tells us more about Somers, and Lawrence, than about Victoria. The "Bits" chapter, quoting bits and pieces from the *Sydney Bulletin*, with "no consecutive thread", is a record of "the sheer momentaneous life of the continent" (K, p.277). It is another attempt to place Somers' preaching and blathering into perspective, in a novel where the internal voice of the central character reveals the inner thoughts and feelings of the narrator himself.

Lawrence found Australia to be a big and empty land, full of space and sun and fresh air. His letters tell of the open skies and sense of freedom in God's Own Country, and of how it was such a relief from "the moral and mental and nervous tension of Europe".<sup>8</sup> Somers' impressions of this new country, the sense of release from the pressures of the old world, the feeling of being a foreigner and of being in exile, are identical to the thoughts and feelings Lawrence expressed in his letters home. One impression was foremost: that, as Lawrence wrote to Else

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8. Letter to Else Jaffe, 13 June 1922, *Letters*, IV, p.264. See also letters to Baroness von Richthofen, 15 May 1922, and to Martin Secker, 11 June 1922, p.238 and p.261.

Jaffe, human "life here really had never *entered in*: as if it were just sprinkled over",<sup>9</sup> and that Sydney, as seen by Somers, "seemed to be sprinkled on a darkness into which it never penetrated" (K, p.8). Australia was a land virtually uninhabited: "Humanly speaking, of course, it just *is not*", and the life of the people crowded together in the vast city of Sydney was "absolutely external".<sup>10</sup> Again and again, in his letters, Lawrence repeated Somers' idea that there was "no inner life" in Australia, feeling:

The absence of any inner meaning: and at the same time the great sense of vacant spaces. (K, p.22)

The new land, Lawrence told Catherine Carswell, was like "the plant kingdom, before souls, spirits and minds were grown at all", with a "*physical* indifference to what we call soul or spirit":

it seems so *old*, as if it has missed all this Semite-Egyptian-Indo-European vast era of history, and was coal age, the age of great ferns and mosses.<sup>11</sup>

In May, he wrote to Robert Mountsier:

The human life seems to me very barren: one could never make a novel out of these people, they haven't got any insides to them, to write about.<sup>12</sup>

Six weeks later, he told Kot "I have nearly finished my novel here - but such a novell". Writing of the temptation to go "bush" in this remote land, to become as detached and indifferent and amoral as the place itself, Lawrence explained:

It is rather like falling out of a picture and finding oneself on the floor, with all the gods and men left behind in the picture.<sup>13</sup>

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9. See note 8 above, p.263.

10. Letter to Earl Brewster, 13 June 1922. *Letters*, IV, p.265.

11. Letter to Catherine Carswell, 22 June 1922. *Letters*, IV, p.271.

12. Letter to Robert Mountsier, (26-30 May 1922), *Letters*, IV, p.246.

13. Letter to S.S. Kotellansky, 9 July 1922, *Letters*, IV, p.275.

Unable to make a novel out of the soulless Australians, he delved deep into his own soul. The inner world of *Kangaroo* is the inner world of Lawrence, as Somers, himself: "Poor Richard Lovat wearied himself to death struggling with the problem of himself, and calling it Australia" (*K*, p.22). The figures on the strangely different and indifferent, primeval Australian landscape emerged from his subconscious, to fight the old battles. The gods and men that he put in the picture of *Kangaroo* are only Australian on the outside. Inside, underneath, they are European. Offered a male mate, Somers is forced to relinquish a cherished ideal and life-long craving for "an absolute friend, a David to his Jonathan, Pylades to his Orestes: a blood-brother" and face up to the fact that "in his innermost soul" he did not really want such comradeship (*K*, p. 104). The professed ideals and beliefs of Ben Cooley, the "Kangaroo" of *Kangaroo*, are those that had been expounded by Somers. But, hearing his ideas on education, a religious State, and the need for paternal authority on the lips of Kangaroo, Somers "heart sank" (*K*, p.109). The Australian experience is self-revelatory, stripping away idealistic illusions. Sydney is a city in the midst of a bubonic plague scare. Like Oedipus at Thebes, Somers discovers the source of sickness in himself. Sailing through the South Pacific, after leaving Australia, Lawrence admitted to Mary Canaan that travel was "a splendid lesson in disillusion - chiefly that".<sup>14</sup> Soon after his arrival in New Mexico, he told Catherine Carswell:

Perhaps it is necessary for me to try these places, perhaps it is my destiny to know the world. It only excites the outside of me. The inside it leaves more isolated and stoic than ever. That's how it is. It is all a form of running away from oneself and the great problems: all this wild west and the strange Australia.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Letter to Mary Canaan, 31 August 1922, *Letters*, IV, p.286.

15. Letter to Catherine Carswell, 29 September 1922, *Letters*, IV, p.313.

He discovered that the earth and the air might be new "and the spirit of piace untouched", but that the human world was "all alike - weary with its old forms".<sup>16</sup> He discovered that he could not run away from himself, that he could not stop caring, that his "fighting conscience"<sup>17</sup> would not let him rest even if he was lost to the civilised world.

The controlling metaphor and central symbol of *Kangaroo* is the volcano. Lawrence's last significant image of Europe, after sailing from Naples through the Straits of Messina, was the sight of Etna, "our Etna" as he called her, wicked and magically beautiful "like a white queen, or a white witch" calling him back:

She said to me "Come back here" - I only said no, but wept inside with pain of parting.<sup>18</sup>

From the macrocosm of the chapter entitled "Volcanic Evidence" which cites a newspaper report of volcanic activity underneath the sea, to the microcosm of the custard-apple, "a pudding inside a knobbly green skin", the symbol of the dormant volcano suggests "the awful forces" and "internal fires" at work beneath the earth's crust and beneath the surface of a man:

He could taste it all in the soft, sweet, creamy custard apple. A wonderful sweet place to drift in. But surely a place that will some day wake terribly from this sleep. (K, p.313)

The wrestle with the "Sleeping Beauty terrors" of Australia was a wrestle with the self.<sup>19</sup> The old submerged terror that erupts in *Kangaroo*, of course, is the nightmare of Lawrence's personal experiences of the War. *Kangaroo* is

16. Letter to Dr Anton Klppenberg, 9 June 1922, *Letters*, IV, p.260.

17. See note 13 above.

18. Letter to Baroness Anna von Richthofen, (28 February-1 March 1922), *Letters*, IV, p.205. See also letter to Lady Cynthia Asquith, 28 February 1922, p.207: "Yesterday for hours our own Etna hovered in the air behind us, like a white witch. I nearly wept, of course, but hardened my heart and said no my lady!"

19. Letter to Katherine Throssell, 3 July 1922, *Letters*, IV, p.273.

Lawrence's song of himself. As Gethin Day would read in the *Book of Days*, in "The Flying Fish" fragment that Lawrence wrote on the way back from Mexico in 1925:

"When earth inert lieth too heavy, then Vesuvius spitteth out fire. And if a nightingale would not sing, his song unsung in him would slay him. For to the nightingale his song is Nemesis, and unsung songs are the Erinyes, the impure furies of vengeance."<sup>20</sup>

The chthonic underworld of fear and the desire for revenge was "something which the modern psyche had excluded, some old and vital thing which Christianity has cut out" (K, p.215). It was something which the ancient Greeks acknowledged and externalised in their "outside" gods.

Ben Cooley is a bizarre mix of many gods. His Jehovah-like "pure kindness" and his Jewish blood establish him as an Old Testament God (K, p.108). He is an Antipodean Pan, with the hindquarters of a kangaroo rather than a goat, whose beautiful voice is "like a flute, a wood instrument" (K, p.111). Sometimes Somers sees him as grotesquely ugly, sometimes intensely beautiful. The figure of Kangaroo is both Christian and pagan, incorporating the imagery of east and west. He is "like a Chinese Buddha", "the lamb of God grown into a sheep" (K, p.112), and a huge, hulking "bear-god" (K, p.131). Somers is both thrilled and repelled by this man who is like a woman in his soft voluptuousness:

You felt you were cuddled cosily, like a child, on his breast, in the soft glow of his heart and that your feet were resting on his ample, beautiful "tummy". (K, p.117)

Cooley tells Somers "I am a son of man. I was once a man born of woman", which suggests links with both Christ and Dionysus (K, p.119). Christ also said he was a son of man. Dionysus was twice-born, once from his mother's womb, then from his father's thigh. But the visual image of Kangaroo is more like that of Silenus, the tutor of Dionysus, than that of the youthful god. Silenus was "an aged, effeminate

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20. "The Flying Fish" in *Phoenix*, pp.780-798 (p.789).



figure with a thick stomach and almost womanly breasts" (Kerenyi, p.227). Pictures of Bacchic processions sometimes show him crowned with ivy, riding on an ass, playing a flute, suggesting associations with both Christ and Pan. Sometimes he has the infant Dionysus in his arms. In Lydia Silenus was the god of springs and running water, regarded as the very personification of water. As has been established by Marilyn Schaur Samuels,<sup>21</sup> water is a very significant unifying symbol in *Kangaroo*. Water also has great symbolic significance in Lawrence's namesake essay "David", which opens with and repeats the "perpetual sound of water" (*Phoenix*, p.60). In the essay, the equilibrium between Dionysus and Christ was lost when Dionysian fire was put out by Christian waters, "quenched by innumerable rains of morality and democracy":

Perpetual sound of waters. The level sweep of waters, waters overwhelming. Morality, chastity - another world drowned: equality, democracy, the masses, like drops of water in one sea, overwhelming all outstanding loveliness of the individual soul. Quenching of all flame in the great watery passivity which bears down at last so ponderous. Christ-like submissiveness which, once it bursts its bounds, floods the face of the earth with such devastation. (*Phoenix*, p.63)

In the essay the statue of David is seen as the perfect embodiment of a youthful soul, the momentary, trembling union of a young Dionysus and Christ. In the novel *Kangaroo* embodies the Christian lamb of God grown into a sheep and old, pot-bellied Silenus.

The whole of *Kangaroo* is concerned with "the collapse of the love-ideal" (K, p.335), the notion that love is an old and outworn ideal:

For the idea, or ideal of Love, Self-sacrifice, Humanity united in love, in brotherhood, in peace - all this is dead. There is no arguing about it. It is dead. The great ideal is dead. (K, p.269)

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21. See note 4 above.

Kangaroo's fascist Diggers and the communists of Wille Struthers are political antagonists, yet they both persist in the ideal of spiritual love. Somers believed that the time of such spiritual love was not only over but that it had been over before the War. During the War "men were *compelled* into the service of a dead ideal" (K, p.269). In such service men felt humiliation and betrayal: "They had been sold" (K, p.270). The experience of the War had destroyed all faith in democracy and left men with a deep desire for revenge:

The moment a man feels he has been sold, sold in the deepest things, something goes wrong with his whole mechanism. Something breaks, in his tissue, and the black poison is emitted into his blood. And then he follows a natural course, and becomes a creature of slow, or of quick, revenge. Revenge on all that the old ideal is and stands for. Revenge on the whole system. Just revenge. Even further revenge on himself.

Men revenged themselves on Athens, when they felt sold. When Rome, persisting in an old defunct ideal, gradually made her subjects feel sold, they were revenged on her, no matter how. Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire the same. And now our turn. (K, p.270)

Beneath the surface of both Kangaroo and Struthers lay the spirit of vengeance, and the lowest manifestation of the mass-spirit was the mob. The theme of betrayal is continued in the character of William James Trehella, Jaz, the Cornishman and Judas figure of *Kangaroo*. The way to understanding the mass-spirit was through the study of the individual soul. The ancient "outside" gods provided a symbolic language for exploring something that modern, so-called scientific psychology, with its inadequate collective labels and mechanistic terminology could not: the creative life-urge or God-urge which inspired the human mass. There is no simple key to the human psyche:

Alas, there is no Morse code for interpreting the new life-prompting. And there never will be. It needs a new term of speech invented each time. (K, p.302)

The majority of mankind live on, automatically adhering to the fixed principle of the old Christian-democratic ideal, oblivious to their own creative evolution, "helpless to interpret the new prompting of the God-urge" (K, p.301). The function of the writer is to interpret the new message, to provide a language for that which we have no words:

The highest function of *mind* is its function of messenger. The curious throbs and pulses of the God-urge in man would go on for ever ignored, if it were not for some few exquisitely sensitive and fearless souls who struggle with all their might to make that strange translation of the low, dark throbbing into open act or speech. Like a wireless message the new suggestion enters the soul, throb-throb, throb-throb-throb. And it beats and beats for years, before the mind, frightened of this new knocking in the dark, can be brought in to listen and attend. (K, pp.301-302)

Somers resists the temptation of the mass-movement, remaining detached, "a man alone with his own soul: and the dark God beyond him":

The man by himself.

That is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, the one absolute: the man alone by himself, alone with his own soul, alone with his eyes on the darkness which is the dark god of life. Alone like the pythoness on her tripod, like the oracle alone above the fissure into the unknown. The oracle, the fissure down into the unknown, the strange exhalations from the dark, the strange words that the oracle must utter. Strange, cruel, pregnant words: the new term of consciousness. (K, p.287)

The writer embodies "the innermost symbol of man". He is Oedipus, solving the riddle of the sphinx and finding that the way to health is through self-knowledge. He is "the listener", the interpreter, the messenger of the gods below.<sup>22</sup> He is Hermes.

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22. In a letter to Willard Johnson, published later in the "The Laughing Horse" as a book review, Lawrence wrote: "The old dark religions understood. 'God enters from below,' said the Egyptians, and that's right. Why can't you darken your minds, and know that the great gods pulse in the dark, and enter you as a darkness through the lower gates. Not through the head. ... There are different dark gods, different passions. Hermes Ithyphallos has more than one road. The god of gods is unknowable, unutterable, but all the more terrible" (712 October 1922), *Collected Letters*, 2, p.726.

The metaphor of the "Harriet and Lovat at Sea in Marriage" chapter is applicable to the whole of the novel. The central image of the chapter is the ship of Dionysus, as illustrated in Gilbert Murray's translation of Euripides and in Hesiod's *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*. When they met for the first time Kangaroo had said to Somers:

"I hope you are going to write something for us. Australia is waiting for her Homer - or her Theocritus" (K, p.106)<sup>23</sup>

Lawrence was very fond of the illustration called "The Sailing of Dionysus" in *Euripides* and, as we have seen, he used the image in "Tickets, Please" and "The Spirit of Place". In 1916, in Cornwall, Lawrence had borrowed the Hesiod from Lady Ottoline Morrell, writing to ask her later:

Do you remember the little round picture at the beginning of Hesiod, of Dionysos crossing the sea? It is very lovely and delightful, I think. Would you like me to draw it for you to embroider? - a round picture, not too big, Dionysos in a ship with a white sail and the mast a tree with grapes, sailing over a yellow sea, with dark, keen, joyful fish?<sup>24</sup>

There is evidence that he did indeed make a drawing of "Dionysus Crossing the Sea". The original 6th Century representation painted on a cup by Exekias illustrates the Homeric Hymn and shows the bearded, ivy-crowned god reclining in a dark and magic ship, holding a horn.<sup>25</sup> Homeric Hymn VII "To Dionysus" tells the tale of the god's abduction by pirates who believed him to be a rich prince worth a fine ransom. Only the helmsman recognizes the youth as a god and he implores the crew to set free this god, "lest he grow angry and stir up dangerous winds and heavy squalls". It proves impossible to bind the god and strange

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23. In 1927 Lawrence called Giovanni Verga "the Theocritus of the nineteenth century" in the introduction to his translation of the "Cavalleria Rusticana", reprinted in *D.H. Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism*, edited by Anthony Beal, (London, 1956), pp.279-291 (p.283). Perhaps Lawrence saw himself as both a twentieth century Theocritus and a Homer.

24. Letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 27 January 1916, *Letters*, II, p.517.

25. See note 2 to letter to Phillip Heseltine, ante 22 April 1916, *Letters*, II, p.598.

transmutations begin to happen on the ship. The deck becomes awash with sweet, fragrant wine. A vine heavy with clusters of grapes spreads out along the top of the sail, and an ivy entwines the mast, blossoming and fruiting all at once. The god changes into a roaring lion and creates a ravening bear, causing the bemused sailors to crowd around "the right-minded helmsman". The lion then seizes the master of the ship who had declared the helmsman mad, and the crew leap overboard. Dionysus changes the sailors into dolphins, but spares the helmsman.<sup>26</sup> The illustration of the hymn provided Lawrence with a highly symbolic image that held a whole complex of vital ideas associated with Dionysus, the Tree of Life, the cycle of destruction and creation, a man adventuring alone with his soul on the long sea-voyage of a life, and "the magic of the animal world" (K, p.209).<sup>27</sup> In *Kangaroo* Harriet says to Somers "I shall call you the flying-fish" and Somers aspires to the perfect telepathic communication and phallic power of the great whales. He wished that "he could take to sea and be a whale, a great surge of living blood", exclaiming to himself:

Telepathy! Think of the marvellous vivid communication of the huge sperm whales. Huge, grand, phallic beasts! (K, p.284)

Lawrence would see dolphins and flying-fishes again in the Gulf of Mexico. In "The Flying Fish" fragment of 1925, dictated to Frieda on the way back from Mexico after he had been very ill, he used the image of Dionysus at sea again, focussing on the dolphins and declaring them to be a superior form of life. The reality matched up to the illustration Lawrence had known for over ten years, reinforcing its symbolic significance. The speeding, laughing, playing school of porpoises "was

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26. Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White. (London, 1914), pp.429-433.

27. Lawrence had seen flying fishes and dolphins in the Arabian Sea. He wrote to his mother-in-law from the R.M.S. *Osterley*: "We now see little flying fishes, they are all silver and fly just like butterflies so gaily. Then also black porpoises (dolphins) that run about like frolicsome little black plgs." See note 1 above.

a spectacle of the purest and most perfected joy in life that Gethin Day ever saw" (*Phoenix*, p.794).

In chapter IX of *Kangaroo* we are told that there are three possible courses a marriage might take. The husband could be a "perfect lover", a "lord and master", or a "true friend and companion". The marriage of Harriet and Lovat Somers was a relationship of perfect love. Harriet wanted the marriage to evolve into companionship, whilst Lovat wanted to be lord and master. Throughout this humorous analysis of marriage Lawrence uses the extended metaphor of a ship at sea. The image of "The Sailing of Dionysus" illustrates the Somers' marriage of perfect love:

And the good ship *Harriet and Lovat*, with white sails spread, sailing with never a master, like the boat of Dionysus, which steered of its own accord across the waters, in the right direction mark you, to the sound of the music of the dolphins, while the mast of the ship put forth tendrils of vine and purple bunches of grapes, and the grapes of themselves dripped vinous down the throats of the true Dionysians. So sailed the fair ship *Harriet and Lovat* in the waters of perfect love. (*K*, p.173)

The good ship *Harriet and Lovat* is directionless, drifting under a faded flag, through fair weather and foul, feeling the pull of opposing currents. The little ship is tired of sailing so utterly alone in treacherous seas:

It was as if she had a certain home-sickness for one or other of the populous oceans: she was weary of the lone and wasteful waters of the sea of perfect love. (*K*, p.174)

One current pulls towards the cold, grey Atlantic of true companionship, associated with the business of profit and loss, the principle of "getting on", and the democratic materialism of Australia. Lawrence told Else Jaffe:

This is the most democratic place I have ever been in. And the more I see of democracy the more I dislike it. It just brings

everything down to the mere vulgar level of wages and prices, electric light and water closets, and nothing else.<sup>28</sup>

The opposite drift is towards "the other ocean" of natural aristocracy. The marriage-ship is pulled in one direction, then the other. Somers insists:

We shall never sail any straight course at all, until you realise that I am lord and master, and you my blissful consort. (K, p. 174)

A marriage of companionship would still be based on the love-ideal that Somers considers to be defunct. He tells Harriet he would prefer "that you deferred your loving of me for a while, and considered the new propositions" (K, p. 174). He proposes a new and different principle as the basis for human relationship, symbolized by Hermes rather than Dionysus:

"I want to set fire to our bark, *Harriet and Lovat*, and out of the ashes construct the frigate *Hermes*, which name still contains the same reference, *her* and *me*, but which has a higher total significance." (K, pp.175-176)

The *Harriet and Lovat*, which "had risen from the waves, like Aphrodite's shell as well as Aphrodite" and which sailed "like the boat of Dionysus" under "the flag of the red-and-white rose upon the cross of thorns", represents all manifestations of the love-ideal, both sacred and profane (K, p. 173). Christ, the god of spiritual love, Aphrodite, the goddess of sexual love, and Dionysus, the god of Bacchic passion, are all associated with this Lawrentian vessel. The denial of Christ and Aphrodite is unsurprising and easily understood in the context of a consistent attitude to both figures throughout Lawrence's work. But Dionysus, the sexually ambiguous god of many names,<sup>29</sup> is a symbolic figure of great complexity whose

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28. Letter to Else Jaffe, 13 June 1922, *Letters*, IV, p.263.

29. See chapter 2, note 30 above. Regarding the many names of Dionysus, Jane Ellen Harrison explained "Each reflects some special function, but each is apt to be both Father and Son" (*Prolegomena*, p.537). In his "David" essay, Lawrence mentions two more names: Dithyrambus and Eleutherios. Interestingly, Richard Lovat Somers is referred to by all three of his names, variously and separately, in *Kangaroo*.

seeming overthrow is less straightforward. Dionysus is a god who changes shape and form. In *Kangaroo* it is Dionysus as Bacchus, "the god of bright desire", who is refused by Somers. He turns down the opportunity "to follow the flame, the moment sacred to Bacchus" offered by Victoria Callcott, "like a comely, desirous virgin offering herself to the wayfarer, in the name of the god of bright desire" (*K*, pp.142-143). Somers' denial of Bacchus is partly out of "old moral habit" and partly out of fear of committing himself, but mainly because he is weary of acting upon conscious desires:

his heart of hearts was stubbornly puritanical. And his innermost soul was dark and sullen, black with a sort of scorn. These moments bred in the head and born in the eye: he had enough of them. These flashes of desire for a visual object would no longer carry him into action. he had no use for them. There was a downslope into Orcus, and a vast, phallic, sacred darkness. He would meet there or nowhere. To the visual travesty he would lend himself no more. (*K*, p.143).

Throughout *Kangaroo* Somers insists on the dark God who can never be seen or visualised and who enters from below, "through the phallic self", rather than from above "through the spirit" (*K*, p.134). The sacred phallic entry seems to incorporate both sexual and spiritual passion, and the dark God Somers wished to serve was "the God from whom the dark, sensual passion of love emanates, not only the spiritual love of Christ" (*K*, p.205). Somers would like to find another word for this sacred phallic experience, but falls back upon the word "love". Count Dionys had the same difficulty in finding another word to describe the great power that draws human beings together in "The Ladybird". He told Basil "You must use another word than love", yet when challenged by Daphne he is unable to suggest an alternative: "How shall I say? I know no word" (*CSN*, p.253). In *Kangaroo*, as in "The Ladybird", Lawrence associates this phallic contact and dark, subconscious power with ancient Greek and Egyptian myths, using the symbolic language of myth to express that for which there was no adequate modern language. Somers "wanted men once more to refer the sensual passion



of love sacredly to the great dark God, the Ithyphallic, of the first dark religions" (K, p.205). He wanted to take men "to the understanding that is deeper than love" (K, p.213). Thus, Somers wished to be like Hermes, guide to the Underworld. As in "The Ladybird", Lawrence alludes to both the Greek and the Egyptian Hermes in *Kangaroo*. In the "Harriet and Lovat at Sea" chapter, Somers says to Harriet:

"Supposing, now, you had the real Hermes for a husband, Trismegistus. Would you not hold your tongue for fear you lost him, and be a worshipper? Well I am not Hermes or Dionysus, but I am a little nearer to it than you allow. And I want you to yield to my mystery and my divination, and let me put my flag of a phoenix rising from a nest of flames in place of that old rose on a field azure." (K, p.175)

Hermes Trismegistus was regarded by the Neo-Platonists as the source of all knowledge and thought. Many philosophical and religious works were ascribed to this Hermes. The most important of them was called *Poemander*, from a word meaning shepherd or pastor. In the form of a dialogue, "it treats with nature, the creation of the world, the deity, his nature and attributes, the human soul, knowledge, &c."<sup>30</sup> Somers sees himself as a modern Hermes in both the Greek sense, as guide to the psychic underworld and religious messenger, and in the Egyptian sense, as a writer and philosopher.

Although he wished to burn the Dionysian boat in favour of the new *Hermes*, Somers declares himself near to both Hermes and Dionysus. In the ancient myths, as Jane Harrison has pointed out, the young Dionysus is sometimes indistinguishable from Hermes (*Prolegomena*, p.426). Dionysus is not completely dismissed by Somers. Only certain aspects of the god are rejected: the association with Bacchus and the principle of love and the association with women and the female principle. Somers turned his back on the god of bright desire in Victoria Callcott, and he was convinced of the need to re-assert the

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30. *A Classical Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography, Myth and Geography*. (London, 1919). p.407.

male principle in a world that had become too female and unbalanced. In the chapter "A Row in Town", where he expounds the theory of "relativity in dynamic living", women are associated with the principle of love:

When the flow is sympathetic, or love, then the weak, the woman, the masses, assume the positivity, but the balance is only ever kept by stern authority, the unflinching obstinacy of the return-force, of power. (K, p.309)

In literary tradition Dionysus has a two-fold link with women. He is effeminate in appearance and women predominate in his cult. Lawrence would have been familiar with the soft and feminine shape of Dionysus in Murray's translation of *The Bacchae*, where Pentheus speaks jeeringly to the god:

Marry, a fair shape for a woman's eye,  
Sir stranger! And thou seek'st no more, I ween!  
Long curls, withall! That shows thou ne'er hast been  
a wrestler! - down both cheeks so softly tossed  
And winsome! And a white skin! It hath cost  
Thee pains, to please thy damsels with this white  
And red of cheeks that never face the light! (*Euripides*, p.99)

Walter F. Otto, in his detailed exposition of the myths associated with Dionysus, emphasises the association of the god with women:

We should never forget that the Dionysiac world is, above all, a world of women. Women awaken Dionysus and bring him up. Women accompany him wherever he is. Women await him and are the first ones to be overcome with his madness.<sup>31</sup>

Somers wished to disassociate himself from these aspects of the god whilst retaining the associations of Dionysus with re-birth and the phallus. The procreative power of Dionysus was reflected in the association of the god with sexually potent animals such as the ass and the bull, and was represented at his

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31. Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus Myth and Cult*, translated by Robert B. Palmer, (Indiana, 1965), p.142. See also *The Gods of The Greeks*: "no other god so much appeared to be a second Zeus as Dionysos did: a Zeus of women, admittedly, whereas the Olympian was much more a Zeus of men" (Kerenyi, p.221).

festivals by phallic symbols. But the god most emphatically associated with the phallus was Hermes, the god whose original primitive representation was the phallic pillar or herm. As the subheading of Carl Kerényi's *Hermes Guide of Souls: The Mythologem of the Masculine Source of Life* indicates, Hermes has very clear male associations.<sup>32</sup> In his "David" essay, Lawrence names the aspect of Dionysus that may be especially associated with Somers: Dionysus Eleutherios, "the Deliverer" who delivered "dreams, brilliant consciousness, vivid self-revelation" (*Phoenix*, p.62).

*Kangaroo* is a novel of self-revelation, and the "Harriet and Lovat at Sea in Marriage" is a chapter of self-scrutiny that works on several levels. It is a humorous account of the evolutionary struggles of a marriage, incorporating general theories regarding male and female relationships. It can also be understood as the externalised battle between a Jungian animus and anima, the male and female aspects, the yang and the yin, of the writer's psyche. Lawrence had read C.G.Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* in 1918. Perhaps like Frieda Lawrence, Harriet Somers de-bunks her husband's pretentious theories, scoffing at the impertinent "Mr Dionysus and Mr Hermes and Mr Thinks-himself-grand" and declaring "this lord, this master, this Hermes-cum-Dionysus wonder" quite mad (*K*, pp.175-176). She brings the self-appointed "world saviour" down to earth:

Him, a lord and master! Why, he was not really lord of his own bread and butter; next year they might both be starving. And he was not even master of himself, with his ungovernable furies and his uncritical intimacies with people: (*K*, p.177)

She rubbishes his involvement with men such as Jack Callcott and Kangaroo. This arrogant "male" activity and revolutionary talk is just a "stunt":

He had nothing but her, absolutely. And that was why, presumably, he wanted to establish this ascendancy over her, assume this arrogance. And so that he could refute her, deny her, and imagine himself a unique male. He *wanted* to be male

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32. Translated by Murray Stein, (New York, 1976).

and unique, like a freak of a phoenix. And then go prancing off into connections with men like Jack Callcott and Kangaroo, and saving the world. She could not stand these world saviours. And she, she must be safely there, as a nest for him, when he came home with his feathers pecked. That was it. So that he could imagine himself absolutely and arrogantly it, he would turn her into a nest, and sit on her and overlook her, like the one and only phoenix in the desert of the world, gurgling hymns of salvation.

Poor Harriet! No wonder she resented it. Such a man, such a man to be tied to and tortured by!

And poor Richard! To be a man, and to have a man's uneasy soul for his bed-fellow. (K, pp.177-178)

Richard "kicked against the pricks" and refused to submit to either Harriet or to Australia, who was like a woman to him. The element of water that figures so strongly in *Kangaroo* is traditionally associated with women and birth. Dionysus is also associated with water:

The cults and myths are as explicit as they can be about the fact that Dionysus comes out of the water and returns to it, and that he has his place of refuge and home in the watery depths. (Otto, p.162)

At Coe-ee, after spurning Victoria's advances, Somers swims naked "like a fish" before emerging "straight from the sea, like another creature" to make love with Harriet (K, p.147). More than once, he expresses the desire to be like "an isolated swift fish in the big seas", with all the "terrific, icy energy of a fish" (K, p.124). It is as though he saw himself as a phallic fish in a female sea, a dolphin leaping free from the element that sustained him, just as the phoenix rose from the nest. Somers was the victim of conflicting desires. He wanted to belong to the rest of mankind, but he also wanted to cut himself clear. In the final chapter, "Adieu, Australia", he tells Jaz that he loves Australia and that his desire to stay and go "bush" was "like wanting a woman". Australia was like "Eve tempting man to a fall" (K, p.355). But he refuses to give in to female temptation. Jaz, the Judas of *Kangaroo*, betrays the inner man with a malicious smile:

"You won't give in, Mr Somers will you? You won't give in to the women, and Australia's like a woman to you. You wouldn't give in

to Kangaroo, and he's dead now. You won't give in to Labour, or Socialism. Well, now, what will you do? Will you give in to America, do you think?" (K, p.361)

Just before the Somers leave Australia there is a terrible storm. The sea becomes hellish and wild, and "it was like the end of the world" (K, p.357). The storm abates eventually, but not the sea. When Richard wanders on the shore he sings to himself "a kind of war croon, malevolent against the malevolence of this ocean", an ocean that seemed "female and vindictive" (K, p.361). It is August, and in this place where the seasons are inverted it is spring. The sun is hot and high in a blue sky, "only the sea would not, or could not, return to its former beauties" (K, p.361). Richard and Harriet go inland to see the blossoming of the Australian spring. They follow a stream to its source:

The two scrambled down, and along after the water, to an abrupt edge. There the water fell in a great roar down a solid rock, and broke and rushed into a round, dark pool, dark, still, fathomless, low down in a gruesome dark cup in the bush, with rocks coming up to the trees. In this tam the stream disappeared. There was no outlet. Rock and bush shut it in. The river just dived into the ground. (K, p.363)

It is a fearful place, famous for snakes. The stream goes underground. The water, the female element and unifying symbol of *Kangaroo* is pulled down into the underworld. Traditionally, the god Dionysus may disappear as suddenly as he appears, and his disappearance signifies "his plunge into the underworld" (Otto, p.79). It was time to go with Hermes. Richard Lovat Somers sails for America "over a cold, dark, inhospitable sea" (K, p.367).

Somers believed that "Kangaroo had been his last embrace with humanity" (K, p.271). He had told Jaz that it was the place not the people that he loved, and he left Australia in a misanthropic mood, muttering to himself "I love nobody and I like nobody, and there's the end to it as far as I'm concerned" (K, p.347). But in Sydney, when making arrangements for the departure, he had felt something akin to love on a visit to the Zoo. He saw the "dark, fem-age

gentleness" of two kangaroos, and seeing these animals "the tenderness came back":

Such a married couple! Two kangaroos. And the blood in Richard's veins all gone dark with a sort of sad tenderness. The gentle kangaroos, with their weight in heavy blood on the ground, in their great tails! It wasn't love he felt for them, but a dark, animal tenderness, and another sort of consciousness, deeper than human. (K, p.347)

"Tenderness" is the nearest Lawrence gets to a new word in place of "love". When Somers walks on the shore, under the full moon, he has a religious experience. But it is not an experience of contact with any anthropomorphic god, and it is physical rather than spiritual:

The radium-rocking, wave-knocking night his call and his answer both. This God without feet or knees or face. This sluicing, knocking, urging night, heaving like a woman with unspeakable desire, but no woman, no thighs or breast, no body. The moon, the concave mother-of-pearl night, the great radium-swinging, and his little self, the call and the answer, without intermediary. Non-human gods, non-human human beings. (K, p.349)

The pull of the moon on the tide is like a sexual passion. There are elements of irony and contradiction in the experience, for although it is implied that this is a contact with Somers' great, dark, ithyphallic Lord and Master god, the qualities of the moon-lit night are female. Alone on the deserted shore by the great ocean, Somers feels the full impact of these natural forces "without intermediary". In Christian theology, Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and man. But Christ is a spiritual mediator. The physical experience of non-human forces requires a different messenger: the writer as Hermes. The Australian experience, endorsed by the "splendid landscape" of a "humanly nothing" America,<sup>33</sup> opened up the possibilities of a non-human world. Two stories written in 1924, "The Border Line"

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33. Letter to Jan Juta, (1 January 1923), *Letters*, IV, p.366.

and *St. Mawr*, show how deeply Lawrence was affected by these wider, wilder landscapes.

"The Border Line" and two lighter weight stories written from February to April 1924 "The Last Laugh" and "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman", concern fallen heroes and the fallen Pan. According to Patricia Merivale:

These heroes have a strong resemblance to each other, and an equally strong resemblance, though it is the resemblance of caricature, to Lawrence's erstwhile friend John Middleton Murry. Lawrence and Murry had been having rather complicated disagreements on literary matters for some time, but the point at issue in these stories is a much less open one: an unspoken rivalry for Frieda. (*Pan the Goat-God*, p.209)

Merivale calls Lawrence's "Pan in America" essay "the manifesto" for the period of his writing when he uses Pan as a symbol for his key concepts (*Pan the Goat-God*, p.198). But it is worth remembering that he wrote the stories before the essay. "The Border Line" is a story that relates to the separation of Lawrence from Frieda in 1923. In August, after a year together in New Mexico and Mexico, Frieda left Lawrence in America and returned to Europe. Lawrence spent time alone in Mexico, but in December he was to rejoin Frieda in England. The old claustrophobia soon returned. He wrote to his mother-in-law:

I am like a wild animal in a trap, so dark and closed-in it is here, and never does one draw free air.<sup>34</sup>

And to Thomas Seltzer, probably on the same day:

Am here - loathe London - hate England - feel like an animal in a trap. It all seems so dead and dark and buried - even *buried*.<sup>35</sup>

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34. Letter to Baroness Anna von Richthofen, 14 December 1923, *Letters*, IV, p.542.

35. Letter to Thomas Seltzer, (14 December 1923), *Letters*, IV, p.542.

At the end of January, the Lawrences moved on to Paris and then to Baden Baden, returning a month later via Strasburg. This journey provided the setting for "The Border Line". Lawrence wrote to Kotellansky from Baden Baden:

Germany is queer - seems to be turning - as if she would make a great change, and become manly again, and a bit dangerous in a manly way. I hope so. Though everybody is poorer, terrible poverty, even no tram-cars running, because they can't afford the fare, and the town dark at night, still there is a certain healthiness, more than in France, far more than in England, the old fierceness coming back.<sup>36</sup>

The spirit of Australia was female. Germany is on the verge, the borderline, of becoming "manly again". "The Border Line" is a story that symbolizes the return of a "fighting conscience".<sup>37</sup> The fierce, male spirit of place, which is ultimately represented in "The Border Line" by the symbol of the pine tree, is an externalization of a psychic and cosmic change of balance.

Katherine Farquhar, as the daughter of a German baron, is an aristocrat by inheritance, as was Daphne of "The Ladybird". Philip, her second husband, is a journalist, quite clever, successful in a worldly sense, a little somebody in a world full of little somebodies. Like Bertie of "The Blind Man", he is a Scotsman, trained for the Bar. The contempt of the narrator for this man is undisguised:

He was a little Highlander, of the insidious sort, clever, and *knowing*. This look of of knowing in his dark eyes, and the feeling of secrecy that went with his dark little body, made him interesting to women. Another thing he could do was to give off a great sense of warmth and offering, like a dog when it loves you. (SSS, p.372)

Alan Anstruther, Katherine's first husband and father of her two grown-up children, was "a red-haired fighting Celt" (SSS, p.371). He was a captain in a Highland regiment, handsome, with a "dauntless, overbearing manliness". He was an

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36. Letter to S.S. Kotellansky, (9 February 1924), *Letters*, IV, p.574.

37. In an earlier letter to Kotellansky, Lawrence had written "There is a great fascination in Australia. But for the remains of a fighting conscience, I would stay". See note 13 above.



aristocrat by birth and he was a natural aristocrat, in Count Dionys' sense, who had "a silent indomitable assumption that he was actually first-born, a born lord" and "a weird innate conviction that he was beyond ordinary judgement (SSS, p.371). In contrast to Phillip, Alan was unsentimental and unsuccessful in the worldly sense. He stood out and stood his ground in the modern world like a primitive Hermetic symbol:

Alan just asserted himself like a pillar of rock, and expected the tides of the modern world to recede around him. They didn't. (SSS, p.372)

As in "The Blind Man" and "The Ladybird", we find that the two male rivals of "The Border Line" are involved in a one-sided friendship and a triadic relationship with one woman. "The Blind Man" ended with the Dionysian husband Maurice feeling a passionate love for the Apollonian Bertie. Basil, the husband in "The Ladybird" who was a golden Dionysus turned Christ-like by the War, was attracted to the dark and Plutonic Count Dionys. Phillip has "an almost uncanny love" for Alan, who was "mostly indifferent" (SSS, p.372). Phillip felt that Alan was the only real man he had ever met, a man who did not let himself be "swept away". Unlike Phillip, "Alan never lets himself be swept away" (SSS, p.373). Phillip, who is small, dark and chetif, physically resembling Count Dionys, is prone to Dionysian ecstasies. Alan says of Phillip.:

I never was Farquhar's friend! If he asserts that he's mine, that's his side of the question. I never positively cared for the man. He's too much over the wrong side of the border for me. (SSS, p.373)

The "border" is a symbol of the line between many related opposites in the story: past and future, north and south, reality and dream, life and death, male and female. Alan denies Phillip because he is too much over on the female side of the border.

After ten years of marriage, Katherine and Alan had separated. Despite their mutual passion, each had attempted to lord it over the other and had refused to yield. Alan had never returned from the War, going "missing" in the spring of 1915. Katherine had never really believed Alan dead, but she had married Philip in 1921. Like the marital struggle between Katherine and Alan, the War had been a battle between opposed principles, but on a cosmic scale. After the War, the female principle had gained ascendancy. Lawrence alludes to Demeter, the goddess of the corn-field and mother of Persephone:

The queen-bee<sup>38</sup> had recovered her sway, as queen of the earth; the woman, the mother, the female with the ear of corn in her hand, as against the man with the sword (SSS, p.374)

The marriage struggle and the War were manifestations of the polarity theory described by Lawrence in "The Crown" and "The Two Principles". As he explained in those essays, the battle between opposed principles was necessary, but it was equally necessary that neither should win. Philip, the humanist, asserted that:

the war was monstrous, that it should never have been, and that man should refuse to consider it as anything but a colossal, disgraceful accident. (SSS, p.374)

The female in Katherine is soothed and consoled by Philip's view, but "in her German soul" she "knew that it was no accident". The male in Katherine sees the inevitability and necessity of the War. She knew, as Alan had known:

That the whole of her womanly, motherly concentration could never put back the great flow of human destiny. That, as he said, only the cold strength of a man, accepting the destiny of destruction, could see the human flow through the chaos and beyond to a new outlet. But the chaos first, and then the long rage of destruction. (SSS, p.373)

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38. The Queen Bee or Q.B. was Lawrence's pet name for Frieda. See also letter to Frederick Carter, (11 January 1924). *Letters*, IV, p.556, where Lawrence refers to Murry as a "sort of queen bee".

This is the Lawrentian view, bothered by humanist doubts as expressed by Philip. The War was not a pathetic accident that could be put out of mind to become forgotten history, but a tragedy with which he had to come to terms again and again. Lawrence understood the distinction between tragedy and accident, a distinction made very clear by the Greek dramatists and by Shakespeare, as he made clear in his "Preface to *Touch and Go*" of June 1919:

It is in this facing of fate, this going right through with it, that tragedy lies. Tragedy is not disaster. It is disaster when a cart-wheel goes over a frog, but it is not a tragedy. Tragedy is the working out of some immediate passional problem within the soul of man. If this passional problem and this working out be absent, then no disaster is a tragedy, not the hugest: not the death of ten million men. It is only a cart-wheel going over a frog. There must be supreme *struggle*.<sup>39</sup>

An accident was meaningless whilst a tragedy was full of meaning. Lawrence had expressed this truth in "England, My England", with the symbolic maiming of Egbert's daughter. At the end of "The Nightmare" chapter of *Kangaroo*, Somers told of the feeling of "meaninglessness" that had overcome him after the War:

the meaning had gone out of everything for him. He had lost his meaning. England had lost its meaning for him. The free England had died, this England of the peace was like a corpse. It was the corpse of a country to him. (K, p.264)

Katherine, in "The Border Line", also experiences a feeling of "nullity" after the War:

It was almost like having a disease. Life became dull and unreal to her, as it had never been before. She did not even struggle and suffer. In the numbness of her flesh she could feel no reactions. Everything was turning into mud. (SSS, p.374)

Whilst she appeared to be enjoying herself outwardly, "in her secret soul" she felt spiritually degraded. On a personal level, the problem lay with the absence of polarity in her second marriage. Philip, with "subtle, fawning power" compromised

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39. "Preface to *Touch and Go*" in *Phoenix II*, pp.289-293 (p.291).

the balance between male and female in the marriage (SSS, p.375). Rather than openly challenging her, as Alan had, Philip equivocates in order to avoid conflict. Katherine begins to yearn for her first husband. The difference between the effects of Philip and of Alan on Katherine is expressed in terms of suffocation and open air:

Sometimes she gasped and gasped from her oppressed lungs. And sometimes the bony, hard, masterful, but honest face of Alan would come back, and suddenly it would seem to her that she was all right again, that the strange, voluptuous suffocation, which left her soul in mud, was gone, and she could breathe air of the open heavens once more. Even fighting air. (SSS, p.375)

Katherine's symbolic return to Alan begins with the boat of Dionysus, crossing the Channel, and continues with a Hermetic train that "went on wings" through the ghastly, war-torn, grave-yard of the Marne, "the border country, where the Latin races and the Germanic neutralize one another into horrid ash" (SSS, pp. 375-376). It is a symbolic return to meaning and to the male principle. On the train, Katherine falls asleep after drinking wine. Dionysus, of course, is the god of wine and self-revelatory dreams. Katherine's dream becomes reality, returning meaning to a post-war world that had been troubled by a nightmare of meaninglessness. Her journey becomes a journey to the Underworld, a world that is described in the sort of language Lawrence would use in the "Bavarian Gentians" poem of 1929. As she slept:

life, as she had known it, seemed all to turn artificial to her, the sunshine of the world an artificial light, with smoke above, like the light of torches, and things artificially growing, in a night that was lit up artificially with such intensity that it gave the illusion of day. (SSS, p.376)

In Katherine's inner thought-speech the word "panic" is foregrounded by repetition, suggesting the special meaning of "panic" as associated with Pan:

Her love and her emotions, her very panic of love, had been an illusion. She realized how love had become panic-stricken inside her, during the war.

And now even this panic of love was an illusion. She had run to Philip to be saved. And now, both her panic-love and Philip's salvation were an illusion.

What remained then? Even panic-stricken love, the intensest thing, perhaps, she had ever felt, was only an illusion. What was left? The grey shadows of death? (SSS, p.376)

Traditionally, Christianity had been responsible for the death of Pan. Lawrence expands the myth, linking the death of Pan to the death of the love principle he had previously associated with Christianity and democracy. All love was an illusion, whether spiritual or sexual. There was no salvation in any kind of human love. Both Christ and Pan, the anthropomorphic gods respectively associated with sacred and profane love, were dead.

In Strasburg, a city "on a weary, everlasting border-line", the German porter keeps guard over Katherine "like an appointed sentinel" and the French policeman "in his blue cape and peaked cap" looks even more like Hermes (SSS, p.377). Katherine crosses the Rhine, a "night-dark river" like the Styx, on foot. She goes to see the minster that she remembered so well "in that other life" (SSS, p.377). There is a long and vivid description of Strasburg Cathedral as a "great blood-dusky Thing", looming with menace "like some vast silent beast with teeth of stone" (SSS, pp.377-378). The description of the enormous blood-rusted building, like a huge phoenix with red plumage, incorporates the image of Mount Sinai that Lawrence had described in letters to Koteliensky and his mother-in-law,<sup>40</sup> and the symbolic red dragon of the Apocalypse.<sup>41</sup> As Lawrence would explain in his last book, red is "the colour of *man's* splendour" but was "the colour of evil in the cosmic creatures or the gods", and the red dragon or kakodaimon was a cosmic symbol of evil:

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40. See notes 1 and 3 above.

41. Lawrence had read an early version of Frederick Carter's *The Dragon of the Alchemists*, in Mexico in June 1925. The work that became *Apocalypse* was originally intended as an introduction to Carter's *Dragon*. Lawrence had stayed with Carter from 3-5 January 1924 to discuss the dragon symbol. See *Apocalypse*, pp.8-9 and p.21.

The green dragon becomes with time the red dragon. What was our joy and our salvation becomes with time, at the end of our time-era, our bane and our damnation. What was a creative god, Ouranos, Kronos, becomes at the end of the time-period a destroyer and a devourer. The god of the beginning of an era is the evil principle at the end of that era. For time still moves in cycles. What was the green dragon, the good potency, at the beginning of the cycle has by the end gradually changed into the red dragon, the evil potency. The good potency of the beginning of the Christian era is now the evil potency of the end. (A, p.125)

The Cathedral had once been a symbol of good, but the Christian cycle had ended, and the Cathedral had become a symbol of evil. Somers had told of his "horror of vast super-incumbent buildings" in *Kangaroo*:

They were a nightmare. Even the cathedrals. Huge, huge bulks that are called beauty. Beauty seemed to him like some turgid tumour. (K, p.354)

Somers had "railed at the scrappy amorphousness" of Australia until he had dreamed of European cities and dreamed a dream where he had found himself in the shadow of a cathedral:

in a high old provincial street with old gable houses and dark shadow and himself in the gulf between: and at the end of the street a huge, pale-grey bulk of a cathedral, an old Gothic cathedral, huge and massive and grey and beautiful.

But, suddenly, the mass of it made him feel sick, and the beauty was nauseous to him. So strong a feeling that he woke up. (K, pp.353-354)

He had woken up from the nightmare of "horrible, inert, man-moulded weight" to the beauty of the clear, clean, flimsy and "frail *inconspicuousness*" of the Australian landscape (K, p.354). Under the "closed wings" of the minster in "The Border Line" a man stands, dark, motionless, alone, and remote, just as Somers had stood in the shadow of the cathedral in his dream. Katherine knew immediately that it was Alan, or rather, the spirit of Alan. His face is touched with

dark splendour, and the atmosphere that surrounds him is like that surrounding a wild animal:

She glanced at his face: it seemed much more dusky, and duskily ruddy, than she had known him. He was a stranger: and yet it was he, no other. he said nothing at all. But that was also in keeping. His mouth was closed, his watchful eyes seemed changeless, and there was a shadow of silence around him, impenetrable, but not cold. Rather aloof and gentle, like the silence that surrounds a wild animal.

She knew that she was walking with his spirit. But that even did not trouble her. It seemed natural. (SSS, p.378)

In the Underworld across the river, Katherine walks contentedly with the spirit of her first husband. Alan wears the peaked cap of Hermes, and has come "from the halls of death" to rekindle the fires of faith (SSS, p.379). Katherine submits "in the afterwards" to the soft, dim, full "flood of contentment" that she had previously fought against. Three paragraphs drive home the same hypnotic message:

Now, afterwards, she realised it. ...

Now, in the afterwards, she knew it. ...

Now, she knew it, and she submitted. (SSS, p.379)

Alan's resurrection returns to Katherine the feeling of unconscious contentment that she had forgotten, and later had "almost wilfully destroyed". He comes back from the dead, not as Christ, with a message of love, but as Hermes, with a message of "kindliness". Katherine is afraid to break the spell of this fragile, "warm" contact:

The warm, powerful, silent ghost had come back to her. It was he. She must not even try to think about him definitely, not to realize him or to understand. Only in her woman's soul could she silently ponder him, darkly, and know him present in her, without ever trying to find him out. (SSS, p.379)

The feelings Katherine now experiences wipe out any intellectual questions. The fear of losing these feelings pre-empts such questioning. The feelings, the questions and answers, are not simply related to the marriage of Katherine and Alan, but refer to the modern experience of loss of faith in a world where both the pagan Pan and the Christian God are dead:<sup>42</sup>

And she repented, silently, of the way she had questioned and demanded answers in the past. What were the answers, when she had got them? Terrible ash in the mouth.

She now knew the supreme modern terror, of a world all ashy and nerve-dead. If a man could come back out of death to save her from this, she would not ask questions of him but be humble, and beyond tears grateful. (SSS, p.380)

The city of Strasburg is "a conquered city, on a weary everlasting border-line", "empty, as if its spirit had left it", "In the great frozen weariness of winter" (SSS, p.377). Strasburg symbolizes the city of man. The victory of the mind has left man spiritually empty, devoid of religious feeling in a coldly intellectual, and godless world. As Lawrence explains in the "Pan In America" essay, and in keeping with the theory of necessary polarity without ultimate victor, if man ever solved the mystery of life there would be nothing to live for:

A conquered world is no good to man. He sits stupified with boredom upon his conquest.

We need the universe to live again, so that we can live with it. A conquered universe, a dead Pan, leaves us nothing to live with.

You have to abandon the conquest, before Pan will live again. You have to live to live, not to conquer. What's the good of conquering even the North Pole, if after the conquest you've nothing left but an inert fact? Better leave it a mystery. (*Phoenix*, p.29)

The essay re-iterates the belief in the natural contentment possible in a male-female relationship, recalling the time when man the hunter returned to the soft comforts of the woman who moved silently about the tents.

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42. See letter to Mark Gertler, (10-11 March 1924), Letters, IV, p.599: "the old Jehovah does *not* rule the world any more. He's quit".



In the stark light of morning, the people of Strasburg "looked pale, chilled through, and doomed in some way" (SSS, p.380). The Cathedral was "cold and repellent, in spite of the glow of stained glass", and Alan was nowhere to be found. The train waiting to cross the Styx-like Rhine has "a few forlorn souls" on board. In Kehl, the train is delayed at a new border-line, another neutral zone. The vast fields of the Rhine plain, where "the earth felt strong and barbaric", seeming to vibrate "in a deep, savage undertone", are anything but Elysian:

There was the frozen, savage thrill in the air also, something wild and unsubdued, pre-Roman. (SSS, p.381)

The train is going ever northwards, through a fiercer wilder landscape, and ancient forests, leaving modern civilization behind. As it travels north it travels deeper, and further back in time:

It was the land beyond the Rhine, Germany of the pine forests. The very earth seemed strong and unsubdued, bristling with a few reeds and bushes, like savage hair. There was the same silence, and waiting, and the old barbaric undertone of the white-skinned north, under the waning civilisation. The audible over-tone<sup>43</sup> of our civilization seemed to be wearing thin, the old, low, pine-forest hum and roar of the ancient north seemed to be sounding through. At least, in Katherine's inner ear. (SSS, pp.381-382)

The description of the landscape here, as in the earlier description of the Marne, is pantheistic and anthropomorphic. But whereas the Marne had a dead face, with houses "like rotten teeth" in a corpse (SSS, p.375), the face of the fierce German earth bristles with life. Katherine meets Philip, her second husband, in Oos. Like Loerke of *Women in Love* and Count Dionys of "The Ladybird", Philip is "queer and *chetif*" (SSS, p.382). Katherine now thinks it quite extraordinary that she could have married such a man and feels humiliated "even by the fact that her name was Katherine Farquhar". Philip looks ill, hollow, and defeated. He feels chilled to the

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43. An unfinished Pan story of 1924 is called "The Overtone".

bone and is unable to get warm. His eyes are full of fear. Katherine's older sister, Marianne, is also at the station to meet her. Marianne, who has also lost a husband in the War, has come to terms with the ruthlessness of life:

It was as if she found a final relief in the radical pitilessness of the Tree of Life. (SSS, p.383)

She sees life as a great tree. Individual leaves may fall, but the strong root-pulse lives on. She calls Phillip a "stand-up-mannikin". Like a toy man weighted with lead, Phillip bobs up again after the War with his belief in love intact:

The old male pride and power were doomed. They had finally fallen in the war. Alan with them. But the emotional, sentimental values still held good. (SSS, p.384)

But Germany was "too much for him". Phillip the sentimentalist had got it all wrong. Here, where everything in the atmosphere seemed to say "Give us pitilessness. give us the Tree of Life in winter, dehumanised and ruthless", love was doomed and Alan, with his old male pride and power, had come back from the dead. When Phillip attempts to make soft, sweet love to Katherine she rejects him and Marianne mocks him. Katherine is utterly repelled by his confession of dependence upon her in order to feel "real", his insistence that: "A man without a woman *can't* be real". He feels less real to her than Alan, who "could wander alone in the lonely places of the dead, and still be the ultimate real thing to her" (SSS, p.384).

There is fear and menace in the "dark and wolfish" winter nights at Baden-Baden. Phillip begins to have terrible dreams of suffocation, of Alan lying on top of him with a terrible weight, the bedclothes "like a lead coffin-shell" (SSS, p.385).

During the day, Katherine walks in the woods with Marianne:

It was sunny, and there was thin snow. But the cold in the air was heavy, stormy, unbreakable, and the woods seemed black, black. In a hollow, open space, like a bowl, were little tortured

vines. Never had she seen the pale vine-stocks so tortured. And the black trees seemed to grow out of unutterably cold depths, and they seemed to be drinking away what warmth of life there was, while the vines in the clearing writhed with cold as leaves writhe in a fire. (SSS, p.386)

It is winter, the winter of the Tree of Life, the season of Pluto's Underworld. Dionysus was a primitive tree-god who later became associated with the cultivation of the vine. The life-force has left the vines sacred to a soft, southern, effeminate Dionysus and has entered the pine trees sacred to an earlier Dionysus and a fiercely male, northern Pan. In the cosmic cycle, the trees rise out of the ashes of the vines. In terms of psychic balance it is time for the male principle, the yang, to rise up in a world that had become unbalanced in favour of the female yin. After sunset, Katherine and Philip go to drink the waters of the spa. The stone of the buildings is dark and reddish, like the stone of Strasbourg Cathedral. The people are gathered "like dark spirits" around the fountain and the steam of the springs is ghostly as it rises from the gratings. Katherine sees Alan standing in the shadows. As he watches, she drinks a silent toast to him "in the hot, queer, hellish-tasting water" (SSS, p.386). According to myth, the waters of the Styx were so venomous "that they proved fatal to such as tasted them".<sup>44</sup> Philip chokes and coughs at the first mouthful of water handed to him by his wife. Then, to his utter horror, he begins to cough up blood. His face is haunted with fear. As they walk away, Alan walks at Katherine's side, holding her hand, and physically preventing her from supporting Philip. When she sits by Philip's bed, Alan sits on the other side, like a statue, the Egyptian statue that Lawrence always associates with male pride and power:

there was a wonderful changeless dignity in his pose, as if he could sit thus, silent, and waiting, through the centuries. And through the warm air of the room he radiated this strange, stony, coldness, that seemed heavy as the hand of death. (SSS, p.387)

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44. *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary of Proper Names mentioned in Ancient Authors*, revised edition (London, 1949), p.598.

Phillip begs Katherine to sleep with him that night, but she goes to her room leaving the two men "to work out destiny between them" (SSS, p.388). In the early hours, there is a horrible cry. Phillip is bleeding internally. He declares that Alan lay on top of him "and turned my heart cold and burst my blood-vessel in my chest" (SSS, p.388). Katherine feels the "strange stone-coldness" of Alan's presence, and knows he has the power to break her heart also. Alan goes away during daylight hours, and Phillip falls into a peaceful sleep, "looking like a corpse". Katherine craves Alan's presence:

Awful though he was, she wanted him to be there, to give her surety, even though it was only the surety of dread; and her contentment though it were the contentment of death (SSS, p.388)

The next night, Phillip calls out her name in terror. When she takes him in her arms she is pushed to the floor by Alan. She feels an instinctive anger and a desire to fight for Phillip's life, but submits to "a greater power", knowing such "womanly interference" to be both useless and dishonourable. Helpless and powerless, she lies in her nightdress on the bedroom floor. The Tree of Life in winter has its pitiless and ruthless way. In the dawn of a new day, Katherine feels herself lifted up, taken and possessed by Alan. He is wearing the uniform he had worn before the War, and his face is "cool and fresh" but no longer stony. In a ritual gesture reminiscent of the laying on of hands in "The Blind Man", "he pressed her firm hand hard to his own hard body". But although Alan is hard and male, Alan's possession of Katherine is a religious, organic, holistic possession, not "the old procreative possession" of a functional sexual act. He possesses her "through every pore of her body" and holds her "as a cloud holds a shower":

He was hard and cold like a tree, and alive. And the prickling of his moustache was the cold prickling of fir-needles. (SSS, p.389)

Then he lays her in her own bed, to sleep. She awakes to find the sun shining, and Phillip lying dead "in a pool of blood". But "somehow she did not mind":

The men who were just functional men; let them pass and perish. She wanted her contentment like life itself, through every pore, through every bit of her. The man who could hold her as the wind held her, as the air held her, all surrounded. The man whose aura permeated every vein, through all her pores, as the scent of the pine-tree when one stands beneath it. A man, not like a faun or a satyr or an angel or a demon, but like the Tree of Life itself, implacable and unquestionable and permeating, voiceless, abiding. (SSS, p.389)

Lawrence had attempted to correct the whimsical, benevolent, sentimental, emasculated, Edwardian image of Pan, the Pan that he accused Forster of confusing with Christ,<sup>45</sup> with the creation of Count Dionys in "The Ladybird". But the Dionysian Pan had retained an association with the defunct principle of universal love. Like the Count, Phillip was small, dark, and chetif. Katherine had fallen under his spell in what was now perceived as a mad panic of love after the War. What was once a symbol of good potency had become a symbol of evil, and "according to old myth", as Lawrence would explain in *Apocalypse*, "it is woman who falls most absolutely into the power of the dragon" (p.125). Just as Strasburg Cathedral was rusted with red, the dying Phillip is stained red with blood. The death of Phillip at the hands of Alan symbolizes the slaying of the evil red dragon, the *kakodaimon* or evil genius, by the good spirit, new green dragon or *agathodaimon*. The anthropomorphic Pan who had become confused with both the spiritual love of Christ and the sexual love of Dionysus as Bacchus, was well and truly dead. The new Pan is completely disassociated from all human love but retains the Dionysian power of transmutability, and comes as Christ had come, as a religious messenger. At the end of "The Border Line", Alan, the new Pan who is like a pine tree, loses his human form completely and becomes a pine tree. He is the new green symbol of life, who frees Katherine from

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45. Lawrence had referred to his "angels and demons" in the 1915 letter to Forster criticising Forster's concept of Pan. See Chapter 3, note 9 above.

the coils of the old and evil red dragon. Katherine walks up through the pine-woods, past the New Castle, to the Old Castle where two old tramps talk of the end of aristocracy. From the castle ramparts, Katherine gazes around at the landscape and the sight of the snow-capped Merkur hill brings to mind the Roman and Greek names of the messenger of the gods. The invocation, the first overt reference to the names of any gods in the story, brings Alan to her side:

Mercury!<sup>46</sup> Hermes! The messenger! Even as she thought it, standing there on the wall, Alan came and stood beside her, and she felt at ease. (SSS, p.390)

As the sun sets, he leads Katherine down from the old, broken castle, past the red rocks, to linger under the shadow of a great pine-tree. Hermes, who was worshipped in ancient times as a stone pillar or herm, guides her back to an older Dionysus, and to a more natural, living phallic symbol:

And again, as he pressed her fast, and pressed his cold face against her, it was as if the wood of the tree itself were growing round her, the hard, live wood compressing and almost devouring her, the sharp needles brushing her face, the limbs of the living tree enveloping her, crushing her in the last, final ecstasy of submission, squeezing from her the last drop of her passion, like the cold, white berries of the mistletoe on the Tree of Life. (SSS, p.390)

The new Pan of "The Border Line" is the pine tree of the "Pan in America" essay. In the essay, Lawrence gives a resume of the literary history of Pan. The central section of the essay is given over to a lengthy description of "the interpenetration" of the big pine tree on the Lobo ranch into Lawrence's life. This tree resonates with all the power and life of the unfallen Pan: "This is the oldest Pan" (*Phoenix*, p.26). The new, oldest Pan of "The Border Line" also resonates with all the power and mystery of the oldest Dionysus and Hermes. At the end of the story both man and woman are transmuted into the bi-sexual tree, and the last drops of human

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46. Lawrence was to write a story called "Mercury" set on the Merkur hill, in which two men are struck and killed by lightning, two years later in July 1926.

feeling are squeezed out, becoming mistletoe berries. Fifteen years previously, in *The White Peacock*, Emily and Lettice had wondered over the lost meanings of the mysterious mistletoe. In *Kangaroo*, Somers had bewailed the loss of meaning after the War. In "The Border Line" Lawrence attempted to restore the wonder and power and meaning of the oldest pagan symbols, with the realization that their meaning was dependent on their wonder and mystery.

## CHAPTER 5: *St. Mawr* and *The Plumed Serpent*

Lawrence had written the first version of *The Plumed Serpent*, then called *Quetzalcoatl*, whilst staying at Lake Chapala in Mexico during the early summer of 1923. He wrote *St. Mawr* during the summer of 1924, back in New Mexico after the depressing winter in Europe where he had written "The Border Line". In November 1924 he resumed work on his Mexican novel in Oaxaca. A few days after completing the second draft at the end of January 1925, he contracted malaria and almost died. The final revision of *The Plumed Serpent* was written in June, during Lawrence's convalescence back at the ranch in New Mexico.

In the last chapter of *Kangaroo* Richard Somers had wandered in the bush in the evening twilight, thinking about the nature of the Australian experience. As he makes his way home, "a cream-coloured pony, with a snake-like head stretched out," reminding him of Greek sculpture, "came cropping up the road" within yards but oblivious to the man.

Richard thought of the snaky Praxiteles horses outside the Quirilline in Rome. Very, very nearly those old, snaky horses were born again in Australia: or the same vision come back.

People mattered so little. People hardly mattered at all. (K, p.352)

Praxiteles had worked in white marble and his talent in copying nature was such that his statues seemed animated.<sup>1</sup> In his article in the shape of a letter, "Dear Old Horse: A London Letter" published in *Laughing Horse* May 1924, Lawrence wrote of a Europe in grave-clothes, where man had become flaccid and flabby as a

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1. Praxiteles, a Greek sculptor of around 324 B.C., had made statues of Cupid and of the naked Venus (Aphrodite), the originals of which have not survived. The best surviving example of his art is the statue of Hermes discovered at Olympia, a youthful figure with a little Cupid on his arm. Only one of the horses outside the Quirilline hill in Rome is by Praxiteles, so Somers/Lawrence is wrong in the detail here. See *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary*, p.517 and p.542.



"two-legged forked radish". Life is symbolized as "Horse-sense, Horse-laughter, Horse-passion, Horse-hooves", and the dead Pan as a Centaur:

Two-legged man is no good. If he's going to stand steady, he must stand on four feet. Like the Centaur. When Jesus was born, the spirits wailed round the Mediterranean: Pan is Dead. Great Pan is Dead. And at the Renaissance the Centaur gave a final groan, and expired. At least, I seem to remember him lamenting and about to expire, in the Uffizi.

It would be a terrible thing if the horse in us died for ever, as he seems to have died in Europe. How awful it would be, if at this present moment I sat in the yellow mummy-swathings of London atmosphere - the snow is melting - inside the dreadful mummy-sarcophagus of Europe, and didn't know that the blue horse was still kicking his heels and making a few sparks fly, across the tops of the Rockies. It would be a truly sad case for me.<sup>2</sup>

As it is, Lawrence consoles himself that the symbolic blue horse of the ancient Mediterranean is still alive and kicking in the mountains, canyons and deserts of New Mexico and Mexico. He wrote to Mabel Dodge Luhan on the same day, telling her that the cure for the disease of self-conscious seriousness was "to dare to have a bit of a laugh at everything" which was "common horse sense":

Now call into action your common horse sense, of which you have your share, as I have mine, and use that. Don't go back on your common horse-sense. It is the centaur's way of knowledge. And if we come back into our own, we'll prance in as centaurs, sensible, a bit fierce, and amused.<sup>3</sup>

A week before returning to America he wrote to Mrs Luhan "I look forward to Taos again, to space and distance and not all these people".<sup>4</sup> At the Lobo ranch Lawrence wrote a story about men in whom the centaur Pan is crushed and corrupted, two ladies and a horse.<sup>5</sup> The fallen hero of the story, Rico, is an

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2. Letter to Willard Johnson, 9 January 1924, *The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, edited by Harry T. Moore, 2 (London, 1962), pp.767-770 (pp. 768-769).

3. Letter to Mabel Dodge Luhan, 9 January 1924, *Letters*, IV, p.555. He goes on to tell Mrs Luhan that his Gods "like the great God Pan, have a bit of a natural grin on their face". At the end of this month he wrote "The Last Laugh" and "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman" two humorous Pan stories.

4. Letter to Mabel Dodge Luhan, 29 February 1924, *Letters*, IV, p.593.

5. Letter to Curtis Brown, 30 September 1924, *Collected Letters*, 2, p.810: "If you think it better, 'St Mawr' can be called 'Two Ladies and a Horse'".

Australian poser who is playing at being an artist, a handsome flirt caught in a sexless marriage to the cosmopolitan American, Lou Witt:

You had only to see the uneasy backward glance at her, from his big blue eyes: just like a horse that is edging away from its master: to know how completely he was mastered. (*SM*, p.21)

Rico was like a pet dog who was about to bite or a tame horse that "might go nasty any moment" (*SM*, p.27). But he dare not "bite", being afraid that if he really let himself go he would "erupt like some suddenly wicked horse" and that this "eruption of life long anger" would destroy the "pretty pretty picture" of domestic and social success (*SM*, p.27). Thus, Lawrence brings to the character of Rico the volcanic symbolism of *Kangaroo*. The marriage of Rico and Lou is held together by "a nervous attachment, rather than a sexual love" and has become "more like a friendship, Platonic" (*SM*, p.24). Rico is what Somers was fighting not to become: an emasculated, repressed, fashionable artist, sailing along under the flag of perfect companionship, afraid to rock the boat. In Rico, whose fall from St. Mawr symbolises the reined-in passion that erupts in panic frenzy, "the animal has gone queer and wrong" (*SM*, p.61). In fact, the two ladies of the story, Lou and her mother Mrs Witt, come to the conclusion that they have never seen the unfallen Pan in any man, only "pancakes" (*SM*, p.66). In men that are masters only in terms of money and social success, the Great God Pan has become a "goaty old satyr" (*SM*, p.64), and the centaur Pan is thwarted in men that are servants and wage-slaves. The world of men in *St. Mawr* is an ignoble world of subservience where men are tamed and domesticated half-men. As Lou and Mrs Witt both see, Pan is manifested in the horse of the title, St. Mawr.

The bay horse is a beautiful, passionate, powerful, fierce, dangerous, red-gold stallion, with a true nobility, glowing with a dark, invisible, mysterious fire (*SM*, pp.28-31). When Lou touches St. Mawr "the vivid, hot life" comes through to her,

and the sight of him makes her want to cry, releasing all her impacted feelings (SM, pp.30-31). As she rests her hand on the horse's "sun-arched neck":

Dimly, in her weary young-woman's soul, an ancient understanding seemed to flood in. (SM, p.30)

The wild, brilliant, questioning and haunting eyes of St. Mawr seem to look at Lou out of another world. She is awe-struck, "as if she had had a vision, as if the walls of her own world had suddenly melted away". The demonish horse is "like a god looking at her terribly out of the everlasting dark", making her human relationships seem trivial and superficial, wielding "some uncanny authority" and forbidding her to be her ordinary social self (SM, p.31). In the relationship between Lou and St. Mawr, Lawrence expresses the social and emotional release he experienced in the wild, untamed and uninhabited landscapes of Australia and America. The fiercer landscapes also released a new flood of "ancient understanding" and freed his imagination to express that understanding in a fiercer symbolic language.

The battle between Rico and St. Mawr is a battle between a social being who has compromised his manhood and a living potent being, between the superficial values of a modern world where "everything was an attitude" and the deep, religious understanding of the ancient world, "something much more terrifying, and real, the only thing that was real"(SM, p.32). St. Mawr recoils from Rico "with a sudden jerk backwards, as if lightning exploded in his four hooves" because he remembers being beaten, and Lou realises that it was "a battle between two worlds":

She realised that St. Mawr drew his hot breaths in another world from Rico's, from our world. Perhaps the old Greek horses had lived in St. Mawr's world. And the old Greek heroes, even Hippolytus, had known it.

With their strangely naked equine heads, and something of a snake in their way of looking round, and lifting their sensitive, dangerous muzzles, they moved in a prehistoric twilight where all things loomed phantasmagoric, all on one plane, sudden

presences suddenly jutting out of the matrix. It was another world, an older, heavily potent world. And in this world the horse was swift and fierce and supreme, undominated and unsurpassed. -"Meet him half-way," Lewis said. But half-way across from our human world to that terrific equine twilight was not a small step. It was a step, she knew, that Rico would never take. She knew it. But she was prepared to sacrifice Rico. (SM, p.35)

The living horses in *Kangaroo* had reminded Somers of ancient Greek statues. In *St. Mawr* the ancient horse returns to life and the handsome figure of Rico, a representation of a modern man who is all "attitude" and no substance, is like a graven image. The reference to Hippolytus in conjunction with Lou's purchase of *St. Mawr* with the inner knowledge that "she was prepared to sacrifice Rico", prophesies Rico's riding accident. In Euripides' play,<sup>6</sup> Hippolytus becomes the object of his step-mother Phaedra's fatal desire in an act of revenge by Aphrodite, the goddess of love whom he had refused to worship. After Phaedra's suicide, Hippolytus is sent into exile by his father and is trampled to death by his horses. Lawrence's Rico, with his sexless marriage, also insults Aphrodite, and his wife falls in love with *St. Mawr*. Lou is compelled to worship the horse that is the external manifestation of the inner forces that Rico denies, and ultimately injure him. Rico has denied the god in him, and the god will be avenged. The gods in Euripides' play are notably harsh and indifferent to human suffering, and in Lawrence's story "not a spark of consideration did the stallion have for Rico" (SM, p.81). During a ride on the Welsh border Rico is crushed by *St. Mawr* when the horse rears at a dead adder and falls back upon the man.

The two grooms in the story, Lewis the black-bearded Welsh groom and Phoenix the son of a Mexican father and Navajo Indian mother, are like guardians of the symbolic horse and keepers of the ancient vision. Lewis is little and quick, dark, bearded and aboriginal, like a Celtic Count Dionys. His "uncanny pale-grey eyes that watched everything and cared about nothing", and his bow-legged stance and solitary status ally him to *Il Duro*, the Pan of *Twilight in Italy*. As

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6. The translation of *Euripides* by Gilbert Murray contained *Hippolytus*, *The Bacchae* and *The Frogs*.

the "attendant shadow" of St. Mawr since he was born, Lewis cares only for the horse:

People did not matter to him. He rode the horse, and watched the world from the vantage ground of St. Mawr, with a final indifference. (*SM*, p.37)

When he rides St. Mawr man and horse are almost indistinguishable, like a centaur. Mrs Witt remarks to Lou:

"Isn't it curious, the way he rides? He seems to sink himself in the horse. When I speak to him, I'm not sure whether I'm speaking to a man or to a horse." (*SM*, p.38)

Mrs Witt, who lays claim to Celtic roots with a Welsh mother, is attracted to Lewis and asks him to marry her but the social distance between them, the implicit relationship of mistress and servant, is too great. Lewis holds on to his male pride and power but that pride and power is inaccessible to an educated and sophisticated woman like Mrs Witt:

In his own odd way he was an aristocrat, inaccessible in his aristocracy. But it was the aristocracy of the invisible powers, the greater influences, nothing to do with human society. (*SM*, p.121)

Although she is touched by his mysterious other-worldliness, she cannot touch him. Although she is in love with him, and he "in an odd way" with her, Lewis is as sexually inaccessible to Mrs Witt as St. Mawr is to Lou. To Lewis, his body is a sacred temple that would be defiled by the touch of a woman who did not respect him. He refuses any intimate connexion with a woman who speaks to him as Mrs Witt speaks to him, with "contemptuous mockery, raillery" (*SM*, p.112). The difference between them is a matter of language. Lewis inhabits an inaudible, silent world:

a world dark and still, where language never ruffled the growing leaves, and seared their edges like a bad wind. (*SM*, p.104)

There was a silent communion between Lewis and Phoenix, and between Lewis and St. Mawr. Rachel Witt, on the other hand, "had lived so long, and so completely, in the visible, audible world" that whilst she and Lewis might meet they could never marry and mingle (*SM*, p.104). As they ride to freedom, rescuing St. Mawr from castration after he has thrown Rico, Mrs Witt questions Lewis about his religious beliefs. Lewis tells her that he has no time for churches and parsons and prayers:

"I don't believe in God and being good and going to Heaven. Neither do I worship idols, so I'm not a heathen as my aunt called me. Never from a boy did I want to believe the things they kept grinding in their guts at home, and at Sunday school and at school." (*SM*, p.110)

To believe in the conventional Christian God is to believe "other people's stuff". Like Phoenix, Lewis has his own religious concepts; naive and "childish nonsense, but nevertheless his own: "I would never belong to any club, or trades union, and God's the same to my mind" (*SM*, p.110). In the shadow of wood's-edge, "the darkness of the old Pan, that kept our artificially-lit world at bay" (*SM*, p.107), Lewis tells Mrs Witt that his mind is full of the wonder of shooting-stars, the smell of oak-trees, the magic of ash-trees, the mysteries of the sun and moon, and the made-up rituals and myths of childhood. Lewis is an example of a man who has remained a man, with the "essential innocence and naivete" of the human being "before he falls and becomes a social individual", and with "the sense of being at one with the great universe-continuum of space-time-life" as Lawrence described in his "John Galsworthy" essay three years later.<sup>7</sup> But Lewis is no articulate and highly educated Lawrentian hero, able to express his vision in such terms.

Like Lewis, Phoenix, Mrs Witt's Mexican-American Indian groom, was inarticulate in the white man's world. His education had caused his exile to the borderland of the half-breed, caught between two worlds and fitting into neither.

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7. "John Galsworthy" in *Selected Literary Criticism*, pp.118-131, p.121.

He was a displaced person whose only inheritance was despair, a despair "almost complete enough to be heroic" (*SM*, p.85). Phoenix was the shape of the "odd piece of *debris*" Mrs Witt had emerged with "out of the *debacle* of the war" (*SM*, p.24). He sat on a horse "as if he had grown there" (*SM*, p.25). He was Pan in the shape of a centaur:

Phoenix looked as if he and the horse were all one piece, he never seemed to rise in the saddle at all, neither trotting nor galloping, but sat like a man riding bare-back. (*SM*, p.36)

To Lewis, whose head was full of the visions of a country childhood, London was like a prison. To Phoenix, London is unreal, "a sort of mirage" without actual substance. His eyes are focussed on another reality, a distant vision of America, a different spirit of place:

He was watching the pale deserts of Arizona shimmer with moving light, the long mirage of a shallow lake ripple, the great pallid concave of earth and sky expanding with interchanged light. And a horse-shape loom large and portentous in the mirage, like some pre-historic beast.

That was real to him: the phantasm of Arizona. But this London was something his eye passed over, as a false mirage. (*SM*, p.36)

When St. Mawr is wicked and uncontrollable, Phoenix brings the horse to order with his "barbarically potent" will (*SM*, p.40). He attempts to dominate women as he dominates St. Mawr, with "a secret of *will*", and his problem with the opposite sex is the same as that of Lewis, except in reverse. It is a matter of respect. Lewis withheld himself from women because they mocked him and made him feel small. Phoenix teases and flirts with the female servants but they resent the way he makes them feel like dirt. Whilst Lewis felt desired by women that despised him as a man, Phoenix desired women he despised "as mere women" (*SM*, p.48). He *liked* his mistress and her daughter, but underneath the surface was a "categorical hatred" of the position of subservience they placed him in (*SM*, p.53). His connection with Lou and Mrs Witt is one of necessity and dependence. He

tells Lou that he will take her to the mountains and pine-trees, deserts and canyons, but the truth is that he needs her to take him there.

In America, Lou realises that Phoenix has been corrupted by the white world. She feels that he is asserting his will to possess her and the privileges that she could provide. But Lou did not mean anything to him as a *woman*. She was not Phoenix's female counterpart, his true mate, but merely a means to an end. The phallic male in him did not respond to the "straight-forwardness and utter sexual incompetence" of Lou, but to the dark, secretive, soft, "quiescent humility" of the native women:

Nevertheless he was ready to trade his sex, which, in his opinion, every white woman was secretly pining for, for the white woman's money and social privileges. In the daytime, all the thrill and excitement of the white man's motor-cars and moving pictures and ice-cream soda's and so forth. In the night, the soft, watery-soft warmth of an Indian or half-Indian woman. This was Phoenix's idea of life for himself. (*SM*, p.136)

Lou recoils from Phoenix, knowing "with the last clear knowledge of weary disillusion, that she did not want to be mixed up in Phoenix's sexual promiscuities" (*SM*, p.138). She realises that, essentially, Phoenix is no different than the husband she has left behind:

In his rootlessness, his drifting, his real meaninglessness, was he different from Rico? And in his childish, spellbound absorption in the motor-car, or in the moving-pictures, or in an ice-cream soda - was it very different from Rico? Anyhow, was it really any better? (*SM*, p.136)

Just as Lewis felt that he would be selling himself if he had a sexual relation with Mrs Witt, Lou feels that sex with Phoenix would be a kind of prostitution, an insult. Phoenix must "run among women of his own sort" (*SM*, p.139). Just as the sophistication of Mrs Witt cannot marry the innocence of Lewis, the bridge



between two worlds cannot be built between Phoenix and Lou.<sup>8</sup> Both Lewis and Lou declare that they are not the marrying kind and settle for a future alone, without a human mate. Mrs Witt declares that she has come home to die, alone. In *St. Mawr* all sexual relationship has become something cheap, sordid and shameful. Even the horse St. Mawr, who "didn't answer" as a stud in England, starts making advances to a long-legged black mare in Texas, following at her heels "almost slavishly" (*SM*, p.29 and p. 131). The sex between Phoenix and his native women is described as something "furtive" and "rat-like" (*SM*, p.136). The battle between men and women has become destructive, with each sex viciously fighting his or her own corner. As Lou says to Lewis, the noble thing now is to stay apart:

"It seems to me men and women have really hurt one another so much, nowadays, that they had really stay apart, till their hearts grow gentle towards one another again. Now, it's only each one fighting for his own - or her own - underneath the cover of tenderness." (*SM*, p.122)

In *St. Mawr* the balance has tipped, and what was gentle mockery, as seen in Harriet Somers' debunking of her husband in *Kangaroo*, has become a vicious goading. The sexes no longer trust or respect each other. The laughter has become a jeer.<sup>9</sup>

The trouble with Man, Lawrence wrote in "Pan in America" was that he "has lived to conquer the phenomenal universe" (*Phoenix*, p.29). This is the trouble with Mrs Witt, and she knows it. She has been a conqueress, an Amazonian queen of a woman who had never found her match. The laughter of Pan in Mrs

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8. See letter to John Middleton Murray, 25 October 1923, *Letters*, IV, p.520: "One hand in space is not enough. It needs the other hand from the opposite end of space, to clasp and form a Bridge. The dark hand and the white".

9. See note 3 above, p.556. Lawrence told Mabel Luhan that we must trust in the sources of life and in each other, just as the fierce recklessness of Pan was based on trust: "Stark trust in a Lord we have no name for, and also stark trust in one another. Instead of a recklessness of defiance and mistrust, a recklessness of must, like a naked knife."

Witt's terrible grey eyes has become a "queer, triumphant leer" (*SM*, p.44),  
demonish and destructive:

Examining herself, she had long ago decided that her nature was a destructive force. But then, she justified herself, she had only destroyed that which was destructible. If she could have found something indestructible, especially in men, though she would have fought against it, she would have been glad at last to have been defeated by it.

That was the point. She really wanted to be defeated, in her own eyes. And nobody had ever defeated her. (*SM*, p.100)

"As far as the mysterious battle of life went, she had won all the way" (*SM*, p.102).  
She was left with nothing but contempt for the world she had conquered. Rather than fearing death, her great dread was that death might be as devoid of "mystery and the rustling of darkness" as her life had been:

Almost she was tempted in her heart to cry: "Conquer me, oh God, before I die! - But then she had a terrible contempt for the God that was supposed to rule this universe. She felt she could make *Him* kiss her hand. (*SM*, p.102)

With empty triumph, Mrs Witt had conquered the "country" of the men she had admired, actually and metaphorically, physically and metaphysically (*SM*, p.101).  
Until Lewis. Lewis defends his physical frontiers and refuses to let his mistress have his body. After the shock of the rejection Mrs Witt seems to experience a little death. It was "as if the power in her were switched off" (*SM*, p.119). On the sea crossing to America, the previously vociferous and energetic woman is silent, lying on her bunk "shut up like a steel trap, as in her tomb" (*SM*, p.127). She is eventually "roused" from her stupor by the savage beauty of "the world beyond: a world not of men" (*SM*, p.153). She tells Lou that heartbreak is as inevitable as the loss of virginity in the world of men and women, and that "it amounts to about as much". It is difficult to believe that Lewis has broken Mrs Witt's heart, but at least she has been hurt enough to know that she has lived, and to know that having your heart broken, like losing your virginity, is "a beginning rather than an end" (*SM*, p.154).

Mrs Witt's daughter, Lou, is the central articulate intelligence of *St. Mawr* who finds an unconquered country in the wild and fierce landscape of New Mexico. Lou, the faun-like and *gamine* outsider, sees the power and mystery of the unfallen Pan, the quick of life burning in St. Mawr, and sees the possibility of living life "straight from the source as the animals do" (*SM*, p.61). She tells her mother that she does not want anything more to do with men who are as mindless and dangerless as "tame dogs" but neither does she want to be knocked on the head by a cave-man:

"- I don't consider the cave man is a real human animal at all. He's a brute, a degenerate. A pure animal man would be as lovely as a deer or a leopard, burning like a flame fed straight from underneath. And he'd be part of the unseen, like a mouse is, even. And he'd never cease to wonder, he'd breathe silence and unseen wonder, as the partridges do, running in the stubble. He'd be all the animals in turn, instead of one fixed, automatic thing, which he is now, grinding on the nerves. - Ah no, mother, I want the wonder back again, or I shall die." (*SM*, pp.61-62)

Lou's pure animal man who would be all the animals in turn is a man who would know "the pagan way, the many gods, the different service" as described by Richard Somers in *Kangaroo* (*K*, p.143).<sup>10</sup> Lou's quest is religious. She seeks the mystery and wonder she sensed in St. Mawr. It is a search for authority. Not to be bossed, but to yield in awe to "the natural mystery of power" as described by Lawrence in his letter to Rolf Gardiner.

Lou sees the image of Rico, clutching the reins so tightly when St. Mawr rears at the dead snake that the horse falls backwards on top of him, as a "vision of evil":

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10. See letter to Rolf Gardiner, 4 July 1924, *Collected Letters*, pp.796-797: "To tell the truth, I am sick to death of the Jewish monotheistic string. It has become monomaniac. I prefer the pagan many gods and the animistic vision. Here on this ranch at the foot of the Rockies, looking west over the desert, one just *knows* that our Pale-face and Hebraic monotheistic insistence is a dead letter - the soul won't answer any more. ...

I know there has to be a return to the older vision of life. But not for the sake of unison. And not done from the *will*. It needs a welling up of religious sources that have been shut down in us: a great *yielding*, rather than an act of will: a yielding to the darker, older unknown, and a reconciliation. Nothing bossy. Yet the natural mystery of power."

It was something horrifying, something you could not escape from. It had come to her as in a vision, when she saw the pale gold belly of the stallion upturned, the hoofs working wildly, the wicked curved hams of the horse, and then the evil straining of that arched, fish-like neck, with the dilated eyes of the head. Thrown backwards, and working its hooves in the air. Reversed, and purely evil.

She saw the same in people. They were thrown backwards, and writhing with evil. And the rider, crushed, was still reining them down. (SM, pp.78-79)

Lou's vision of evil is all-encompassing and apocalyptic: "The whole world was enveloped in one great flood" (SM, p.78). Every individual and every nation, every ideal and every political system was immersed in the poisonous tide of evil. It is a vision of man as the great betrayer, betraying each other and the natural world, with Judas, who betrayed the God of Love, as their last and most potent God:

Mankind, like a horse, ridden by a stranger, smooth-faced, evil rider. Evil himself, smooth-faced and pseudo-handsome, riding mankind past the dead snake, to the last break.

Mankind no longer its own master. Ridden by this pseudo-handsome ghoul of outward loyalty, inward treachery, in a game of betrayal, betrayal, betrayal. The last of the gods of our era, Judas supreme! (SM, p.79)

Lou understands that man crushes and kills the Pan in the snake and the horse, "the kings of creation in the order below man", out of fear (CSN, p.346).<sup>11</sup> Judas might be the last God, but as Somers declared in *Kangaroo* "Fear is the first of the actuating gods" (K, p.305). Haunted by her own fear that St. Mawr's behaviour might be due to malevolence or meanness, Lou goes to see the horse:

Was it the natural wild thing in him which caused these disasters? Or was it the slave, asserting himself for vengeance? (SM, p.82)

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11. As he expressed in the poem "Snake", written at Taormina in July 1920, Lawrence was not immune to this fear and betrayal of one of the lords of life.

As she gazes hard at him she settles the question, and "In a woman's muse" she realises that underneath the horse's frenzied panic lay grief and despair. She understands that Lewis and the horse share the same sadness, an "unconscious, vague, pervading animal grief" of brave and generous creatures "born to serve nobly" but born into a world where "nobility had gone out of men" (*SM*, p.84). Lou breathes the grief "into her breast, as if it were a great sigh down the ages", feeling both "the woe of human unworthiness" and the despair of a creature without a mate, a master, or a god worthy enough to serve (*SM*, pp.83-84).

In order to save "one last male thing" from the knives of a "eunuch civilisation", the two ladies and, conspire to take their horse to America (*SM*, pp.96-97). After Mrs Witt has made the initial escape with Lewis and St. Mawr, Lou writes long, amusing letters to her mother, relating snippets of conversation with Rico and describing his convalescence, nursed by Flora Manby. She tells her mother that she has been studying the Classical gods, and gives us a last, grotesque image of Rico as a cross between an impotent Priapus and a limp Adonis with the adoring Flora Manby like a Cassandra or an Iphigenia, absurdly waiting in vain to be violated and sacrificed. The artificiality of this false scene and the obscenity of this "paint-Priapus business" is realised by Lou when she picnics by a stream with Phoenix, and tastes *real* life:

He found me some watercresses, and they tasted so damp and alive, I knew how deadened I was. (*SM*, p.115)

Lou leaves Rico to his career as a popular portrait artist, "a pig in clover" with his nurse-bride, and sails for a new life in America. She feels "all bruises, like one who has been assassinated", like a risen Christ who cannot bear to be touched, wanting only to be left alone. Using Christ's words to Mary Magdalen after the Resurrection, quoted so often by Lawrence in his work, Lou writes:

"I do so understand why Jesus said: *Noli me tangere*. Touch me not, I am not yet ascended unto the Father. Everything had hurt

him so much, wearied him beyond endurance, he felt he could not bear one little human touch on his body. I am like that." (SM, p.120)

As the boat steers for Santander, Lou sees the coast of France, "twinkling like some magic world", but knows that beyond the rocks lie the depressing cities of a post-war Europe:

No, no one must land, even on magic coasts. Else you found yourself in a railway station and a "centre of civilisation" in five minutes. (SM, p.127)

Lou's journey, in contrast to the northwards movement of Katherine in "The Border Line", takes her south:

To go South! Always to go South, away from the arctic horror as far as possible! That was Lou's instinct. To go out of the clutch of greyness and low skies, of sweeping rain, and of slow, blanketing snow. Never again to see the mud and the rain and snow of a northern winter, nor to feel the idealistic, Christianized tension of the now irreligious North. (SM, p.128)

In the Gulf of Mexico she sees, as Richard Somers had seen in *Kangaroo*, the glorious vitality and true libido of the porpoises and flying fishes:

Great porpoises rolled and leaped, running in front of the ship in the clear water, diving, travelling in perfect motion, straight, with the tip of the ship touching the tip of their tails, then rolling over, cork-screwing, and showing their bellies as they went. Marvellous! The marvellous beauty and fascination of natural wild things! The horror of man's unnatural life, his heaped-up civilization!

The flying fishes burst out of the sea in clouds of silvery, transparent motion. Blue above and below, the Gulf seemed a silent, empty, timeless place where man did not really reach. And Lou was again fascinated by the glamour of the universe. (SM, p.129)

Lou's reaction to these beautiful, vital creatures is the same as Lawrence's own reaction as registered in *Kangaroo* and in "The Flying Fish" fragment.<sup>12</sup> She

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12. See Chapter 4, note 21 above.

comes back to earth with a "bump" in Texas. It is freer, less claustrophobic than Europe, but it is not the place she is searching for. There is no substance, no "deeper consciousness", no meaning beneath the visual surface of Texas. Life in Texas is "like life enacted in a mirror" or on a cinema screen: "there was nothing behind it" (*SM*, p.131). So Lou travels further south, in search of something behind the visual world and something beyond man, something "bigger and stronger and deeper" (*SM*, p.154).

In New Mexico, she finds a little wild ranch in the heart of the savage Rockies, ringed with untameable pine-trees: "*This is the place,*" she said to herself (*CSN*, p.410).<sup>13</sup> The history of the ranch is a story of a heroic battle between man and Nature:

Always, some mysterious malevolence fighting, fighting against the will of man. A strange invisible influence coming out of the livid rock-fastnesses in the bowels of those uncreated Rocky Mountains, preying upon the will of man, and slowly wearing down his resistance, his onward-pushing spirit. (*SM*, p.143)

The previous owners had been a trader and his New England wife, who had kept goats. Whilst the country had slowly invaded the soul of the white man with "an inertia of indifference", just as it had "slowly taken all the plith of manhood" from the Mexicans, the woman had been filled with a "curious, frenzied energy":

The woman loved her ranch, almost with passion. It was she who felt the stimulus, more than the men. It seemed to enter her like a sort of sex passion, intensifying her ego, making her full of violence and of blind female energy. The energy, and the blindness of it! A strange blind frenzy, like an intoxication while it lasted. And the sense of beauty that thrilled her New England woman's soul. (*SM*, p.144)

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<sup>13</sup> The place is the ranch in New Mexico that was given to Lawrence by Mabel Luhan, and the place where he wrote *St. Mawr*.

At every hour of the day, in all seasons, the New Mexican world was a world of pure, simple, natural, perfect, *absolute* beauty; a vast and living landscape that was never grandiose or theatrical:

The landscape lived, and lived as the world of the gods, unsullied and unconcerned. The great circling landscape lived its own life, sumptuous and uncaring. Man did not exist for it. (*SM*, p.146)

The breath of frenzied energy that enters the New England wife has the same source as the the breath of animal despair that was inhaled by Lou In England: it is the divine pnuma of a god whose creative energy turns destructive when thwarted, the god who became known as Dionysus. The permanent guardian of the place was the pine-tree:

But a bristling, almost demonish guardian, from the far-off crude ages of the world. Its great pillar of pale, flakey-ribbed copper rose there in strange callous indifference, and the grim permanence, which is in pine-trees. A passionless, non-phallic column, rising in the shadows of the pre-sexual world, before the hot-blooded ithyphallic column ever erected itself. (*SM*, p.144)

This blossomless and resinous, fierce and wolfish tree, "the wind hissing in the needles, like a vast nest of serpents", is the hermetic pine-tree Pan of "The Border Line" and the oldest Pan of "Pan In America". In *St. Mawr*, Lawrence strips away the grotesque priapic accretions of the goatly old satyr by placing his "non-phallic" symbol of the nameless Pan in a "pre-sexual primeval world". Thus, the New Mexican world is imbued with the mythical powers of Dionysus, Hermes and Pan before they acquired names and personalities. It is a world not only "before and after the God of Love" but also before and after the all-too-human gods of classical Greece, before and after the Olympian conquest. Lawrence's new age combines the pre-lapsarian age with what Gilbert Murray called the Age of



Ignorance.<sup>14</sup> The classical gods had their origin, according to Gilbert Murray, in the innate tendency of primitive man to imagine a personal cause for every striking phenomenon:

If the wind blows it is because something more or less human, though of course superhuman, is blowing with his cheeks. If a tree is struck by lightning it is because some one has thrown his battle-axe at it. (Murray, p.38)

This is the tendency of the New England wife, who sees the lightning strike on the pine-tree just above the ranch as an act of a God "*shaggy as the pine-trees, and horrible as the lightning*" (*SM*, p.147). Eventually, the animosity of the spirit of place "like some serpent-bird for ever attacking man, in a hatred of man's onward struggle" drives her from the ranch (*SM*, p.150). Ancient Greece, as Murray wrote and Lawrence knew:

has the triumphant if tragic distinction of beginning at the very bottom and struggling, however precariously, to the very summits. There is hardly any horror of primitive superstition of which we cannot find some distant traces in our Greek record. There is hardly any height of spiritual thought attained in the world that has not its archetype or its echo in the stretch of Greek literature that lies between Thales and Plotinus. (Murray, p.16)

Eventually, the primitive glimmerings of divine agencies behind natural phenomena became the anthropomorphic gods of classical Greece. A transitional step on the way to the human shape of the gods, was the divine beast or half-man, originating in the masks and animal hides worn by the priest or medicine-man (Murray, pp.38-41). But the Olympian pantheon, in its final stage, became imbued with every human desire and impulse; jealous, cruel and vengeful as Aphrodite to Hippolytus, lewd and promiscuous as Priapus, "nasty-

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14. Lawrence's imaginative re-creation of a pre-classical yet numinous world owes much to Gilbert Murray's account of the origins and development of Greek religion, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*. He had read the original version entitled *The Four Stages of Greek Religion* as early as 1916. In the revised version (1925) Chapter I is called "The Age of Ignorance" and Chapter II, "The Olympian Conquest".

minded" as the humans who demanded the sacrifice of St. Mawr (*SM*, p.96).<sup>15</sup>

Natural good turns evil, in an endless cycle of creation and destruction, as expressed by the chorus of Euripides *Hippolytus*:

For good comes in Evil's traces,  
And the Evil the Good replaces;  
And Life, 'mid the changing faces,  
Wandereth weak and blind.<sup>16</sup>

As the narrator of *St. Mawr* tells us, putting into perspective the heroic failure of the New England woman and the new start about to be made by Lou, "man is only himself" when he is fighting to overcome "the old, half-sordid savagery of the lower stages of creation, and win on to the next stage", fighting "the dragon" to win "the apples of the Hesperides, or the fleece of gold":

And every civilization, when it loses its inward vision and its cleaner energy, falls into a new sort of sordidness, more vast and more stupendous than the old savage sort. An Augean stables of metallic filth.

And all the time, man has to rouse himself afresh, to cleanse the new accumulations of refuse. To win from crude wild nature the victory and the power to make another start, and to cleanse behind him the century-deep deposits of layer upon layer of refuse: even of tin-cans. (*SM*, p.151)

In *St. Mawr* the journey from England to New Mexico is a journey from a degenerate civilisation with degenerate and defeated men and gods, to a savage and numinous landscape and the primitive source of man's religious impulses. There, the gods are re-born, cleansed of "layer upon layer of refuse". The female principle is in ascendancy and Lawrence shows the proud, aristocratic

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15. Murray explained the ethical problems of the Olympian religion as follows: "To make the elements of a nature-religion human is inevitably to make them vicious. There is no great moral harm in worshipping a thunder-storm, even though the lightning strikes the good and evil quite recklessly. There is no need to pretend that the Lightning is exercising a wise and righteous choice. But when once you worship an imaginary quasi-human being who throws the lightning, you are in a dilemma. Either you have to admit that you are worshipping and flattering a being with no moral sense, because he happens to be dangerous, or else you have to invent reasons for his wrath against the people who happen to be struck. And they are pretty sure to be bad reasons. The god, if personal, becomes capricious and cruel" (p.90).

16. In Gilbert Murray's translation, *Euripides*, pp. 1-75, p.58.

singleness of being passing from Mrs. Witt to Lou in a process that is both apocalyptic and evolutionary. The destructive conquering spirit of Mrs Witt becomes the creative fighting spirit of her daughter Lou.

Lou has found the divine mystery and master she has been searching for, the "something bigger" that will give her life meaning, not in a man but in an external landscape and in the inner sanctuaries of her own soul:

The gods of those inner mountains were grim and invidious and relentless, huger than man, and lower than man. Yet man could never master them. (*SM*, p.150)

She buys the ranch called Las Chivas, which is Spanish for "The Goats", because of the "wild spirit" she has found there. Paradoxically, in this supposedly loveless, sexless world, Lou feels that this wild spirit both needs her and wants her:

It needs me. It craves for me. And to it, my sex is deep and sacred, deeper than I am, with a deep nature aware deep down of my sex. (*SM*, p.155)

But this world is before *and after* the God of Love. It is an Eden, but an Eden of a fierce and mysterious pine-tree Pan, hissing with dangerous snakes, not an apple orchard idyll with a painted Priapus. In his *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, Murray gave the history of Hermes, establishing the origins of "the Immovable Watcher", divine guardian and guide, in the primitive phallic "Herm":

Originally, outside Homer, Hermes was simply an old upright stone, a pillar furnished with the regular Pelasgian sex-symbol of procreation. Set up over a tomb he is the power that generates new lives, or, in the ancient conception, brings the souls back to be born again. (Murray, p.76)

Lawrence's pine-tree god retains the re-creative powers and functions of Hermes, and even the primitive shape of Hermes but not the phallicism. His "non-phallic column" that is supposedly from the "pre-sexual world" is in fact a purified

Pelasgian pillar, a Homeric pillar. His pine-tree is a Pan with dark, hermetic roots; a new green dragon, the *agathodaimon*.<sup>17</sup> *St. Mawr* is the magic papyrus of a second Homer.<sup>18</sup> The first Homer had brought light into darkness, but as we saw in "The Blind Man", Lawrence believed it was time to reverse the process and bring darkness to light. Similarly, whilst the first Homer had found the original Hermes too inhuman, his successor felt that all the gods had become all too human.

Lawrence found expression for the various sides of his complex sexual and psychological nature in the personae of his fiction. The triads of two men and a woman or two women and a man, or a horse, are the symbolic expression of Lawrence's creative, religious and fighting spirit. Looking back from *St. Mawr* at the endings of Lawrence's triadic tales we can see a developing pattern, within which the motif of the border-line has great significance. In "The Blind Man" the Dionysian husband embraced the Apollonian friend of a pregnant female writer. In "The Ladybird" the female descendant of a border soldier had two soldier husbands, of Dionysian night and Apollonian day. In both these stories the female figure can be seen as the reconciler, the one who holds the balance, the border-line where both men meet. In "The Border Line" a second, post-war husband who is an effeminate journalist is killed off in favour of a re-born, powerfully male first husband who had been a captain in a Highland regiment. The woman and her fighting spirit are then transfigured together into a bi-sexual tree, the pine-tree Pan. In *St. Mawr* the popular artist husband is left behind on his sick-bed, like a painted Priapus whilst his wife Lou takes her Dionysian creative spirit to fight a battle for survival on the southernmost border of the New World. This spirit can be identified throughout Lawrence's works in the impulse to be alone and independent, and to be lost in a wild landscape.<sup>19</sup>

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17. See chapter 3, note 6 above. In his account of the history of Hermes, Murray explained: "In the magic papyrus Hermes returns to something of his old functions; he is scarcely to be distinguished from the Agathos Daimon. But thanks to Homer he is purified of his old phallicism" (p.77).

18. See chapter 4, note 23 above.

19. It can be seen in Richard Somers wish to "go bush" in Australia. It can also be seen in Alvina of *The Lost Girl* who became lost to the civilised world in the wilds of Italy, and in the stories that feminist critics in particular have found problematic: "The Woman Who Rode Away" and "The Princess".

As Sheila MacLeod discerns, in her account of the conflicts and contradictions in Lawrence's attitudes to the sexes, Lou is Lawrence's most successfully independent woman:

Her independence and her wish for solitude are both synonymous with her integrity, which in turn is inseparable from the quest for meaning.<sup>20</sup>

Lou is Lawrence's "mouthpiece" and a "self-portrait" through which he "recognises, acknowledges and even celebrates the feminine side of his nature" (MacLeod, p.152). But MacLeod does not draw out the full implications of Lawrence's female persona, implications that add another dimension to the quest for religious authority and purity, despite mentioning Norman Mailer's analysis of Lawrence as a man who had fought off "his natural destiny, which was probably to have the sexual life of a woman" (MacLeod, p.35). Lawrence sublimated his latent homosexuality through his writing. Like a literary transvestite, he found best expression for the female side of his nature in a female persona. In *St. Mawr*, through the persona of Lou Witt, he recognised and acknowledged this sexual sublimation. In *Kangaroo* Somers spoke repeatedly of submitting to a dark god who would enter him from below, which describes a religious experience in terms of a female sexual experience. In *St. Mawr* Lou tells her mother that she will save herself from "cheapness" by keeping herself for the spirit of the wild, the spirit to whom her sex was sacred, the spirit which was deeply aware of her sex (*SM*, p.155). She reflects that human intimacy was a violation of her "inner sanctuaries", expressing this in terms of sexual penetration:

It was as if only the outside of herself, her top layers were human. This inveigled her into intimacies. As soon as the intimacy penetrated, or attempted to penetrate inside her, it was a disaster. Just a humiliation and a breaking down (*SM*, p.139)

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20. Sheila MacLeod, *Lawrence's Men and Women*, (London, 1985), p.151.

She tells herself:

"It is no good. Love can't really come to me from the outside, and I can never, never mate with any man, since the mystic new man will never come to me. No, no, let me know myself and my role. I am one of the eternal virgins, serving the eternal fire. My dealings with men have only broken my stillness and messed up my doorways. It has been my own fault. I ought to stay virgin, and still, very, very still, and serve the most perfect service. I want my Apollo mystery of the inner fire. And with men, only the delicate, subtler, more remote relations. No coming near. A coming near only breaks the delicate veils, and broken veils, like broken flowers, only lead to rottenness." (SM, p.139)

In this sacred and blessed place Lou will be as pure as Hippolytus, free from Aphrodite the goddess of love and free as Artemis, the wild and virgin goddess beloved of Hippolytus. Here, Lou can be, as Somers described in *Kangaroo*, alone with her own soul, like the oracle at Delphi, which is "the innermost symbol of man" and "the one absolute" (K, p.287).<sup>21</sup>

Apollo is a god rarely invoked by Lawrence, whose Dionysian creative spirit was reflected in his writing style. The writer concerned to restore and make sacred the life of the body had little use for a god who symbolised the light of the mind. In the "civilised" world the sun god had acquired an association with the sterile idealism and mechanical form that Lawrence loathed, the dead minds and "clicking needles" of "clever men" that were *finished* in the Lawrentian sense (SM, p.60). But the Apollo of Lawrence's mountain is a god of the dark and hidden fire, representing the "good intuitive mind" that thinks "quick as a woman: only farther" (SM, p.61). In the sacred and blessed atmosphere of a primitive landscape the creative passion of Dionysus is untrammelled and the sweet reason of Apollo is re-born in "spring-fire". A natural balance is possible between Dionysus and Apollo, in both the inner and the outer world. Such a balance is necessary, for as Euripides showed in *The Bacchae* and Lawrence showed in "Tickets, Please" and "The Blind Man", blind passion may destroy the thing it loves.

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21. As Lawrence made clear in his letter to Willard Johnson from Taos in 1922, Apollo was just one form of the God that entered from below. See Chapter 4, note 22 above.

Here, Lou will need the natural balance of the wild thing, which needs both courage and self-discipline (*SM*, p.82), if she is to survive without going mad as Agave. The creative Dionysian fighting spirit may naturally submit to Apollo, her mystic male master; not to be bossed but to yield:

She felt a great peace inside herself as she made this realization, and a thankfulness. (*SM*, p.139)

The place in the New World bequeathed by the New England woman is a place on a mythical border-line between a primitive age of innocence and a new classical era, an emergent half-created, half-sordid world. The sense of peace and hoped-for wholeness and harmony at the end of *St. Mawr* soon disintegrates when we begin to read *The Plumed Serpent*. The physical connection and correspondence between the internal and external worlds in the novel focusses on half-ness and unfinishedness, and the individual self is shown to be incomplete, incapable of achieving wholeness by itself. The setting is south of the border, in Mexico, but the novel is Lawrence's attempt to put flesh and bones on the revived religious spirit of *St. Mawr*. In *The Plumed Serpent* Lawrence shows the emergence of priests and rituals, doctrine and hymns, as a new religion uproots Christianity and starts to come to life in a Mexico that is the Lawrentian equivalent of Ancient Greece. It is a new classical age, based on the second coming of a Mexican nature god of the Classic Period. It is not a bloodless coup, and the novel is redolent with doubts and contradictions, oscillating between conviction and revulsion, sheer delight and utter horror. Lawrence told Thomas Seltzer, when the novel was in its infancy, that it meant more to him than "any other novel of mine", continuing:

This is my real novel of America. But you may just hold up your hands with horror. No sex.<sup>22</sup>

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22. Letter to Thomas Seltzer, 15 June 1925, *Letters*, IV, p.457.

Lawrence may have meant by this claim of "no sex" that the horror Seltzer might feel would not be because the book was too sexually explicit. *The Plumed Serpent*, however, turned out to be a novel that is full of phallicism and sexual horror.

F.R. Leavis, the great exponent of Lawrence's creative genius who defended Lawrence against the criticisms of T.S. Eliot, and who had regarded *St. Mawr* to be a major dramatic poem that was greater than Eliot's "The Waste Land", loathed *The Plumed Serpent*. Some of Leavis's criticisms are quite valid, especially in relation to the extent and monotony of the hymns and chants. But his claim in *D.H. Lawrence: Novelist* that the "deeper governing intention or impulse" of *The Plumed Serpent* "has clearly been to escape as much as possible from that inner drama of doubts and questionings and partial recoils" that characterized *Kangaroo*, is quite wrong (Leavis, p.78).<sup>23</sup> Leavis accuses Lawrence of playing down his complexities of attitude in the novel, but whilst admitting that "single-minded" is a description that he would have to qualify in a full analysis, Leavis is himself guilty of playing down the evidence of internal conflict in *The Plumed Serpent*. Leavis's mistake centres on his failure to understand that the triad of central characters in the novel represent aspects of Lawrence's own divided self.<sup>24</sup> He asks, bemusedly:

Why should the main character, the centre of sympathetic interest and the dramatized consciousness through which things are presented, be, in this book, a woman? (Leavis, p.78)

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23. As Graham Hough observes, *The Plumed Serpent* has evoked both admiration and disgust amongst critics. Hough finds this variance in view unsurprising as "The *Plumed Serpent* is a curiously mixed work. Its moral keynote is ambiguity;" *The Dark Sun: A Study of D.H. Lawrence*. (New York, 1957), p.135. Hough draws attention to the end of the novel, "when vacillation and ambiguity are admitted again to the central place that rightly belongs to them" (p.135). John B. Vickery considers this novel to be concerned with "the attainment of an integrated personality" through the "complementary figures" Ramon and Kate, and also comments on the irresolute ending, "The *Plumed Serpent* and the Eternal Paradox", *Criticism*, V (1963), 119-134.

24. Other critics, since Leavis, have also failed to see evidence of externalized inner conflict in this work. H.M. Daleski, whilst acknowledging that Lawrence's work as a whole reflects an attempt to reconcile the male and female sides of his consciousness, considers that "his attempt, in *The Plumed Serpent*, to assert a "male" metaphysic in order to justify himself is disastrous" *The Forked Flame: A Study of D.H. Lawrence*, (London, 1965), pp.251-252.



Kate Leslie, as Leavis so rightly discerns, is not Frieda. Leavis believed that in placing the "imaginative centre" of the novel in a female figure Lawrence avoided the sort of self-criticism presented through Harriet Somers in *Kangaroo*. He could not see Lawrence as Cipriano, because despite the resemblance to Count Dionys, he was only second in command to Don Ramon "whom we certainly do not take for Lawrence, and in whom we are not very much interested" (Leavis, p.79). In fact, we do take Lawrence for all three. Cipriano, the living Huitzilopochtli, Don Ramon, the living Quetzalcoatl, Kate Leslie, the reluctant green goddess Malintzi, represent parts and projections of one fragmentary being. We can see aspects of Lawrence in Cipriano, the true little Indian who speaks Oxford English with a musical voice, who describes himself as "half a priest and half a soldier". Kate sees in him both "the curious recoil into chastity" and "the intense masculine yearning, coupled with a certain male ferocity".<sup>25</sup> We can see aspects of Lawrence in Don Ramon, the leader, unifier and would-be world-saviour, lord of the two ways between Night and Day, creator of new symbols and writer of hymns telling the people how to live. Kate felt Ramon to be an old European in essence, like herself. Teresa, Ramon's second wife, tells Kate that he "saved her sex" from the insult of "prostitutional sex" and "restored it to her in its pride and beauty" (PS, p.396). It is extraordinary that Leavis could not see Lawrence in Ramon. It is even more extraordinary that he did not find Ramon interesting, for in Ramon Lawrence placed so many of the ideals closest to his heart. Leavis's claim that we do not feel that Lawrence was "fully engaged" in this novel, denies Lawrence his female persona (p.79). Kate Leslie, who was "too Irish" and "too wise" to be "in any society" (PS, p.42), reaches the "dividing line" age of forty in Chapter III of the novel (PS, p.49).<sup>26</sup> Kate is the self-questioning

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25. *The Plumed Serpent*, edited by L.D. Clark, (Cambridge, 1987), p.70.

26. Lawrence was also approaching this borderline age in 1925.

consciousness who sees life as a sacred book, the first half written in the light of Christian symbolism, the second half a dark and empty page:

She was forty: the first half of her life was over. The bright page with its flowers and its love and its stations of the Cross ended with a grave. Now she must turn over, and the page was black, black and empty.

The first half of her life had been written on the bright, smooth vellum of hope, with initial letters all gorgeous upon a field of gold. But the glamour had gone from station to station of the Cross, and the last illumination was the tomb.

Now the bright page was turned, and the dark page lay before her. How could one write on a page so profoundly black? (PS, pp.50-51)

Leavis was essentially wrong about *The Plumed Serpent*. Kate, who swings between a need for human contact and a need to be alone, between the desire to stay and the equally pressing desire to leave, the fighter who would fight with herself if she were alone in the world,<sup>27</sup> provides a very clear, self-acknowledged, self-image of a man rocking on his very foundations as he tries to reconcile his conflicts.

In *Kangaroo* Somers had come to the conclusion that it was time to be still with his own soul, "the one absolute" (K, p.287). Lou Witt in *St. Mawr* had come to the same conclusion. In *The Plumed Serpent*, Kate Leslie also seeks re-birth and re-connection, having heard "the consummatum est of her own spirit" in England, in Ireland and in Europe (PS, p.50). But she finds that the still centre of absolute authority is an elusive goal. The self is shown to be on a border-line of prevarication and uncertainty, unfinished, half-created, half-evolved, in a state of existential flux:

In this country, she was afraid. But it was her soul more than her body that knew fear. She had realized, for the first time, with finality and fatality, what was the illusion she laboured under. She

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27. See letter to Baroness Anna von Richthofen, 10 November 1923, *Letters*, IV, pp.531-532: "I must go back and forth, through the world. I must balance Germany against Mexico, and Mexico against Germany. I do not come for peace. ... I want no peace: I go about the world fighting. Pful Pful! In the grave I will find my peace." He also tells his mother-in-law that "women today always have more strength than men", and that it was fighting-strength rather than love that he wanted from a woman.

had thought that each individual had a complete self, a complete soul, an accomplished I. And now she realised as plainly as if she had turned into a new being, that this was not so. Men and women had incomplete selves, made up of bits assembled together loosely and somewhat haphazard. Man was not created ready-made. Men to-day were half-made, and women were half-made. (PS, pp.105-106)

As Cipriano tells Kate, the soul is "a thing you make, like a pattern in a blanket" (PS, p.234). The trouble with Kate is that she cannot decide what threads and colours to weave next, cannot make up her own mind, because "the common threads that bound her to humanity seemed to have snapped" (PS, p.306). The only way out of this existential loneliness and despair is through re-connection with other human beings and through the resurrection of the religious sense. Then life could be a sacred book again. Kate is offered a way back in from her position as outsider, and a way to be whole, through the religion of Quetzalcoatl. The Christian religion did not answer any more:

Instead of doing as it should, collecting the soul into its own strength and integrity, the religious day left it all the more decomposed and degenerate (PS, p.277).

The new religion was based on blood-communion, and blood-unison, sweeping away individualism, knocking down her notion of a proud, untouchable spirit asserting: "*My blood is my own. Noli me tangere*". The new religion demanded her submission and acquiescence to the primeval assertion: "*The blood is one blood. We are one blood*":

It was the assertion that swept away all individualism, and left her immersed, drowned in the grand sea of the living blood, in immediate contact with all these men and women. ...

It was the primeval oneness of mankind, the opposite of the oneness of the spirit. (PS, p.417)

If she is to re-join the "the great blood-being, the god, the nation, the tribe" she must sacrifice both her belief in individualism and give up "the English-Germanic

idea of the *intrinsic* superiority of the hereditary aristocrat" (PS, p.416).<sup>28</sup> Through the persona of Kate Leslie, Lawrence confronts his temptations like a Christ in the wilderness. Kate is tempted to join the new religion out of loneliness, but is equally unwilling to relinquish her independence. The central symbol of the religion of Quetzalcoatl is the Morning Star, the star that rises between night and day, the star that can only rise between two people. If she is to be part of it Kate must abandon the idea of proud singleness of being alone with the gods in one's own soul that had been asserted at the end of *St. Mawr*. She must admit that the idea of the individual self, the individual soul, was just an illusion. The new religion is based on the belief that it takes "a man and a woman together to make a soul". This "meant abandoning so much, even her own very foundations" and Kate is full of misgiving:

Her halfness! Was there no star of the single soul? Was that all an illusion?

Was the individual an illusion? Man, any man, every man by himself just a fragment, knowing no Morning Star? And every woman the same; by herself, starless and fragmentary and unblest.

Was it true, that the gate was the Morning Star, the only entrance to the innermost? (PS, p.389)

The religion of Quetzalcoatl insists that the lower gate through which Somers wanted his dark god to enter in *Kangaroo* needed to be opened by two people during sexual union. The most sacred moment of the Morning Star is the moment of coition. If she is to join the new religion, if she is to attain organic connection, Kate must marry Cipriano. This is in fact what Kate does. But this marriage does not resolve her doubts or her dualism, the feeling that she has two selves. To the very end, Kate is uncertain:

She could not definitely commit herself, either to the old way of life, or to the new. She reacted from both. (PS, p.429)

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28. This idea of sacrificing superiority can also be seen in "The Woman Who Rode Away".

The only certainty, the only resolution arrived at, is that she must somehow hold both worlds in balance: the old and the new, the individuality and the mystic relationship:

After all, when Cipriano touched her caressively, all her body flowered. That was the greater sex, that could fill the world with lustre, and which she dared not think about, its power was so much greater than her own will. But on the other hand when she spread the wings of her own ego, and sent forth her own spirit, the world could look very wonderful to her, when she was alone. But after a while, the wonder faded, and a sort of jealous emptiness set in.

"I must have both," she said to herself. (PS, p.439)

It is the pragmatic answer. She decides to "abandon some of my ego, and sink some of my individuality", to submit "as far as I need, and no further", in order to have both the warm touch of human relationship and the free flight of her own spirit:

Because what I call my greatness, and the vastness of the Lord behind me, lets me fall through a hollow floor of nothingness, once there is no man's hand there, to hold me warm and limited. (PS, p.439)

In *The Plumed Serpent*, Lawrence distinguishes between spirit and soul, associating the spirit "which is superior, and is the quality of our civilisation" with modern man and soul "which is of the blood" with primitive man (PS, p.116). Kate's lesson, being a woman "wise enough to take a lesson", was that she needed both soul and spirit. The marriage between Kate and Cipriano symbolises the bridge between the two worlds, between the dark hand and the white.<sup>29</sup> But this solution is neither easy, nor free of contradictions and ambiguities.

The men of the Morning Star and the women of the Dawn Star must live between the earth and the sky, lightning and earthquake, snake and eagle, the serpent and the sun, in order to have both "the innermost earth and the

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29. See note 9 above.

outermost heaven" (*PS*, p. 199). Life as a plumed serpent is life lived on the borderline, forever on the *qui vive* (*PS*, p. 203). Cipriano says it is refreshing, but Kate finds it exhausting: "She felt like a bird round whose body a snake had coiled itself" (*PS*, p. 72). The Mexico of *The Plumed Serpent* is full of images of people as snakes or birds or an uneasy mixture of both, half-created, half-sordid images. The snake was sex, was Cipriano, was Mexico itself. Kate is afraid of being dragged down into the folds of the dragon, into the horror of reptilian blood-lust, caught up in "the serpent-tangle of sun and electricity and volcanic emission" (*PS*, p. 135).

*The Plumed Serpent* begins with the spectacle of a Mexican bull-fight, a spectacle that is full of images of sexual degradation. The mob who watch are degenerate, like black beetles.<sup>30</sup> The toreadors are effeminate eunuchs, and the chief toreador is "like a male Venus who is never undressed" (*PS*, p. 27). The bull's horn "working vigorously up and down" inside the horse's hitched up hindquarters is a sexual image "so passive and grotesque" that Kate cannot erase it from her mind (*PS*, p. 20). She feels an empathy with the horse; "something felt damaged in her inside" (*PS*, p. 26). The entrails of the gored horses spill out on to the earth like coiled snakes. She recoils from this ugly, squalid image of excremental sex, leaving behind her two American male companions, Owen Rhys and the young "bald eagle of the north" Villiers. Both men continue to feed on sordid sensation, like debauched carrion birds. The image of sex expressed in the bull-fight scene is an image of sex that has gone rotten. The rhythmic goring of the bull is an act of friction. The religion of Quetzalcoatl intended sex to be a frictionless, sacred act, a "pure sliding conjunction" (*PS*, p. 131). When Kate and Cipriano finally have sex together he denies her any conscious, frictional orgasm, "the beak-like friction" of Aphrodite of the foam, in favour of a new, soft, heavy, hot, gushing flow (*PS*, p. 422). Yet, despite the assertion of the primacy of the sacred sexual union between a man and a woman, the sexual relationship of Cipriano and Kate seems secondary both to the relationship between Cipriano and Ramon. Kate

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30. Beetles were Lawrence's symbol of dissolution and degeneracy in *Women In Love*.

herself feels superfluous when the two men are together. The scene of sacred sexual bondage between Cipriano and Ramon, when Cipriano is symbolically returned to the great womb of life before being re-born as the living Huitzilopochtli, seems more potent than the sexual scene between Cipriano and Kate. Again, in contradiction of what he preaches to the people, Ramon both desires and is perfectly capable of attaining a state of wholeness and holiness, alone. When he feels angry and betrayed he withdraws from other people to the privacy of his inner sanctuary:

He shut the doors of his room till it was black dark inside. then he threw aside his clothing, saying: I put off the world with my clothes. and standing nude and invisible in the centre of his room he thrust his clenched fist upwards, with all his might, feeling he would break the walls of his chest. And his left hand hung loose, the fingers softly curving downwards.

And tense like the gush of a soundless fountain, he thrust up and reached down in the invisible dark, convulsed with passion. Till the black waves began to wash over his consciousness, over his mind, waves of darkness broke over his memory, over his being, like an incoming tide, till at last it was full tide, and he trembled, and fell to rest. Invisible in the darkness, he stood soft and relaxed, staring with wide eyes at the dark, and feeling the dark fecundity of the inner tide washing over his heart, over his belly, his mind dissolved away in the greater, dark mind, which is undisturbed by thoughts. (PS, p.193)

Like the salute of Quetzalcoatl used by Ramon in his scene of private, sacred communion, all the symbolism of the new religion is phallic. Ramon is the creator of the new symbolism, the designer of the beautifully embroidered symbolic serapes, the author of the hymns that tell the people how to live in a symbolic language that is both simple and deep, the imagination behind the new classical era of Mexico. Kate and Ramon have a great deal in common. They understand each other. They are both European in essence, belonging to the "old, old Europe" (PS, p.41 and p.203). They both have a tendency to go the way of the anchorites who withdraw into the wilderness, to recoil from human society with the feeling of *noli me tangere*. They both admit to feeling abhorrence and disgust at *personal* contact and *intimacy* with people. This is why

Ramon needs the idea of "transfiguration" of body, soul, and spirit into a third thing when they meet and mingle: he cannot bear to be touched at the quick by another human being. Ramon confesses to moments of feeling what Kate says she feels permanently: that people are nothing but monkeys (PS, p.250-252). It is an embarrassing confession for a would-be world saviour to make. Kate's probing of Ramon's feelings and motivations, her "sheer repudiation", brings into the open all his self-doubt, exploding the myth that he is busily expounding in public, that the way to "the bright Quick of all things" cannot be found by one man or woman alone (PS, p.253). The truth is that Ramon is weary of breaking the terrible trail to his God alone and his myth of the Morning Star allows him the best of both worlds. He recognises his deepest needs and tries to reconcile them. Sitting beside Kate, Ramon admits to himself:

There is only one thing that a man really wants to do, all his life; and that is, to find his way to his God, his Morning Star, and be alone there. Then afterwards, in the Morning Star, salute his fellow man, and enjoy the woman who has come the long way with him. (PS, p.253)

Ramon is a pantheist and a pluralist and a pragmatist.<sup>31</sup> He believes in one God but that God is an unfathomable mystery, nameless and unknowable. He believes that man is the creator of the gods and prophets. Man needs myths and manifestations to give his life meaning. Images to which he can respond and to which he can aspire. Ramon tells Kate:

Quetzalcoatl is to me only the symbol of the best a man may be, in the next days. The universe is a nest of dragons, with a perfectly unfathomable life-mystery at the centre of it. If I call the mystery the Morning Star, surely it doesn't matter! A man's blood cannot beat in the abstract. (PS, p.273)

Kate "in her vague, woman's way" knew this already:

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<sup>31</sup>. See chapter 2, note 26 above.



All a confusion of contradictory gleams of meaning, Quetzalcoatl. But why not? Her Irish spirit was weary to death of definite meanings, and a God of one fixed purport. Gods should be iridescent, like the rainbow in the storm. Man creates a God in his own image, and the gods grow old along with the men that made them. But storms sway in heaven, and the god-stuff sways high and angry over our heads. Gods die with the men who have conceived them. But the god-stuff roars eternally, like the sea, with too vast a sound to be heard. Like the sea in storm, that beats against the rocks of living, stiffened men, slowly to destroy them. Or like the sea of the glimmering, ethereal plasm of the world, that bathes the feet and the the knees of men as earthsap bathes the roots of trees. Ye must be born again. Even the gods must be born again. We must be born again. (PS, p.58-59)

The Christian religion does not answer any more. The God of Love has become the "god of death", not a saviour but a sado-masochistic symbol of "victims and victimisers" (PS, p.274). Neither will "white Anti-Christ of charity, and socialism, and politics, and reform" be able to save Mexico's soul (PS, p.209). Ramon is behind the story of Quetzalcoatl emerging from Lake Sayula. He develops the story into a legend. He removes and burns the gilt images of "the Crucified streaked with blood" and Mary "the doll of dolls" from the little church, and replaces them with new idols, new dark and powerful images of man. The church of life is re-decorated in green, like the tree of life. As his new religion take hold everything is changed, even the way men tell the time, "from metal to membrane" (PS, p.361). The drums replace the bells:

The world was different, different. the drums seemed to leave the air soft and vulnerable, as if it were alive. Above all, no clang of metal on metal, during the moments of change.

"Metal for resistance.  
Drums for the beating heart.  
The heart ceases not."

This was one of Ramon's little verses. (PS, pp.358-359)

The trouble is that Ramon's little verses, the dogma and the disciplines, the singing and the dancing, the return to ancient crafts, the annointings and sacred ceremonies, do not bring Ramon any closer to the people. He may wish only to

be a leader among men and not of men, but the two are seen to be inextricable. The master shows the way, men inevitably follow. He speaks with the voice of authority, they listen. He is desperately concerned not to be contaminated by any political party, and has no wish to be a political leader but he cannot shake off the feeling of superiority. It is not racial, nor hereditary, but it exists. He tells Cipriano that the Quetzalcoatl pantheon is a natural aristocracy of Initiators, transcending the limits of the general mass. They are the flowers on the Tree of Life, fertilized by the spirit of the world that flies from blossom to blossom like a humming-bird. The leaves of the trees of each race, the common people, must stick with their own gods, their own myths, their own kind.<sup>32</sup> Only the flowers of each race can commingle:

"Only the Natural Aristocrats of the World can be international, or cosmopolitan, or cosmic. It has always been so. the peoples are no more capable of it than the leaves of the mango tree are capable of attaching themselves to the pine." (PS, p.248)

He tells the Bishop that in a truly catholic, Universal Church would be a home for the religions of every race, all the gods and prophets: "A big tree under which every man who acknowledges the greater life of the soul can sit and be refreshed" (PS, p.265). But every race needed its own symbolic language, needed "its own prophet to speak with its own tongue":

"Now, Father, we must speak to the Mexicans in their own language, and give them the clue-word to their own souls. I shall say *Quetzalcoatl*. If I am wrong, let me perish. But I am not wrong" (PS, p.264)

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32. In his letter to Connie at the end of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* Mellors wrote: "the mass of people oughtn't even try to think, because they can't. They should be alive and frisky, and acknowledge the great god Pan. He's the only god for the masses, forever. The few can go in for the higher cults if they like. But let the mass be forever pagan." (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1961), p.312.

Ramon had tried to explain it to Carlota, the wife whose Christian love had turned into *will* and charity "that cruel kindness", the wife in whom all spontaneous life had withered:

"Quetzalcoatl is just a living word for these people, no more. All I want them to do is to find a way to their own manhood, their own womanhood. Men are not yet men in full, and women are not yet women. They are all half and half, incoherent, part horrible, part pathetic, part good creatures. Half arrived. - I mean you as well, Carlota. I mean all the world. - But these people don't assert any righteousness of their own, these Mexican people of ours. That makes me think that grace is still with them. And so, having got hold of some kind of clue to my own whole manhood, it is part of me now to try with them." (PS, pp.209-210)

Carlota never answers to Ramon's new call, and is one of the human sacrifices of the Quetzalcoatl religion. The new call in the air, the new images, are external manifestations of the gods within. Only the flowers of the tree are capable of giving these gods coherent shape and form and names. Only the natural aristocrats can recognize that Thor and Wotan, Ashtaroth and Mithras, the Tuatha De Danaan, Brahma, Hermes, and the oldest of the Chinese dragons are just different manifestations of the same mystery (PS, pp.248-249). The Voice of God can be heard in many symbolic languages (PS, p.264). Thus, whilst Ramon is busily presenting the Mexicans with Mexican gods in serapes and sandals, the most compelling numinous scenes in *The Plumed Serpent* contain manifestations of European gods, the old Greek gods.

The flowers of the tree are part of the same mystery as the leaves, only they see it more clearly and they see more. But the flowers of the tree wither if they lose touch with the roots. Whenever Kate recoils from the savagery, brutality and menace of the Mexican spirit of place and the Mexican people, she seeks and finds reassurance in things that remind her of Europe. In the "squalid evil" of Mexico city she finds a hotel that is full of Italians, telling Cipriano:

"my little San Remo may be rough, but it's kindly and human, and it's not rotten. It is like Italy as I always knew it, decent, and with a bit of human generosity." (PS, p.23)

She finds the Mexican market on the shores of the lake depressing in comparison to "the animation and the frank wild clamour of a Mediterranean market" (PS, p.230). She even sees the way that the Mexican women carry their water-jars as awkward and contorted in contrast to "the proud way the women carried their water in Sicily" (PS, p.239). She seeks out and finds most reassurance in the old Europe she sees in Don Ramon. But Ramon tells Kate that she needs to be pulled down by Mexico as the roots of a tree are drawn down into the earth, for better balance (PS, p.80). This is why Ramon is unavailable sexually to Kate. Ramon feels he has been torn inside by the wrong kind of relationship. The Christian love of his first European wife, Carlota, had injured him in his "old emotional, passionate self" (PS, p.206). He chooses a flower from the Mexican tree as his second wife: the deeply, quietly passionate Teresa, the native woman who will provide a home for the soul of her hunter in her soft silence of her womb when he returns from the woods of Pan.<sup>33</sup> Kate is at first contemptuous of this woman, but as always happens in this novel of changing minds and moods and transfigurations, she changes her mind about Teresa and reluctantly admits her superiority. Kate's contempt was rooted in envy. Although she believes Ramon to be right in theory, that if marriage is not to be a battle of wills the white spirit must make a connection with the dark soul, she has great difficulty in accepting that she must mate with Cipriano rather than Ramon. She is physically attracted to her prophet, but her role in Ramon's new era is to be the wife of the little red devil. The new era is not "a helpless panic reversal", an unconscious lapse back, but a conscious,

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33. Ramon can presumably say to Teresa: "Oh, woman, be soft, be very soft and deep towards me, with the deep silence. Oh, woman, do not speak and stir and wound me with the sharp horns of yourself. Let me come into the deep, soft places, the dark, soft places deep as between me and the stars. Oh, let me lose there the weariness of the day: let me come into the power of the night. Oh, do not speak to me, nor break the deep night of my silence and my power. Be softer than dust, and darker than any flower. Oh, woman, wonderful is the craft of your softness, the distance of your dark depths. Oh, open silently the deep that has no end, and do not turn the horns of the moon against me." ("Pan in America", *Phoenix*, p.31)

carefully chosen reversal based on the "instinct to believe" (*PS*, p.138). But Ramon, the thinker behind the new era, is able to reconcile his public and private roles more easily than Kate. Once he is rid of Carlota, there seems to be no conflict between the fulfilment of his natural desire and his role as the living Quetzalcoatl. His marriage to Teresa brings him the comfort he needs as a man but it is not necessary to his role as the living Quetzalcoatl. Kate, on the other hand, must marry Cipriano before she can take her place as a goddess in the Quetzalcoatl pantheon.

The internal impulses and external manifestations of the gods in *The Plumed Serpent* interweave and cross like the different coloured threads in an embroidered serape. As Quetzalcoatl Ramon is the messenger of the gods, a Mexican John the Baptist, a Mexican Hermes. To Kate he is as sensually attractive and as sexually unavailable as John the Baptist had been to Salome:

Kate knew now how Salome felt. She knew now how John the Baptist had been, with his terrible aloof beauty, inaccessible, yet so potent.

"Ah!" she said to herself. "Let me close my eyes to him, and open only my soul." (*PS*, p.184)<sup>34</sup>

To Kate Ramon must be as non-sexual and non-phallic as the hermetic pine-tree of *St. Mawr*. To Kate Ramon is Hermes Trismegistus, the Egyptian source of all knowledge and thought, the "real Hermes" of *Kangaroo*.<sup>35</sup> Only Teresa can serve the phallic male in Ramon, as a "valley of blood" to his "column of blood" (*PS*, p.412). Kate may have opened her soul to Ramon but she must open her body to Cipriano:

Ah, the soul! The soul was always flashing and darkening into new shapes, each one strange to the other. She had thought Ramon and she had looked into each other's souls. And now, he was this pale, distant man, with a curious gleam, like a

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34. Ramon is also a Christ-figure. Lawrence resolved the non-sexuality of Christ in his 1927 story "The Escaped Cock".

35. See Chapter 4, note 30 above.

messenger from the beyond, in his soul. And he was remote, remote from any woman.

Whereas Cipriano had suddenly opened a new world to her, a world of twilight, with the dark, half-visible face of the god-demon Pan, who can never perish, but ever returns upon mankind from the shadows. The world of shadows and dark prostration, with the phallic wind rushing through the dark. (PS, pp.316-317)

Ramon has told Kate that he accepts "the *must* from the oldest Pan in my soul" to become the living Quetzalcoatl, and she sees that his power over Cipriano lies in this internal categorical imperative "which really was like a messenger from the beyond" (PS, p.316). But the external manifestation of Pan to Kate is Cipriano, and when she sees, with her third eye, the hidden Pan in Cipriano, the phallic mystery is revealed to her as "a dark whirlwind column", rising from him like "a great pliant column, swaying and leaning with power, clear between heaven and earth" (PS, p.310). The little general is transfigured into a limitless living male power, the power of Pan and of Hermes Ithyphallus:

In his black, glinting eyes the power was limitless, and it was as if, from him, from his body of blood could rise up that pillar of cloud which swayed and swung, like a rearing serpent or a rising tree, till it swept the zenith, and all the earth below was dark and prone, and consummated. Those small hands, that little natural tuft of black goats' beard hanging light from his chin, the tilt of his brows and the slight slant of his eyes, the domed Indian head with its thick black hair, they were like symbols to her, of another mystery, the bygone mystery of the twilight, primitive world, where shapes that are small suddenly loom up huge, gigantic on the shadow, and a face like Cipriano's is the face at once of a god and a devil, the undying Pan face. The bygone mystery, that has indeed gone by, but has not passed away. Never shall pass away. (PS, pp.310-311)

Lawrence's attempt to resurrect the Great God Pan in all his power and glory is not very convincing. He acknowledges this in the text through Kate's uncertainties and ambivalences. swooning like the heroine of a gothic romance, she imagines abandoning herself to this demon-lover, this Master:

Ah! and what a mystery of prone submission, on her part, this huge erection would imply! Submission absolute, like the earth under the sky. Beneath an over-arching absolute.

Ah! what a marriage! How terrible! and how complete! With the finality of death, and yet more than death. The arms of the twilight Pan. And the awful, half-intelligible voice from the cloud. (PS, p.311)

She comes out of her swoon to find Ramon speaking to her and looking at her:

His eyes, his voice seemed kind. Kind? The word suddenly was strange to her, she had to try to get its meaning.

There was no kindness in Cipriano. The god-demon Pan preceded kindness. She wondered if she wanted kindness. She did not know. Everything felt numb.

"I was wondering whether to go to England," she said. (PS, pp.312-313)

Lawrence leaves his thumb out of the pan here,<sup>36</sup> but as the novel unfolds we realise that Kate does want kindness.<sup>37</sup> Not kindness that has become an act of will, the perverted kindness of Christian charity, but the kindness that is a wish, an answer to another's call. She mistrusts Cipriano and she mistrusts the spell he puts her under:

In the long run he was nobody's man. He was of that old, masterless Pan-male, that could not even conceive of service; particularly the service of mankind. he was only glory; the black mystery of glory consummated. And himself like a wind of glory. (PS, p.313)

Ramon also mistrusts Cipriano. He is useful, but also very dangerous. Cipriano is a killer, the killer of countless hundreds of men whose blood-lust would crush the world like an egg if it were ever let loose, the executioner who says that a bit of

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36. In his 1925 essay "Morality and the Novel", he made the much-quoted declaration: "If you try to nail anything down in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail.

Morality in the novel is the trembling instability of the balance. When the novelist puts his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection, that is immorality" *Phoenix*, p.528.

37. See letter to the Hon. Dorothy Brett, (726 January 1925), *Collected Letters*, 2, pp.828-829, where Lawrence warns Brett against "half-ness" in her relationships with men, telling her to stop looking for men with strange eyes, and look for "a little flame of warm kindness" instead. He advises: "If you can marry in a spirit of kindness, with the criticism and the ecstasy both left in abeyance, do it."

horror is like the sesame seed that gives flavour to the nougat. When she is under his spell Kate dismisses the "tales of swift cruelty she had heard of him" and tells herself she does not care about the killing (*PS*, p.394). But at other times she is shocked and depressed and revolted:

She knew herself under the spell.

At the same time, as is so often the case with any spell, it did not blind her completely. She was spell-bound, but not utterly aquiescent. In one corner of her soul was revulsion and a touch of nausea. (*PS*, p.387)

It is not Cipriano who holds Kate to Mexico, it is Ramon. In symbolic terms Kate calls out to Ramon, but Ramon gives her the message that Cipriano is her answer. He withdraws, refusing to impose his will by telling her what to do, wanting her to listen to her own inner voice. Kate knew early on that Ramon was the only one she could not quite escape from because "he really touches me somewhere inside" (*PS*, p.204). At that time, however, she had believed that she "could not be caught" by Cipriano. Cipriano does catch her, but in the end, when she goes to see the two men at Jamiltepec, it is to Ramon that Kate cries out:

"I don't really want to go away from you."

Ramon looked swiftly at Cipriano, then said:

"I know you don't."

But the gentle protective tone of his voice only made Kate rebel again. She brimmed over with sudden tears, crying:

"You don't really want me." (*PS*, p.443)

Cipriano answers her and she hears the "hot, phallic passion in Cipriano's voice", but Ramon has access to Kate's soul and knows that it is Kate who does not altogether want them. He tells her that if it is her "own best desire" to go then she should go. The implication is that she should trust her own instincts. Again she cries out to Ramon, and Cipriano answers her call:

"I knew you didn't really want me," she wept.

Then Cipriano's voice said, with hot, furtive softness of persuasion:



"You are not his! He would not tell you!"  
 "That is very true," said Ramon. "Don't listen to me!"  
 He spoke in Spanish. And Kate glanced up sharply through her  
 tears, to see him going quietly, but swiftly, away. (PS, p.441)

Only then, suddenly calm, does Kate address herself directly to Cipriano. "Want" to Cipriano means sexual need. He wants her very much, and his whole-body convulses with soft desire. With a shiver that seems to signify both desire and fear, Kate says to him: "You won't let me go" (PS, p.444).

The final message of *The Plumed Serpent*, the lesson to be learned, is that we need one another:<sup>38</sup>

Kate had convinced herself of one thing, finally: that the clue to all living and to all moving-on into a new living lay in the vivid blood-relation between man and woman. A man and a woman in this togetherness were the clue to all present living and future possibility. Out of this clue of togetherness between a man and a woman, the whole of new life arose. It was the quick of the whole.

And the togetherness needed a balance. (PS, p.399)

Lawrence attempts, in this novel, to find a way forward to that new, balanced, tender relationship. It is to be a relationship like the Indian woman's blanket, containing our whole soul, but leaving a little opening for the spirit to escape and fly free now and again. The relationship of Ramon and Teresa, holding each other's souls in their wombs, is presented as ideal and superior to battles of will. The intermittent relationship of the two fighters, Cipriano and Kate is based on sexual rather than emotional need. But the weapon-like desire of these Bacchantes is to be a soft flow when they are together sexually. The savage soldier becomes as a little child, and the conqueress as a young virgin, naive, innocent and insouciant. The quest is for an image of a male who can be tender without being effeminate, and for a female who can be fully alive sexually without being a destructive maenad. We need to combine the sexual potency of

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38. See "We Need One Another", the essay that Lawrence wrote a few months before he died, for an extended prose account of the "important and prickly fact" we had to admit (*Phoenix*, pp.188-195).

Pan with true kindness and gentleness. At the end of *St. Mawr* Lawrence symbolically cleansed the gods of their sexual and phallic associations. In *The Plumed Serpent*, Lawrence attempts to find new images of sexuality to replace the obscenity of Priapus and Aphrodite. He finally pulled together the fragmentary and disparate parts of the image of male and female sexuality in his last novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

There are two scenes in *The Plumed Serpent* that contain the clue to the novel, symbolically expressing this message of innocence "in the fulness of sex" (PS, p.442). Both scenes contain manifestations of the god Dionysus at sea. The first scene occurs in Chapter VI, "The Move Down the Lake", when Kate is with two Mexican men in the boat taking her to Sayula. Kate has what can only be described as a religious experience. The waters of Lake Sayula are at the centre of the novel's symbolic landscape. The Lake allows "the flowering of the soul" in the same way that the little pools of water keep the flowers alive in the inner patios of the old Spanish houses. The motif of the sailing of Dionysus can be seen in the tufts of water-hyacinth,

travelling on the soft spermy water, holding up a green leaf like a little sail of a boat, and nodding a delicate, mauve blue flower.  
(PS, pp.104-105)

Kate is at first afraid of the men, but then realises that "their souls were nascent", that there was "no fixed evil in them, they could sway both ways" (PS, p.106). Only if she believed them evil, and communicated the thought to them would they molest her. She invokes the gods, and receives "the gift of grace", "the fulness of the vine" of Dionysus:

So in her soul she cried aloud to the greater mystery, the higher power that hovered in the interstices of the hot air, rich and potent. It was as if she could lift her hands and clutch the silent, stormless potency that roved everywhere, waiting. "Come then!" she said, drawing a long, slow breath, and addressing the silent life-breath which hung unrevealed in the atmosphere, waiting.

And as the boat ran on, and her fingers rustled in the warm water of the lake, she felt the fulness descend into her once more, the peace and the power. The fulfilment filling her soul like the fulness of ripe grapes. (PS, p.106-107)

No longer afraid, she shares her oranges and sandwiches with the two men, breaking bread with them in a silent "communion of grace". It is a moment of sexual recognition and prophesy:

*We are living! I know your sex, and you know mine. The mystery we are glad not to meddle with. You leave me my natural honour and I thank you for the grace. (PS, p.107)*

The second scene, or more precisely the changing series of scenes, is by the lake in the final chapter, entitled "Here!", all containing manifestations of the god Dionysus. The chapter begins with an overt allusion to the image of the sailing of Dionysus as found in the illustration to the Homeric Hymn. It is a particularly beautiful day, when there was "a certain autumnal purity and lull on the lake", with a lingering moisture, and a greenness, such that the dry, hellish heat is but a distant memory:

And always the day seemed to be pausing and unfolding again to the greater mystery. The universe seemed to have opened vast and soft and delicate with life.

There was something curiously soothing even in the full, pale, dove-brown water of the lake. A boat was coming over, with its sail hollowed out like a shell, pearly white, and its sharp black canoe-beak slipping past the water. It looked like the boat of Dionysos coming with a message, and the vine sprouting. (PS, p.426)

Ramon tells Kate she must tell the people of Ireland to substantiate their own mysteries as the Mexicans have tried to do. Then he withdraws, recoiling from her motherly touch. Later, as Kate sits watching the dove-pale lake, a group of Mexicans attempt to load a black-and white cow and a huge, monolithic bull with black snake markings down his haunches into black boat with a tall mast: "The whole silhouette frieze motionless, against the far water that was coloured

brown like turtle doves" (*PS*, p.431). It is a scene that stands in stark contrast to the spectacle of the bull-fight in Chapter I. Eventually, after great difficulty, the peons manage to get the animals down into the hold, and the boat afloat:

The sail thrust up her horn and curved in a whorl to the wind. The ship was going across the waters, with her massive, star-spangled cargo of life invisible.

All so still and soft and remote. (*PS*, p.433)

The bull and the snake are animals sacred to Dionysus, and the image of this boat with its potent, hidden cargo can be associated with the sailing of Dionysus and the sacred marriage that took place at the oldest of the Dionysian festivals, the Anthesteria.<sup>39</sup> The scene prefigures a conversation between Teresa and Kate, with Teresa assuring Kate that she is the right wife for Cipriano. Then a little flame of life, "the flash of living recognition and deference" flickers between Kate and a peon who is working by the lake (*PS*, p.434). Another peon has driven a high-wheeled wagon, drawn by four mules, deep into the water:

It looked like a dark square boat drawn by four soft, dark sea-horses which slowly waved their long dark ears like leaves, while the peon, in white with his big hat proudly balanced stood erect. (*PS*, pp.434-435)

This also looks like the ship-cart on which Dionysus made his entrance into the Ionic cities at the Anthesteria festivals. It was winter, close to Christmas, the time of nativity, and "like spring by the lake". A roan horse prances and runs down the shore. Young calves, new and silky, are skipping and trotting down to the water. A mother-ass is tethered "in the shadow of a great tree". Her ink-black ass-foal, tasting its first wondrous day, testing its legs, dances with new life then walks back to drink from her udder:

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39. According to Gilbert Murray, the Holy Marriage between the wife of the sacred King and the Imaginary god at the Anthesteria took place in the Boukollan or Bull's Shed. See *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p.33.

Glancing up, Kate met again the peon's eyes, with their black, full flame of life heavy with knowledge and with a curious reassurance. The black foal, the mother, the drinking, the new life, the mystery of the shadowy battlefield of creation; and the adoration of the full-breasted, glorious woman beyond him: all this seemed in the primitive black eyes of the man. (PS, pp.435-436)

The peon salutes Kate with the phallic salute of Quetzalcoatl. As she walks across the beach to the jetty she feels "the life surging vivid and resistant within her". "It is sex," she said to herself. "How wonderful sex can be, when men keep it powerful and sacred, and it fills the world!". She calls it sex but what Kate has received is an initiation into the new phallic consciousness that Connie learns from Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Thus, in *The Plumed Serpent*, the symbolic flag-ship that Richard Somers would have burned just as the images of Christian love were put on a boat and sent to the flames by Ramon, sails back. Out of the ashes, the ship of Dionysus returns with a potent and powerful message of a new relationship between man and his God, between men and women, by way of a new phallic consciousness. Lawrence would use the image of "Dionysus at Sea" as the basis of the unfinished novel he had started on the way back from Mexico, the fragment of which is called "The Flying Fish". He told Achsach Brewster that the last part was to have been "regenerate man, a real life in this Garden of Eden", but that it was written "so near the borderline of death" that he had never been able to "carry it through in the cold light of day".<sup>40</sup> Lawrence's Last Poems, again written on the borderline of death, contain many references to the Greek gods. He would use the image of "Dionysus at Sea" as represented in the illustration to the Homeric Hymn in "Middle of the World" and "They Say the Sea is Loveless". It is possible that he also had this ship of life in mind when he wrote "The Ship of Death".<sup>41</sup>

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40. Keith Sagar, *D.H. Lawrence: A Calendar of His Works*. (Manchester, 1979), p.143.

41. *The Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence*, edited by Vivian de Soja Pinto and Warren Roberts. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1977), p.688, p.693 and pp.716-720.

Mexico was Lawrence's harrowing of hell, and *The Plumed Serpent* his Heracleian labour. *St. Mawr* was the purification ceremony of Lawrence's Eleusinian Mysteries.<sup>42</sup> *The Plumed Serpent* was his sacred drama of Initiates. In the "The Flying Fish" he opens the sacred book, the secret "Book of Days". He sailed back to England, to Europe, with the golden fleece and the apples of the Hesperides in the form of the new phallic consciousness. The Dionysus-cum-Hermes wonder brought home a new Word of God: In place of Love, was Tenderness.<sup>43</sup> The Dionysian ship was Lawrence's Ark, carrying new life within the dark womb of its hold. Noah's place of refuge from the apocalyptic Flood, and the Ark of the Covenant, the receptacle of sacred Jewish Law, are incorporated with the transforming, vital power of Dionysus in a complex, symbolic fusion of ancient Greek and Hebraic myth.

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42. See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 2 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1955), p.156. According to Graves the Greater Eleusinian Mysteries commemorated Theseus's defeat of the Amazons, "which means his suppression of the matriarchal system". The mysteries were a sacred drama, a ceremony of symbolic death and re-birth "open to all judged worthy of initiation", equivalent to the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. In Eleusis, Osiris was identified with Dionysus.

43. This was, of course, Lawrence's alternative title for *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the book in which Mellors taught Connie that "fuck" and "cunt" were also sacred words.

## CHAPTER 6: *Apocalypse*

In a letter to Frederick Carter, written on the 18th June 1923 in Mexico, Lawrence declared that the "clue to Apocalypsis" was the "relation between the microcosm and the macrocosm".<sup>1</sup> The clues to the vision and work of D.H. Lawrence can be found in his "Introduction" to Carter's *The Dragon of the Apocalypse* and *Apocalypse*, written between December 1929 and January 1930.<sup>2</sup> *Apocalypse*, as Frank Kermode has asserted, provides the key to Lawrence's final period and handles themes that had pre-occupied him all his life.<sup>3</sup> Kermode drew attention to the significance of *Revelations* to Lawrence and other "apocalyptic" writers, but did not pursue the question of Greek and Egyptian influences on the Old Testament. Lawrence believed that acknowledgement of these influences and connections was crucial to understanding. I shall add to Kermode's study by showing how Lawrence's endorsement and development of Frederick Carter's interpretation of *Revelations* centred on his belief that the old symbolic meanings had their roots in Greek and Egyptian myth and metaphysics.

Lawrence's interpretation of *Revelations*, as presented in *Apocalypse*, was an imaginative interpretation. In the foreword to *Fantasia of the Unconscious* of 1921 Lawrence claimed that an artist's philosophy was

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1. Letters, IV, p.460.

2. Lawrence wrote a long essay in December 1929 which he had intended to be the Introduction to Frederick Carter's *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, but which developed into *Apocalypse*, published after his death as his last book in 1931. In January 1930, he wrote a shorter Introduction. Carter's book was published in 1932, as *Dragon of the Apocalypse*, but without Lawrence's Introduction. Lawrence's two works, along with two uncanceled fragments written in November 1929 that were absent from the final draft of *Apocalypse*, are contained in the Cambridge edition (1980).

3. Lawrence, Fontana Modern Masters, (London, 1973), p.121. Kermode considers *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the light of *Apocalypse*. See Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, (Oxford, 1967), for further reflections on the expression of the apocalyptic spirit in literature.

"unfolded" unconsciously into his art, and that his own "metaphysic" was only consciously developed after the novels and poems:

One last weary little word. This pseudo-philosophy of mine - "pollyanalytics", as one of my respected critics might say - is deduced from the novels and poems, not the reverse. The novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen. And then the absolute need which one has for some kind of satisfactory mental attitude towards oneself and things in general makes one try to abstract some definite conclusions from one's experiences as a writer and as a man. The novels and poems are pure passionate experience. These "pollyanalytics" are inferences made afterwards, from the experience. (*Fantasia*, p. 15)

Lawrence considered his novels and poems to be "passionate experience", part of a Dionysian life-experience, from which he deduced his theories and his philosophy. It could also be argued that Lawrence worked as a poet-scientist who proposed hypotheses, laws of life, which he tested and developed through his fictions.<sup>4</sup> As David Ellis and Howard Mills have pointed out, immediately following the claim for the superiority of "pure passionate experience" to the "inferences made afterwards" Lawrence half-contradicts himself by declaring "it seems to me that even art is utterly dependent on a philosophy; or if you prefer it, on a metaphysic" (*Fantasia*, p. 15).<sup>5</sup> He wrote the Pan stories of 1924 before he wrote his "Pan in America" essay, but the thoughts that centred on the image of the pine-tree Pan must have been in his mind as he wrote the stories. The view of Ellis and Mills, that Lawrence's discursive works "point forwards as well as back", being "not merely rationalisations after the event but part of his continuous development as a writer" (p.86) seems sensible. The crucial point is that, for Lawrence, the image or symbol came prior to the abstract thought or theory. The imagination was vital to the acquisition of knowledge, and the process of acquiring knowledge

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4. If Lawrence could so be described, he would be an early Greek scientist, of course, rather than a modern scientist. Lawrence declared that the Greek scientists "were necessarily poets" (A, p.96).

5. *D.H. Lawrence's Non-Fiction: Art, Thought and Genre*, (Cambridge, 1988), p.86.



was creative. Lawrence was a creative reader and writer. My discussion of *Apocalypse* emphasises the point that all Lawrence's writing, fiction and non-fiction, was imaginative, and shows how both the processes and the products of his imagination were influenced by the myths and metaphysics of the ancient Greeks.

The introductory chapter of *Fantasia* identifies man's creative impulse with the religious, and declares it to be the prime human motive to which even the sexual impulse is subsidiary. In *Apocalypse* Lawrence writes about the imagination, the gods, power and love, death and re-birth, asserting and explaining the human desire for imaginative experience and the search for knowledge, whether through art, science, or religion, in terms of this will-to-create.

#### The Primacy of the Imagination

At the time of writing his thoughts on and around the Book of Revelation in 1929, Lawrence was reading Plutarch, and re-reading Hesiod, John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy* and Gilbert Murray's *Five Stages of Greek Religion*. In a fragment of an early draft of *Apocalypse*, he tells of how the Bible had "gone dead" on him, of how its meaning had become a fixed meaning. Then, after studying the old literature of "Babylon, Persia, Egypt, Crete, Mycenae and the Ionian seaboard" for over twenty years, he had come back to discover the Bible afresh. This re-discovery was vital, because "if the Bible dies, or becomes dead and fixed and repellant to us, then something very important in our responsive soul also goes dead and fixed" (A, p.154). Lawrence's studies in the old literature were not in the interests of dry scholarship but rather, in the revitalisation of the imagination. As he writes in his Introduction to Frederick Carter's *The Dragon of The Apocalypse*, the value of such studies to those "who care more about life than about scholarship" lies in the "release of the imagination" (A, p.50). Rather than explanation or "correct"

interpretation, a work such as Carter's gives us the old symbolic meanings that may lead to the great imaginative experience of which we are starved. Such experience, according to Lawrence, is of primary importance:

What we want is complete imaginative experience, which goes through the whole soul and body. Even at the expense of reason we want imaginative experience. For reason is certainly not the final judge of life. (A, p.50)

This "complete imaginative experience" involves physical experience and includes the "pure passionate experience" that Lawrence claimed for his novels and poems in *Fantasia*. In his "Return to Bestwood" essay of 1926, he linked the imagination to notions of the "quality of life", "essential beauty" and "sensitive power", writing:

What is alive, and open, and active, is good. All that makes for inertia, lifelessness, dreariness, is bad. This is the essence of morality.

What we should live for is life and the beauty of aliveness, imagination, awareness, and contact. To be perfectly alive is to be immortal.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the imagination is a vital part of our aesthetic, ethical, social and religious sensibility. If we are starved of imaginative experience, we are starved of God, "For God is only a great imaginative experience" (A, p.51). But, the imaginative experience per se is valued highest. Lawrence considers that the Chaldean experience of the stars, of "brilliant living stars in live space" was one of the greatest imaginative experiences the human race has ever known, greater even than any "god-experience" (A, p.51).

The Chaldeans found the cosmos magnificent and described it as such. Modern man, out of touch in the Lawrentian sense, thinks the universe mostly void and dead and chemical. Lawrence mocked the modern knowledge of the moon provided by scientific photographs of its pock-

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6. "Return to Bestwood" in *Phoenix II*, pp.257-266 (pp. 265-266).

marked surface, refusing to believe it sounder or more real than knowing the moon as Artemis, Cybele or Astarte. Knowing, to Lawrence, was a matter of recognising deep feeling. The a priori empirical evidence was the feeling.<sup>7</sup> The modern state of mind, with its consciousness reduced to dead "thought-forms", was becoming so unbearable that it must be changed. Lawrence knew that the Chaldean vision of the living heavens was irretrievable, but hoped for a new vision in harmony with memories of the old. He believed that the cosmos would come to life again for us.

To Lawrence, Carter's study was valuable because it opened imaginative doors and awakened "the memories of old, far-off, far, far-off experience that lie within us" (A, p.54). This idea of dormant knowledge of ancient experience seems very like the Jungian theory of the collective unconscious.<sup>8</sup> In the foreward to *Fantasia of the Unconscious* Lawrence wrote of his belief in the esoteric knowledge universally established in the Glacial Period when men "wandered back and forth from Atlantis to the Polynesian Continent as men now sail from Europe to America" (*Fantasia*, p.13).<sup>9</sup> This knowledge was preserved and is remembered in the form of myth:

And so, the intense potency of symbols is part at least memory. And so it is that all the great symbols and myths which dominate the world when our history first begins, are very much the same in every country and every people, the great myths all relate to one another. (*Fantasia*, p.13)

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7. In the Introduction to his edition of Lawrence's *Letters*, Aldous Huxley relates how Lawrence rejected scientific evidence for theories with which he disagreed: "But look at the evidence, Lawrence," I insisted, "look at all the evidence." His answer was characteristic. "But I don't care about evidence. Evidence doesn't mean anything to me. I don't feel it here." And he pressed his two hands on his solar plexus. I abandoned the argument and thereafter never, if I could avoid it, mentioned the hated name of science in his presence. (*The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, (London, 1932), p.xv).

8. Lawrence had been familiar with the theories of Carl Jung since 1918, and in particular with *Psychology of the Unconscious*. He wrote to Mabel Luhan on 23 September 1926, "Jung is very interesting, in his own sort of fat muddled mystical way" (*Collected Letters*, 2, p.938).

9. This idea of free movement over dry sea-beds before the melting of the glaciers was based on "Bell's suggestion of the geographical nature of this previous world" which Lawrence found "most interesting" (*Fantasia*, p.12). He had read Thomas Bell's *The Naturalist in Nicaragua* in September 1921, prior to writing the foreward to *Fantasia* in October.

Like Yeats, he believed in the interrelationship of the world's myths. As he wrote through the voice of Ramon in *The Plumed Serpent*, the many and varied mysteries of different peoples are all part of the same Mystery.

In an analysis that clearly re-iterates Romantic aesthetic thought, based on an organic model of artistic creation, Lawrence defines and distinguishes between allegory and myth.<sup>10</sup> Whereas allegory uses images invented to express or "stand for" certain qualities, with a moral or didactic purpose, myth is the narrative description of deep human experience using symbols. A symbol is a "complex of human experience" (A, p.49) that cannot be invented, cannot be so easily explained. The old symbolic meanings under the Christian allegorical accretions are of universal and eternal value. As with anything that is "final" or "finished", the idea of a symbol standing for something or other, as found in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, was deadly to Lawrence. Carter's fantastic "star-myth" may not be the only meaning of *Revelations* but its imaginative "truth" brings the book to life.

#### Art, Science and Religion

In the early fragment Lawrence declares that art and religion are essentially the same, and he explores this idea, manifest in so much of his work, more fully than in the final text. "Art", writes Lawrence, "is a form of religion without dogma". Art and religion are both a matter of "feeling", and both attempt to put us into touch with life:

So that, since essentially the feeling in every real work of art is religious in its quality, because it links us up or connects us with

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10. Lawrence's definitions seem to echo Samuel Taylor Coleridge's critical speculations on the nature of allegory and symbol, as expressed in *The Statesman's Manual*, 1816: "Now an allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses; the principal being more worthless even than its phantom proxy, both alike unsubstantial, and the former shapeless to boot. On the other hand a symbol ... is characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual or of the general in the especial or of the universal in the general. Above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal. It always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative." (re-printed in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by H.J. Jackson, Oxford, 1985, p.661)

life, you can't substitute art for religion, the two being essentially the same. (A, p.155)

A work of art demands a religious response. A man without any religious feeling may find pleasure and entertainment in art and literature, but these are of lesser importance. He cites *Alice in Wonderland*, *Macbeth*, *Wuthering Heights*, and the works of Dickens, Rabelais and Keats as examples of religious literature in this sense.

In a second fragment of an early version of *Apocalypse*, Lawrence describes God as an intermediary between man and the "lost" cosmos (p.181). He understands the "fall" of Man to be a fall into self-conscious separation. Originally, man was godless because he was naked, "breast to breast" with the vital cosmos. The need for God came when self-conscious man felt himself cut off from the cosmos. But God had become a mental construct, a metaphysical idea. Modern man had lost the sense of "the god" in things. Primitive man had been godless because he had been "at one" with the cosmos. Modern man, a naked, disembodied mind in a disembodied universe, was godless because he had lost his connection with the cosmos. Behind Lawrence's account we can hear echoes of the Victorian "Pan is dead" and the Nietzschean "God is dead". The function of both religion and art is to give man a sense of wholeness and connection. In his essay "A Proposal of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*", Lawrence had declared that man had two ways of knowing, "in terms of apartness, which is mental, rational, scientific," and knowing "in terms of togetherness, which is religious and poetic" (*Phoenix II*, p.512).<sup>11</sup> A few months later, in *Apocalypse*, Lawrence re-connected science to art and religion. Just as religion had become a mental abstraction, so had modern science.

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11. Lawrence believed that modern man relied too heavily on his mind, and too little on sense experience. As he wrote in his 1929 poem "Thought": "Thought is a man in his wholeness wholly attending" (*Complete Poems*, p.673). H.D.F. Kitto has suggested that "A sense of the wholeness of things is perhaps the most typical feature of the Greek mind" (*The Greeks*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1951), p.169).

Lawrence held the early Greek scientists, such as Thales, Anaximander, Xenophanes and Heracleitos, with whose theories he was familiar from Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*, in great regard. In the foreward to *Fantasia of the Unconscious* he describes this early science, "a science in terms of life", as "perfect" (*Fantasia*, p.12).<sup>12</sup> In the second fragment of *Apocalypse* he declares that all the old ideas, such as the necessity of duality as expressed by Anaximander's notion of the "strife of opposites" were taken over from religion by philosophy, and then by science. Lawrence described himself as an amateur rather than a scholar: "I only remember hints - and I proceed by intuition" (*Fantasia*, p.12), and he sometimes muddled the theories of the early scientists.<sup>13</sup>

It was not the detail so much as the general "revelation of the old symbolic mind", the way of thinking, that interested Lawrence. He saw early science as "a source of the purest and oldest religion" in this sense. The early scientists, according to Lawrence, took over the religious vision of the cosmos when Greek religion lost this vision in the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ. With the Orphics religion became abstract, moralistic and concerned with personal salvation:

The mind of man recoiled, there in Ionia, to the oldest religious conception of the cosmos, from which to start thinking out the scientific cosmos. (A, p.131)

The thought processes of the ancient mind were based on instinct rather than reason, sensual rather than mental activity; "Socrates and Aristotle were the first to perceive the dawn" (A, p.91). Unlike the modern, linear method of

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12. See also "The Two Principles" essay of 1919: "The religious systems of the pagan world did what Christianity has never tried to do; they gave the true correspondence between the material cosmos and the human soul. The ancient cosmic theories were exact, and apparently perfect. In them science and religion were in accord" (*Phoenix II*, p.227).

13. An example of such muddling can be found in *Apocalypse* when he declares that Anaximenes said that "all was water" (p.134). According to John Burnet in *Early Greek Philosophy* (p.46 and pp.78-79), Anaximenes actually said that all was air, and it was Thales who believed the primary substance to be water.

thinking, reaching an end or conclusion, the old, organic, way involved a working together of the deep emotions towards a centre. Lawrence's term for the old method was "rotary image thought" (A, p.93). Donald Gutierrez uses the term "hylozoism" to describe this ancient mode of thought "as well as a dazzling sense of interpenetration between man and nature".<sup>14</sup> Gutierrez finds this term less depreciating than animism or primitivism. He considers many scenes from Lawrence's major novels to be "hylozoistic" and concludes that we may best describe Lawrence "not as a libertarian mind, but as something more radical, a liberating Imagination" (p.195). Daniel J. Schneider, in his article "D.H. Lawrence and the early Greek Philosophers", explores the correspondences between the theories of the early Greek philosophers and Lawrence's works, emphasizing the depth of John Burnet's influence. Schneider dismisses as "considerable nonsense" Lawrence's development of Heraclitean and Empedoclean notions as found in the "Cosmological" chapter in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, but concludes:

His insistence on seeing mankind in relation to god-nature and to the great rhythms of the cosmos and of organic life remains important even to those who are dismayed by his endorsement of the "exact and apparently perfect" cosmic theories of the ancient Greeks.<sup>15</sup>

Lawrence preferred the way the old Greek philosophers described the universe. To him, the chemical descriptions of modern science, like the photographs of the pock-marked moon, had no meaning. It was the old philosophers' use of language that attracted Lawrence: the images of the Fire and the Dark, the Bear and Bright Zeus:

The old Greeks were very fine image-thinkers, as the myths prove. Their images were wonderfully natural and

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14. 'The Ancient Imagination of D.H. Lawrence', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 27 (1981), 178-196 (p.179). Hylozoism is the theory that matter has life, or that life is merely a property of matter (Oxford English Dictionary).

15. *D.H. Lawrence Review*, 17 (1984, 97-109 (p.108).

harmonious. They followed the logic of action rather than reason, and they had no moral axe to grind. (A, p.96)

To him, the Greek scientists "were necessarily poets".

### All the Gods

Just as Lawrence believed that Life was nothing else but living creatures, he believed that God was all material things. He had read about the ancient, pantheistic experience of the divine in Gilbert Murray's *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, and Murray's influence is evident in part IX of *Apocalypse*:

Today, it is almost impossible for us to realise what the old Greeks meant by god, or theos. Everything was theos; but even so, not at the same moment. At the moment, whatever struck you was god. (A, p.95)

What struck Lawrence about the ancient consciousness of the divine was that the god in things was a sense experience rather than an abstract idea:

If it was a pool of water, the very watery pool might strike you: then that was god; or the blue gleam might suddenly occupy your consciousness: then that was god; or a faint vapour at evening rising might catch the imagination: then that was theos; or thirst might overcome you at the sight of the water: then the thirst itself was god;

The god in things could be seen, touched and tasted. To the early scientists and philosophers "the cold", "the moist", "the dry", were not qualities of things but active "things in themselves, realities, gods, theoi" (A, p.96).

In the first early fragment of *Apocalypse* Lawrence attempted to restore the historical setting and the connections he felt were missing in the common understanding of the Bible. He saw the Bible as the result of "a strange and fascinating Odyssey of a whole race wandering among strange races that attracted them intensely" (A, p. 158). The Bible evolved from



centuries of "vivid contact" with these strange races and their ancient gods are woven into the God of Israel. To Lawrence, Christianity was very wrong in its denial of these connections and influences. The exclusiveness of an historically isolated God and the absolutism of "narrow monotheism" had to be redressed: "Our consciousness is crippled and maimed, we only live with a fragment of ourselves" (p.158).<sup>16</sup> Like Kate in *The Plumed Serpent*, Lawrence was weary of "a God of one fixed purport" (*PS*, p.58). He advocated a vital polytheism to restore our religious connections and psychic health:

For in spite of all our doctrine and dogma, there are all kinds of gods, forever. There are gods of the hearth and the orchard, underworld gods, fantastic gods, even cloacal gods, as well as dying gods and phallic gods and moral gods. (A, p.155)

All these gods are aspects or "sides" of the one God; to know God, we must know them all.<sup>17</sup> And all these gods can be found in the Bible:

Nay, even, the Jahweh of the Old Testament is all the gods, except the dying and redeeming gods.<sup>18</sup> But surely the Jehovah of Genesis and Numbers, Samuel, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, surely he is all the gods in turn, Dionysic, Apollo-like, strange like Ra, and grim like Baal or Bel. (A, p.156)

Not only does God contain all the ancient gods, but also "all the unknown gods that are yet to come". Towards the end of the first fragment of *Apocalypse* Lawrence defines Almighty God as that in the universe which contains "the potentiality of all things, known and unknown" (p.175).

Lawrence's portrayal of Almighty God as a "terrific and frightening and delighted potency" seems to describe a kind of cosmic Imagination. Thus,

16. See Chapter 5, note 10 above.

17. These gods are sides and aspects of ourselves, as Lawrence makes clear in his 1929 poem (the Gods) "The gods are all things and so are we./ The gods are only ourselves, as we are in our/ moments of pure manifestation" (*Complete Poems*, p.673).

18. The "dying and redeeming" side of the Christian God only came to be expressed with the coming of Christ in the New Testament.

Lawrence comes full circle. In his Introduction to Frederick Carter's *Dragon* he had made the declaration that God was "only a great imaginative experience" (A, p.51). The later, definition equates the Almighty with the power of imagination, suggesting that God is manifest in every human act of imagination. It amounts to the same thing, but whereas the first definition seemed rather reductive of God, the second elevates the imagination and reminds us that Lawrence was a Romantic to whom imaginative experience meant divine experience. God is not limited to everything that is; He is everything that is imaginable, which is infinite. Lawrence's polytheism is holistic. He wanted to restore the awareness of all the "sides" of God he felt were missing in the "narrow monotheism" of a Christianity which perceived only a fragment of the whole. In the second fragment of *Apocalypse* Lawrence insists that the historical Jesus, described as "a religious young Jew of the working-class", must have had this awareness:

A great nature like that of Jesus is sensitively aware. And who is going to tell me that he was totally unaware of Dionysos and the Orphic Mysteries, or the mysteries of Isis or Mithras? for the temples of these deities must have stood by the Sea of Galilee. (A, p.180)

Lawrence wished to remind us of our religious roots. He wished us to recognise the subconscious desires, instincts and impulses, the natural forces and rhythms of life, that the ancient Greeks acknowledged and named as Dionysus, Hermes, Apollo, Aphrodite and all the other gods. The Christian image of God was but a fragment of the whole. In bringing light to darkness, Plato and Christ had tipped the balance too far towards the light. Just as Aeschylus had brought back the Erinyes to the city at the end of *The Oresteia*, restoring to the forces of darkness their due honour and usefulness, so Lawrence wished to bring back the darkness to balance the light. At the end of *Apocalypse* he declares that "what man most passionately wants" is not the salvation of his individual soul, but "his living wholeness and his living unison"

(p.149). The light of reason, the conscious mind, separates man from the rest of the living universe. It is the forces of darkness rather than of light that connect us to the cosmos. Our sense of unity with other living creatures comes through the instincts, through feeling the natural rhythms of life, "the daily, yearly, seasonal life of birth and death and fruition" as Lawrence puts it in the "A Propos" (*Phoenix II*, p.511). Thus, we can see the importance of Dionysus and Hermes in Lawrence's works, as symbolic messengers of darkness, and we can see why it is that Dionysus and Hermes "appear" in his stories and novels far more frequently than Apollo, a god associated with the light of reason.

### Power and Love

"With Jesus," wrote Lawrence, "a new thing came into the world", and in order to comprehend the radical nature of Jesus' message of love, tenderness, humility and peace, we have to place him in the context of his times (A, p.160). It was a world of endless conflict and war, to which the admonition to "Love one another! Love your enemies!" must have seemed sheer madness. The pagan religions and the Jewish religion had never got beyond the conception of power. Jesus came to establish the nature of love in the world. Lawrence had been deeply critical of Christian love in his works. At the end of his life, in *Apocalypse*, he attempted a reconciliation with both Christ and the concept of love. Both power and love are essential, and the ultimate aim must be a perfect balance between the two forces:

Man is a being of power, and then a being of love. The pure individual tries either for sheer power, like Alexander, or sheer love, like Christ. But mankind forever will have its dual nature, the old Adam of power, the new Adam of love. And there must be a balance between the two. Man will achieve his highest nature and his highest achievements when he tries to get a living balance between his nature of power and his nature of love, without denying either. It is a balance that can never be established save in moments, but every flower only flowers for a moment, then dies. That makes it a flower. (A, p.163)

Lawrence saw the fundamental duality of things as a law of Nature. Ten years earlier, in his "David" essay of 1919, an essay which shows the influence of Burnet and Pater, he had described Michaelangelo's David in terms of its expression of momentary perfect balance between two elements: "Fire and dew for one moment proportionate, immediately falling into disproportion" (*Phoenix* p.63). The David is "Dionysus and Christ of Florence", so finely balanced that the figure is symbolic of the perfect man: "A clouded Dionysus, a refractory Christ" (*Phoenix*, p.61). The philosophical balance, each tempering the other, is reflected in the perfect physiology. It was the aesthetic expression of a momentary balance in the history of ideas. Dionysian fire was soon swamped by a new flood of Christian morality, chastity, passivity, submissiveness, equality, democracy, the masses:

For one moment Dionysus touched the hand of the Crucified: for one moment, and then was dragged down. Meekness flooded the soul of Dithyrambus, mist overwhelmed him. (*Phoenix*, p.63)<sup>19</sup>

In *Apocalypse*, Lawrence wrote of the chthonian Kabiri, fertility gods, rivals, dividers and separators, "gods of the gateposts, guardians of the gate, secret lords of sex" (A, p.116). The twin gods of the gates are also the gods of limits. They ensure that every action is counterbalanced by an opposite action, and put a limit on excess. They are "witnesses" to life and to man's dual consciousness: "it is between their opposition that the Tree of Life itself grows, from the earthly root" (A, p.117). Physiologically, the duality is water and blood. If the water and blood ever mingled, wrote Lawrence, we should be dead. Our dual consciousness depends upon the two streams, kept apart by the gods.

One of the "wonders" of the Book of Revelation, to Lawrence, was the vision of a goddess clothed in the sun, standing on the crescent of the moon,

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19. The symbol of water was linked with the love-ideal in *Kangaroo*.

giving birth to a new sun-god. The birth of the Christian Messiah was rooted in pagan myth. The great cosmic Mother, the Magna Mater, "was essential to the scheme of power and splendour, which must have a queen: unlike the religions of renunciation, which are womanless" (A, p. 120). This great female symbol was suppressed by Christian salvationists and maniacal anti-lifers, since which "we have had nothing but virgins and harlots, half-women: the half-women of the Christian era" (A, p. 121). The motive for this suppression, as Lawrence saw it, was envy. Lawrence alluded to this great cosmic Mother and moon goddess in his first novel, and throughout his works.<sup>20</sup> But his attitude to this figure of female power and mother-love was ambivalent. This ambivalence is understandable in view of Lawrence's own relationship with his mother, as expressed in fictional terms in *Sons and Lovers*.

The Book of Revelations was a "book of thwarted power-worship" (A, p. 120); its tone was the tone of "popular religion, as distinct from thoughtful religion" (p. 63), about the humble rising up to grandeur, bottom dogs becoming top dogs, like the doctrine of the Salvation Army or the Chapels. This Apocalyptic religion, of self-glorification, of power and darkness, was a different kind of Christianity to the tender, gentle religion of a humble and suffering Jesus. In fact, wrote Lawrence, the early churches' conception was not of a gentle Jesus at all, but of Jesus as Hermes:

- He holds the keys that unlock death and Hades. He is Lord of the Underworld. He is Hermes, the guide of souls through the death-world, over the hellish stream. He is master of the mysteries of the dead, he knows the meaning of the holocaust, and has final power over the powers below. The dead and the lords of death, who are always hovering in the background of religion away down among the people, these Chthonoi of the primitive Greeks, these too must acknowledge Jesus as a supreme lord. (A, p. 75)

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20. We recall the moonlit churchyard scene in Chapter II of the *The White Peacock*, where Annable tells Cyril of his sexual rejection by Lady Crystabel. One of the most remarkable scenes in *Women in Love* (and perhaps in Lawrence's entire works) is, of course, Birkin's stoning of the moon in Chapter XIX.

Like the vision of the great cosmic Mother, this vision of Christ is touched with old pagan splendour. Yet, Lawrence also declares that Apocalyptic Christianity appealed to the masses, to second-rate minds, to the weak who wished the downfall of the strong only to attain power themselves. Lawrence's exposition of early Christianity's lust for the end of the world is clearly Nietzschean, being a virtual re-statement of Nietzsche's ideas of herd mentality, the will-to-power and the transvaluation of values:

Revelation, be it said once and for all, is the revelation of the undying will-to power in man, and its sanctification, its final triumph. (A, p.67)

Lawrence, as has been pointed out by several critics, was deeply indebted to Nietzschean ideas.<sup>21</sup> But whilst Nietzsche made a great impact on Lawrence's thought, there is a fundamental difference between them. In Lawrence we sense a sympathy, an empathy with the envy of these "lowest classes" who, having realised that "never would they get a chance to be kings, never would they go in chariots, never would they drink wine from gold vessels", "would have their revenge by *destroying* it all" (A, p.144).

The Christianity of Jesus, the doctrine of Love, according to Lawrence, appeals to the individual side of man's nature; the Christianity of John of Patmos' Revelation appeals to the collective self, which always recognises Power. Lawrence believed that the will-to-power was a natural law that came into being as soon as men collected together:

Power is there and always will be. As soon as two or three men come together, especially to do something, then power comes into being, and one man is a leader, a master. It is inevitable.(A, p.68)

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21. See Chapter 3, notes 21 and 22 above.

Despite his widely quoted 1928 letter to Witter Bynner, Lawrence's so-called "leadership" phase was not simply an aberration, something he got out of his system by writing *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent*, then left behind. The letter is often quoted without either of the two qualifying phrases "on the whole".<sup>22</sup> The fact remains that this letter contains evidence only of Lawrence's partial agreement with what we understand to be Witter Bynner's convictions. The two qualifying phrases seem to suggest a reluctance, on Lawrence's part, to relinquish the idea of leadership completely. He had seen the necessity for leadership in 1915,<sup>23</sup> and his writings on the nature and the necessity of power in *Apocalypse* show that he continued to believe in a natural aristocracy until the end of his life.

Accept it, recognise the natural power in the man, as men did in the past, and give it homage, then there is great joy, an uplifting, and a potency passes from the powerful to the less powerful. There is a stream of power. And in this, men have their best collective being, now and forever. Recognise the flame of power, or glory, and a corresponding flame springs up in yourself. Give homage and allegiance to a hero, and you yourself become heroic. It is the law of men. (A, p.68)<sup>24</sup>

Lawrence believed that the denial of natural power and the leadership of a greater man led to the imposition of authority, with its ministers, public officials and policemen. He believed a natural aristocratic hierarchy was preferable to democracy as a vehicle for the will-to-power. Democracy led to bullying, a negative form of power, and to a mere collective cohesion as against the organic whole of a hierarchy. It seems as though Lawrence wished to do for power in *Apocalypse* what he had wished to do for sex in *Lady Chatterley's*

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22. "On the whole, I think you're right. The hero is obsolete, and the leader of men is a back number. After all, at the back of the hero is the militant ideal: and the militant ideal, or the ideal militant, seems to me also a cold egg. We're sort of sick of all forms of militarism and militantism, and *Miles* is a name no more, for a man. On the whole, I agree with you, the leader-cum-follower relationship is a bore and the new relationship will be some sort of tenderness, sensitive, between men and men and men and women, and not the one up one down, lead on I follow, *ich dien* sort of business" (*Collected Letters*, 2, p. 1045).

23. See Chapter 2, note 7 above.

24. He considers that the law of women may be different, but does not expand upon this.

*lover*: restore to the realm of the sacred what had become profane. He wished to change the concept of power as military power to what he called, in the "Return to Bestwood" essay, "sensitive power" (*Phoenix II*, p.265).

Now we must free ourselves from the superficial contempt for power which most of us feel and express today. We know only dead power, which is force. Mere force does not command our respect. But power is not mere force. It is divine like love. Love and power are the two divine things in life. This is what Nietzsche meant. (A, p.164)

Love is only divine when it is in harmonious relation to power, and vice versa. Modern Christianity had forgotten the conception of the early churches, of Christ as Hermes. Lawrence wished to restore the dark side, the power, the passion, the body, to an image of Christ that was impoverished, an image of spiritual "half-ness". The image of Christ was an ideal, and "unreal" image of man, stripped of both his Dionysian and Hermetic aspects. Lawrence re-constructed the *whole* image.

### Death and Re-birth

As Lawrence understood it, towards the end of the pagan era cosmic power was conceived as phallic power. The aim of phallic worship and of the old pagan Mysteries was to derive power from the cosmos, by undergoing "a temporary winter-death and transit through Hades, like the plants" (A, p.172). This entailed the symbolic death of body and spirit, passage through the underworld of the dead, emergence into life like a new baby with a new spirit, the meeting of the newborn spirit with the Great Spirit of the god which descends from heaven for the consummation, and the final marriage of new body and new spirit. This dual mystic death was an old cosmic truth we had



lost sight of.<sup>25</sup> The Mysteries were too physical, too self-glorious, for Christianity. The Christian apocalyptists turned this "individual adventure into Hades" into a cosmic calamity and "the wrath of the Lamb" (A, p.104). They transformed the earthly pagan initiation ceremony into a vision of martyrs in heaven, and moved the action from the underworld of the self to the underworld of the cosmos.<sup>26</sup>

Hades, whether personal or cosmic, is made up of old selves, old and superseded powers that are malevolent, harmful and hostile to new life:

This very profound truth was embodied in all old religions, and lies at the root of the worship of the underworld powers. The worship of the underworld powers, the chthonioi, was perhaps the very basis of the most ancient Greek religion. When man has neither the strength to subdue his underworld powers - which are really the ancient powers of his old, superseded self; nor the wit to placate them with sacrifice and the burnt holocaust; then they come back at him, and destroy him again. Hence every new conquest of life means a "harrowing of Hell". (A, p.109)

Lawrence described such a "harrowing of Hell" in the "The Nightmare" chapter of *Kangaroo*, and the whole of that novel was based on the notion of terror and horror beneath the surface.<sup>27</sup> Again, the experience of Mexico, as expressed in *The Plumed Serpent* was a harrowing of hell. He repeats, in *Apocalypse*, the idea that all the world's religions are but different manifestations of the same mystery as expounded by Ramon in *The Plumed Serpent* (p.285). The Mystery religions took different forms in different countries but the rituals in which men experienced death and went through the dark horror of Hades to re-birth were universal. The Greek Orphics, the Dionysian

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25. Lawrence re-read Hesiod's *Homeric Hymns* in 1929, and, and refers to the translations of Hesiod in *Apocalypse* (p.96). As is noted by Frank Kermode, the "Hymn to Demeter" is an important source of information on the Eleusinian Mysteries (Lawrence, p.118). The Greek dramatist Aeschylus was prosecuted for revealing the Mysteries.

26. According to the Cambridge editor's note (p.218), Lawrence's idea of *Apocalypse* as a manual of spiritual development was derived from James Pryse whose *Apocalypse Unsealed* he had read in 1917.

27. See also Chapter 4, note 21 above.

and Eleusinian mysteries, the Egyptian mysteries of Osiris and Isis, the near Eastern mysteries of Tammuz and Attis, the Persian mystery of Mithras: all were primarily concerned with death and re-birth. As were, according to Lawrence, Buddhists and Hindus, the old Greek scientists and the modern physicists. In the first fragment of *Apocalypse* Lawrence asserted that the ultimate goal of both science and religion was identical. Whether it be through the blood of the Mithraic bull or through the search for pure knowledge, the goal and final state of consciousness was the same: "the mystic experience of ecstasy in re-birth" (A, p. 169). Men first achieved this state of consciousness by way of ritual, then through dogmatic religion, and finally by science. Lawrence makes the staggering assertion that:

Einstein himself is in the same state of consciousness, essentially, as an Orphic initiate was in, four centuries before Christ. (A, p. 170)

Lawrence believed, as he argued in his earlier essays "The Crown" and "The Reality of Peace", that dissolution and disintegration were necessary to the process of creation and growth: "everything human degenerates, from religion downwards, and must be renewed and revived" (A, p. 136).<sup>28</sup> As was proclaimed in *The Plumed Serpent*, "Ye must be born again. Even the gods must be born again. We must be born again" (p. 91).

Lawrence used apocalyptic symbols throughout his work to express the necessary relationship between life and death.<sup>29</sup> Lawrence's apocalypses were an expression of optimism. Death, whether on a cosmic or personal scale, was a precursor to new life. As Frank Kermode has suggested, endings

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28. In Chapters 1 and 2, I discussed these ideas in relation to *The White Peacock* and "England, My England".

29. Necessary even to artistic creation. Lawrence told Catherine Carswell in his letter (22 July 1916), of the essential "*resistance*" of life to bring that solid equilibrium which is the core of art, an absolute reached by the sheer tension of life stubborn against death, the two in opposition creating the third thing, the pure resultant, absolved art" (*Letters*, II, p. 638).

opened the possibility of new beginnings.<sup>30</sup> The apocalyptic horses that torment Ursula at the end of *The Rainbow* presage her re-birth into the dawn of a new day expressed in images of organic growth. In *Women in Love* Birkin consoled himself with the thought that a new species would replace man should he fail to develop creatively:

If humanity ran into a cul-de-sac, and expended itself, the timeless creative mystery would bring forth some other being, finer, more wonderful, some new, more lovely race, to carry on the embodiment of creation.<sup>31</sup>

Later, Lawrence was more hopeful for humanity. In the foreword to *Fantasia* he wrote:

Floods and fire and convulsions and ice-arrest intervene between the great glamorous civilizations of mankind. But nothing will ever quench humanity and the human potentiality to evolve something magnificent out of a renewed chaos.

I do not believe in evolution, but in the strangeness and rainbow-change of ever-renewed creative civilizations. (p. 14)

*Apocalypse* ends optimistically with the exhortation to dance with joy at being alive.

Lawrence told Carter that "the clue to Apocalypse" was "the relation between the microcosm and the macrocosm".<sup>32</sup> The "Moony" chapter of *Women in Love* relates the microcosm of personal conflict to the macrocosm of universal forces and the scene where Birkin stones the reflection of the moon illustrates the inter-relationship of the various aspects of Lawrence's symbolic language. Birkin's stoning of the moon is more than an act of spite toward the Magna Mater. It is the ritual destruction of old, superseded powers, necessary before new life can begin; it is a symbolic scene of conflict

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30. See note 3 above.

31. *Women in Love*, (Cambridge, 1987), p.479.

32. See note 1 above.

between universal principles, fire and water, darkness and light, love and power; it is the symbolic expression of what Lawrence was to call "rotary Image-thought" in *Apocalypse* (p.93), the working together of deep emotions toward a centre.

In "Moony", as Jack F. Stewart states:

the Cybele myth is secondary to the startling revival of animism, whereby the moon comes to life as a psychic force. Lawrence strives to recover that "primitive mental state" that unites man's psyche with nature. In "Moony", animism, ritual, myth, and symbol, together with rhythmic language, recreate a primitive sensibility that is pre-cognitive, rapturous, and instinctual. Just as ritual precedes myth, so the moon scene has little need of classical allusion.<sup>33</sup>

In his greatest novels, Lawrence integrated his understanding of myth into a symbolic language far removed from the simple vitalism, pathetic fallacy and decorative classical allusions of *The White Peacock*. Just as the "Moony" scene cannot be explained away in terms of straight-forward allegory, the image of Dionysus at Sea symbolises a whole "complex of human experience" (A, p.49). The dark ship of the Dionysus-cum-Hermes wonder does not "stand for" something or other in Lawrence's work, but is a complex symbol that incorporates notions of death and re-birth, prophetic message, divine guidance, revelation of the Mysteries, transfiguring power, phallic consciousness and joyful celebration, the word of God becoming the deed of Life. The gods and goddesses, the old myths in which Christianity had its roots, allowed Lawrence to think in poetic images like the ancient Greeks, seeing Pan in a pine-tree and the eternal cycle of life and death in terms of the myth of Persephone. The myths and gods of ancient Greece enabled Lawrence to express human experience as a "complete imaginative experience" (A, p.50).

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33. "Primitivism In *Women in Love*", *D.H. Lawrence Review*, 13 (1980), 46-62 (p.52).

## CONCLUSION

The gods of the Greeks, and their associated myths, liberated Lawrence's imagination, giving him a symbolic language in which to express subconscious desires, instincts, rhythms and impulses. Lawrence believed that all human endeavour, whether in the field of religion, science or art, had a common aim, "the mystic experience of ecstasy in re-birth" (A, p.169), and that Einstein was no closer to the meaning of life than the Orphic initiate. In the modern world, where science and religion were inarticulate and inadequate, the responsibility for guiding human souls lay with the artist who could speak the music of lost languages, giving access to ancient knowledge.

The ancient world, the ancient Greeks, acknowledged what the modern world had forgotten or denied, that "what man most passionately wants is his living wholeness and his living unison" (A, p.199). Lawrence wished to unify and make whole again what had become separated out, abstracted and fragmented. In his essay "A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*", completed whilst doing the preparatory reading for *Apocalypse* in October 1929, he likened the human race to "a great uprooted tree", cut off from the sources of nourishment and renewal (*Phoenix II*, p.510). He wrote of the necessity to re-create "ancient forms" in order to get back into "vivid and nourishing relation to the cosmos and the universe" (*Phoenix II*, p.510). It meant going back "a long way, before the idealist conceptions began, before Plato, before the tragic idea of life arose"; it meant getting back "Apollo, and Attis, Demeter, Persephone and the halls of Dis" (*Phoenix II*, p.511).

Lawrence planted the seed of his Dionysian Tree of Life in *The White Peacock*, where life was shown to be grounded in death. From these roots his metaphorical, metaphysical Tree grew and blossomed. From his myth kitty he abstracted three Greek gods, Pan, Dionysus and Hermes, and I have shown how

he forged them, with the alchemy of the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus, into a symbolic trinity. I have explained how, in his novels and stories, these three gods personified the interrelationship between life and death, and the natural forces at work on both a personal and cosmic level.

Throughout his work, the emphasis on the emotional or physical side of things stemmed from the desire to return what he saw as overly-spiritual, rational human life to a right balance. He used and developed the traditional oppositions between Dionysus and Apollo, Pan and Christ, incorporating the theories of the ancient Greek scientists, to express the perpetual duel between darkness and light, mind and body, love and power, as we saw clearly in "England, My England" and "Tickets, Please", "The Blind Man" and "The Ladybird". At all times, Lawrence's dualism was concerned with the right balance between elements, and his theories on polarity and balance were significantly influenced by Greek ideas. As he wrote in New Mexico, in 1925, "The Greeks made equilibrium their goal" and "equilibrium argues either a dualistic or a pluralistic universe" ("Him With His Tail In His Mouth", *Phoenix II*, p.431). The movement towards equilibrium in Lawrence's work involved a shift in the cosmic scales, away from love and towards power, which culminated in *The Plumed Serpent*.

The trouble with personifications is that they tend to become tainted with human faults and failings. He attempted to cleanse or purify the images of the anthropomorphic gods of accrued associations that devalued or belittled them. Thus, as we saw in *Kangaroo*, "The Border Line" and *St. Mawr*, the return to "ancient forms" involved the re-creation of "the oldest Pan" inspired by the savage landscapes of Australia and America. Shedding both the "Lucy Gray" aspect of Wordsworthian pantheism, and the vulgarity of the goatly old Edwardian satyr, the Lawrentian Pan became manifest in a horse and a pine-tree, non-human, "fierce and bristling" ("Pan in America", *Phoenix*, p.25). Similarly, Hermes the winged messenger from the Underworld was re-born in his oldest form, as the pillar or "herm" which Lawrence used to symbolize dark, phallic power.

Just as the young Dionysus and Hermes were sometimes indistinguishable in the myths, in Lawrence's work we have seen Dionysus, Hermes and Pan mingle and merge. Traditionally, Dionysus had the ability to change shape and form, and to enter you. In *Kangaroo*, Lawrence incorporated these characteristics into Hermes, to create an image of the dark god that entered you from below. In *The Plumed Serpent*, Cipriano was presented as Pan in the shape of a great, dark pillar, "a whirlwind column" (p.310), thus combining the transmogrifying power of Dionysus with the phallic mystery of Hermes. In *Apocalypse*, Lawrence presented an image of a "whole" Christ, with the qualities of Dionysus and Hermes, as a symbol of balanced life and sensitive power. Lawrence's pluralism was a way of articulating the flux of competing elements and forces within the universal "whole". As articulated by Ramon in *The Plumed Serpent*, all the gods were but aspects of one God, all the myths concerned one Mystery. This God was not a mental construct, but an experience limited only by the bounds of the imagination.

Lawrence's imagination fed from various sources, but even when far from Europe, as my thesis has illustrated, the gods of the Greeks were never far from his mind. At the middle of his world was the Mediterranean. His Tree of Life was planted firmly in the myths and metaphysics of ancient Greece, the great sources of his inward nourishment and renewal. I believe that I have demonstrated this most clearly by drawing attention to the recurring allusions he made to the illustration of "The Sailing of Dionysus", the picture that encapsulated, in a single, unified image, Lawrence's vision of eternal life. As he lay dying in Bandol, he held on to this vision, watching the ships of the modern world criss-crossing in the distance, but seeing with his third eye,

the slim black ship of Dionysos come sailing in  
with grape-vines up the mast, and dolphins leaping.<sup>1</sup>

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1. "Middle Of The World", *Complete Poems*, p.688.

My thesis has clarified and expanded upon previous studies of Greek influences on Lawrence by identifying, explicating, and tracing the development of those influences, as evident in allusions, metaphors and themes in his novels and stories. As discussed in Chapter Six, further confirmation of the significance of the ancient Greeks to Lawrence can be found in *Apocalypse*. I have shown Greek myth and metaphysics to be deeply embedded in Lawrence's symbolic language, being both an important source of his recurrent themes and a means of expressing what he called the "complete imaginative experience" of life (A, p.50).



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