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THE MALE- FEMALE PRINCIPLES:
THE ART AND THE METAPHYSIC OF D. H. LAWRENCE

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For Diana and Sara, my wife and daughter, who have borne more than their share.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. THE METAPHYSIC AND THE CRITERIA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE STRUGGLE INTO ARTICULATION</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ART IN A METAPHYSICAL CUL-DE-SAC</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. RECONCILIATION: THE CORE OF LIFE</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE ART AND THE METAPHYSIC</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. H. Lawrence's purpose in life was two-fold: as both artist and prophet, he sought to express in terms of his own soul the realities of life, and to change them as well. Thus, he was aware that his and "every work of art adheres to a system of morality,"¹ and that his art might also be a vehicle for a new morality and an implement for change. Yet, he realized that "the adherence to a metaphysic does not necessarily give artistic form. Indeed the over-strong adherence to a metaphysic usually destroys any possibility of artistic form."² Lawrence was thus aware of the conflict, not only in his own work but in art in general, between what he called an artist's "metaphysic" and the art which proceeds from it.

That Lawrence's expression of this conflict is to be found in his "Study of Thomas Hardy" is highly significant: the "Study," which he admitted "turned out as a sort of Story of My Heart, or a Confessio Fidei,"³ contains his principal criticism of


²Ibid., p. 477.

Hardy, and an articulation of a large part of Lawrence's own metaphysic as well. As a devoted "son of Hardy," Lawrence considered his literary "father's" art "lovely, mature and sensitive"; but as a sometimes astute critic, he also observed of Hardy's metaphysic, that "that which is physical, of the body, is weak, despicable, bad," was "almost silly." "But it is not as a metaphysician that one must consider Hardy," Lawrence says: "He makes a poor show there. For nothing in his work is so pitiable as his clumsy efforts to push events into line with his theory of being."^5

In a letter to A. W. McLeod, Lawrence thus writes: "Oh Lord, and if I don't 'subdue my art to a metaphysic', as somebody very beautifully said of Hardy, I do write because I want folk—English folk—to alter and have more sense."^6 His own art is a reflection of this conflict between the prophet and the artist, despite the fact that as early as 1913 he resolved to avoid the evils of art fallen prey to a metaphysic. In the course of his ten novels and numerous other writings, Lawrence came to develop a strict and rather complex metaphysic, an ontology which is at times traditional, often peculiarly his own,

^4Collected Letters, p. 488.
^6Collected Letters, p. 204.
but always central to his artistic vision. The purpose of this study is to outline that ontology, to explore its effect on Lawrence's art, and, finally, to discover to what extent he "subdued his art to his metaphysic."

An examination of Lawrence's study of Hardy is essential for an understanding of his system of morality, and for what H. M. Daleski calls "the most striking feature of Lawrence's Weltanschauung ... its dualism."\(^7\) For Lawrence views humanity as the product and embodiment of two opposing principles, principles which he extrapolates from the human sphere and employs for a larger, cosmic view. The principle of duality is overwhelming for Lawrence: In the beginning, in his Genesis, "the living cosmos divided itself, and there was Heaven and Earth: by which we mean, not the sky and the terrestrial globe, for the Earth was still void and dark; but an inexplicable first duality, a division in the cosmos."\(^8\) The "mystic" Heaven for Lawrence is the "dark cosmic Fire," and the mystic Earth is the Waters, and "every new thing is born from the consummation of the two halves of the universe, the two great halves being the cosmic waters and the cosmic fire of the First Day. In procreation, the germs of the male and


female epitomize the two cosmic principles." It is not surprising that Lawrence, whose concern with men and women in love is perhaps greater than any other modern novelist, also expresses the duality in his cosmic view in terms of Maleness and Femaleness.

This use of the Male and Female principles to represent the two ontological forces in the universe must not be confused with men and women, though it invites confusion. Male and Female, in the sense Lawrence uses them here, do not necessarily correspond to men and women, but rather to the fact that

The sex division is parallel with the mystery of the first division in chaos, and with the dualism of the two cosmic elements. This is not to say that the one sex is identical with fire, the other with water. And yet there is some indefinable connection. If we must imagine the most perfect clue to the eternal waters, we think of woman, and of man as the most perfect premiss of fire.

Lawrence's reader may find, however, even after Lawrence's articulation of his view, that the duality is all too "inexplicable" and the connection far too "indefinable" to be adequately intelligible.

As one compares Lawrence's various philosophical writings, one learns that he is not always consistent. He employs the principle of duality, for example, to describe the human anatomy—apparently regardless of sex—by dividing the body, "according to

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10 Ibid., p. 234.
the old-fashioned phraseology, into the upper and lower man: that is, the spiritual and sensual being . . . the upper body, breast and throat and face, this is the spiritual body; the lower is the sensual." The upper, spiritual body he then identifies as "the magnificent centre wherein all life pivots, and lapses, as all space passes into the core of the sun" and, hence, as Male. "The lower part of the body," on the other hand, "is the world of living dark waters, where the fire is quenched in watery creation," and which is, thus, Female. He further divides man laterally, with the front "open and receptive" and, therefore, apparently Female; and the dorsal area and the spine—that from which the will acts—and, thus, apparently Male. Such a physiology may have little medical value, but it is extremely significant as a demonstration of how pervasive the Male and Female are for Lawrence.

The problem, however, is that Lawrence is never as simplistic as he may sound in a given essay. In another essay, for instance, from Fantasia of the Unconscious, he seems to contradict the above application of duality and polarity to the human body:

A child is born sexed. A child is either male or female, in the whole of its psyche and physique is either male or female. Every single living cell is either male or female, and will remain either male or female as long as life lasts. And every single cell in every male child is male, and every cell in every female child is female.\(^\text{12}\)

Isolated, this pat argument sounds final enough; but later in the same essay Lawrence decries the fault of modern society, in which "the dynamic polarity has swung around," so that "woman is now the initiator, man the responder."\(^\text{13}\) Thus we observe the paradox that while "every single living cell is either male or female," at the same time we have both masculine women and feminine men. The reversal of the poles is a perversion for Lawrence, this is clear; but his denial that even the most feminine man is in any way female is confusing, if not entirely contradictory.

Likewise, Lawrence compounds the problem when in the same essay he derogates the "hermaphrodite fallacy," which speciously suggests that a man "is really half female" because "certainly woman seems very male" when she assumes the "positive and active" roles and leaves man to become "the emotional party."\(^\text{14}\) This insistence on the unity and exclusiveness of the Male in the man


\(^\text{13}\)Ibid., p. 132.

\(^\text{14}\)Ibid., p. 134.
and the Female in the woman seems antithetical to the statement that "within the self, which is single, the principle of dualism reigns." Nor is it clear that "every single cell in every male child is male, and every cell in every female child is female," when, "biologically, it is true, the rudimentary formation of both sexes is found in every individual. That doesn't mean that every individual is a bit of both, or either, ad lib." What it does mean is certainly not clear. Nor is there much satisfaction in his statement in the same article that "man, in the midst of all his effeminacy, is still male and nothing but male," or in "The Two Principles" essay when he speaks of "the sex mystery of the dual psyche, sensual and spiritual, within the individual being."

The task of elucidating Lawrence's metaphysic by comparing his non-fictional, philosophical writings can obviously become quite discouraging. Perhaps Lawrence most fully articulates his view of the Male-Female duality in the "Study of Thomas Hardy," which we shall examine presently, but even here it is clear that much of what he says in this study he seems to contradict elsewhere. Yet, the study of Hardy is particularly important for two

16*Fantasia,* p. 131.
reasons: it is the earliest of Lawrence's major non-fictional statements on the Male-Female duality, and it clearly demonstrates that he was aware, quite early in his career, of the great western tradition which regards the Male and Female in the terms he employs in that study. That some of his later statements seem to contradict some of his metaphysic as it appears in the study should not diminish its significance, but merely point out that Lawrence, as prophet-metaphysician and as artist, developed and evolved rather than remained static.

The single most important study of Lawrence in terms of his vision of Male-Female duality is H. M. Daleski's The Forked Flame. His first chapter, which relies most heavily on the "Study of Thomas Hardy" in its discussion of "The Tiger and the Lamb: The Duality of Lawrence," proposes that the "radical discrepancy" we find in Lawrence's various articulations of his metaphysic "must be accounted for," and "that it can best be explained in terms of a deep split in Lawrence himself. Daleski provides much evidence to establish that Lawrence was "more strongly feminine than masculine and that he was unable to effect such a reconciliation" of these elements. Citation: Citing both biographical accounts and Lawrence's own autobiographical writings, Daleski establishes that Lawrence's own personal problem of

19Daleski, p. 33.
duality and then employs this self-division as the controlling principle for his subsequent interpretation of the six major novels.

Daleski's work is careful and scholarly, and his continual insistence upon the close correspondence between the art and vision of the novels and Lawrence's own conflict of the Male and Female in himself is significant. The purpose of this study is, naturally, somewhat similar, but it differs considerably from Daleski's in its attempt to place Lawrence's conception of the Male-Female duality against the background of the cultural tradition of the West—the tradition of a society he obviously aspired to alter—and to examine the expression of his prophetic, apocalyptic vision as art.

If for Lawrence "the first and greatest law of creation" was that "all creation, even life itself, exists within the strange and incalculable balance of these two elements," it is no less so for much of the art and thought of the Western world. The scope of this study prohibits any lengthy discussion of precisely how artists other than Lawrence have received and employed these two concepts in their art; nevertheless, the fact that the bulk of our culture is highly conscious of this duality—expressed in terms of the Male and the Female—is as significant as it is easily demonstrable.

Martin D'Arcy, for example, in his excellent analysis of *The Mind and Heart of Love*, attempts to show "how the notions of active and passive, egoism and self-sacrifice, classical and romantic, life and death, masculine and feminine, *animus* and *anima* are the two constituents or factors which give the clue to the workings of nature and the self." That D'Arcy is successful in his attempt is due not merely to his own astute ability, but also to the fact that such conceptualizations of these opposing life principles are so frequently and powerfully expressed in so much of Western culture.

Lawrence's acute sense of the duality of the Male and Female led him to conclude that "in life, then, no new thing has ever arisen, or can arise, save out of the impulse of the male upon the female, the female upon the male. The interaction of the male and female spirit begot the wheel, the plough, and the first utterance that was made on the face of the earth." D'Arcy echoes Lawrence in his statement that the important point to notice about "the law which governs what is highest and lowest in the Universe" is "the universal fact of duality." And George R. Bramer points out, in his assessment of D'Arcy's analysis of

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the two life-forces, that "as often as any other, the masculine-feminine dichotomy is used by D'Arcy to express his duality. And . . . he constantly stresses the active and rational character of the 'masculine' force, the passive and emotional character of the 'feminine' force."  

It is significant to note, in this light, that Lawrence's literary "father," Thomas Hardy, visualizes the Male and Female in these same terms, and thus stands in the mainstream of the traditional conception of Male and Female in Western literature. That Lawrence was well aware of this fact is evidenced by his description of Hardy's Sue Bridehead, in Jude the Obscure, as the embodiment of "the ultra-Christian principle—of living entirely according to the Spirit, to the One, male spirit, which knows, and utters, and shines, but exists beyond feeling, beyond joy or sorrow, or pain, exists only in the Knowing." And, Lawrence argues, Sue Bridehead could not survive "under the influence of the other dark, silent, strong principle, of the female," which he describes a few pages earlier as that principle which "will eternally hold herself superior to any idea, will hold full life in the body to be real happiness. The male exists in doing, the


female in being." These passages reflect Lawrence's awareness of Hardy's metaphysic—a "system of morality" characterized by the duality of the active, rational Male and the passive, passional Female.

But the study of Hardy is much more than Lawrence's critical analysis of the Wessex novels; it is at the same time one of his profoundest expressions of his own Weltanschauung, a cosmic view which differs radically from Hardy's at times, while often resembling it so much that the two seem inseparable. Like Hardy, Lawrence concludes that "every man comprises male and female in his being, the male always struggling for predominance. A woman likewise consists in male and female, with female predominant." Jude Fawley, in Hardy's last novel, comprised the Male and Female, the desire to attain to the Idea—Christminster, the ministry and Sue Bridehead—as well as the body—sexual satisfaction, children and Arabella. That his life was a tragic and pathetic passage to death was due in part to his inability to reconcile these two opposing principles and to discover in one woman a proper balance of the two. As Lawrence says, "Jude is only Tess /in Tess of the D'Urbervilles/ turned about. Instead of the heroine containing the two principles, male and female, at strife within her one being, it is Jude who contains them both,

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27Ibid., p. 481.
whilst the two women with him take the place of the two men to
Tess."

D'Arcy's discussion of the two principles again echoes

Lawrence's:

Nevertheless in each individual the characteristics
of each remain to this extent that there is a positive
and a negative principle or movement, and one is called
masculine or feminine according to the dominance of one
or the other of these two in the individual. Each per­
son has an animus and an anima, each is in different
proportions masterful or clinging and submissive, fierce
or gentle, hard or soft, Appoline or Dionysiac, intel­
lectual or emotional, selfish or devoted."

That Lawrence was intensely aware of this conception of duality
in the bulk of Western culture, as well as in Hardy, is evident
in his digressions from the Wessex novels:

Thus Correggio leads on to the whole of modern art,
where the male still wrestles with the female, in un­
conscious struggle, but where he gains ever gradually
over her, reducing her to nothing. . . . And in the
Renaissance, after Boticelli, the motion begins to di­
vide in these two directions. The hands no longer
clasp in perfect union, but one clasp overbears the
other. Boticelli develops to Correggio, and to Andrea
del Sarto, develops forward to Rembrandt, and Rem­
brandt to the Impressionists, to the male extreme of
motion. But Boticelli, on the other hand, becomes
Raphael, Raphael and Michaelangelo. . . . Raphael and
Michaelangelo are men of different nature placed in
the same position and resolving the same question in
their several ways. Socrates and Plato are a parallel
pair, and, in another degree, Tolstoi and Turgenev,


29D'Arcy, p. 207.
and, perhaps, St. Paul and St. John the Evangelist, and, perhaps, Shakespeare and Shelley.  

More often than not, one finds, Lawrence's "little book" about Hardy is not so much about Hardy as about Lawrence, the Male-Female dichotomy, and its expression in the spectrum of Western literature, thought and art.

When Lawrence is speaking of Hardy, in fact, he must continually "let it be said again that Hardy is a bad artist." He finds two great flaws in Hardy's art, both related to the Male-Female duality; the first is that

There is a lack of sternness, there is a hesitating betwixt life and public opinion, which diminishes the Wessex novels from the rank of pure tragedy. It is not so much the eternal, immutable laws of being which are transgressed, it is not that vital life-forces are set in conflict with each other, bringing almost inevitable tragedy—yet not necessarily death, as we shall see in the most splendid Aeschylus. It is, in Wessex, that the individual succumbs to what is in its shallowest, public opinion, in its deepest, the human compact by which we live together, to form a community.

In Hardy's metaphysic, as Lawrence sees it, "there is no reconciliation between Love and the Law . . . the Spirit of Love must always succumb before the blind, stupid, but overwhelming power of the Law."  

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31 Ibid., p. 488.
32 Ibid., p. 440.
33 Ibid., p. 480.
The Law, which Lawrence elsewhere identifies with the Female, the passional, sensual principle, is for Hardy destructive; it is this which makes the latter's metaphysic "almost silly" for Lawrence. "From the very start, he Hardy has had an overweening theoretic antagonism to the Law. 'That which is physical, of the body, is weak, despicable, bad,' he said at the very start."34

And the fact that Jude Fawley's failure is a product of his "passionate nature" is symbolic of what Lawrence, in his own metaphysic and his own art, reacted against most violently and most profoundly. This is not to say that Lawrence deprecated entirely the Mind or the Spirit, but merely that he saw in the world a sacrifice of the Body for the Spirit. In some men he found "the denial of marriage in the spirit," which he held to be "an equal blasphemy," as evil as "the denial of marriage in the body" which he found in so many. "But which of the two is a greater sinner, working better for the destruction of his fellow-man, that is for the One God to judge."35

He knew only that "there must be a marriage of body in body, and of spirit in spirit, and Two-in-One. And the marriage in the body must not deny the marriage in the spirit," or vice versa; rather, "the two must be for ever reconciled, even if they must

exist on occasions apart one from the other."\textsuperscript{36} Despite the occasional obscurity of Lawrence's expression of his metaphysic, it is clear that he conceives of the individual human destiny as a struggle to reconcile--to marry, to balance, to fulfill--the Body and the Spirit; that is to say, to reconcile the Male and Female principles in each person through a communication with another.

"It seems as if the history of humanity were divided into two epochs: the Epoch of the Law and the Epoch of Love," writes Lawrence. "It seems as though humanity, during the time of its activity on earth, has made two great efforts: the effort to appreciate the Law and the effort to overcome the Law in Love. And in both efforts it has succeeded."\textsuperscript{37} But this success is only partial, for Lawrence concludes that "what remains is to reconcile the two."

What remains in this study, then, is to examine the work of Lawrence, the prophet and artist. And it seems only fair to judge the man by his own criteria to determine whether he subdued his art to his metaphysic. What is clear at this point is that Lawrence, as early as 1914--the year of his "Study of Thomas Hardy"--had already articulated both the foundations of his metaphysic and the standards by which the world ought to judge the workings of that system of morality in his art.

\textsuperscript{36}"Study of Hardy," p. 475.

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 510.
CHAPTER TWO

THE STRUGGLE INTO ARTICULATION

In view of the great bulk of Lawrence criticism of the last fifteen years, Karl Shapiro's statement of 1957 has proven to be somewhat ironic: "Lawrence suffers somewhat the fate of Whitman today. He is declassed. He enjoys a kind of underground popularity among writers, but he is outside the pale of the tradition."¹ That Shapiro should have added, "most of Lawrence's disciples, it seems to me, misunderstand him; but at least he has disciples,"² suggests that he had not put up a finger to test the wind. For the wind has indeed changed, and we are much richer for it.

Among those disciples Shapiro probably meant—the ones who "knew Lawrence when" and those who admired him from the underground, and among those whom Shapiro did not foresee, many of them capable and respected critics—there is almost unanimous agreement that Lawrence's third novel, Sons and Lovers, is an intensely autobiographical novel. His first major novel, it is set in the coal-rich Midlands of Lawrence's boyhood; moreover, the story

²Ibid., p. 60.
parallels his own family's struggles, as well as his twelve-year relationship with Jessie Chambers, the Miriam of the novel. As Eliseo Vivas says, Lawrence's purpose

in Sons and Lovers besides writing a book that would give him the rewards of authorship and other purely external ends--was to achieve a grasp of his experience in its context. This called for his producing a coherent picture of his life and of the life of his family in terms of those factors that he took to have been important in their development.

Because of the close correspondence between the characters in the novel and those in Lawrence's own life, much of the criticism of Sons and Lovers is in this same vein.

Daniel Weiss's study, Oedipus in Nottingham, for example, goes perhaps farther in this approach than any other; it is, according to Mark Schorer, "a full-scale and brilliant psychoanalytic examination of Lawrence's work, starting off from Sons and Lovers." A novel of such consequence as to warrant Weiss's psychoanalytic analysis, Sons and Lovers is essential to any study of Lawrence because it points to the foundations—or perhaps

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the frustrations—upon which the Lawrentian metaphysic is built. Thus, the theme of "domination" which Schorer says pervades the novels after Sons and Lovers begins there and "develops into a complex drama within the psyche . . . [the domination] of male by female, or female by male; more important, within the individual, of one part of himself, preventing totality, preventing total relationships with others."  

H. M. Daleski's point is much the same when he says that he believes that "Lawrence initially made a strenuous effort to reconcile the male and female elements in himself, but that he was more strongly feminine than masculine and that he was unable to effect such a reconciliation." 

Whatever the value of this psychoanalytic approach, it is certainly clear that the struggle for dominance is central to Lawrence's first major novel. And it is the outcome of this struggle which Reloy Garcia calls the "Ascendant Eve" and which he identifies with the novels up to Women in Love. The "ascendant Eve" is, of course, Gertrude Morel, the dominant woman whose power over both her sons and her husband is both frightening and tragic. In terms of what we already know of the Male-Female

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7Schorer, p. 23.


tradition in Western culture, however, this novel is all the more significant because it outlines the metaphysical struggle which the later novels seek to resolve.

In that tradition, which acknowledges that the "male exists in doing, the female in being," and that the male is the rational principle and the female the passion, Sons and Lovers portrays the paradox of an active, rational woman in conflict with a rather passive and highly passion man. Moreover, each character in the novel is identified with a number of Male or Female characteristics other than activity-passivity or reason-passion. It is not mere formularizing to say that Gertrude Morel is Male because she is the dominant partner in the marriage relationship; rather, a close reading of the text of the novel indicates that Lawrence identifies her with a large number of symbols and images which he elsewhere characterizes as essentially Male. Likewise, Walter Morel is identified with many characteristics which Lawrence indicates, in the "Study of Thomas Hardy," are essentially Female.

Daleski has done much of the necessary work on the Male-Female dichotomy in Lawrence's metaphysic by enumerating nearly thirty dualities identified by Lawrence as Male or Female in his study of Hardy. Among the most significant are Knowledge-Feeling, Spirit-Flesh, Utterance-Gratification in the Senses, Mind-Senses, Consciousness-Feelings, Knowledge-Nature, Brain-Body, Light-
Darkness, Consciousness-Instinct, Service of Some Idea-Full Life in the Body; the first of each pair signifies the Male, the second the Female. In addition, as I have noted, Lawrence also identifies the Male with Fire and the Sun, the Female with Water and the Moon.

If we remember what Lawrence—and Western culture—tell us about the Female principle being predominant in the woman and the Male principle predominant in the man, *Sons and Lovers* is indeed paradoxical. For despite these associations, Lawrence portrays Walter Morel, the father of the novel, as the embodied Female principle, and his wife, Gertrude, as the embodied Male principle. Lawrence, whose own father "hated books, hated the sight of anyone reading or writing," describes the father of the novel in terms of "the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle," and the woman as "gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit." Morel's "nature was purely sensuous" (SL, 14) but his wife "strove to make him moral, religious. She tried to force him to face things. He could not endure it—it drove him out of

10 Daleski, p. 62.


12 *Sons and Lovers* (New York, 1958), p. 10. All subsequent references to the novel will be included in the body of the text.
Morel, who speaks the broad Midland dialect, goes into the mines every morning and emerges every night—he lives by darkness, the Female principle—and is possessed by a tendency to drunkenness and a "soft, non-intellectual, warm kind of gambolling" (SL, 9). Mrs. Morel, who was a school teacher, is his very opposite: "she had a curious, receptive mind which found much pleasure and amusement in listening to other folk. She was clever in leading folk to talk. She loved ideas, and was considered very intellectual" (SL, 9). Her speech was perfect English, and "what she liked most of all was an argument on religion or philosophy or politics with some educated man" (SL, 9).

The novel abounds with similar references to the Morels in terms of the principles which contradict their respective sex. During a fight with her husband, for example, Gertrude Morel rushes outside because she "could not control her consciousness." And when "at last she came to herself" (SL, 23), she finds that her husband has locked her out, unknowingly, in his drunken stupor. As she raps on the window to wake him, "the labouring of his heart hurt him into consciousness" (SL, 25) and he lets her in. Once inside the house, "for sometime her mind continued snapping and jetting sparks, but she was asleep before her husband awoke from the first sleep of his drunkenness" (SL, 26). Throughout the novel, then, Morel is referred to in terms which Lawrence, in his study of Hardy, identifies as Female, while Gertrude Morel is
presented in Male terms.

Dorothy Van Ghent says that this novel is "rigorously controlled by an idea . . . of an organic disturbance in the relationships of men and women—a disturbance of sexual polarities that is first seen in the disaffection of mother and father." Her analysis of the novel is presented not exactly in terms of the Male-Female principles; if it were, however, she might well arrive at the conclusion she does when she says, "Lawrence's development of the idea has certain major implications: it implies that his characters have transgressed against the natural life-directed condition of the human animal." If we assert, as Lawrence does at times, that Maleness consists of those qualities which we find in Gertrude Morel and that Femailness consists of those evident in Walter Morel, we might well argue that this inversion of principles is an instance of Van Ghent's "transgression against the natural life-directed condition of the human animal."

H. M. Daleski also concludes that "it is the decidedly male father who represents the female principle and the mother the male." His discussion of the other important characters in the

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14 Ibid., p. 247.
15 Daleski, p. 62.
novel—Miriam and Clara, for example—is along more autobiographical lines. Though he admits that "Miriam is his intellectual threshing-floor and Clara is his sexual testing-ground," Daleski gives scarce attention to them in terms of the two principles. An analysis of these two women in light of what we know of the Male-Female dichotomy, however, yields an interesting and significant footnote to the inversion of the two principles in Paul's mother and father.

Miriam's intellectualism is decidedly Male, for example, and Lawrence makes much of it: "She wanted to learn, thinking that if she could read . . . the world would have a different face for her and a deepened respect" (SL, 143). "So she was mad," Lawrence tells us, "to have learning whereon to pride herself . . . Learning was the only distinction to which she thought to aspire" (SL, 143). Thus, "with Miriam was always on the high plane of abstraction, when his natural fire of love was transmitted into the fine stream of thought" (SL, 173). And this, in part, is what destroys Paul—or at least his relationship with the girl—because "in this passion for understanding her soul lay close to his; she had him all to herself. But he must be made abstract first" (SL, 173). Because "the intimacy between them had been kept so abstract, such a matter of the soul, all thought

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16 Daleski, p. 73.
and weary struggle into consciousness" (SL, 172), Paul realizes that "in all our relations no body enters" (SL, 251). He writes her that "I can give you a spirit love, I have given it you this long, long time; but not embodied passion. See, you are a nun. I have given you what I would give a holy nun—as a mystic monk to a mystic nun" (SL, 251). Though many young men undoubtedly make similar accusations against young women in the real world, Paul's plea is curious here. In terms of Lawrence's articulation of the Male-Female in his "Study of Thomas Hardy," it is strange that Paul, the man, should plead for "full life in the body" and that Miriam, the woman, should not want him to talk to her "through the senses—rather through the spirit" (SL, 251).

Moreover, in spite of all Miriam's passivity, there is a strange note of activity in Lawrence's portrayal of her. In a scene in which she fondles and "sips" some "flowers with fervid kisses," Paul asks, "can you never like things without clutching them as if you wanted to pull the heart out of them? Why don't you have a bit more restraint, or reserve, or something?" (SL, 218). Perhaps the "something" that Paul (and Lawrence) ask of Miriam here is more passivity. "You wheedle the soul out of things," Paul tells her. "You don't want to love—your eternal and abnormal craving is to be loved. You aren't positive, you're negative. You absorb, absorb, as if you must fill yourself up with love, because you've got a shortage somewhere" (SL, 218).
For all her negativity—perhaps to be taken as passivity—there is a good deal of active "wheedling."

Miriam, in effect, becomes a sort of spiritual prototype of Lawrence's Mater Magna figure, which I shall discuss presently. There is something terribly active in her "craving" and her conviction that Paul "belonged to her," a fact of which "she was so fixedly sure that he allowed her right" (SL, 252). In terms of the domination-submission dichotomy—decidedly a Male-Female dichotomy—it seems that Miriam is the "possessor" and Paul the "possessed." This observation seems antithetical to much of what appears, on the surface at least, to be Miriam's most significant trait—her lack of confidence, her deep, silent submission to her brothers and Paul. But "deep down, she hated him /Paul/ because she loved him and he dominated her. She had resisted his domination. She had fought to keep herself free of him in the last issue. And she was free of him, even more than he of her" (SL, 296). In resisting Paul's domination of her, Miriam becomes the more active and, hence, the more Male.

Clara Dawes, on the other hand, is most frequently portrayed with the Female principle predominant. It is she who is described in terms of "the curves of her breast and shoulders as if they had been molded inside him" (SL, 276). "Clara was, indeed, passionately in love with him /Paul/, and he with her, as far as passion went" (SL, 351). "She caught him passionately to
her, pressed his head on her breast with her hand. . . . He might have anything of her—anything; but she did not want to know" (SL, 353). In addition to Lawrence's identification of Clara with Female qualities—Flesh and anti-intellectualism—she is characterized by darkness, another Female trait. Her eyes "were dark and shining and strange, life wild at the source staring into his life . . . a strong, strange, wild life, that breathed with his in the darkness through this hour" (SL, 353).

If it is true, then, that the men and women in Sons and Lovers are inversions of the Male-Female principles, why does Clara— a Female woman—not set things right? One critic, asking the question "What is wrong with Paul and Clara?" concludes, "the book does not reveal the cause and therefore we cannot answer the question."17 Perhaps not, but we can come much closer than that sort of half-hearted response.

The answer lies, despite this critic's assertion, in the text of the novel and in the conflict of the Male and the Female. And a clue to that answer can be found in an attempt to delineate the two principles in Paul Morel—D. H. Lawrence. Paul, like his father, his brother William, and nearly everyone in the novel, is dominated by his mother; but Walter Morel shrinks almost to insignificance under his wife's fierce spirit, and William dies young.

17Vivas, p. 183.
As for the father, "the only times he entered again into the life of his own people was when he worked, and was happy at his work" (SL, 63). At those times his children "united with him in the work, in the actual doing of something, when he was his real self again" (SL, 63). Throughout most of the novel, however, Morel is never his "real," Male self, but, rather, the ineffectual, fumbling pawn of his domineering wife. More often than not, we see him in a state of being--a Female state--rather than in the Male state of "the actual doing of something."

Unlike his father, Morel's oldest son, William, "read a great deal, and had an active, quick intelligence" (SL, 131) like his mother. "He was accustomed to having all his thoughts sifted through his mother's mind" (SL, 131), so that he too was dominated by her, though in a different manner than the father. Mrs. Morel "was a woman who waited for her children to grow up. And William occupied her chiefly" (SL, 68). But William dies of pneumonia and "a peculiar erysipelas, which had started under the chin where the collar chafed, and was spreading over the face" (SL, 135). It is evident here that Lawrence has already rejected the city--an indication of his later rejection of the Machine and the industrial world. At any rate, he obviously intends to associate William's death with his job as an inspector and his position as a man of the city, the city which later seems to Paul "savage and uncouth" (SL, 365) and to Clara "a sore upon the country" (SL, 271). One
must not forget that it was Gertrude Morel who sent her son off to the city.

Shortly after William's death, Paul becomes gravely ill with pneumonia.

"Might he never have had it if I'd kept him at home, not let him go to Nottingham?" was one of the first things she [Mrs. Morel] asked.

"He might not have been so bad," said the doctor.

Mrs. Morel stood condemned on her own ground.

"I should have watched the living, not the dead," she told herself. (SL, 140)

Paul thus becomes more to his mother than William had ever been, even more than before, when "his life-story [at Jordan's], like an Arabian Nights, was told night after night to his mother . . . almost as if it were her own life" (SL, 113). Paul the artist, for example, gives his mother great joy when he wins first prize for a sketch:

William had brought her his sporting trophies. She kept them still, and she did not forgive his death. Arthur was handsome—at least, a good specimen—and warm and generous, and probably would do well in the end. But Paul was going to distinguish himself. She had a great belief in him, the more because he was unaware of his own powers. There was so much to come out of him. Life for her was rich with promise. She was to see herself fulfilled. Not for nothing had been her struggle. (SL, 183)

Paul is certainly more like his mother than his father; he learns well, reads books, talks politics, philosophy, the Idea. He is frail, unlike his father, the "dusky," "sensuous" collier. "And in the end" his mother "shared almost everything with him without
knowing" (SL, 87).

But Mrs. Morel dominates her son too, and Lawrence's description of "a good many of the nicest men" Paul knew, who "were like himself," gives evidence to this domination:

Being the sons of mothers whose husbands had blundered rather brutally through their feminine sanctities, they were themselves too diffident and shy. They could easier deny themselves than incur any reproach from a woman; for a woman was like their mother, and they were full of the sense of their mother. They preferred themselves to suffer the misery of celibacy, rather than risk the other person. (SL, 278)

Thus, Miriam's "fearful, naked contact . . . on small occasions shocked him. He was used to his mother's reserve. And on such occasions he was thankful in his heart and soul that he had his mother, so sane and wholesome" (SL, 153). It is even more interesting and significant to note that Paul suffered on this particular "small occasion" because of Miriam's "extreme emotion" (SL, 153). Paul has learned to expect the Male in a woman, and he suffers when he finds emotion—the Female quality—in Miriam.

But for all Mrs. Morel's domination of her son, for all her Maleness, Paul himself is a male. Hence, when he observes the deeply emotional, "religious trust" of Miriam's household, he is at odds with himself because "his own mother was logical. Here there was something different, something he loved, something that at times he hated" (SL, 147). It is here that much of Paul's struggle—and perhaps Lawrence's, if we are to believe Daleski—rests:
in his own ambivalent and conflicting nature, in the conflict of the Male and the Female in himself.

It is thus the Male in Paul which seeks to dominate Miriam, and which leads her to "resist his domination" and to fight "to keep herself free of him in the last issue":

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

Paul therefore rejects Miriam in his Maleness, and seeks to become a man in Clara Dawes, whom we have already identified as the Female woman of the novel. Perhaps it is because Clara has the Female predominant in her that Mrs. Morel does not object to her as she does to Miriam, especially if it is true that the Male seeks to dominate and that Miriam, as Male, would have dominated Paul and thereby taken him from his mother.

Paul, at any rate, seems much happier with Clara than he is with Miriam, at least in the beginning. But even Clara cannot satisfy him indefinitely, and it is here that we must face Vivas' question: "What is wrong with Paul and Clara?" The answer, though this is stating it somewhat too simply, is nothing great, but Paul does not realize it. What is wrong is most probably Paul's—or Gertrude Morel's—fault rather than Clara's. Too often is the reader reminded by Gertrude Morel that Paul's affair with Clara...
will not work, that "you'll tire of her, my son, you know you will" (SL, 329). And too often does Paul fail to see Clara as an individual human being, separate in her "otherness"—a theme which Lawrence is to make much more of in later novels. Paul and Clara make love and experience the depths of passion, so that their relationship is the antithesis of the spiritual relation between Paul and Miriam; and yet, in their love-making, Paul seems to neglect Clara's presence as a person and to regard her merely as a woman, or more properly, Woman—the great sensuous, sexual power. In other words, Paul's failure with Clara is akin to his submission to his mother: in each case, he submits his Maleness to the Female in himself, becoming passive to his domineering mother and utterly, exclusively passional with Clara.

Thus, much as Paul is submissive to the dominance of his Male mother, he becomes subordinate—not so much to Clara—to the Female principle predominant in Clara. "Did he leave Clara out of count" in love, "and take simply women? But he thought that was splitting a hair" (SL, 363). Moreover, his submission is not even to the Woman as much as it is to Sex, as this long passage from the novel demonstrates:

As a rule, when he started love-making, the emotion was strong enough to carry with it everything—reason, soul, blood—in a great sweep, like the Trent carries bodily its back-swirls and intertwined, noiselessly. Gradually the little criticisms, the little sensations, were lost, thought also went, everything borne along
in one flood. He became, not a man with a mind, but a
great instinct. His hands were like creatures, living;
his limbs, his body, were all life and consciousness,
subject to no will of his, but living in themselves.
Just as he was, so it seemed the vigorous, wintry stars
were strong, also with life. He and they struck with
the same pulse of fire, and the same joy of strength
which held the bracken-frond stiff near his eyes held
his own body firm. It was as if he, and the stars, and
the dark herbage, and Clara were licked up in an im-
mense tongue of flame, which tore onwards and upwards.
Everything rushed along in living beside him; every-
thing was still, perfect in itself, along with him.
This wonderful stillness in each thing in itself, while
it was being borne along in a very ecstasy of living,
seemed the highest point of bliss.
And Clara knew this held him to her, so she trusted
altogether to the passion. It, however, failed her
very often. They did not reach again the height of
that once when the peewits had called. Gradually, some
mechanical effort spoiled their loving, or, when they
had splendid moments, they had them separately, and not
so satisfactorily. (SL, 363-364)

Lawrence realizes that sex alone cannot set the world
right, a fact which he does not fully articulate until much later,
in his last novel. But even here that fact is evident: Paul, in
becoming "not a man with a mind, but a great instinct," sacrifices
some of his humanity because he fails to acknowledge Clara. That
he is perhaps incapable of acknowledging her and her "otherness,"
that he in fact submits his own mind—the Male principle—to sex,
is evidence of his own deep conflict.

To say that Gertrude Morel is the source of all her son's
conflict and internal strife is obviously to oversimplify matters.
But the fact remains that she has dominated him, as the Male domi-
nates the Female, as the light overpowers the darkness. And while
she may not be directly to blame for her son's failure to reach a lasting, fulfilled relationship with Clara Dawes, she has obviously destroyed something of his Maleness in dominating him.

"A man who is well balanced between male and female in his own nature," writes Lawrence in his study of Hardy, "is, as a rule, happy, easy to mate, easy to satisfy, and content to exist. It is only a disproportion, or a dissatisfaction, which makes the man struggle into articulation." If we regard—as most of the critics have done—Sons and Lovers as a closely autobiographical novel, such a statement explains something perhaps of the art of the book and its relation to the metaphysic of its author. Lawrence's novel reflects a deep conflict within himself—at least to the extent that Paul Morel and Lawrence are one—and that conflict no doubt formed the basis of the metaphysic which he was to articulate in detail two years after Sons and Lovers.

Lawrence's metaphysic, at least that version of it he expresses in his "Study of Thomas Hardy," focuses upon the significance of the Male and Female principles in every human being. What Lawrence warns against in that work is the danger of an imbalance of those principles in men and women. And what occurs in Sons and Lovers is not merely an imbalance, but an inversion of the principles which Lawrence identified as predominantly Male or

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Female. That inversion resulted in frustration and strife among the Morels and especially in Paul, and left him "in the end naked of everything, with the drift towards death." As David Daiches comments, "any sensitive reader of the novel can see at once that the mother, for all the passionate and moving intensity with which she is presented, stands in the long run for death." Although Gertrude Morel struggled to keep a hold on her own life, even when Paul wished in his heart that she would die, the mother of the novel spells death—physical death in William's case, spiritual and emotional death in Paul's—for those around her. And if there is even the slightest hope at the end of the novel, it is only because the natural order of things has taken Mrs. Morel before the others, a fact which Lawrence was to acknowledge years later: "She won. But she died first. He laughs longest who laughs last." 

That Sons and Lovers is one of Lawrence's finest novels seems to be a common critical consensus, though it is, in fact, probably the most conventional of his major novels. Vivas, in his The

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21 Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 86. While Lawrence is speaking here of his own mother, one can as readily apply the statement to Gertrude Morel.
Failure and the Triumph of Art, places this novel with The Rain­bow and Women in Love among Lawrence's triumphs. Mark Spilka says
"it draws its greatest strength from Lawrence's radical new in­sight, moral as well as psychological, into the complex nature of emotional conflict." Seymorr Betsky says that "Sons and Lovers is a purgation become the successful work of art. The best of Lawrence's later works are, in similar fashion, acts of purga­tion." But David Daiches' comment seems even more to the point:

It is perhaps an oversimplification but it is not wholly untrue to say that when Lawrence, in the midst of handling a situation dealing with personal relations, becomes too conscious of the fact that he is projecting through this personal situation some central truth about the nature of modern civilization, he is overcome by his responsibility and adds a dimension of eloquence or ex­cessive symbolism that distorts his original vision. There is little enough of this in Sons and Lovers.

The novel, Lawrence's first successful "struggle into articulation," is also his first successful work of art. And the fact that it is successful may very well be because Lawrence's view was limited to his own life and experience to a greater extent than in most of his earlier—and much of his later—work. That restriction allowed him to intrude and still not destroy the art, for it was Lawrence—


24Daiches, p. 146.
Paul Morel writing about Paul Morel-Lawrence.

In *Sons and Lovers*, then, Lawrence's view is restricted and his art emerges. After this novel, however, as Daiches says, "the functioning of his artistic imagination in fiction was oddly bound up with the way in which he saw his own problems of adjustment and relationship and also with the diagnosis and doctrine which he felt impelled to apply to modern civilization." And while the later works are an indication, more often than not, that the diagnosis and the doctrine impelled him to sacrifice his art, *Sons and Lovers* stands as the triumph of Lawrence's art over his metaphysic.

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25Daiches, p. 150.
D. H. Lawrence's stature as an artist was secured by his first major novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913); his destiny as a prophet was not as certainly established in that work as it was in the novel which followed, *The Rainbow* (1915). A novel of gigantic scope, *The Rainbow* traces three generations of the Brangwen family of the Marsh Farm. The first half of the book focuses on the first two generations of the family and upon the land that holds them, "the primal impulsive body [that] would go on producing all that was to be produced, eternally, though the will of man should destroy the blossom yet in bud, over and over again."¹ Though this is Lawrence's description of Hardy's Egdon Heath, it applies equally well to his "characterization"—for the land is almost more important than the characters—of the Marsh Farm. In this first half of the novel, Lawrence explores the relationship of Tom Brangwen and the Polish widow he marries, Lydia Lensky, and then the marriage of her daughter, Anna, to Tom's nephew, Will Brangwen. Both marriages are characterized, moreover, by women who are embodiments of the active, rational, Male principle of

the "cosmic fire," and by men who personify the passive, sensual, Female principle of the cosmic waters. That the men and women of the first half of The Rainbow are continuations of Gertrude and Walter Morel is made clear in the first few pages:

The men sat by the fire in the house where the women moved about with surety, and the limbs and the body of the men were impregnated with the day, cattle and earth and vegetation and sky, the men sat by the fire and their brains were inert, as their blood flowed heavy with the accumulation from the living day.\(^2\)

The women were different. On them too was the drowse of blood-intimacy, calves sucking and hens running together in droves, and young geese palpitating in the hand while the food was pushed down their throttle. But the women looked out from the heated, blind intercourse of farm-life, to the spoken world beyond. She stood to see the far-off world of cities and governments and the active scope of man, the magic land to her, where secrets were made known and desires fulfilled. (R, 3)

But the novel splits when it shifts its focus to Ursula, the daughter of Will and Anna Brangwen,\(^3\) and Lawrence becomes a modern novelist in the sense in which David Daiches uses the term when he says that

\(^2\)The Rainbow (New York, 1961), p. 2. All subsequent references to the novel will be incorporated in the text.

\(^3\)This "split" in The Rainbow is, I think, the most lucid reading of the novel and is one which is extremely significant in judging Lawrence's evolution as a modern novelist. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Reloy Garcia for this approach to the novel, and wish to credit here what will appear in his forthcoming book on Lawrence.
The modern novelist is born when such public machinery is no longer used in order to achieve the plot-pattern, and the true inwardness of a character's moral and psychological problems can be revealed only by removing him from the distorting mirror of a public sense of significance and exploring the truth about him in an isolation either real or symbolic.  

At the end of the novel Ursula has alienated herself from conventional morality so that she discovers her (and Lawrence's) prophetic vision. In the concluding chapter, Ursula leaves the land for the "highroad and the ordered world of man" (R, 488); in coming out she experiences the rainbow and the knowledge that "the sordid people who crept hard-scaled and separate on the face of the world's corruption were living still, that the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to life in their spirit" (R, 489).

But as prophecy, Ursula's vision is neither completely clear nor ultimately very hopeful: hers is essentially a tragic vision, in which the sordidness of the world is manifested and in which she envisions what is at best only a faint hope for man. If there is a triumph, it is hers alone, and can hardly be postulated for the world in general. From The Rainbow on, however, Lawrence becomes increasingly concerned with his prophecy and his efforts to articulate it, so concerned, in fact, that it is both interesting and difficult to judge whether or not his next novel,
Women in Love (1920), subscribes to his criterion that art must not be subdued to a metaphysic.

Two things are clear in Lawrence's "Foreword" to Women in Love: first, that "though it does not concern the war itself," the novel reflects the disaster Lawrence felt with the coming of the great War so much that "the bitterness of the war may be taken for granted in the characters"; and second, that "this book is a potential sequel to The Rainbow." Originally planned as a single novel, to be called The Sisters, The Rainbow and Women in Love split to become radically different in both substance and structure. The unifying element in the two is Ursula, but even at the first reading of each it becomes clear that neither she nor Lawrence is the same person.

Women in Love is a bitter novel indeed, and the vision which Lawrence achieves at the end of The Rainbow seems almost wholly lost in the book which follows. Correspondent with this change in sentiment is an apparent alteration in the Lawrentian metaphysic. Unlike the earlier books, which seem to be striving for a balance of the Male and Female principles in every man and between men and women, Women in Love is characterized by Rupert Birkin's--and Lawrence's--insistence on "the perfection of the polarized sex-

\[5\] "Foreword" to Women in Love (New York, 1960), p. vii. All subsequent references to the text of the novel will be incorporated into the text of this study.
circuit" (WL, 193), "not meeting and mingling; but an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings;—as the stars balance each other" (WL, 139).

Precisely what Birkin means by this insistence is not clear within the context of the novel itself. Ronald P. Draper, in his study of Lawrence, suggests a method of viewing the "polarity" in this novel:

The reference to "poles" and "positivity" are part of Lawrence's development of his basic notion of duality into an elaborate theory of "polarity." This involves a somewhat odd physiology in which "sympathetic" centers and "voluntary," or assertive, centers exist at higher and lower levels in the human body known as "sensual" and "spiritual" planes. Circuits are set up between these centers, and upon the proper, natural development of the centers and the circuits between them depends the health of the individual psyche.

The ideal informing the theory is that of wholeness of being, which is seen to depend, not on a compromise, or even a wise cooperation between head and heart, but on a dynamic flow of energy between the poles.

Such poles exist within the human being, but they may also be found between the individual and others, or between the individual and his environment.

Draper's analysis of the principle of polarity is useful in reading Women in Love, but he also states that "Lawrence's attitude toward the sexes is essentially dualistic. Maleness and femaleness are total for him, and he will not even concede, in his

theorizing, that actual men and women share characteristics of the opposite sex. Such a view is not only seriously inaccurate, but entirely too simplistic; it applies rigidly a formula which works only tenuously in Women in Love and in one or two of Lawrence's "philosophical" works. It is significant to note, consequently, that Draper cites only Women in Love and Fantasia of the Unconscious to substantiate his theory. He does include further references to polarity in his study, once as he observes something like it in Aaron's Rod and once as he infers it from The Plumed Serpent. But in neither instance does he make a strong case for polarity in Lawrence's art outside of Women in Love. His entire case, it seems, must stand or fall on his reading of this novel and Fantasia.

Before one relies too heavily on Fantasia, however, it is well to remember what Lawrence tells us in the "Foreword" to that work:

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 the 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 sort 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

7Draper, p. 23.
are pure passionate experience. These "pollyanalytics" are inferences made afterwards, from the experience. And while H. M. Daleski wants to quibble a bit with Lawrence on this point, he is still ready to admit that "in the Fantasia, published in 1922, he was indeed concerned to give systematic expression to some of the insights he gained in the writing of The Rainbow (1915) and Women in Love (1920)." Thus, Draper's reliance on Fantasia to demonstrate the persistence of this "polarity" in Lawrence is all the more questionable.

It is nevertheless true, however, that in Fantasia of the Unconscious Lawrence seems to be affirming, in a passage I have already cited, what Draper says he affirms:

A child is born sexed. A child is either male or female, in the whole of its psyche and physique is either male or female. Every single living cell is either male or female, and will remain either male or female as long as life lasts. And every single cell in every male child is male, and every cell in every female child is female.

At first sight, such a statement does suggest a radical departure from Lawrence's position, as stated in his "Study of Thomas Hardy,"

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8"Foreword" to Fantasia of the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious, in one volume (New York, 1960), p. 57.


10Fantasia, p. 131.
that "every man comprises male and female in his being, the male always struggling for predominance. A woman likewise consists in male and female, with female predominant."[11]

The two statements are not entirely irreconcilable, however, if we consider Lawrence as an evolving metaphysician—prophet and artist, rather than a static one. Using that approach, we find that the germ of Fantasia can be found in Lawrence's criticism of "the great Northern confusion" in the Hardy study; we also find, moreover, that what resulted in Fantasia, and in Women in Love, represents something of a thematic "cul-de-sac"—to use H. M. Daleski's description of The Plumed Serpent even more appropriately here—in the Lawrentian metaphysic. Such an approach requires, however, that we contrast what we know of Lawrence before Women in Love with what we find him doing in that novel.

Rupert Birkin, the character most often considered the voice of Lawrence in the novel, is the principal, and almost the sole, advocate of this attempt at "balancing each other like two poles of one force" (WL, 191); and it is interesting to trace the "others" with whom he seeks such a de-personalized relationship. His first attempt is with Hermione Roddice, who "saw herself as the perfect Idea" (WL, 301), and who responds by clubbing him with a lapis lazuli paperweight. Here again we find the descendant of

Gertrude Morel and Lawrence's mother, the woman who embodies the traditional Male principle and who, according to Birkin, lacks "any real body, any dark sensual body of life," but who is possessed only by a "lust for power, to know" ([WL], 35). Hermione is, for the most part, a secondary character, and Lawrence's description of her alienates the reader from her much as we were somehow alienated from the willful Ursula as she destroyed Skrebensky in *The Rainbow*. Hermione, then, is only another example of a woman in whom the "poles are reversed," a woman who is the embodiment not of the Female, but the Male, and who thereby loses our sympathy.

Ursula, on the other hand, is not the Ursula of the preceding novel, but a changed woman, at times even a great passive Mater Magna who, like her mother bearing children, "was the perfect Womb, the bath of birth, to which all men must come" ([WL], 301). It is Ursula, according to Birkin, who wishes to record "the subjective impression" ([WL], 30) of the catkins, "the little red pistillate flowers which had some strange, almost mystic-passionate attraction for her" ([WL], 31). If one contrasts this Ursula with the one who studies life mechanically and superficially under a microscope in *The Rainbow*, one sees the change from a perverted Male principle in her to the proper predominance of the Female. And it is with Ursula that the reader asks, at the end of the novel, if her union with him in a true marriage is not the
real solution to their mutual and individual fulfillment.

Birkin, unlike the men in The Rainbow, appears to embody the Male principle, for it is he who tells Ursula to give her pupils crayons so that they can "emphasize the fact" of the catkins in their drawings, "a pictorial record of the fact" (WL, 30). But even in Birkin there is a deep conflict: "He knew he was perverse, so spiritual on the one hand, and in some strange way degraded on the other" (WL, 300). An indication of his self-degradation is not his own spirituality, or Maleness, but, as Ursula says, his relationship with a perverse woman like the Male Hermione, his "spiritual bride" (WL, 298). One important source of this degradation, according to Ursula, is his attempt to achieve what he thinks is truth and purity ("polarity" perhaps?), which she says "stinks, your truth and your purity. No, you want yourself" (WL, 299).

Perhaps Birkin seeks a Hermione because he himself is not Male enough, because he is somewhat perverse in that his Maleness is not integral, but rather "without unity, without mind, in the ultimate stages of living; not quite man enough to make a destiny for a woman" (WL, 289). Even so, it is not convincing enough to fault Birkin because of a perversion of his Maleness; in fact, in the wrestling scene of the "Gladitorial" chapter, Birkin is the one who is described in terms of activity as he "entered into the flesh of the fuller man Gerald Crichton" (WL, 262). But, with
Ursula, we too can criticize Birkin for his perversion in wanting something more than the natural in a "polarized" relationship with both a man and a woman.

The common critical view is to regard Birkin as Lawrence; this seems half correct. It is more accurate, despite the close resemblance of Ursula to Frieda, to view both Birkin and Ursula as Lawrence, as the two sides of the conflict in his own thinking. That Lawrence is somewhat ambivalent toward Birkin's position in the novel seems all too clear, not only in Ursula's arguments with him, but also in Birkin's own frequent misgivings and in Lawrence's occasional efforts to parody, not very lightly and not in any sense of innocent fun, Birkin's philosophical pronouncements. The best example of the latter is Halliday's reading of one of Birkin's letters at the Cafe in London; while the reader sympathizes with Birkin as he is mocked, it is also true that he cannot help laughing a little with Halliday, who has heard Birkin perhaps once too often also. At any rate, it is difficult to resist this feeling of ambivalence unless one has reduced Lawrence to a formula or unless one holds *Fantasia* in one hand and *Women in Love* in the other.

Frequently, in fact, our sympathies seem to lie with Ursula rather than with Birkin, to the extent that "polarity" and its corollaries, "equilibrium" and "separateness," seem to fail as a solution to the "dissolution" of the world. Birkin's attempt at polarity with a man is killed with Crich's death, though there is
little hope that it would have worked anyway. That it does not work for any of Lawrence's other characters, in or out of *Women in Love*, is significant for an understanding of the development from the "great Northern confusion" in the Hardy study into the cul-de-sac of the polarity notion in this novel.

For Lawrence, in the study of Hardy, "the great northern confusion" was the failure to recognize that "the Flesh is of the flesh, and the Spirit of the Spirit, and they are two, even as the Father and the Son are two, and not One." Further, that "there is an eternal non-marriage betwixt flesh and spirit. They are two; they are never Two-in-One." But, he adds,

This has been the confusion and the error of the northern countries, but particularly of Germany, this desire to have the spirit mate with the flesh, the flesh with the spirit. Spirit can mate with spirit, and flesh with flesh, and the two matings can take place separately, flesh with flesh, or spirit with spirit. But to try to mate flesh with spirit makes confusion.¹³

What this means is never perfectly clear, at least not in the Hardy study; but in the same chapter Lawrence adds an important illustration of these two marriages:

For in Boticelli the dual marriage is perfect, or almost perfect, body and spirit reconciled, or almost reconciled, in a perfect dual consummation. And in all art there is testimony to the wonderful dual marriage, the true consummation. But in Raphael, the marriage in the

¹²"Study of Thomas Hardy," p. 473.

¹³Ibid., p. 473.
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12"Study of Thomas Hardy," p. 473.

13Ibid., p. 473.
spirit is left out so much that it is almost denied, so that the picture is almost a lie, almost a blasphemy. And in Turner, the marriage in the body is almost denied in the same way, so that his picture is almost a blasphemy. But neither in Raphael nor in Turner is the denial positive: it is only an affirmation of the one at the expense of the other.

But in some men, in some small men, like bishops, the denial of marriage in the body is positive and blasphemous, a sin against the Holy Ghost. And in some men, like Prussian army officers, the denial of marriage in the spirit is an equal blasphemy. But which of the two is a greater sinner, working better for the destruction of his fellow-man, that is for the One God to judge.\textsuperscript{14}

By 1917, however, the year in which \textit{Women in Love} was completed, Lawrence had come to witness the terrible, inhuman destruction of his fellow-men in the War. And it is not surprising that a book which "took its final shape in the midst of the period of war"\textsuperscript{15} should reflect the man's own bitter understanding of that destruction, and that it should reflect also his desperate struggle to find a way out of it.

Nor is it surprising that the demonic figure of the novel, Gerald Crich, should be identified with "something northern" (WL, 9):

He was one of these strange white wonderful demons from the north, fulfilled in the destructive frost mystery. And was he fated to pass away in this knowledge, this one process of frost-knowledge, death by perfect cold? Was he a messenger, an omen of the universal dissolution into whiteness and snow? (WL, 246-247)

\textsuperscript{14} "Study of Thomas Hardy," pp. 475-476.

\textsuperscript{15} "Foreword" to \textit{Women in Love}, p. vii.
If Gerald is a symbol of the "great northern confusion," "the crying confusion and pain of our times," Lawrence's attempt at polarity appears to be an effort to escape the destruction of that pain:

There was another way, the way of freedom. There was the paradisal entry into pure, single being, the individual soul taking precedence over love and desire for union, stronger than any pangs of emotion, a lovely state of free, proud singleness, which accepted the obligation of the permanent connection with others, and with the other, submits to the yoke and leash of love, but never forfeits its own proud individual singleness, even while it loves and yields. (WL, 247)

Perhaps by standing outside the confusion and the pain, by entering into a "lovely state of free, proud singleness," one might escape the sordidness and destruction of the world.

This, it seems, is the source of Lawrence's insistence on polarity in the novel: the desire to escape the War and the destruction of the world which spawned it, and the acute sense of the two principles, Flesh and Spirit, Female and Male, in which all worlds, the old and the new, must necessarily be cast. But the shape that solution took for Lawrence, the new way which Birkin wanted—an equilibrium with a man and a woman—was so desperate that it denied one of Lawrence's profoundest beliefs, his commitment to the view that the hope for mankind lay deep in human relationships.

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16"Study of Thomas Hardy," p. 474.
Yet, Gerald Crich is a fully-drawn character and, as a symbol, he is far more complex than has been suggested thus far. The Gudrun-Crich relationship is profound in its illustration of the disastrous consequences of the demonic mind-knowledge of the Machine. Crich, in the machine world, possesses active Male qualities; but in the human world of personal relationships, he is identified more frequently than not with the Female images of water and ice. He is, for example, an excellent swimmer, his hair is light and his eyes blue like the water which is so natural to him; "in his clear northern flesh and his fair hair was a glis­ten like sunshine refracted through crystals of ice" (WL, 9). When he is killed on the German-Austrian ski-slopes, he becomes "dead, like clay, like bluish, corruptible ice" (WL, 472), ice which is only a crystallized form of the Female waters. That Gerald, the horrible, demonic Machine Man, is identified finally with the Female waters, and is taken back into them in the form of ice, serves to heighten his complete perversion. His Maleness, his will, and his mind are wedded to the destructive machine, and in human relations, the Female is predominant where the Male should be.

What Lawrence does to Crich, then, is what he would like to do to all machinery, all perversion of the sensuous "blood-know­ledge" sacrificed to "mind-consciousness" by Eve when she ate the apple. "Gerald was the God of the Machine, Deus ex Machina. And
the whole productive will of man was the Godhead" (WL, 220). For him, "the only way to fulfill perfectly the will of man was to establish the perfect, inhuman machine" (WL, 221). One is reminded of Lawrence's condemnation of army officers in his study of Hardy when he discovers that Gerald had been a commissioned officer in the war (WL, 56-57); likewise, Lawrence's condemnation of bishops in the Hardy study is echoed in the fact that "Gerald was their high priest, he represented the religion they really felt" (WL, 223). In Gerald Crich, the perversion of man to machine produces the destruction of human nature: his ideas are not the Male Idea, but the Machine Idea; the age of the machine represents a total loss of blood-knowledge to mechanistic mind-knowledge. "There was a new world, a new order, strict, terrible, inhuman, but satisfying in its very destructiveness. The men were satisfied to belong to the great and wonderful machine, even whilst it destroyed them" (WL, 223). Hence, it becomes all the more imperative that Crich be destroyed; and Lawrence executes him with a vengeance, forcing him back to nature and, yet, making his "heart cold, frozen . . . mute Matter" (WL, 472), like the very heart of the machine he idolized.

It is helpful to view the Gudrun-Crich relationship as a parody of the one between Ursula and Birkin. For all Birkin's cries for a "pure balance of two single beings" (WL, 139), it is Gudrun and Gerald who are frequently described in such terms.
Gudrun "was as if magically aware of their being balanced in separation, in the boat" (WL, 169) during the "Water-Party"; Gerald "seemed to balance her perfectly in opposition to himself, in their dual motion of walking" (WL, 321), later in the novel; "he and she were separate, like opposite poles of one fierce energy" (WL, 389). But it is obviously not their relationship which Lawrence hopes for, for he destroys it. Yet the fact that he attributes to it what he seems to desire as the proper alternative might seem to mean one of two things: either he does not mean it as the desirable solution, or he intends to demonstrate that even such an answer will not save a pair so perverse as Gudrun and Crich. The answer to what Lawrence does mean, I think, lies somewhere between these two.

Gudrun, Ursula's younger sister, represents the latter's antithesis in her embodiment of the traditional Male principle. At times, it is true, Ursula is in accord with her, when "they armed each other with knowledge, they extracted the subtlest flavours from the apple of knowledge" (WL, 255). But such times are only temporary, when Ursula is possessed by a resistance against Birkin or her father. Gudrun, on the other hand, is master of the Idea; for the machine-man Palmer, she is not a woman, but a "fellow-mind" (WL, 110). And though she eventually abandons the high-priest of the Machine, Gerald, she goes off with Loerke, the artist of the Machine, who says "the machinery and the acts of"
labour are extremely beautiful. We have the opportunity to make beautiful factories, beautiful machine-houses" (WL, 414). She is important to us not only for her destructive adherence to the Male Idea, but also for her subordination, body and spirit, to the Machine, its high-priest, and its artist.

*Women in Love* is, finally, one of Lawrence's most articulate statements of some of his profoundest beliefs and commitments, among them his condemnation of the Machine and his struggle for an apocalypse from which might come a new and better world. But the novel contains, at the same time, a refinement of Lawrence's fundamental metaphysic, the addition of Birkin's wish for a "polarized sex-circuit"; that shift in Lawrence's thinking produced a novel radically different in both form and theme, one which was flawed by it, in fact, though it is perhaps up to the individual reader to decide how serious those flaws may be.

David Daiches, for example, feels the flaws are serious. He says that "the conclusion of the novel, with Gerald dead, Gudrun fascinated by an attractively corrupt German sculptor, and Ursula and Rupert facing each other, is far from embodying a final solution."17 The conversation between Rupert and Ursula as they face each other in the last scene of the novel gives testimony to Daiches' observation:

17Daiches, p. 168.
"Did you need Gerald?" she asked.
"Yes," he said.
"Aren't I enough for you?" she asked.
"No," he said. "You are enough for me, as far as a woman is concerned. You are all women to me. But I wanted a man friend, as eternal as you and I are eternal."
"Why aren't I enough?" she said. "You are enough for me. I don't want anybody else but you. Why isn't it the same with you?"
"Having you, I can live all my life without anybody else, any other sheer intimacy. But to make it complete, really happy, I wanted eternal union with a man too: another kind of love," he said.
"I don't believe it," she said. "It's an obstinacy, a theory, a perversity."
"Well-----" he said.
"You can't have two kinds of love. Why should you!"
"It seems as if I can't," he said. "Yet I wanted it."
"You can't have it, because it's false, impossible," she said.
"I don't believe that," he answered. (WL, 472-473)

As Daiches comments,

The search for the mystic communion between man and man, Blutbruderschaft, is a theme that winds in and out of the novel, and it projects some tense scenes between Rupert and Gerald. . . . But it remains, at least to this reader, a case of Lawrence thrusting himself into the novel; the treatment is never properly persuasive or illuminating, and one never really knows what the author is getting at. 18

There is a good deal of significance, however, in the fact that, although the reader may never know quite what Lawrence is getting at, he at least knows it has not worked for Birkin.

David J. Gordon offers much the same criticism as Daiches' when he says that "Lawrence's obsessive interest in certain ideas

--or perhaps his excessively fluid empathy--constitutes a risk in any case."

Gordon concludes that Lawrence's grasp on the strong idea that one gives oneself away in books and should not be afraid to do so . . . that one inevitably writes about oneself even when one succeeds in writing about a shared reality, gave him great freedom of expression. But it is a freedom he abused on the arrogant assumption that he had the power to objectify every movement of his own mind. 19

The problem which Laiches and Gordon find in the novel is not unlike the one Daleski observes when he says that "in regard to the careful avoidance of any suggestion of 'mingling and merging,' or any sense of containment," certain incidents in *Women in Love* are "offered as a kind of sexual contract which, by its nature, cannot be either destructive or subversive of singleness." 20 But that such parts of the novel are "an expedient is, in part, suggested by the poor quality of the writing." 21 Daleski is even harder on Lawrence when he adds that the "special pleading" in certain parts of the book "is also betrayed by the ridiculous lengths to which Lawrence is driven in attributing significance" to them. 22

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20 Daleski, p. 177.


That *Women in Love* represents a peak in Lawrence's career is evident even from the first reading of the novel, and especially so if one has already plodded through those which follow it, up to the over-wrought and sluggish *Plumed Serpent*. But the reader is nevertheless faced with the question which the novel prompts Mark Schorer to pose:

And the question is whether a novelist has the right to impose himself to this extent on his reader, even when his reader, like the present writer, cannot, after eight or ten readings of this novel, imagine being without it. It is possible that *Women in Love* attempts to do more than the novel as we know it and even as Lawrence developed it itself knows how to do. . . . But he has not, in this book, found the whole way to speak.  

It is an all too common feeling, then, that Lawrence has said too much, and thereby imposed himself on the novel and the reader, in *Women in Love*. What is important here is not merely to note that he may have "subdued his art to a metaphysic" in this novel, but also to understand, if possible, why he may have done so.

A possible answer is to apply to *Women in Love* what Daleski says of the novels from *Aaron's Rod* through *The Plumed Serpent*:

that "Lawrence wrote so badly because he was writing against his own deepest values." Such a judgment is of value in assessing

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24 Daleski, p. 311.
Women in Love only if we qualify it by adding that Lawrence did not write all that badly there, but that, in fact, the novel is one of his most brilliant efforts. Nevertheless, it remains true that Lawrence does intrude in the work, and that those intrusions seem too frequently to be instances of his protesting too much, of his attempts to work out before our eyes the conflict in himself. That conflict, between Birkin's rather tenuous efforts to escape the sordidness of a war-torn, utterly mad world by entering into a "free, proud singleness," and Lawrence's own deep conviction that every good thing in life is born from an "interaction" of the Male upon the Female, does flaw the novel, no matter how understandable it may be.
CHAPTER IV

RECONCILIATION: THE CORE OF LIFE

It has been my contention that Lawrence, in *Women in Love*, found himself in a rather precarious and largely untenable position by arguing, via Birkin, for a "polarized sex-circuit." This desire, "not \[For\] meeting and mingling but an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings," led Lawrence to espouse "separateness" rather than human contact, and to thereby deny his most basic beliefs. Gerald Crich's death marks, for the most part, however, the early and very salutary death of this restricted concept of "polarity" as a solution to the "dissolution" which Lawrence felt around him.

"But at the same time," says Spilka, "the possibility of some kind of brotherhood is established" in the Birkin-Crich relationship. "In the novels that follow," he adds, "Lawrence re-works this possibility along wholly different lines, scrapping brotherhood per se for the lordship principle, and moving much more clearly into the realm of purposive (and spiritual) endeavor."¹ That move, however, resulted in what were probably Lawrence's

worst novels, Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo and The Plumed Serpent, with the possible exception of the two before Sons and Lovers.

With the unfortunate exception of William York Tindall's assertion that "Lawrence's Mexican dream, alone of the later novels, takes its place beside Sons and Lovers, the great work of his youth," the common critical consensus is that The Plumed Serpent is one of Lawrence's most serious artistic failures. It is, no doubt, that, but it is highly significant for another reason: "Lawrence's Mexican dream" is an over-wrought but clearly stated articulation of the final direction his metaphysic was to take. Among the dark gods he uprooted from pre-Columbian mythology and transplanted into contemporary Mexican revolutionaries, Lawrence found the resolution to the northern, "crying confusion and pain of our times."

More than any other previous Lawrentian female, including Ursula in Women in Love, Kate Leslie is the embodiment of the predominant Female principle. She exhorts herself to "let me close my prying, seeing eyes" (PS, 202), eyes which previously looked out to the "far-off world of cities and governments and the active scope of man" in The Rainbow (p. 3); "the itching, prurient,

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2"Introduction" to The Plumed Serpent (New York, 1951), p. xv. All references to the novel will be included in the body of the text.

knowing, imagining eye, I am cursed with it," she says; "I am hampered up in it. It is my curse of curses, the curse of Eve. Daughter of Eve, of greedy vision, why don't these men save me from the sharpness of my own eyes" (PS, 203). She is saved, of course, and the reason seems to be that her rescuers are men in whom the Male principle is at last predominant: "if women thieve the world's virility, it is only because men want to have it thieved, since for men to be responsible for their own manhood seems to be the last thing men want" (PS, 382). Ramon and Cipriano are men, however, and there is the hope that "perhaps after all life would conquer again, and men would be men, so that women could be women. Till men are men indeed, women have no hope to be women" (PS, 383).

Thus the novel, after too many of Lawrence's repeated intrusions, finally falters to its conclusion; but it is a significant conclusion all the same. The characters have returned to "the old mode of consciousness, the old, dark will, the unconcern for death, the subtle, dark consciousness, non-cerebral, but vertebrate. When the mind and power of man was in his blood and his backbone" (PS, 455). Because of Ramon, "Man is a column of blood: Woman is a valley of blood. It was the primeval oneness of mankind, the opposite of the oneness of the spirit" (PS, 457). Hence Kate has achieved true Femininity through "the strange, heavy positive passivity. For the first time in her life she felt
absolutely at rest" (PS, 462). At the end of the novel, "she had come to make a sort of submission: to say she didn't want to go away" (PS, 486), and she remains where she (and Lawrence) have found the return to sanity. No longer does the "drift towards death" of Sons and Lovers pervade, nor the confusion and ambivalence of Birkin's desire for perfect separateness and "star-equilibrium"; at last the Sons of God have come to the daughters of men.

If The Plumed Serpent marks the return to the "old mode of consciousness," it also marks the end of the leadership or "lordship" phase of Lawrence's development. In the famous letter to Witter Bynner, Lawrence wrote in 1928:

I have sniffed the red herring in your last letter a long time: then at last decide it's a live sprat. I mean about The Plumed Serpent and the 'hero.' On the whole, I think you're right. The hero is obsolete, and the leader of men is a back number. . . . 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 women, and not the one up one down, lead on I follow, ich dien sort of business. 4

As Spilka says, "the lordship theme has been cast aside, and the brotherhood theme long since abandoned—though to be more accurate, both themes have been sharply modified, dropped to the background,

and realigned within the larger scheme of the novel at hand,"^5

Lady Chatterley's Lover.

Lawrence's tenth and last novel, Lady Chatterley's Lover, stands as his fullest and most effective articulation of his metaphysic and his prophecy, even if it is not his art at its best. At last Lawrence resolves, in his own mind and supposedly those of his protagonists, the great problems of Male and Female, the Machine, and human encounter. Each of the three main characters symbolizes and embodies one of Lawrence's most significant visions: Clifford Chatterley the Machine, his wife Connie the true Female, and Oliver Mellors the true Male. And the conflicts that erupt between these three people are essentially the conflicts Lawrence has been seeking to work out throughout the course of his development as a prophet and an artist.

Like a good many of Lawrence's works, most of Lady Chatterley's Lover is presented through the eyes of a woman, Connie Chatterley. At the start, one wonders if Lawrence is again presenting just another Male woman; in their youth, Connie and her sister Hilda "loved their respective young men, and their respective young men loved them with all the passion of mental attraction."^6

^5Spilka, p. 167.

^6Lady Chatterley's Lover (New York, 1968), p. 5. All subsequent references to the novel will be included in the body of the text.
The sisters "were from an early age not the least daunted by art or politics. It was their natural atmosphere" (LCL, 2-3). One is reminded of Gertrude Morel in the following:

Connie quite liked the life of the mind, and got a great thrill out of it. But she did think it overdid itself a little. She loved being there, amidst the tobacco smoke of those famous evenings of the cronies, as she called them privately to herself. She was infinitely amused, and proud too, that even in their talking they could not do without her silent presence. She had an immense respect for thought . . . and these men, at least, tried to think honestly. But somehow there was a cat, and it wouldn't jump. They all alike talked at something, though what it was, for the life of her she couldn't say. (LCL, 35-36)

But there is not enough of Gertrude Morel here that the reader can easily tie Connie to the Male Idea; even before the cat is out of Lawrence's bag, there is the suggestion that Connie is much different from so many of the Lawrentian females who have preceded her.

One clue to this difference is Connie's insistent, though barely conscious, desire for "touch" and "contact": "she herself was a figure somebody had read about, picking primroses that were only shadows or memories, or words. No substance to her or anything . . . no touch, no contact! Only this life with Clifford, this endless spinning of webs of yarn, of the minutiae of consciousness" (LCL, 16). Driven to this desire to reach out, and unable to achieve it sexually with the impotent, paralyzed Clifford, she sleeps with Michaelis, the young playwright:
He roused in the woman a wild sort of compassion and yearning, and a wild, craving physical desire. The physical desire he did not satisfy in her; he was always come and finished so quickly . . . But then she soon learnt to hold him, to keep him there inside her when his crisis was over. And there he was generous and curiously potent; he stayed firm inside her, given to her, while she was active . . . wild, passionately active, coming to her own crisis. And as he felt the frenzy of her achieving her own orgasmic satisfaction from his hard, erect passivity, he had a curious sense of pride and satisfaction.

"Ah, how good!" she whispered tremulously, and she became quite still, clinging to him. (LCL, 28)

In light of what we know of the Lawrentian metaphysic, this activity of Connie's, and Michaelis' correspondent passivity, must seem utterly perverse—another inversion of the Male-Female principles.

Lady Chatterley, of course, realizes this somehow, shortly after meeting the gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors, for the first time. Standing naked in front of her mirror, Connie later realizes that "her body was going meaningless, going dull and opaque, so much insignificant substance . . . The mental life! Suddenly she hated it with a rushing fury, the swindle!" (LCL, 73).

Unlike the early Connie, Mellors, who stands in direct contradiction to the life of the mind, says, "all the modern lot get their real kick out of killing the old human feeling out of man, making mincemeat of the old Adam and the old Eve . . . when the last real man is killed, and they're all tame . . . then they'll all be insane. Because the root of sanity is in the balls" (LCL, 235). In terms of the metaphysic at least, the gamekeeper is the most fully realized Lawrentian hero in any of the novels. He is far
more successful even than Rupert Birkin, who falls victim to Lawrence’s emphasis in *Women in Love* on the "polarity" notion. Likewise, Mellors is more effective—metaphysically if not artistically—than Ramon or Cipriano in *The Plumed Serpent* because his "Ideas" are entirely his own, not bound up in political or religious associations, but rather the result of his own deep, Male activity. His commitment to the Male Idea is, of course, to Lawrence's Idea: "I stand for the touch of bodily awareness between human beings, and the touch of tenderness. . . . And it is a battle against the money, and the machine, and the insentient ideal monkeyishness of the world" (*LCL*, 302).

There is an apparent paradox here, which I shall only mention at this point and will take up in more detail in my concluding chapter: Mellors, despite all his activity, is profoundly committed to the Idea of the "full life in the body," an Idea which Lawrence describes in his study of Hardy as an essentially Female rather than Male quality. My purpose in noting this paradox here is to illustrate the lengths to which Lawrence goes in the novel to assert Mellors' activity, despite the fact that he seems to be doing so at cross-purposes with himself. For Lawrence repeatedly and clearly attempts to identify Mellors with activity and, conversely, Connie with passivity, as the following passages from the

7"Study of Thomas Hardy," p. 481.
With queer obedience, she lay down on the blanket. . . . Then she quivered as she felt his hand groping softly, yet with queer thwarted clumsiness among her clothing. Yet the hand knew, too, how to unclothe her where it wanted. . . . And he had to come in to her at once, to enter the peace on earth of her soft, quiescent body. It was the moment of pure peace for him, the entry into the body of the woman.

She lay still, in a kind of sleep, always in a kind of sleep. The activity, the orgasm was his, all his; she could strive for herself no more. (LCL, 123)

She, poor young thing, was just a young female creature to him; but a young female creature whom he had gone into and whom he desired again. (LCL, 127)

But it was over too soon, too soon, and she could no longer force her own conclusion with her own activity. This was different, different. She could do nothing. She could no longer harden and grip for her own satisfaction upon him. She could only wait, wait and moan in spirit as she felt him withdrawing, withdrawing and contracting. (LCL, 142)

He took her in his arms and drew her to him, and suddenly she became small in his arms, small and nestling. It was gone, the resistance was gone, and she began to melt in a marvellous peace. (LCL, 186)

In much the same vein, Lawrence presents the following exchange between Connie and her father:

"I hope you had a real man at last," he said to her after a while, sensually alert.
"I did. That's the trouble. There aren't many of them about," she said. (LCL, 297)

Hence it is Mellors' profound Male activity which regenerates Connie: "She had to be a passive, consenting thing, a physical slave. Yet the passion licked round her, consuming, and when the sensual flame of it pressed through her . . . she thought she was
dying: yet a poignant, marvellous death" (LCL, 267). In dying to the old way of life, Connie is thus reborn: "She knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman" (LCL, 187).

Mellors is obviously the Male that Walter Morel never was, though Morel was "blood-conscious" in a way. But unlike the father in Sons and Lovers, who stumbled over simple words in a newspaper, the gamekeeper in Lady Chatterley's Lover is something of an intellectual: Connie finds in his cottage "books about Bolshevist Russia, books of travel, a volume about the atom and the electron... then a few novels... So! He was a reader after all" (LCL, 229). Her lover has also served as an officer, which Lawrence here seems to stress as an indication of his mental prowess; he has been abroad, to India and elsewhere; and he believes that men "should be alive and frisky, and acknowledge the great god Pan" (LCL, 326). He is, if we are to believe Lawrence, a truly Male man.

Kate Leslie's realization that "till men are men indeed, women have no hope to be women" (PS, 383) is reiterated by Mellors, the Male, who acts out his belief in the necessity "to be men again, to be men... it's because th' men aren't men, that th' women have to be" (LCL, 237). And through "the touch of tenderness" he comes to be a man, just as Connie is born a woman.

Gone is the "separateness" which Birkin called for in
Women in Love; when Connie, at one point, "willed herself into separateness" against Mellors, "she felt herself a little left out. And she knew, partly it was her own fault. . . . Now perhaps she was condemned to it" (LCL, 133). The gamekeeper, likewise, realizes at another point that "he felt his own unfinished condition of aloneness cruelly" (LCL, 153). "Separateness" means perfection no longer; in Lady Chatterley's Lover it means being "unfinished."

But while Connie and Mellors triumph, Connie's husband, Sir Clifford Chatterley, fails utterly. Clifford is a rather complex individual who stands for most of what Lawrence hated in modern life. In terms of the Male-Female principles as Western culture and Lawrence conceive of them, he is Lawrence's profoundest paradox. In the world of thought and sterile mind-consciousness, Chatterley is active and highly rational; early in the novel he becomes a popular writer and a respected intellectual. But Lawrence tells us, through one of Clifford's friends, Tommy Dukes, what we are to think of such intellectualism:

Real knowledge comes out of the whole corpus of the consciousness; out of your belly and your penis as much as out of your brain and mind. The mind can only analyse and rationalise. Set the mind and the reason to cock it over the rest, and all they can do is to criticise, and make a deadness. . . . mind you, it's like this; while you live your life, you are in some way an organic whole with all life. But once you start the mental life you pluck the apple. You've severed the connection between the apple and the tree: the organic connection. And if you've got nothing in your life but the mental life, then you yourself are a plucked apple . . . you've fallen off the tree. And . . . it's a logical necessity for a plucked apple to go bad. (LCL, 37-38)
Chatterley, of course, has no penis, paralyzed as he is from the waist down. Harry T. Moore goes so far as to call this physical paralysis "the flaw of the novel . . . not because it sets up an apparatus for sentimentalism over the betrayal and desertion of Clifford, but rather because it has the effect of removing the target which Lawrence was most of all aiming at." Moore feels Lawrence should have shown that it was not Clifford's paralysis but his "over-intellectualization . . . which can exist in men not physically crippled, that drove Connie into the arms of his game-keeper."9

Such a criticism betrays the shallowness with which the critic has read the novel more than it shows Lawrence's flaw; the physical paralysis is not the cause, but merely the symptom and symbol of Clifford's more serious paralysis of the blood, caused— not by the enemy in war—but at his own hands. There is, in fact, a good deal of evidence in the novel which suggests that Clifford's humanness was paralyzed by his mind before he ever lost the use of his legs in battle: sex had always been for him "merely an accident, or an adjunct: one of the curious, obsolete, organic processes which persisted in its own clumsiness, but was not really


9Ibid., p. 264.
necessary" (LCL, 9).

But whatever the significance of Clifford's paralysis, there can be no justification in Lawrence's thought for the man's dedication to the Machine. His commitment to the industry of the pits, like his affair with the wireless, is "madness":

To keep industry alive there must be more industry, like a madness. It was a madness, and it required a mad-man to succeed in it. Well, he was a little mad. Connie thought so. His very intensity and acumen in the affairs of the pits seemed like a manifestation of madness to her, his very inspirations were the inspirations of insanity. (LCL, 231-232)

The depth of this tragic insanity is not fully realized, however, until Clifford subjugates himself to Ivy Bolton, the great Magna Mater, after he discovers that Connie wants a divorce:

After this, Clifford became like a child with Mrs. Bolton. He would hold her hand, and rest his head on her breast, and when she once lightly kissed him, he said: "Yes! Do kiss me! Do kiss me! (LCL, 316)

There is a striking parallel between his "letting go all his manhood, and sinking back to a childish position that was really perverse" (LCL, 316), and the fetal position which Gerald Crich, Lawrence's other great Machine-demon, assumes when he becomes part of the mountain.

And the curious thing which Lawrence points out about this submission to Ivy Bolton indicates the utter tragedy and insanity of Clifford:
She was the Magna Mater, full of power and potency, having the great blond man-child under her will and her stroke entirely.

The curious thing was that when this child-man, which Clifford was now and which he had been becoming for years, emerged into the world, it was much sharper and keener than the real man he used to be. This perverted child-man was now a real businessman: when it was a question of affairs, he was an absolute he-man, sharp as a needle, and impervious as a bit of steel. . . . It was as if his very passivity and prostitution to the Magna Mater gave him insight into material business affairs, and lent him a certain remarkable inhuman force. (LCL, 317)

In the world of human relationships, Clifford is perverse because the Female or, at least, the child, is predominant in him: he is passive, utterly non-rational, totally devoid of masculinity. In the machine world, however, a world which Lawrence bitterly condemns, Clifford is Male: active, rational, an "absolute he-man." Lawrence tells us in the "Study of Thomas Hardy" that the Male holds service to some Idea over the Female commitment to full life in the body: in Women in Love he shows that service to the machine, though perhaps the ultimate result of a wholly sterile, insane Male Idea, is not human, but demonic.

And although Mellors must wait six months for his divorce, and Connie perhaps forever for hers, the novel ends "a little droopingly, but with a hopeful heart" (LCL, 328). Lady Chatterley and her gamekeeper have discovered the regenerative powers of sex, of tenderness, and of "life in the body." Whatever else may happen, though the world may go madder than it is already, the two of
them have discovered that "it's important, a man and a woman" (LCL, 220) and that "the core to . . . life" (LCL, 220) lies in such a relationship.

After reading Lady Chatterley's Lover, one is aware, as one must always be with Lawrence, that as art the work is both profound and perplexing. Lawrence's description of Thomas Hardy's art as "lovely, mature and sensitive" is no less true of his own, nor is his criticism that the earlier novelist too frequently "subdued his art to a metaphysic" any less applicable to himself. Diana Trilling's comment is indicative of the balanced view that Lawrence's last novel requires: "despite its didacticism," she says, "Lady Chatterley's Lover has a quality both of reality and humanity that is not often present in Lawrence's fiction."\(^\text{10}\)

It is not difficult, of course, to point to some of the more obvious of Lawrence's shortcomings in the novel. The didacticism, for example, is certainly there, perhaps most blatantly in the creation of Tommy Dukes, Mellors' "press agent," who voices Lawrence's philosophy in long, over-wrought speeches, but who plays little importance in the movement of the book. As Julian Moynahan points out, Dukes "anticipates the views of Mellors, but it is hard to see why such press agentry should be necessary.

When Mellors enters the story, it soon turns out that he can speak for himself, sometimes to the point of tediousness."\textsuperscript{11} The same may be said of "Lady Bennerley, Charles May, Hammond" also, adds Moynahan, because they "are devitalized, two-dimensional creatures, they are no more than tautological variations on Clifford himself."\textsuperscript{12}

Similarly, Vivas argues that "Lawrence fails to make his case against Clifford."\textsuperscript{13} Vivas is, of course, more than seriously mistaken when he allows himself to be convinced that "Clifford is really a decent fellow"; in that instance his own words ring true, when he says later, "my discussion misses the point."\textsuperscript{14} The point is, however, that Lawrence may come down on Clifford a bit too hard, to the extent that he becomes less than real, almost a caricature of everything Lawrence despises. If this is true, the reader may have some difficulty accepting the rest of the theme, the characterization, or the plot. While such "devitalization" may pass in the case of a Tommy Dukes or a Lady Bennerley, it is doubtful that it could or should with Clifford, for he is


\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 81.


\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., pp. 124, 146.
far too important a character. And if Lawrence, through intrusion into the characterization of so central a figure as Clifford, makes it difficult for the reader to suspend disbelief in his case, it immediately becomes more difficult in the cases of Connie and Mellors also. What I am suggesting is not that we ought to judge Lawrence by how cautiously he treads the fine line between esthetic distance and conscious intrusion, but rather that we ought to realize that he comes very close to defeating his own purposes—too close for comfort—whether those purposes be esthetic or didactic.

Nevertheless, when all is said, the line is admittedly finer and less precise than one might think, having read Vivas or even Moynahan. What does seem incontestable, though, if one is alive and sensitive, or even a bit "dotty" himself,¹⁵ is what Mark Spilka says of Lawrence's last novel:

He returns here to the central theme of his work, the love ethic, and carries it to final resolution. Admittedly, there are loose ends in the novel, there are long bursts of slovenly or didactic writing; but there is also further discovery, further insight, and a basic creative triumph which most critics tend to overlook, or at best, to underestimate.¹⁶

¹⁵Vivas, p. 132. He is citing a letter by Lawrence (The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley, p. 412) in which he says: "Yesterday I began to type the Peace articles—I want another copy—and I was recasting the second one. But suddenly I felt I was going dotty, straight out of my mind, so I left off ... I wonder if I am a bit dotty."

¹⁶Spilka, Love Ethic, p. 178.
And finally, it seems to me that even art is utterly dependent on philosophy: or if you prefer it, on a metaphysic. The metaphysic or philosophy may not be anywhere very accurately stated and may be quite unconscious, in the artist, yet it is a metaphysic that governs men at the time, and is by all men more or less comprehended, and lived. Men live and see according to some gradually developing and gradually withering vision. This vision exists also as a dynamic idea or metaphysic—exists first as such. Then it is unfolded into life and art. Our vision, our belief, our metaphysic is wearing woefully thin, and the art is wearing absolutely threadbare. We have no future; neither for our hope nor our aims nor our art. It has all gone gray and opaque.¹

As both prophet and artist, D. H. Lawrence recognized the difficulty of his dual role, a position made even more difficult because he sought to fulfill both destinies in the same forum. But despite the odds, which were decidedly against him, he managed to create art out of the chaos of his "tragic sense of life."² And what is more, he added a set of criteria by which we might judge

¹"Foreword" to Fantasia of the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious, in one volume (New York, 1960), p. 57.

²Miguel de Unamuno seems very close to Lawrence when he writes: "Man, by the very fact of being man, of possessing consciousness, is, in comparison with the ass or the crab, a diseased animal. Consciousness is a disease." Tragic Sense of Life, trans. J. E. C. Flitch (New York, 1954), p. 18.
the one in terms of the other.

Lawrence believed, if we are to accept his "Study of Thomas Hardy," that "every man comprises male and female in his being, the male always struggling for predominance. A woman likewise consists in male and female, with female predominant."\(^3\) As I have shown, Lawrence conceived of the Male principle as essentially active and rational, the Female principle as essentially passive and passion­al; both of these conceptions, moreover, stand well within the mainstream of the Western cultural tradition by which we have come to view the two great, opposing life­forces.

A man who embodies the proper balance of these two great principles, said Lawrence, was a happy man. "It is only a dispro­portion, or a dissatisfaction, which makes the man struggle into articulation."\(^4\) That Lawrence's own struggle grew out of a dis­proportion in his own family is evidenced in his first major novel, Sons and Lovers. But the imbalance is not reconciled there, and the novel ends with "the drift towards death."\(^5\) It was only in his last novel, Lady Chatterley's Lover, published fifteen years after Sons and Lovers and two years before his death, that he really


\(^4\) Ibid., p. 460.

achieved the proper balance he sought. And even then, it was achieved in his art, not his England.

In the course of his "gradually developing, gradually withering" metaphysic, Lawrence created in Rupert Birkin of *Women in Love* an expression of his deep disenchantment with the world that produced the First World War. More importantly, however, he created the profound expression of his desire to disengage himself from the affairs of a world gone mad, though in doing so he also expressed the desire for "separateness" which ran against his own deepest inclinations and hopes for man.

With Lady Chatterley and her gamekeeper, however, Lawrence returned to the metaphysic he held most dear and the prophecy he believed the world needed most. In an essay, "Apropos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover,*" Lawrence wrote:

> But I stick to my book and my position: Life is only bearable when the mind and the body are in harmony, and there is a natural balance between them, and each has a natural respect for the other . . . Sex is the balance of male and female in the universe, the attraction, the repulsion, the transit of neutrality, the new attraction, the new repulsion, always different, always new.6

Out of his own struggle, then, grew his metaphysic, his prophecy and his art.

There is perhaps an element of casuistry in all criticism of art, since by its nature the esthetic knows no rigid criteria.

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Hence we manipulate either the criteria to fit the art as we see it, or the art to conform to what we ask of it. But Lawrence, in the "Study of Thomas Hardy"—his "Confessio Fidei"—gives us what seems to be as viable a standard as any:

Every work of art adheres to a system of morality. . . But the adherence to a metaphysic does not necessarily give artistic form. Indeed the over-strong adherence to a metaphysic usually destroys any possibility of artistic form.

And if we apply this criterion—the artist's own—to his art, our judgments are still only as good as our standards for judgment and, thus, are perhaps no more valid. But they are possibly a little more just.

Lawrence, a "son of Hardy," admired the earlier novelist a great deal, but still considered his metaphysic "almost silly" because of its Manichean insistence upon the primacy of the intellect over the senses and the imbalance which results from such a posture. And yet, despite all his assertion that he sought a balance of the Male and Female, there is a strong case for suggesting that he was guilty of the reverse of what he had found wrong in Hardy. H. M. Daleski, after a long and careful study of Lawrence, concludes that "to the end, however, he could not reconcile the male and female elements in himself; and his attempt to balance the overt 'female' tendency of the novel Lady Chatterley's

7 "Study of Thomas Hardy," p. 477.

8 Ibid., p. 480.
Lover by asserting a covert 'male' significance resulted in its major blemish." That Daleski may have misread Lawrence is indicated by the novelist's statement that:

If England is to be regenerated . . . then it will be by the arising of a new blood-contact, a new touch, and a new marriage. It will be a phallic rather than a sexual regeneration. For the phallus is only the great old symbol of godly vitality in man, and of immediate contact.  

Still, for all Lawrence's insistence on the phallus and a "phallic regeneration," there is the rather distressing fact that that regeneration is to come by a return to "blood-consciousness." And whether he means it or not, the assertion of "blood-consciousness" often makes him openly antagonistic, as we have seen, to "mind-consciousness." One may argue, of course, that what Lawrence is really telling us is that Clifford Chatterley's brand of "mind-consciousness" is merely a state of imbalance, and that it is that state of being which must be destroyed, not "mind-consciousness" itself. Hopefully, for Lawrence's sake as much as our own, that is the case. And yet, again, there is still in the novels themselves that plaguing bulk of evidence that points to Lawrence's primary interest in the one before the other, if not the one over the other.

But this is a question that cannot be answered without that slight reliance on the tools of the literary critic, tools which,

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if one reads much of the criticism, can be used to prove many diverse and even conflicting truths. Little more can be said, then, except that one either derives esthetic satisfaction from Lawrence or one does not; one either accepts him for what he has put in front of us, or one rejects him for pushing it at us. Or—and this is surely the case most often—one does both. There are no rigid criteria, no matter what Lawrence or any other artist or art critic says. I think there is a good deal of truth, however, in the demand that Robert Brustein, a contemporary film critic, makes of art:

Films, in Lawrence's case, novels of quality proceed not from the demands of a mass audience but from the painful proddings of an artist's conscience. They do not creep along the surface of the skin, but journey deep into the recesses of the soul.

If indeed that is true, then Lawrence's power as an artist of the twentieth century is all the more evident; for the novels of Lawrence proceed from the painful proddings of a deeply distressed and tragically modern conscience, and they journey, it seems, deep into the recesses of not only his own soul, but ours as well.

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11 There is irony even here, in that Lawrence had little use for the film, though that irony takes away little of the value of the observation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


