

**'WRITING SOCIETY:  
POLITICS AND HISTORY IN  
THE WORK OF  
D. H. LAWRENCE'**

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**For my parents, with love**

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## Abstract

This thesis is a cultural materialist exploration of the trans-generic work of D. H. Lawrence. Combining formalist analyses with this historical approach, I provide perspectives on Lawrence which attend to the particularity of his texts' form while revealing their constitution as historical and material products. The consequence is neither a "radicalized" Lawrence nor a right-wing caricature of him, but a politically hybrid Lawrence whose texts are sites of struggle with the socio-historical contradictions of modernity. In chapter 1, I show how Lawrence can critique bourgeois culture and its material foundations more profoundly than has been assumed. *Pansies*, whose dialogical poetics undermines conventional literary genres and assaults a bourgeois "literature" which suppresses its materiality, is read as a critique of its own conditions of production. In chapter 2, I illustrate how Lawrence's post-war work is more embattled than is usually realised, in its intense exploration of the contradictions of liberal capitalism: the notion of Lawrence's post-war texts as largely monologic and reactionary is radically undermined. In chapter 3, I argue that Lawrence's life as an exile does not signify, as it is normally understood to, a sustained hostility to England and nation-ness. Rather, Lawrence's articles on Englishness offer an abstract, bourgeois myth of England which occludes the conflicts of class and gender. Finally, in chapter 4, I illuminate the darker cultural roots of Lawrence's unconscious, which is commonly perceived as a liberatory force, opposing hegemonic cultural ideologies. While Lawrence critiques the hypocrisy and repression of modern democratic idealism, his positing of an extra-cultural unconscious is haunted by an intensified version of the very cultural repression he assaults.



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## Introduction

It is well known that Lawrence's work is saturated with contradictions, and chameleon-like in its rhetorical virtuosity. While recognising this quality of Lawrence's *oeuvre*, critics have nonetheless frequently been at odds in their persistent attempts to form some totalising view of this extremely hybrid set of texts. Lawrence's writing has been regarded as both humanistic and hedonistic, fascistic and socialistically class-conscious, irredeemably sexist and sexually liberating, a prime example of "high modernism" and a radical series of discourses subversive of Western meta-narratives.

This thesis aims, therefore, to avoid the inescapable reductionism inherent in a *totalising* analysis of a writer whose individual texts each possess such a peculiar level of *particularity* in their specific combination of languages, forms, ideologies, and areas of historical and critical engagement. I hope to avoid this trap through a particularist approach to Lawrence's texts which does not attempt to promote the illusion of Lawrence's work as a single, unified whole or a process of organic growth. Rather, the objective of the current study is to produce new perspectives on Lawrence's work, while coming to terms with the specificity of the texts analysed. In fact, I hope to show how the composite nature of Lawrence's *oeuvre* reveals a new Lawrence characterised by political hybridity, not by totality or linearity. This is a reading which, I hope, breaks away from the binary structure of past critical debates over Lawrence.

Such specificity is evident in the trans-generic nature of Lawrence's work. Yet in spite of the existence of numerous critiques of his assessment of

Lawrence, F. R. Leavis's claim that Lawrence was primarily a novelist and, therefore, that the critic should focus on his novels, has gone largely unchallenged. This is often because, with the exception of his short stories and some of his poems, Lawrence's various works in genres other than the novel or novella - poems, plays, psychological studies, educational essays, newspaper articles, travel sketches, philosophical works, literary criticism, and even paintings and a school history book - are perceived by Lawrencian critics as aesthetically or politically embarrassing and, therefore, unrewarding of attention. However, one of the assumptions on which my analysis rests is that a writer is more than the few "great works" for which he is posthumously acclaimed by criticism. Firstly, while he lives the writer produces, and is culturally received through, many other works which are written with no less faith than those which later become canonic. To manufacture, through criticism of a canonised selection of texts, the Lawrence which most concords with our aesthetic and political perspectives is not only intellectually irresponsible but evasive of historical reality. Secondly, a writer produces some works primarily in order to earn a living. These works should not be merely dismissed as beyond the pale of critical analysis because of the more substantial economic motivation behind them. On the contrary, our conception of the writer cannot legitimately be distilled from the economic realm into the writer of "great works" when such works would not have been written without such material concerns being attended to. As a professional writer with no other regular income (and even his writing did not often earn him regular sums), Lawrence frequently wrote for material reasons as much as cultural ones. This is, however, not a point made to demean him - in a world in which

cultural production is fettered to the marketplace, it is historically falsifying to assume the possibility of a utopian transcendence of the material factors involved in professional writing.

The following argument will, then, engage with Lawrence across several of the genres in which he worked: namely, poetry, drama, the novel, the newspaper article, the educational polemic, the psychological theory, and the short story. For reasons of space, I will not discuss the travel sketches, the metaphysical works, literary criticism, the history book, or the paintings. Such limitation of my own study is by no means intended to preclude the examination of such works; rather, it is hoped that the trans-generic attention of this thesis will initiate further exploration of these largely neglected genres which also constituted Lawrence as a cultural producer. I should also emphasise, in what I have already acknowledged is a thesis dealing largely with “minor” works (with the exception of *Women in Love* and “The Woman Who Rode Away”), that the following is not intended as a renovation of these texts for the modernist canon. This should be clear from the fact that this study is not a “critical appreciation” but a critical analysis. It is a critical analysis in the widest sense of the phrase, examining Lawrence’s texts for the particular explorations of the social – sometimes insightful, sometimes deeply problematic, but always illuminating – which they provide. In this sense, the current study is, again, an unconventional approach. By contrast, criticism of Lawrence, perhaps partly because of the emotionally powerful and idiosyncratic quality of both his writing and life, has tended to divide into the dual categories of “for” or “against”. However, this reading of Lawrence differs radically from conventional approaches in many other senses, which I

will now delineate by conducting a brief survey of the general branches of Lawrence criticism.

The most persistent mode of Lawrence criticism has, of course, been “for” Lawrence – that is, Lawrencian. Since the 1950s liberal humanist critics, such as F. R. Leavis, Frank Kermode and Graham Hough, have helped to establish a large base of Lawrencian critics who treat Lawrence’s texts and Lawrence himself as quasi-sacred objects to be protected from both the forces of modern “theory”, with its historicising proclivities, and from Lawrence’s own textual transgressions from Lawrencian orthodoxy. While criticism of this nature still thrives, the Lawrencian project has, in the last quarter of a century, turned to scholarly rather than critical endeavour in its production of the Cambridge Edition of D. H. Lawrence’s works and a three-volume Cambridge Biography of his life. Lawrence’s “genius”, we might say, speaks for itself in its very objectification as a monolithic and forbidding collection of black, biblically intimidating volumes, each emblazoned with a phoenix. Such reification of literary value in the face of a growing body of Marxist and, particularly, feminist critiques of Lawrence is a paradoxical refuge in materiality for an idealist criticism intent on maintaining a Lawrence untainted by his insistent explorations in the socio-historical.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, the present study will not shy away from critically grounding Lawrence’s texts within the society of which they write and of which they are a product. Instead, by

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<sup>1</sup> It is also ironic that the Cambridge Edition is the product of the historical and economic imperative of maintaining copyright for the Lawrence Estate, since it attempts to establish as “authoritative” texts which are fundamentally ahistorical and supposedly free from the material constraints of early twentieth-century publishing. For an extended discussion of the contradictions inherent in the Cambridge project, see my article, “Freedom under Capital: The Ideal of the Artist/Critic and the Laws of the Market”, *New Comparison: A Journal of Comparative and General Literary Studies*, forthcoming.

focusing on texts which Lawrencian critics have neglected, or dismissed for their aesthetic and political weaknesses, this analysis will reveal the extent to which Lawrence was deeply interested in exploring historical and material issues which preoccupy the fields of critical theory and cultural studies today. Thus, this thesis will explore a Lawrence seldom acknowledged by critics antipathetic to literary “theory” – a Lawrence whose writing illuminates such diverse critical areas as money and the materiality of cultural production, ideology and class conflict, gender and national identity, and cultural and instinctual violence. Naturally, an historical reading of this kind cannot justifiably adopt the obsequious approach of the “critical appreciation” by assuming the author’s artistic or moral rectitude. Nor, moreover, can it simply annihilate those texts of Lawrence’s which fail to meet some arbitrary set of aesthetic or ethical criteria (a point which I will examine in more detail in the first chapter).

From an opposing yet similarly reductive stance, orthodox Marxist and feminist critics have produced a sizeable volume of criticism which tends to assault Lawrence variously as a misogynist, fascist, or bourgeois individualist – a simplifying yet persuasive critique which threatened to extinguish Lawrence from the literary canon.<sup>2</sup> While my own approach is influenced by both feminism and, particularly, Marxism, it differs radically from such manifestations of these critical currents in the following ways. First, it does not adopt a reflectionist theory of literature as, in particular, many Marxist

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<sup>2</sup> The most well-known examples of such modes of criticism are Kate Millett, “D. H. Lawrence”, *Sexual Politics* (1971; London: Abacus, 1972), pp. 237-93, and Christopher Caudwell, “D. H. Lawrence: A Study of the Bourgeois Artist”, *Studies in a Dying Culture* (New York: 1938), pp. 44-72, reprinted in *D. H. Lawrence: Critical Assessments: Poetry and Non-fiction; The Modern Critical Response 1938-92: General Studies*, vol. IV, ed. David Ellis and Ornella De Zordo (Mountfield: Helm Information, 1992), pp. 351-65.

critiques of Lawrence do, by assuming that the text in some way mirrors historical reality. The relation between text and history is here understood as highly mediated though concrete. Second, this thesis adopts a more sophisticated notion of ideology. While Lawrence allows explicit political pronouncements (which are often right-wing, misogynist or individualistic) to enter his texts, his texts possess a deeper ideological structure which is frequently more complex and which can often problematise the politics of those more overt pronouncements. It is this deeper ideological structure which this thesis grasps as the proper object of an ideological analysis. This is not however to ignore the explicit “politics” of the text, but to contextualise it within the text’s wider field of ideological signification.<sup>3</sup> Finally, unlike most Marxist and feminist approaches, the following argument will not rely solely on sociological and historical methods of analysis. Rather, it will combine such methods with formalist techniques, which attend to the specificity of the text’s genre, use of language and formal structuring. However, this does not mean that such methods will be used in isolation from an otherwise sociological and historical reading. One reason for such a combination of critical techniques is to avoid the characteristic reductionism of orthodox Marxist and feminist readings, which tend to deny the formal specificity of the text in its particular reshaping and crystallisation of the socio-historical.

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<sup>3</sup> This is also relevant to more recent, less reductive, approaches to Lawrence’s politics. For example, Rick Rylance, in “Lawrence’s politics”, *Rethinking Lawrence*, ed. Keith Brown (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990), pp. 163-80, emphasises the complexity of Lawrence’s politics, yet his reading lacks the depth which an ideological analysis would have – that is, an analysis which situates the texts ideologically without reducing them to literary versions of fixed ideological positions. As a result of Rylance’s substitution of “politics” for ideology he attempts to renovate Lawrence for an anti-capitalist perspective largely because of his anti-industrialism. An ideological approach however, such as the one I will conduct in chapter 2 of this thesis, would show how a merely anti-industrial perspective can be connected with liberal thought.

Yet this combinative approach is also adopted in order to demonstrate, contrary to the idealist belief that form should be privileged over historical determinations, how literary form is historically constituted - even in its particularity and complexity.

For example, in my first chapter I will show how *Pansies*, in its subversion of conventional generic boundaries, alienates both the critic who seeks to commodify the work by reducing it to a single, normative generic category, and its own conditions of production (which depend upon such commodification). In my second chapter, I will examine how Lawrence's so-called "leadership" writing is in fact structured less by hierarchies than by dichotomies, which reveal the inherent contradictions of post-war liberalism. In my third chapter, I will use structuralist and semiotic approaches in order to illuminate how Lawrence constructs images of Englishness which, even at their (seemingly) most politically innocent, suppress the fissuring forces of class and gender, creating a bourgeois myth of England. In my fourth chapter, finally, I will conduct a comparative analysis of Lawrence's explorations in psychology alongside the psychoanalytic writing of Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein. This will show how psychoanalysis's different sense of the relation between culture and the unconscious sheds light upon the historical nature and political significance of Lawrence's rigidly structured, yet seemingly extra-cultural and politically ambiguous, theory of the self. While a socio-historical approach is necessary, then, in order to illustrate how literary forms are embedded in, and therefore can only be fully understood within the context of, material history, formalist approaches are necessary in order to address the full complexity of the text's highly mediated relationship to the



socio-historical. In this way, the reduction of the text to a rigid ideological category, in the hasty pursuit of a clear historical analogue, is avoided.

This thesis also distinguishes itself from post-structuralist criticism of Lawrence, most of which tends to attempt a “radicalization” of Lawrence’s works, often drawing on Lawrence’s interest in the fluidity of unconscious desire in order to reveal how his texts undermine the dominant ideologies of capitalist society. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, for example, while apparently seeing desire as thoroughly implicated in the socio-political, adopt a conception of “real desire” as “revolutionary” which is supported throughout their *Anti-Oedipus* by Lawrence’s arguments for the non-ideal fluidity of desire.<sup>4</sup> What such a reading ignores, however, is the way in which Lawrence’s abstract notion of a non-cultural, instinctual desire is, ironically, deeply implicated in an extreme version of the very modern cultural violence it purports to critique. Yet Deleuze and Guattari have spawned a whole body of post-structuralist readings which have, conventionally, endorsed *Anti-Oedipus*’s emphasis on Lawrence’s promotion of a shifting and chameleon-like, impulsive self which evades the exploitative restrictions of cultural significations.<sup>5</sup> What such arguments do not account for, however, is that Lawrence’s positing of a non-cultural mode of being is the very process of abstraction which conceals and facilitates the *naturalising* of reactionary, *cultural* positions of sex- and class-domination. By contrast, the materialist

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<sup>4</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (1977; London: Athlone Press, 1984), p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> For some examples of such an approach, see Robert Burden, *Radicalizing Lawrence: Critical Interventions in the Reading and Reception of D. H. Lawrence’s Narrative Fiction* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), and Paul Poplawski, ed., *Writing the Body in D. H. Lawrence: Essays on Language, Representation, and Sexuality*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2001).

approach to Lawrence which is advanced in the following thesis will seek to situate even such amorphous concepts as the unconscious (see chapter 4) within their historical dimension. This task is undertaken in the belief that a criticism which assumes such concepts to be extra-cultural or essentially progressive (and the latter assumption involves the former) can only produce a radically reductive and idealist analysis. In abstracting the concept of the unconscious from its socio-historical context, such criticism dangerously idealises the unconscious, and does so in a manner which mimics the texts from which it requires critical distance.

Another typical characteristic of post-structuralist readings of Lawrence is their frequent insistence on the “radical indeterminacy” of his texts.<sup>6</sup> Such an insistence, while emphasising the need to address the full linguistic complexity of a text, frequently allows Lawrence’s texts to escape a proper historical analysis, since the fact of the text’s deconstructibility allows it to acquire a multiplicity of meaning which explodes its historical determinations. The simple fact that the text *can* be read as self-critiquing permits the text, in a typically postmodern irony, to evade the consequences of such a critique – the radicalism of the approach endowing the text with a radicalism it had

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<sup>6</sup> See Gāmini Salgādo, “Taking a Nail for a Walk: on Reading *Women in Love*” (1976), *D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Peter Widdowson (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 137-45, 138. Though Salgādo’s phrase speaks of *Women in Love* alone, Lawrence’s work has been read by many recent critics as insidiously defiant of, and resistant to, the disempowering and imprisoning structures of language, despite his texts’ overt attempts to harness what is seen as Western thought’s deluded sense of its own epistemological authority. For examples of this interpretative strategy, see Lydia Blanchard, “Lawrence, Foucault and the Language of Sexuality”, *D. H. Lawrence’s “Lady”: A New Look at Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, ed. Michael Squires and Dennis Jackson (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1985), pp. 17-35; Burden; Deleuze and Guattari; Anne Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Poplawski; and Roger Poole, who writes of the “undecidability” of *St Mawr*’s textual significations in “Psychoanalytic Theory: D. H. Lawrence, *St Mawr*”, *Literary Theory at Work: Three Texts*, ed. Douglas Tallack (London: Batsford, 1987), pp. 89-113.

previously not possessed! This is, then, an approach unable to historicise Lawrence because it reads the writer as a politically radical unconscious rather than as an individual using all of his critical faculties in order to grapple with and understand his society. This is not to deny the “unconscious” of the text: it is only that such a “radicalizing” approach denies the struggles, the ideological conflicts, and the sense of history as a process which an historicising criticism must acknowledge as inherent to the act of writing if it is to understand it historically. This thesis, then, will attempt to read Lawrence’s texts, historically, as sites of struggle. Lawrence was, for example, torn between the social and the individual; a struggle which I will, on one level, situate within the parameters of liberalism and, on another level, illustrate as an exposure of historical contradictions. To re-read this conflict, in post-structuralist terms, merely as a radical illumination of liberal capitalism’s ideological incoherence is evidently to produce a distorted historical view of Lawrence’s writing as a mechanical reflex of postmodern radicalism.

The approach with which this study most closely associates itself is that of cultural materialism. However, this thesis hopes both to go beyond the limitations of cultural materialist debates over form and commitment, and to expand the critical territory of cultural materialism. Some criticism of Lawrence has been undertaken from a cultural materialist perspective: most significantly, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton have employed critical methods which have brought Marxist literary criticism of Lawrence away from the reflectionism which had previously characterised it. However, their debates on Lawrence’s work have avoided close readings and have, perhaps as a consequence, tended to focus on a binary opposition between the forms of

realism and modernism: in short, Lawrence's work is evaluated according to whether or not the critic is a Lukácsian or a Brechtian. This has meant that Williams has tended, from a Lukácsian standpoint, to reduce the later, more modernist works of Lawrence to a redundant form of individualism; while Eagleton has adopted an unelaborated Brechtian approach which assumes formal fragmentation to be ideologically radical.<sup>7</sup> This thesis, however, aims to go beyond these rather unproductive dichotomies since it views such blanket evaluations of form as highly reductive: we need to examine the particular effects of both formal fissuring and formal realism by situating them in their particular textual and historical contexts. Hence, this study will assume neither that the text should embody some kind of social totality, nor that it should enact some kind of formal radicalism – since both positions deny the full historical implications of the literary form in question. More attention needs to be paid to the specificity of the text's use of the structures which it employs. Consequently, the following argument will attend, without prejudice, both to the ways in which the text registers post-war historical change and to the methods, however anti-realist, by which it seeks to challenge historical reality.

The present study also aims to release cultural materialist criticism of Lawrence from its confinement, on the one hand, to the analysis of class and a narrow conception of "politics", and, on the other hand, to an examination of

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<sup>7</sup> For Raymond Williams's Lukácsian approach to Lawrence, see "Social and Personal Tragedy: Tolstoy and Lawrence", *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), pp. 121-38; "D. H. Lawrence", *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970; St Albans: Paladin, 1974), pp. 137-49; and "The Border Again", *The Country and The City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), pp. 264-71. For Terry Eagleton's Brechtian discussion of Lawrence, see *Criticism and Ideology: a Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (1976; London: Verso, 1978). It should be noted here, however, that one of the best cultural materialist approaches to Lawrence, Graham Holderness, *D. H. Lawrence: History, Ideology and Fiction* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982), is nonetheless also torn between these competing, formally reductionist positions, sometimes appealing to a Lukácsian notion of the social totality while, at other times, appealing simply to the radicalism of formal open-endedness.

the “major works” (which are usually novels).<sup>8</sup> Firstly, my analysis intends to broaden the field of cultural materialist study of Lawrence by examining the politics of Lawrence’s treatment of a diverse range of issues: from literary form itself and such conventionally dehistoricised concepts as the unconscious and violence, through the often emotionally indistinct terrain of national identity, to money, liberal ideology and gender. By conducting such a hybrid study, “politics” takes on a wider, more substantial meaning – and one which cannot be reduced and marginalised to issues of class and political affiliation alone. Here, politics will be seen as penetrating all spheres of representation, from the representation of instinctual violence to the representation of such seemingly “natural” and politically innocuous events as a train journey through rural England.

Secondly, this extension of the field of political criticism and debate is enabled by the trans-generic attention of this thesis which should reveal a Lawrence who is more hybrid in his approaches, as well as his interests, than is normally assumed. Lawrence’s *oeuvre* crosses numerous genres, and for a materialist analysis persistently to neglect the vast body of alternative modes in which Lawrence wrote, for the sake of focusing on a received, idealist notion of Lawrence’s “major works” or “major novels”, is to produce a highly selective and ahistorical version of Lawrence’s work. Such a construction glosses over those texts which do not serve successfully to support the abstract concept of the “great writer” of “great works”. Moreover, since the neglected

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<sup>8</sup> For some recent cultural materialist discussions of Lawrence and class, see Graham Martin, “D. H. Lawrence and Class”, *D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Peter Widdowson (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 35-48, Jeremy Hawthorn, “Lawrence and working-class fiction”, *Rethinking Lawrence*, ed. Keith Brown (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990), pp. 67-78, and Peter Scheckner, *Class, Politics, and the Individual: A Study of the Major Works of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Associated University Presses, 1985).

texts discussed here still possess a great deal of relevance to contemporary critical debates, it is a criticism which is profoundly indifferent to such debates which would dismissively brand such works as “minor” rather than critically engaging with them.

The following thesis should, then - through the unconventionality of its approach as outlined in relation to the main strands of Lawrence criticism - shed fresh light upon Lawrence’s work. Lawrence critics have, for example, never before recognised a radical critique of capitalism and bourgeois literary culture in Lawrence’s *Pansies* – on the contrary, they have generally either attacked the poems or contemptuously ignored them. Neither has Lawrence criticism realised the extent to which Lawrence’s late fiction, such as *Aaron’s Rod*, engages with, and is confined by, the ideological parameters of post-war liberalism; rather, it has tended to label this fiction with terms such as “authoritarian” or include it in the so-called “leadership novels”. Equally, Lawrence critics have tended to emphasise Lawrence’s anti-nationalism, reading his departure from England in 1919 as a Romantic repudiation of his national identity: in this thesis, however, I will read Lawrence’s late newspaper articles and essays as offering sentimentally bourgeois images of an emotionally undivided nation. Furthermore, the notion of Lawrence’s version of the unconscious as deeply implicated in the very culturally repressive violence which he is known for critiquing is one which flies in the face of most critical conceptions of Lawrence, old and new. In short, it is a non-reductive, cultural materialist approach that combines sociological analyses with formalist analyses, while attending to the particularity of the text, which is able

to historicise Lawrence while accounting for both his textual complexity and his continuously changing ideological relationship to modernity.

### The Particularity of the Text: An Explanation of Methodology

While the readings in this thesis possess the overall consistency of a cultural materialist approach whose object is to situate the texts within their historical and material relationships as both cultural contributions and historically constituted material products, I have adopted specific critical methods in each chapter in order to do this. This is because it is the assumption of this thesis that the particularity of the text requires a particular set of critical tools of analysis. I have already spoken of the general need to combine formalist analysis with sociological analysis. This synthesis of approaches is particularly striking, however, in my first chapter, which will read Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel alongside Lawrence's poems in order to illuminate the specificity of the text's use of languages, and then show how such formal strategies can be understood as realising a poetics of estrangement from the conditions of capitalist production. My particularly sustained use in this chapter of structuralist critical tools is, however, not merely accidental – the need to use such methods is derived from the particularity of the text in question. In other words, given the text's historical alienation of its critics and their difficulty in examining the text's use of conventionally non-poetic discourses, the analysis requires critical tools which will explain such paramount formal issues before it can situate the text historically.

The same applies to the other chapters in this thesis: that is, the choice of which methods to adopt is derived from the object of study. To repeat, each reading has the consistent objective of grounding the text in its historical and socio-material conditions. However, the specific character of each text requires different tools of analysis in order to conduct this historicising approach. This hybridity is, then, not merely a postmodern eclecticism; rather, it simply attempts to show a sensitivity to the text's specificity which conventional readings commonly lack.<sup>9</sup> Hence, the blatant focus of such works as *Touch and Go* and *Aaron's Rod* (explored in chapter 2) upon problems of political ideology means that they lend themselves to ideological analysis. My reading of these texts, therefore, while still attending to literary form and conducting a cultural materialist analysis, also depends specifically on an analysis of ideology in order to engage with what is particular to the texts examined.

Similarly, literary representations of such slippery concepts as national identity and violence demand new tools of analysis. To doggedly rely *solely* upon methods derived from historical materialism as a means of explicating all literary texts is to neglect the specificity of the text in question. In my third and fourth chapters, for example, the social and material determinations of literary explorations of such amorphous concepts as Englishness and destructiveness are highly mediated and complex. Therefore, new lines of enquiry must be opened in order to bridge the gap between text and history. Lawrence's late constructions of Englishness do have a relationship to ideologies of both British national and imperial power, and containment (of class conflict and the

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<sup>9</sup> This includes even Lawrencian formalist approaches which, despite their concern with close readings, dogmatically disparage the use of all "theory" even where the text evidently lends itself as an object of study to certain theoretical forms of knowledge.



women's movement). An understanding of the particular position of the writer in his complex relation to the nation he depicts is of course necessary. However, this oblique and complex relationship can only be understood by also situating such constructions of Englishness within a wider culture of literary representations of English national identity, and by examining the distinct politics underlying seemingly similar and "natural" images of place. In other words, literary constructions of national identity bear a subtle relation to political ideology and material history which cannot easily be deduced by a purely socio-historical reading. Structuralist and semiotic approaches must flesh out such a reading since national identity – being felt in myriad ways, from a whole range of political positions, and under various economic conditions – is distinguished by its virtuoso linguistic adaptability to mutually antagonistic modes of thought. The same signs can signify opposing values according to their relations to the signs surrounding them.

Equally, the texts on which I focus in chapter 4 exhibit a particular preoccupation with the relation between culture and the unconscious. In these texts, it is clear that Lawrence's engagement with the problem of modern violence contains a critique of the denial by liberal democratic and left-wing politics of their own repressive violence, and that his idealisation of the destructive instincts resonates with the ideology of fascism. However, an analysis which aims critically to evaluate, rather than merely pin political labels to, such amorphous notions as instinctual and cultural violence must clearly attend to the specifically psychological focus of these texts. In chapter 4, then, I will read Lawrence's texts alongside those of inter-war psychoanalysis: firstly, because they explore the same historical and political

problem of the unprecedented violence of modernity; and, secondly, because they explore it by examining the same psychological relation within the self between cultural and instinctual determinations. Such a comparative analysis enables me to illuminate, on the one hand, the historical and cultural situatedness of Lawrence's idealised unconscious and, on the other, the psychoanalytical power of Lawrence's critique of liberal capitalism and left-wing humanism's idealist repression of the instinctual foundations of culture. This particular approach therefore fully attends to the particularity of the text's (psychological) focus, while situating this analysis within a broader critical assessment of Lawrence's contribution to the understanding of a particular historical and political problematic. My use of the cultural contexts of psychoanalysis and modern literary writing on Englishness to analyse Lawrence's work is not, then, a way of abstracting cultural analysis from history through the *application* of one cultural text to another. Rather, it is a method of exploring how that history can be comprehended in the light of competing cultural versions of it.

#### A Note on Period

This thesis focuses solely on texts from Lawrence's post-1918 period. My reasons for this choice are as follows. Firstly, Lawrence's output was vast and no critical analysis can be comprehensive. This fact leads me to focus on a particular period which has been neglected, and the post-1918 texts form one substantial area of such neglect. Excluding analyses of *Women in Love* (1920) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), little work has been done on the

numerous works produced in this prolific later period of Lawrence's writing life. By comparison, a relatively large body of work has been devoted to the study of Lawrence's less expansive body of early, pre-1918 writings. Secondly, the works in this period tend to have been neglected by criticism. Thirdly, and finally, because this thesis does not seek to produce a totalising study of Lawrence which summarises the character of the whole individual and his *oeuvre*, it is not my intention here that the coverage of texts be uniformly distributed across the writing life.

### Lawrence and Modernism

The following analysis also contributes to the recent revival of debates surrounding the concept of modernism. In recent years definitions of modernism have become more flexible as critics have challenged the common notion of modernism as elitist, ahistorical and right-wing (if politically committed at all). The result has been a new conception of modernism as more plural and diverse in its manifestations – less unified and monolithic than the selective construction of modernism as (mainly Anglo-American) “high modernism” had suggested.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the perception of Lawrence's work as limited to the traditional notion of modernism as self-consciously aesthetic, reactionary, and disengaged or critically aloof from contemporary history and mass politics, is still dominant in readings of modernism: Peter Brooker

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Peter Brooker, “Introduction: Reconstructions”, *Modernism / Postmodernism*, ed. Peter Brooker (Harlow: Longman, 1992), pp. 1-33; Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995); and Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou, eds., “Introduction”, *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. xvii-xx.

appears content with the restriction of Lawrence to the conservatism of what he terms “Traditionalist Modernism”;<sup>11</sup> for Randall Stevenson, “Lawrence’s ultimate evasion of issues of political or historical change is particularly disappointing – given the extent of social awareness his fiction shows – but not unusual”;<sup>12</sup> while Todd Avery and Patrick Brantlinger include Lawrence within a modernism which “inherited from Victorian aesthetes and decadents such as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde the idea of ‘art for art’s sake’”.<sup>13</sup>

However, this thesis, by conducting a cultural materialist examination of texts of Lawrence’s which are generally ignored, should demonstrate that his *oeuvre* is deeply committed to the exploration of “issues of political [and] historical change”. This is not to say that Lawrence’s works are incapable of temporary evasion of such issues. However, Lawrence persistently returned to them in a variety of ways (often through different genres) which the label of “reactionary” fails to explain. The texts discussed here reveal a Lawrence engaged with the changing historical and political climate of modernity through investigations of such diverse issues as economics, industrial politics, the crisis of post-war liberalism and the rise of mass movements, national identity, and the unprecedented destructiveness of modernity. What emerges is, I hope, a writer incapable of tearing himself away from, or sustaining transcendent solutions for, the tumultuous world of the post-war period – in spite of frequent *attempts* to do so. This is a Lawrence not readily compatible with the “high modernism” with which he is conventionally associated. What

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<sup>11</sup> Brooker, pp. 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Randall Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 211.

<sup>13</sup> Todd Avery and Patrick Brantlinger, “Reading and Modernism: “‘Mind hungers’ common and uncommon”, *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 243-61, 245-6.

this thesis should show, through the originality of both its selection of texts and its non-reductively materialist approach, is that Lawrence was critically engaged with his era in more direct and substantial ways than through the conventional modernist methods of mythopoeia and alienated subjectivity. The texts analysed here (such as *Pansies*, for example, which has embarrassed Lawrencian critics by its unabashed immersion in the discourses of modern politics and propaganda) place Lawrence in the position of problematising the conventional opposition between modernism and what is seen as the more politically engaged writing of the 1930s.

While this necessarily revises conventional conceptions of Lawrence's texts as "high modernist" conservatism, this thesis does not, however, view them as representative of the kind of self-deconstructionist radicalism which Astradur Eysteinsson argues is typical of modernism:<sup>14</sup> a manoeuvre which Robert Burden makes in his recent argument for Lawrence's texts to be seen as an example of "radical Modernism".<sup>15</sup> Burden's interpretation of Lawrence is one of several recent re-readings of Lawrence as a prime example of modernism's hitherto suppressed post-structuralist radicalism: Lawrence's texts, such post-structuralists argue, resist their own meta-narratives through a self-conscious approach towards their power to contain truth, and challenge the cultural construction of existence under modern capitalism.<sup>16</sup> However, while many of these post-structuralist accounts have brought necessary new

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<sup>14</sup> See Astradur Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). While Eysteinsson argues for the self-deconstructionist radicalism of modernism, he provides, however, an excellent critique of the widespread critical view of modernism as ahistorical. Furthermore, Eysteinsson rightly rejects an alternative, though less common, reading of modernism as a reflection of social modernity and modernisation.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Burden, *Radicalizing Lawrence: Critical Interventions in the Reading and Reception of D. H. Lawrence's Narrative Fiction* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), p. 356.

<sup>16</sup> See Burden and, once again, Blanchard, Deleuze and Guatarri, Poplawski, and Salgado.

emphases, they tend to privilege what, in psychoanalytic terms, we might call the text's unconscious – its instabilities and transgressions of its own intended meanings – over its more overt significations. Thus, while a deconstructionist approach might fruitfully reveal, in a Machereyan fashion, the text's absences in order to read the text *against* itself, post-structuralist critics of Lawrence have tended to read the text's absences *as* the text itself, arguing that these reveal the inherent political radicalism of the text. Thus, the text escapes the full consequences of its historical determinations – it becomes “radicalized” in spite of them. The text, while rightly seen as possessing no inherent unity, becomes a void: Lawrence's texts become defined by their absences, transgressions, and Freudian slips.

By contrast, this thesis aims to employ a conception of ideology, derived from Althusser, which not only takes ideology to be deeper than the politics of the text's explicit pronouncements, but gives the concept sufficient width to deal with the different levels of the text's significations – its “presences” as well as its absences. The ideological structure of the text is thus not confined merely to textual instabilities and transgressions which, after all, only have meaning in relation to the dominant ideologies they subvert. Such a mode of analysis paves the way, I believe, for a truly historical reading which allows Lawrence's texts to be read in the full complexity of their engagement with modernity. In this way, Lawrence's work is not reduced, in a travesty of historical relationships, to a form of deconstructionist radicalism: rather, the sense of its production as a lived, historical process is retained. In the subsequent argument I will emphasise, therefore, the way in which Lawrence's texts are the products of historically constituted conflicts and struggles – not

reified, and hence ahistorical, moments of an inadvertent subversion of meta-narratives and essentialist selves.

Lawrence is shown here to be more complex than conventional readings of him as a modernist allow – that is, more complex than either a straightforward reactionary or an unwitting writer of radically subversive texts. Scepticism should, after all, be aroused when a writer is transformed from a politically regressive monolith to a fluidly post-modern and radical transgressor of the values of Western civilisation. His texts should be seen, in more complex terms, as sites of struggle - and this thesis charts a range of such struggles. For example, in my discussion of *Pansies* I will show how the text enacts a material contradiction (in the conditions of its publication) at the level of literary form, producing a radical anti-aesthetic which critiques both the capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois culture of which it itself is a part. In my discussion of *Touch and Go* and *Aaron's Rod* Lawrence is seen to shift from a position which enacts the ideological containment of class conflict, to a position in which, though itself confined by the problematic of a divided liberalism, threatens to explode that liberalism through the exposure of its ideological and historical contradictions. *Assorted Articles*, by contrast, show a Lawrence more engaged than ever with the notion of nation-ness and England, yet (ironically) indulging in the simplified, bourgeois abstractions of the tourist – a paradox, I will argue, symptomatic of Lawrence's position as an exile writing of home. Similarly, in my analysis of Lawrence's post-war interrogation of modern violence I will reveal how a conflict between culture and the instincts in Lawrence's writing produces a double-edged examination: on one level, a devastating critique of liberal/progressive humanist hypocrisy

in relation to its own destructiveness and repression; on another, a proto-fascistic idealisation of the unconscious.

Throughout my thesis I will, then, attempt to show, through a cultural materialist analysis, how Lawrence's texts reveal a complex relationship, of critical engagement and idealist rejection, to the period in which they were written. However, what will perhaps surprise readers of Lawrence, and of modernist texts in general, is the extent to which Lawrence's work is perpetually drawn back towards the social and material rigours of history despite its frequent attempts to transcend them through the evasions of idealism, Burkean parochialism, utopian affirmation, or prophetic claims of epistemological authority. Such perpetual shifting between the ideal and the material reveals a different Lawrence in each text. Here, I hope, is a Lawrence who – though not politically committed in the conventional sense – stubbornly committed himself to a politically colourful engagement with the crises and contradictions of liberal democratic capitalism. Moreover, this commitment was sustained in spite of self-contradiction and a proclivity towards transcendence, and the result is a politically engaged body of work which has lost none of its contemporary relevance. Such a cultural contribution is greater than that which recent post-structuralist critics grant Lawrence – their reward for Lawrence being the spuriously radical denial of all discourses dependent on a notion of truth. The issues discussed here, which Lawrence examined without surrendering to a cynical relativism, of money, capitalism, radical aesthetics, class, ideology, gender, national identity, the unconscious and violence, are all still with us as we begin the twenty-first century. Lawrence's modernism is, then, politically relevant to a greater extent than a disquisition



on the progressivism of the instability or plurality of its meanings would suggest; and cannot be reduced, therefore, to a mere interrogation of so-called meta-narratives.<sup>17</sup> This point is strikingly illustrated in my chapter on *Pansies*, where I discuss how the dialogic interaction of multiple and competing languages creates a democratic poetics. However, this is not a democratic poetics in form alone. For Lawrence's inclusion of a vast array of populist and demagogic languages shows an awareness that democracy is more than either the empty formalism of post-modern relativism and liberal pluralism, or the half-hidden subversion of an otherwise hegemonic discourse.

Moreover, Lawrence appears in this thesis as a rather unconventional modernist in many other senses. The modernism of Lawrence's *Pansies* is, for instance, at odds not only with the older view of modernism as more elitist than demotic: it challenges particularly, as in less spectacular ways the other texts discussed do, a certain conventional conception of modernism as more committed to formal experimentation and artistic autonomy than historical exploration, and more linguistically and morally subtle than directly polemical (as the literature of the 1930s is ordinarily perceived).<sup>18</sup> Similarly, modernism has almost always been associated with political extremes. The recent shift in the view of modernism, from right-wing elitism to post-modern, leftist radicalism, underscores this tendency. Yet my second chapter shows that

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<sup>17</sup> Such a procedure often leads, moreover, to contradiction. For example, a recent, well-known study of Lawrence and ideology, by Anne Fernihough, concludes that the contrariness of Lawrence's writing means that his "stance" is "in the final analysis, apolitical" (*D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], p. 187). Nonetheless, Fernihough is willing to describe Lawrence's aesthetics as "anti-imperialistic" (p. 188).

<sup>18</sup> In fact, as I will illustrate, Lawrence's poems actually critique the literary values of modernism, by employing an innovative formal dialogism to satirise the experimental aestheticism of contemporary forms such as Imagism. Formal radicalism is here united with political radicalism in a manner which undermines the notion of an aesthetic grounded in its distance from history and society.

Lawrence, as commonly charged with political extremism as any other modernist writer, was frequently confined, as well as inspired, by the contradictions of a crisis-ridden liberalism in his post-war work. Furthermore, Lawrence – like most other modernists – is conventionally perceived as an exile, disparaging of the bourgeoisie and its nationalism. However, as I hope to show in my third chapter, his late articles on Englishness reveal a very different character who, having renounced native experience for the isolation of the national exile, created nostalgic images of a bourgeois England largely devoid of the divisive effects of class and gender.

Finally, Deleuze and Guattari have given new life to the notion of Lawrence's modernism as a celebration of the politically subversive powers of the instinctual life. Only recently, Peter Childs has argued that Lawrence's modernism "championed deeply problematic *but liberating* sexual and spiritual aspirations towards new relations, self-responsibility and the emergence of a free individuality rooted in a recognition of otherness [my italics]".<sup>19</sup> However, my fourth chapter examines the way in which Lawrence's very championing of the individual unconscious as an extra-cultural realm of being leads him into the very culture of violent repression he critiques.

Thus, my thesis raises the question of whether we need to revise, yet again, our conception of modernism; or, whether we need to read Lawrence as offering forms which cannot be reduced easily, as they are conventionally, to even the lately expanded paradigm of modernism(s), and which might be placed in critical dialogue with modernist writing as a way of assessing the

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 145.

peculiarity of their contribution to the period.<sup>20</sup> My own feeling is that, while the former might achieve some re-definition of modernism if more non-reductive materialist readings of modernist writers were undertaken, Lawrence's *oeuvre* is peculiar for its period in its exploration of a vast spectrum of historical problems, and in that exploration's continued relevance to contemporary society.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Tony Pinkney has already begun this process of re-reading in *D. H. Lawrence* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), a book which analyses some of the complex relationships in which Lawrence stood to cultural modernism, but which also "post-modernises" Lawrence very questionably.

<sup>21</sup> It is hoped, however, that Kolocotroni, Goldman and Taxidou's call for a "reappraisal of the [pre-1930] years, traditionally designated a period of apolitical 'High Modernism'", will be acted on (p. xix). Certainly, I share with Lawrence Cahoon the belief that "social modernity is the home of modernist art, even where that art rebels against it" ("Introduction", *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Cahoon, 2nd ed. [1996; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003], pp. 1-13, 9).

## 1: Double Alienation: The Revolutionary Methods of *Pansies*

### A Critique of Criticism

[Lawrence's] hatred could not flow into the neat channels of epigram - petty, malicious anger made him dull, and the visions that he held in his mind's eye dissolved into yellow waters that fed a sewer. *Nettles* and *Pansies* are dull reading matter, and the odour that rises from them is the smell of a world that is "tainted with myself," a sick world that was to bury a dead prophet.<sup>1</sup>

The weaknesses in Lawrence's poetry are so obvious that it seems unnecessary to dwell on them. In brief, at times he was downright bad in the very matters in which at other times he was superbly good....in much of *Pansies* there is a pathetic straining after rhyme which defeats its own purposes, an ensuing serio-comic effect which fails to be either comic or serious[....]<sup>2</sup>

Although extreme examples, these two extracts are characteristic of the bulk of criticism which has paid attention to Lawrence's *Pansies* (1929). If critics have not dismissed the poems with the neglect of analysis evident above, they have maintained similar aesthetic criteria while arriving at more complimentary judgments. In recent years, the small quantity of criticism that has been written on the poems has tended towards the latter type. This, in turn, falls broadly into two strains of thought. Jay Dougherty and Thomas M. Antrim have tried to justify *Pansies* by arguing that the poems form a constitutive whole and that the numerous weaker poems (which they insist are the majority) are vital for their contribution to the definition and explication of the few stronger ones.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Horace Gregory, *Pilgrim of the Apocalypse: A Critical Study of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Martin Secker, 1934), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> D. J. Enright, "A Haste for Wisdom", *New Statesman*, 30 October 1964, p. 654.

<sup>3</sup> See Jay Dougherty, "'Vein of Fire': Relationships Among Lawrence's *Pansies*", *D. H. Lawrence Review* (hereafter *DHLR*) 16 (2), 1983, pp. 165-81, and Thomas M. Antrim,

The other strategy has been to attempt, like Sandra M. Gilbert, to site the poems within an "honourable tradition",<sup>4</sup> comparing them with poetry such as that of Swift, Blake, Shelley, Pound, Ginsberg, Horace, and Whitman; in short, poetry which has already been accepted as Literature worthy of teaching and study in academic institutions.

The obvious problem with all of these approaches is that none of them takes sufficiently into account the aesthetic preconceptions that motivate the poems; they prefer to impose their own assumed aesthetic norms upon them (although "poems" is a poor term for them: Lawrence explicitly stated in one letter to Aldous and Maria Huxley that *Pansies* are "meant for Pensées, not poetry, especially not lyrical poetry").<sup>5</sup> A rather comic example of this is Dougherty's examination of what he calls the "exclamatory" poems in *Pansies*, where he insists that "such technique - or, rather, lack of it - is not normally associated with good poetry", as if Lawrence was oblivious to what people "normally" considered "good poetry"!<sup>6</sup> Moreover, it is important that we recognise the instability of the theoretical foundations upon which such forms of analysis rest. Pierre Macherey has explained the precarious nature of criticism's tendency to appropriate certain "rules" and "norms" external to itself:

*As a general rule*, those critics who have adopted the role of the technician of taste are never mistaken; but in the attempt to define the average realities of taste they are always and inevitably mistaken because their work evades rationality and does not produce a knowledge in the strict sense of the word. The rule guarantees an

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"Lawrence's Wild Garden", in *DHLR* 17 (2), 1984, pp. 111-25.

<sup>4</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert, *Acts of Attention: The Poems of D. H. Lawrence* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2nd ed., 1990), p. 260.

<sup>5</sup> *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, vol. VII, ed. Keith Sagar and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15 December 1928, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Dougherty, pp. 166-7.

activity which is both normative and approximative... this activity could be termed contradictory in that it is unable to produce its own justifications, thus it *receives* its norms from elsewhere. Obviously a criticism which pursues an activity based on rules treats literature as a commodity [....] It organises and controls the uses of a given reality which has offered itself empirically to the attention.<sup>7</sup>

Gilbert's categorization - an "honourable tradition" - depends, similarly, upon a notion of such arbitrary "norms". As Terry Eagleton has argued, "Literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist": we cannot rationally and objectively say which works should fall into this category and which should fall into another.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, to assimilate Lawrence's *Pansies* into the construct of a literary "tradition",<sup>9</sup> forging some extremely arbitrary literary links along the way (for instance, with Pound's *Cantos* simply because they are "fragmentary"),<sup>10</sup> involves an undue amount of selectivity and reduction in approaching the poems which, somehow, has not perturbed critics. Dougherty has recognised the selectivity, making a telling calculation:

Of the 232 *Pansies* [...] only some 47 could be considered, by my definitions, "illustrative"; and yet in discussions in which *Pansies* are considered at any length - namely, in those of Gilbert, Pinion, and Murfin - quotations of illustrative poems outnumber those of non-illustrative poems by roughly two to one. And, as with Pinion and Murfin especially, quotations of non-illustrative poems are usually made to point out negative rather than positive aspects of Lawrence's *Pansies*.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (1966), trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd ed., 1996), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Eagleton, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Gilbert, p. 258.

<sup>11</sup> Dougherty, p. 181.

Although Dougherty's "definitions" ("illustrative" and "non-illustrative") are vague, the point he is making (which is clear when he explains his "definitions") is that the majority of the *Pansies* are not conventionally poetic and have, as a consequence, not been addressed at all except to dismiss them with standard references to the "norms" of art. Strangely, considering her appeals to a "tradition", Gilbert has noted the most common aesthetic norm referred to, that of obliquity, commenting that critics "seem really to dislike the polemical or confessional directness that gives the poems their power". However, she obviously does little to dispel this feeling with the limited choice of poems she examines. What Gilbert points out, however, is vital to understanding the poems. The negative response to *Pansies* has rested upon the presuppositions that art should be indirect, subtle ("they sacrifice all subtlety on an altar of urgent necessity"),<sup>12</sup> relativist,<sup>13</sup> undogmatic<sup>14</sup> and unrepetitive in theme.<sup>15</sup> Macherey's concept of the critic who commodifies the work, proposing only "rules of consumption" and, therefore, assigning supremacy over the work to both himself and the general reader, is clearly pertinent to the

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<sup>12</sup> Ross C. Murfin, *The Poetry of D. H. Lawrence: Texts and Contexts* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 228.

<sup>13</sup> See M. J. Lockwood, *A Study of the Poems of D. H. Lawrence: Thinking in Poetry* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 155-6: "What the design of *Pansies* is intended to follow [...] is the essential relativity of truth, in all its swan-like shiftings [...] it is committed to no unity of idea and no message." However, "Lawrence [...] falls into the trap a number of times of trying to codify a trust in 'real living' so as to give it a status compatible with other '-isms', political or philosophic. These policy statements fall flat [...]" It is interesting to note that Lawrence sent six of his poems to Charles Wilson (under the heading "New Years Greetings to the Willington Men"), writing "Here are three scraps of a sort of poetry, which will perhaps do as a 'message' [...]" The whole scheme of things is unjust and rotten, and money is just a disease upon humanity" (*Letters*, vol. VII, 28 December 1928, pp. 98-99).

<sup>14</sup> See Philip Hobsbaum, *A Reader's Guide to D. H. Lawrence* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), p. 138: "there is a limit to the amount of protest and admonition one can take, even when it is trenchantly expressed".

<sup>15</sup> F. B. Pinion, *A D. H. Lawrence Companion: Life, Thought, and Works* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978), p. 115: "[Lawrence] may not have been guilty of nagging in *Pansies*, but he did not avoid becoming a bore; he had a few leading ideas, and seems to have assumed that saying the same thing repeatedly in slightly different ways made tactical sense."

critical history of *Pansies*.

Such an evaluative manoeuvre is nowhere more striking in the critical and publishing history of *Pansies* than in David Ellis' edition of the poems, tellingly entitled *Pansies: A Selection*.<sup>16</sup> This selection demonstrates not only the difficulty of commodifying *Pansies*<sup>17</sup> but the extent to which a critic can take his mediatory role between literary works and their markets. Ellis' extraordinary "Introduction" speaks volumes:

When Yorick Books published its edition of *Tortoises* six years ago, it was in deference to what we assumed to have been Lawrence's original intentions for those six poems [...] one of our chief motives was the traditional 'respect for the author's wishes'.

The word 'selection' on our title page demonstrates that this cannot be the case here. The poems in this book are taken directly from two volumes of poetry published in 1929 and from the one edited by Orioli and Aldington in 1932 (*Last Poems*), two years after Lawrence's death. Of the more than five hundred pieces in these three volumes, only fifty have been retained. The number of *Pansies* printed here is small in comparison with the number Lawrence wrote and one of them - 'Red Herring' - appears without its last two stanzas because we think that their omission makes it a much more successful poem. So much for respect.

The primary purpose of this publication is nevertheless the same as that which inspired *Tortoises*. Convinced that Lawrence is a much more considerable poet than is generally allowed, we want to secure him a better hearing than is possible through the anthologies currently available or the unwieldy *Complete Poems*. *Tortoises* is a sequence of uniformly high quality....The quality of those poems Lawrence wrote in his last years and chose to call *Pansies* is not at all uniform. Encountered *en masse*, they tend to suggest that he was responsible for no poetry of merit after the triumph of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* apart from one or two pieces [...]. It is to combat this common view more effectively

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<sup>16</sup> *Pansies: A Selection*, ed. David Ellis (Canterbury: Yorick, 1988).

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that following the two British editions (and Knopf's American edition) of *Pansies* published by Lawrence in 1929, the text has been published only three times (excluding its incorporation in *Complete Poems*), and only twice in full. Moreover, although Heinemann's 1939 edition actually includes some unpublished *Pansies*, the other complete edition is a privately printed edition of only 1000 copies.



than do the *Pansies* which habitually appear in the anthologies that we publish this selection.<sup>18</sup>

Ellis goes on to affirm that “each of the items has been chosen on its literary merit” and that it is an attempt to “disengage from an unwieldy mass the essential animating presence”.<sup>19</sup> One presumes that he has effectively disengaged this “essential animating presence” from those poems written on censorship: “‘Conundrums’ seems to me the only poem Lawrence wrote about censorship which is any good”.<sup>20</sup> Since the reader of Ellis’ selection would not get the opportunity to decide for herself, could a critic be more ironic? The necessity of such heavy editing with *Pansies* - selecting the few pieces of “literary merit” and even cutting lines out of those chosen - is perhaps not surprising considering the criticism the poems have received and the still dominant conception of aesthetic “norms”: moreover, for the publisher, the poems must sell. However, such an egregious handling of Lawrence’s work for such blatantly commercial purposes is surely indicative of the powerlessness of even the scholarly world of literary criticism to defend itself from a scheme of production which esteems exchange-value over use-value - especially when we consider the eminent position of the scholar in question. How are we able to take such a scholar’s treatment seriously, grounded so firmly as it is in the process of marketing Lawrence’s work? Furthermore, how Ellis is able to perceive his “primary” role as that of serving the task of rehabilitating Lawrence as a poet is uncertain, since this explicitly involves a radical demolition and extension (the selection includes posthumous poetry) of the work Lawrence published (and, one suspects, intended to publish) in his

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<sup>18</sup> David Ellis, “Introduction”, *Pansies: A Selection*, p. vii.

<sup>19</sup> Ellis, “Introduction”, *Pansies: A Selection*, p. xi.

<sup>20</sup> Ellis, “Introduction”, *Pansies: A Selection*, p. ix.

lifetime. Evidently the critic's job unavoidably entails some mediatory role between the text and its market, whatever the critic's motives might have been. However, if this role becomes primary to a critical analysis and even goes as far as to literally vandalise the work in order to transform it into an acceptable commodity, then the critic has effectively substituted exchange-value for use-value: his task is merely to secure the continued production of the commodity, not to make any analysis which may be valuable in itself.

Such a treatment of Lawrence's work will not be undertaken here. The following analysis is dual in purpose: I intend to combine a thorough enquiry into the nature of Lawrence's new form with an account of its personal and socio-cultural historical origins. Unlike previous critics of *Pansies*, I envisage these two approaches as being interdependent. Furthermore, in discussing the poems I intend to illustrate how their form is inextricably linked to their content and that any truly historical account would recognise that the new form established by Lawrence in *Pansies* is a response to the need of the writer to express new feelings. There will therefore be no attempt to measure the work against the irrational and illusory concept of an aesthetic model, as past critics of the poems have done. However, conversely, this study will not speculate on authorial intentions since these can never be fully known, not even by the writer. Instead, the preconceived ideas and retrospective thoughts Lawrence had about his *Pansies* must be judged alongside the poems themselves. Neither the reader nor the author must dictate to one another.

## A New Linguistic Space, A New Literary Space

Arguments concerning the formal coherence of *Pansies* as a whole work have been attempted in the accounts of Dougherty and Antrim mentioned above. Certainly there are thematic continuities and even relationships between themes: poems about peace (such as "Peace and War"),<sup>21</sup> exploring the complex nature of peace, develop into poems about personal welfare (such as "Poverty"),<sup>22</sup> contrasting a welfare dependent upon riches and a welfare based on an individual's sense of peace and "natural abundance"<sup>23</sup> - and these, in turn, form a link with the poems which tackle issues of money and class more specifically. However, what such a reduced formal analysis does is to ignore the individual poem's form and, in doing so, looks at the poems, as it were, through the wrong end of a telescope. For although this kind of criticism is helpful in order for us to see the overall coherence of Lawrence's work, it inevitably eradicates the characteristics fundamental to the individual poem's form - such as the poem's overt discontinuity (in its customary refusal to obey formal poetic conventions), and its persistent refusal to be questioned. Although there are of course exceptions to them, such tendencies are prevalent ones. For criticism to ignore the dominant characteristics of a work is to sacrifice aesthetic predilections for a true knowledge of the text. Dougherty's attempt to justify the presence of these dominant features as simply a foundation for understanding a minority of untypical poems in the work depends entirely upon such personal tastes, and therefore evades the task of a

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<sup>21</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Complete Poems* (1964), ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p. 495.

<sup>22</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 498.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 498.

thorough analysis: the dominant techniques of the work are written off from the very beginning of the study as subsidiary, merely helpful.

Evidently the widespread inability to conduct a rigorous examination of *Pansies* has been due to the deep-seated prejudice that it is simply not Literature. In order to understand this prejudice and the poems themselves better, it is perhaps helpful to take a look at a movement in literary criticism which actually attempted to formulate rationally what exactly is meant by the concept of a literary language.

The Russian Formalists theorised a very common notion<sup>24</sup> that literary language is a “deviation from the norm”, a “strange” language, created through the manipulations of artistic devices, in contrast to a hypothetical “ordinary” language.<sup>25</sup> Though the Formalists saw this language as a relative one, dependent upon the linguistic norms of the social and historical context of the moment, their general notions of literary language are significant, both for their emphasis on its estranging poetic qualities and for their description of the contrasting “ordinary” language which enabled it to exist. Victor Erlich summarises the Formalists’ conceptualisation of literary language:

It is [the] inexorable pull of routine, of habit, that the artist is called upon to counteract. By tearing the object out of its habitual context, by bringing together disparate notions, the poet gives a *coup de grâce* to the verbal cliché and to the stock responses attendant upon it and forces us into heightened awareness of things and their sensory texture. The act of creative deformation restores sharpness to our perception, giving ‘density’ to the world around us.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History - Doctrine* (1955) (The Hague: Mouton, 4th ed., 1980), p. 179: “As Wellek and Warren pointed out, the criterion of ‘strangeness’ was anything but novel.”

<sup>25</sup> Erlich, p. 178.

<sup>26</sup> Erlich, p. 177.

Literariness, for the Formalists, is “strangeness”,<sup>27</sup> produced by the rupture of the object from its conventional surroundings. Furthermore, the “creative process” is a “tension between ordinary speech and the artistic devices which shape or deform it”.<sup>28</sup> This “ordinary speech” is seen as “habitual” and “routine”.

A major movement of literary criticism in the 1920s, Russian Formalism provides an index of the predominant conceptions of the literary in this period. For although the Russian Formalists did not intend to define literature itself, their ideas illustrate what they believed was typical of literature (though not exclusive to it) - a refreshing estrangement from the impoverished perspectives ineluctably produced by the dull and hackneyed qualities of “ordinary” language.

It is interesting therefore that Lawrence’s collection of poems is so contradictory in nature to this significant contemporary critical conception of what constituted poetry. The poem “Money-Madness” will serve as a good example of both the typical style of *Pansies* and its contrast to the literary qualities outlined and promoted by the Russian Formalists:

#### Money-Madness

Money is our madness, our vast collective madness.

And of course, if the multitude is mad  
the individual carries his own grain of insanity  
around with him.

I doubt if any man living hands out a pound note  
without a pang;  
and a real tremor, if he hands out a ten-pound note.

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<sup>27</sup> Erlich, p. 179.

<sup>28</sup> Erlich, p. 190.

We quail, money makes us quail.  
It has got us down, we grovel before it in strange  
terror.  
And no wonder, for money has a fearful cruel  
power among men.

But it is not money we are so terrified of,  
it is the collective money-madness of mankind.  
For mankind says with one voice: How much is he  
worth?  
Has he no money? Then let him eat dirt, and go  
cold.-

And if I have no money, they will give me a little  
bread  
so I do not die,  
but they will make me eat dirt with it.  
I shall have to eat dirt, I shall have to eat dirt  
if I have no money.

It is that that I am frightened of.  
And that fear can become a delirium.  
It is fear of my money-mad fellow-men.

We must have some money  
to save us from eating dirt.

And this is all wrong.

Bread should be free,  
shelter should be free,  
fire should be free  
to all and anybody, all and anybody, all over the  
world.

We must regain our sanity about money  
before we start killing one another about it.  
It's one thing or the other.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to the literary norms promulgated by the Russian Formalists -  
which are, paradoxically, patterns of estrangement from "ordinary" language -  
this "poem" uses several kinds of "ordinary" language (it is clear and simple in  
both its terms and meaning) in a thoroughly estranging way. The words are

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<sup>29</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, pp. 486-7.

entirely unusual to the context of a poem. However, their layout upon the page presents them as if they do form a poem and they do contain an occasional poetic device. They cannot therefore be received by the reader in the way he would a discourse addressed to him in the street. Moreover, the reader is being asked to read according to the unspoken yet conventional codes and procedures of reading a "poem" and, simultaneously, having this reading protocol smashed by the text's aberrant mode of address and use of language. The reader is being hailed in a very personal tone, particularly in the use of both "I" and "We", and yet is simultaneously being told, by the material dimension of the text, that he is reading a "poem" in a published collection by a "literary" author. The Formalist categories of the "ordinary" and the "literary" are thus exploded, the critic's answer to the question "What is literature?" radically destabilised. For the critic or general reader, the poem immediately upsets all hopes and expectations of a complicated, unfamiliar, and deformed language while also refusing to give anything clichéd or insipid; the reader is, so to speak, doubly alienated.

In "Money-Madness" there are barely any poetic devices. The poem works through a good degree of imagery and repetition - which helps to intensify the effect of the simplest of words and phrases - but does not depend upon any of the typical poetic techniques of, for example, metre, rhyme, or assonance. Language is not "deformed" or made "strange" as the Russian Formalists insisted it must be in order to be alienating. Perversely however, the poem is alienating (to which the critical response over the years surely testifies), not merely in its abandonment of the conventionally "strange" techniques of poetry, but in its unorthodox use of "ordinary" language. The

poem develops out of its initial direct, generalising assertion, "Money is our madness, our vast collective madness", expressing ideas that are not normally voiced by either the poet or the man in the street. Any reader familiar with poetry in the slightest would certainly not expect such a direct form of expression to be adopted by the speaker (phrases such as "of course", "I doubt", "no wonder", "it is") without any form of irony; such matter-of-fact language is disconcertingly "unpoetic". However, this ordinariness (an ordinariness inherent in the poem's personal quality - the speaker does not appear to conceal his feelings and the reader feels that he is being addressed directly and even incorporated into a collective identity with the speaker as "We") is counterpoised by clear yet unusual images such as "grain of insanity" and "we grovel before it in strange terror".

The phrase "grain of insanity" plays cleverly, but almost imperceptibly, on the meaning of "grain" (which can mean both a small particle and the fruit or seed of a cereal), indicating the source of the individual's morsel of dementia - the fight for food, now abstracted into a fight for money. Similarly, the idea of grovelling before money "in strange terror" is an arresting and macabre one and forms a focal point for two vitally connected and significant images; it implies a religious fear, humility, and pleading for benevolence or forgiveness before an omnipotent god, and a prostrate posture of sexual humiliation and obsequiousness. The figure itself, in connecting and containing these two images, fuses together seemingly disparate socio-cultural territories (also apparently separable from the central economic problem the poem addresses) in its dramatic and graphic vision of the relationships inherent in a society bound to a free market economy. Such an image is capable of



describing the multiple ways in which capitalism affects individuals and their relationships; the power of money enters, exploits and corrupts the world of social and cultural instincts - sexual and religious needs are perverted to the ends of historically specific economic objectives.

Of course, the above paragraph offers the kind of literary analysis that can only be applied to poetry as it is conventionally understood. This kind of analysis requires poetic devices to reveal and poetic images to explicate. In a poem such as "Money-Madness", however, the two images discussed above are almost all the critic who adopts this strategy has to work with. This is a further illustration that this form of analysis is not sufficient as a comprehensive or just means of examining Lawrence's *Pansies*. The poems are, perversely, too complex to be reduced to the evaluation an orthodox literary criticism would provide. Moreover, to begin to understand this complexity, the *languages* of *Pansies* have to be discerned and interpreted in relation to one another and the world of discourse that exists external to (yet in a "dialogic" relationship with) those languages.<sup>30</sup> I will therefore continue by examining the interaction of languages between poems, returning to "Money-Madness" later for a more detailed study of the internal dynamics of language within the individual poem form.

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<sup>30</sup> See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1975), ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), in which Bakhtin explores the "dialogic imperative" conditioning all utterance. "Dialogism" is a term coined by Bakhtin which the editor defines as the following: "Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole - there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance. This dialogic imperative, mandated by the pre-existence of the language world relative to any of its current inhabitants, insures that there can be no actual monologue. One may, like a primitive tribe that knows only its own limits, be deluded into thinking there is one language, or one may, as grammarians, certain political figures and normative framers of "literary languages" do, seek in a sophisticated way to achieve a unitary language. In both cases the unitariness is relative to the overpowering force of heteroglossia, and thus dialogism" (p. 426).

For Mikhail Bakhtin, this kind of linguistic examination is specific to the study of the novel. In Bakhtin's view, poetry is outlawed from undergoing such analysis. The novel is reserved for special treatment owing to the nature of its language:

The author participates in the novel (he is omnipresent in it) with almost no direct language of his own. The language of the novel is a system of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other. It is impossible to describe and analyse it as a single unitary language.<sup>31</sup>

Language in the novel is "represented...as a living mix of varied and opposing languages". Specifically, it attempts to both "overcome the superficial 'literariness' of moribund, outmoded styles and fashionable period-bound languages" and "renew itself by drawing on the fundamental elements of folk language".<sup>32</sup> Finally, novelistic language is radically materialised (without being reified):

[...] every novel is a dialogized system made up of the images of "languages", styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language. Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation. Novelistic discourse is always criticising itself.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to this use of language, poetic discourse lacks this reflexivity and dynamism. However, Bakhtin's description of why this is so has direct relevance to the distinguishing features of *Pansies* I have been exploring:

Poetic style is by convention suspended from any mutual interaction with alien discourse, any allusion to alien discourse.

Any way whatever of alluding to alien languages, to the possibility of another vocabulary, another

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<sup>31</sup> Bakhtin, p. 47.

<sup>32</sup> Bakhtin, p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> Bakhtin, p. 49.

semantics, other syntactic forms [...] to the possibility of other linguistic points of view, is equally foreign to poetic style. It follows that any sense of the boundedness, the historicity, the social determination and specificity of one's own language is alien to poetic style, and therefore a critical qualified relationship to one's own language (as merely one of many languages in a heteroglot world) is foreign to poetic style - as is [...] the incomplete commitment of oneself, of one's full meaning, to a given language.<sup>34</sup>

If poetry were to open itself up to such relationships it could not do so without "destroying" the "poetic style" of the work, "without transposing it into a prosaic key and in the process turning the poet into a writer of prose".<sup>35</sup>

Bakhtin's description of "poetic style" clearly does not apply to *Pansies*.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, his suggestion that "poetic style" would be destroyed if it escaped its self-preserving linguistic limitations and consequently become prosified is vividly manifested in Lawrence's poems. Even the seemingly more "poetic" *Pansies*, which critics have isolated and reduced to objects suitable for an orthodox literary analysis, contain a complexity of language that could be called, by Bakhtin's definitions, novelistic. The opening poem of the collection, for example, adopts a poetic register yet does not offer any complex and distorting imagery or skilful metrical strategy:

#### Our Day Is Over

Our day is over, night comes up  
shadows steal out of the earth.  
Shadows, shadows  
wash over our knees and splash between our thighs,  
our day is done;  
we wade, we wade, we stagger, darkness rushes  
between our stones,

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<sup>34</sup> Bakhtin, p. 285.

<sup>35</sup> Bakhtin, p. 285.

<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, Bakhtin does allow for a "certain latitude for heteroglossia" in poetry, but "only in the 'low' poetic genres— in the satiric and comic genres", (p. 287). The *Pansies*' sharp satire, their undermining of "literariness", and their refusal of convention in both form and content, strongly associate them with these more novelistic of poetic genres.

we shall drown.

Our day is over  
night comes up.<sup>37</sup>

The poem is allegorical, yet the language is reduced to a simplicity and directness which is both prophetically assertive and crudely reticent in its uncompromising reluctance to develop, to explain, or to enrich its declarations with deeper meaning. The poem demands to be read as poetry yet simultaneously defies the reader to understand it as such, through its undermining lack of "poetic" suggestion. Through this method of controlled limitation even the isolated poem becomes self-critical after the manner of a "Bakhtinian" novel.

However, this "unpoetic", symbolist poetry is not the sole language of *Pansies*, to which the style of "Money-Madness" testifies. There are "opposing voices" which deny one another any autonomous authority. "Literariness", in particular, speaks (as in "Our Day Is Over"), but is continually mocked, emasculated, and denied the monopoly it conventionally possesses in poetry: *Pansies* are poems in dialogue with poetic language itself. We can see the beginnings of this "dialogic" process in "Elephants In The Circus" (only two poems later):

#### Elephants In The Circus

Elephants in the circus  
have aeons of weariness round their eyes.  
Yet they sit up  
and show vast bellies to the children.<sup>38</sup>

This very short poem, in its limited focus and meditation upon the nature of elephants in a single scene, resembles the haiku - and thus partly associates

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<sup>37</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 425.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 425.

itself with a literary form and style fashionable within the Imagist movement of the previous decade. However, the poem is not a lyric and does not therefore adopt the haiku convention of suggesting feelings through a natural phenomenon, as Imagist poetry had done. Furthermore, it has the concision of the haiku form without the explicitness: instead of providing a sense of neat encapsulation, it leaves the reader feeling that something has been omitted. Opposing itself to both the declarative poetic mood of “Our Day Is Over” and the haiku lyric so admired by the Imagists, “Elephants In The Circus” attempts to “overcome the superficial ‘literariness’ of moribund, outmoded styles and fashionable period-bound languages”.<sup>39</sup>

This undermining opposition to “poetry” is not always such a serious and subtle affair in *Pansies*, however. The next poem immediately counteracts (while paradoxically supplementing) the opposing voice in “Elephants In The Circus” through straightforward silliness:

#### Elephants Plodding

Plod! Plod!  
And what ages of time  
the worn arches of their spines support!<sup>40</sup>

While combining with the subversive voice of the previous poem in its integration of a selective use of haiku elements with a conflicting set of linguistic choices, “Elephants Plodding” also mocks and parodies the seriousness of both “Our Day Is Over” and “Elephants In The Circus”. The onomatopoeic “Plod!” is an absurd fusion of poetic device with naïve childishness, while the ridiculously “unpoetic” title undermines the style of the poem’s conclusion: the declarative utterance (“And what ages of time”) and

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<sup>39</sup> Bakhtin, p. 49.

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 426.

the reading codes of poetry (the structure of the language implies a deeper meaning than is superficially present) are all vital to the technique of the poem's final words, yet are dialogically ridiculed by their surrounding "heteroglot" context.<sup>41</sup>

Bakhtin describes two elements of "decisive importance" in the formation of novelistic language in his account of the "prehistory of novelistic discourse": laughter and polyglossia. He elaborates:

The most ancient forms for representing language were organised by laughter—these were originally nothing more than the ridiculing of another's language and another's direct discourse. Polyglossia and the *interanimation of languages* associated with it elevated these forms to a new artistic and ideological level, which made possible the genre of the novel.<sup>42</sup>

This synthesis of laughter with the dynamism of polyglossia constitutes the central foundation for novelistic discourse. In *Pansies* we can see this discourse in action: no language is ever allowed to stand alone, without illuminating or being illuminated by another's language, and no language is preserved from the subverting force of laughter.

Languages continue to shed the light of ridicule upon one another in "Destiny". "Literariness", "period-bound" language, and seriousness, as before, are objects for attack in this poem - the affirmative phraseology of the Romantic lyric being the specific target here. However, this parodied lyrical language is not simply and completely reified since the language that serves to undermine it is, in turn, animated by the declarative style of the lyric:

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<sup>41</sup> Bakhtin, p. 428: "all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve". Bakhtin insists that the poet denies the heteroglot nature of the utterance, treating his own individual poetic language as "a pure and direct expression of his own intention" (p. 285).

<sup>42</sup> Bakhtin, pp. 50-51.

## Destiny

O destiny, destiny,  
do you exist, and can a man touch your hand?

O destiny  
if I could see your hand, and it were thumbs down,  
I would be willing to give way, like the pterodactyl,  
and accept obliteration.  
I would not even ask to leave a fossil claw extant,  
nor a thumb-mark like a clue,  
I would be willing to vanish completely,  
completely.

But if it is thumbs up, and mankind must go on  
being mankind,  
then I am willing to fight, I will roll my sleeves up  
and start in.

Only, O destiny  
I wish you'd show your hand.<sup>43</sup>

The Romantic convention and lyrical style of addressing an abstract concept is played down by the dissonant mixture of language and the resultant absurdity of the images that disharmony creates: "destiny", personified, with its "thumbs up". However, the colloquial language (which refers to the Roman games) that provides this mockery is itself illuminated by the prevailing force of the poem's plea, a combination of Romantic lyricism and simple, informal entreaty: "Only, O destiny / I wish you'd show your hand." Through this technique of linguistic "interanimation" the poem displays both the power and the inadequacy of poeticism and colloquialism alike - and thus the effect is to deconstruct the conventional polarities of the literary and the ordinary, solemnity and comedy, which we have seen as vital to the "dialogic" confrontation of poems such as "Our Day Is Over" and "Elephants Plodding". "Destiny" is therefore a supplementing voice to an incomplete dialogue of

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<sup>43</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 430.

languages.

This process can be seen more succinctly if we examine what happens to the more marginal elements of a poem when they become more dominant in other *Pansies*. The brief serio-comic treatment of scientific language and fact in "Destiny" (in the archaeological image of the "fossil claw extant") is extended into a more comprehensively dialectical treatment in the interaction of the two scientifically-orientated poems, "The Third Thing" and "Relativity". These poems mix scientific language and ideology with a combination of naïve discourse and the language of Romanticism, which concomitantly undermines and strengthens the scientific discourse with powerful results:

#### The Third Thing

Water is H<sub>2</sub>O, hydrogen two parts, oxygen one,  
but there is also a third thing, that makes it water  
and nobody knows what that is.

The atom locks up two energies  
but it is a third thing present which makes it an  
atom.<sup>44</sup>

#### Relativity

I like relativity and quantum theories  
because I don't understand them  
and they make me feel as if space shifted  
about like a swan that can't settle,  
refusing to sit still and be measured;  
and as if the atom were an impulsive thing  
always changing its mind.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike the employment of scientific language in "Destiny" (where it mainly serves the aims of novelistic laughter and self-criticism), scientific discourse in these poems is focused upon and thus used with a more developed

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<sup>44</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 515.

<sup>45</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 524.



ambivalence and dialectic, owing to its increased contact with heteroglossia. On the one hand, there is the school teacher's statement of scientific fact ("Water is H<sub>2</sub>O") and the ordinary, straightforward expression of a personal regard for certain scientific theories ("I like relativity and quantum theories"). On the other hand, however, there is both the assertive language of naïvety and bluntness ("nobody knows what that is" and "because I don't understand them") and the poetic, philosophical/psychological language of Romanticism ("the third thing", space as a "swan that can't settle", and the atom as "an impulsive thing" ). This unorthodox fusion of poetic/Romantic and naïve discourse simultaneously enriches and undermines the language of science - and, in doing so, conjoins conventionally disparate ideological worlds. Consequently, these two poems constitute a subversive response not only to the tendency in both poetic and scientific languages to isolate and purify themselves in an attempt to become the dominant ideological discourse, but also to the Romantic, organicist language of poems such as "New Houses, New Clothes" and "Work" which sets itself polemically against the technological advances of science. Such a clash of languages over the contentious issue of scientific knowledge and its applications is productive - in this case, the dialogue between poems such as "Relativity" and "Work" allows important distinctions to be made between science as reductive materialism and as an imaginatively liberating field of exploration, and technology as a tool for human exploitation and as a force harnessed for the satisfaction of human needs.

Perhaps the most radical aspect of *Pansies*, however, is their persistent focus upon what are, for poetry, unorthodox subjects: the poems explore the

highly “unpoetic” issues of class, money, and politics, and provide a discomfiting interrogation of aesthetic practice itself. By allowing these issues to enter into the world of poetry, *Pansies* also admits the various discourses and ideologies that are inevitably bound to any discussion of them. Such an invasion into the monologic realm of poetry dramatically increases the potential for dialogue in poetry - in particular, dialogue with poetic language itself since, owing to the simple fact of its common isolation from everyday linguistic practices, it is conventionally either irrefutable (between the pages of the book) or easily ignored (by those who choose not to read poetry). In contrast, *Pansies*’ novelisation of language creates a “sense of the boundedness, the historicity, the social determination and specificity of one’s own language” - whether it be poetic or political - and hence opens the work up to the debates and conflicts of everyday life.

A poem such as “Altercation” is at the centre of conflicts of language, culture, class and politics, both within its textual confines and without: it is an embodiment, in fact, of the arbitrariness of such linguistic divisions. The simple fact that it is contained within a book of poems and yet is a prose dialogue, immediately sets it apart as a text in formal conflict. However, the conflict is deeper than an abstract, formal one:

#### Altercation

Now look here,  
if you were really superior,  
*really* superior,  
you’d have money, and you know it!

*Well what abaht it?*

What about it?  
what about it?  
why, isn’t it obvious?

Here you are, with no money,  
and here am I, paying income tax and god-knows-what  
taxes  
just to support you and find you money,  
and you stand there and expect me to treat you like an  
equal!—  
Whereas, let me tell you, if you *were* my equal  
you'd *have* money, you'd *have* it, enough to support  
yourself, anyhow—  
And there you stand with *nothing*, and expect me to  
hand it you out  
as if it were your dues, and I didn't count at all—

*All right, guvnor! What abaht it?*

Do you mean to say what about it?  
My God, it takes some beating!  
If you were a *man*, and up to my mark, you'd *have*  
money—can't you see it?  
You're my inferior, that's what you are, you're my  
inferior.  
And do you think it's my business to be handing out  
money to a lot of inferior swine?  
Eh? Answer me that!

*Right ch'are, boss! An' what abaht it?*<sup>46</sup>

The most striking aspect of the conflict here is the opposition of languages: both speakers have a different idea of what constitutes “ordinary” language. However, these contrasting notions of “ordinariness” are bound up with class differences - the “ordinary” middle-class man's language against the “ordinary” working-class man's language. These oppositions, which fuse the formal with the ideological, dissolve the whole notion of “ordinariness” itself, revealing the concept as a tool of artificial reconciliation. This is most strikingly demonstrated in the working-class speaker's refusal to participate in effective dialogue. The gap between discourses here is such that all attempts at communication on behalf of the middle-class speaker break down: we are left

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<sup>46</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, pp. 546-7.

with a fractured verbal exchange which marks the limits of dialogue. Nonetheless, from the portrayal of such a dispute we can see the kind of differences required in order for these limits to be reached. This is no superficial conflict of words but one deeply rooted in the integrated realms of language and belief. For example, the bourgeois notion of “ordinary”, decent behaviour in this poem is connected with financial independence and what is described in the poem “Trust” as “the narrow little / bargaining trust / that says: I’m for you/ if you’ll be for me”.<sup>47</sup> It is, furthermore, bound up with the conservative belief in the capitalist economy and disdain for the welfare system. In contrast, the opposing speaker can only perceive his opponent in terms of power relations: the words “boss” and “guvnor” eclipse the desired objectivity of the middle-class individual. By placing these languages not only in conflict with each other within the poem, but with the other languages of *Pansies* and the conventional language of poetry the reader expects to find in a volume of poems, the dialogue is extended: the middle-class and working-class discourses represented here are associated or contrasted with other discourses. Thus, the political consciousness of the middle-class man of “Altercation” is connected, through poems such as “Don’ts” and “Nottingham’s New University”, with a certain kind of cultural consciousness (one promoted through society’s institutions):

Don’t be sucked in by the su-superior,  
don’t swallow the culture bait<sup>48</sup>

From this I learn, though I knew it before  
that culture has her roots  
in the deep dung of cash, and lore  
is a last offshoot of Boots.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 561.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 459.

<sup>49</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 489.

However, these associated forms of consciousness are ironically displayed within the cultural medium of poetry, albeit an intentionally “unpoetic” form of poetry. Through this method, *Pansies* not only connects multiple “linguistic consciousnesses”,<sup>50</sup> but also, with an alienating power, sets them off against each other. More “poetic” poems such as “Our Day Is Over” and even “Destiny” are, in the light of the language of “Altercation” and “Nottingham’s New University”, made to look both feebly vague and narrowly restricted to a literary idea of what constitutes appropriate subject-matter for poetry.

To suggest that the conflicts that structure *Pansies* constitute only, in ideological terms, a war between middle-class and working-class values and, in linguistic terms, a war between poetic and folk language, would be, however, a gross simplification. The “dialogic” interaction and clash of two poems creates an ideological space which is often partially filled by other poems. The linguistic and ideological space between poems such as “Altercation” and “Our Day Is Over” is, for example, invaded by a poem such as “Democracy”:

#### Democracy

I am a democrat in so far as I love the free sun in men  
and an aristocrat in so far as I detest narrow-gutted,  
possessive persons.

I love the sun in any man  
when I see it between his brows  
clear, and fearless, even if tiny.

But when I see these grey successful men  
so hideous and corpse-like, utterly sunless,  
like gross successful slaves mechanically waddling,  
then I am more than radical, I want to work a  
guillotine.

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<sup>50</sup> Bakhtin, p. 359.

And when I see working men  
pale and mean and insect-like, scuttling along  
and living like lice, on poor money  
and never looking up,  
then I wish, like Tiberius, the multitude had only one  
head  
so that I could lop it off.

I feel that when people have gone utterly sunless  
they shouldn't exist.<sup>51</sup>

Formally, "Democracy" resembles a conventional poem to a greater extent than "Altercation" but to a lesser extent than "Our Day Is Over": it contains many metaphors and similes and uses a poetic register, yet it has little poetic rhythm or structure and it can be read as prose. In terms of the "social determination and specificity" of the poem's language, its dominant linguistic-consciousness contains both the poetic, apocalyptic language-consciousness of "Our Day Is Over" and the "ordinary", straightforward language-consciousness of the unemployed man of "Altercation". Operating in an ideological gap between these poems, "Democracy" provides the apocalyptic language-consciousness of "Our Day Is Over" with a genocidal element, and yet simultaneously shows traces of that compassionate language-consciousness ("when I see working men" contrasts with "grey successful men") inherent in "Altercation" with its mockery of the "superior" conservative and its final defiant words "*What abaht it?*".

Dialogue in *Pansies*, therefore, creates conflict, and the space that emerges from the discordant clash of two mutually contradicting discourses is occupied by new voices, which regenerate the cycle of dialogue. Such a process involves what Bakhtin describes as the specific task of the novelist: the

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<sup>51</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 526.

“process of coming to know one’s own language as it is perceived in someone else’s language, coming to know one’s own belief system in someone else’s system”.<sup>52</sup> One language is regularly seen in the light of another in *Pansies*, as dialogue occurs between the multiple languages of its many different poems: it is through this method that Lawrence’s poetry becomes novelised. However, how can this novelised quality of the poems as a whole be reconciled with their frequently polemical aspect? Does this not substantially diminish any claims we make for the poems as novelistic in their manipulation of discourse? In order to answer these questions I must now undertake a more detailed analysis of the internal “dialogism” of the individual poem form, taking as my example the highly didactic “Money-Madness”. It will be shown that the internal dialogue of “Altercation” is in fact only a more explicit example of the dynamic quality inherent to any individual poem in *Pansies*.

### The Poem as Novel

The amalgamation of discordant languages, perspectives, semantics, codes and registers in “Money-Madness” allows the text to move outside the conventional categories of the “poetic” and the “ordinary” (as we saw in my brief discussion of the poem earlier) and into a novelised, “heteroglot” world of competing discourses. It incorporates disturbing and unique “poetic” images within a so-called “ordinary” language, destroying both the orthodox conception of a unitary poetic language and the Formalist assumption that “ordinary” language is stale. Different types of language blur into one another

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<sup>52</sup> Bakhtin, p. 365.

and, paradoxically, throw one another into relief.

At the beginning of the poem we have what could be the self-assured voice of a philosopher, psychologist or socialist, telling the reader dogmatically and repetitively that "Money is our madness, our vast collective madness." Then, in the next line, this "high" tone of didactic righteousness is diminished and overshadowed by the more informal register of the journalistic essay (the language here is reminiscent of Lawrence's own journalism): "And of course, if the multitude is mad...." However, by the end of the sentence we are confronted once again with "high" language in one of the poem's few poetic images, already discussed: the individual's "grain of insanity". This interchangeability of languages and registers in the poem creates an internal dialogue of voices continually checking, supplementing, and qualifying one another, taking up different perspectives on the subject as they do so.

The more colloquial and self-conscious observation of the next voice to enter the poem continues this process: "I doubt if any man living hands out a pound note without a pang; / and a real tremor, if he hands out a ten-pound note." The hint of self-mistrust in these phrases marks out a new voice in the poem, suggesting something felt from everyday experience (perhaps personal or in observing others' behaviour), speculating in a conversational, unauthoritative tone on a collective psychology. If the language of the poem was attempting to be unitary in the style of the first line, these words would read differently, perhaps as: 'No man exists who does not hand out money with pain and fear.' Even the specificity of the "pound note" represents an everyday, very "unpoetic" manner of speech, inappropriate to this style. The second line, emphasising the point with reference to a "ten pound-note", could



not be included, being too trivial for such a grand and declarative style to incorporate (the effect would be to undermine the poem's declarations). Moreover, the fact that these phrases seem more like speech than written language illustrates their obvious contrast with the poem's earlier "collective madness" and "grain of insanity"; phrases which are more likely to be seen than heard.

Following this very personal observation, the poem once again adopts the self-identifying and all-encompassing mode of address peculiar to the propagandist: "We quail" mirrors "our madness". However, this voice has now merged with the poetic, journalistic, and "ordinary" languages previously described to produce a "multi-linguaged"<sup>53</sup> discourse in which we hear the different resonances of a crowd of individuals, each of whom speaks a different language:

*We quail, money makes us quail.*  
*It has got us down, we grovel before it in strange*  
*terror.*  
*And no wonder, for money has a fearful cruel power*  
*among men. [my italics]*

The social critic's "We" is followed by the poet's repeated "quail"; this followed by the colloquial "got us down", which is substituted in turn for the macabre poetry of "grovel" and "strange terror". Both "ordinary" and journalistic voices combine in "no wonder", while poetic, propagandist and journalistic languages are made compatible in "fearful cruel power". By the end of the three lines we have also moved from "We" to "men", denoting a move outwards from a voice vitally connected to and acting within a social set of relationships to an objective, externalised voice, setting itself apart from

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<sup>53</sup> Bakhtin, p. 326.

those relationships in order to see them from a new, perhaps less painful and conscience-ridden, perspective.

Following this deviation into an objectifying register, a qualifying voice is introduced, with a similarly objective tone, to insist: "But it is not money we are so terrified of, / it is the collective money-madness of mankind." It is as if the former speaker had begun to stray from the poem's initial aims - to target not money itself but the "collective money-madness of mankind" - and a new speaker is introduced to retrieve the poem's direction and power of attack. Although the language here is mainly a mixture of the previously adopted languages of journalism and philosophy, it differs from the poem's earlier uses of such languages in that it destabilises the poem. The "But" at the beginning of this section, playing down the significance of the preceding five lines with no intended irony or underlying subtlety of meaning, is compatible with the style of a journalistic essay but not the style of a poem. The result is a sense that the poem is now completely open to debate. It is not merely a selection of discourses manipulated and governed by a presiding authorial intention, for the poem makes the reader aware that there is confusion and multiplicity at the heart of this dialogue; just as in all living dialogues there is no programme of events, no definitive outline of what is going to be said, or whether or not it will reach its objectives (if it has any). The poem is more appropriately seen as a site for debate and the confrontations and disagreements that go with those debates - and the reader is not excluded from this site. The destabilising effect produced by this part of the poem appears to open up a space for the reader to fill with his contribution, while the multiplicity of discourses which invade "Money-Madness", and their

“dialogic” “interillumination”<sup>54</sup> of each other, in fact immediately deter any attempt at reading the poem as a self-contained and autonomous entity.

The next two lines of the poem show the speaker producing an imaginary representation of the thoughts of “mankind” which combines a representing “linguistic consciousness”, using a fairly “ordinary” language of dissent, with the represented collective consciousness of a ruthlessly right-wing people. This is achieved by using short and simple words to produce pompous, discriminating and reifying class and status judgments: “How much is he worth? / Has he no money?” Form and content here fuse together disparate ideological “linguistic-consciousnesses” in a single “utterance”. The “double-voiced”<sup>55</sup> nature of this language allows it to be “simultaneously represented and representing”.<sup>56</sup> There is, however, a third “linguistic consciousness”, contained in the words “let him eat dirt, and go cold”. Here, the conservative consciousness is infiltrated by an alien proverbial language with its own intention of subverting the ideology of its surrounding linguistic world. This “linguistic consciousness” charges the aggressive words of mankind’s wilful repudiation of responsibility for other’s basic welfare with a conflicting emotive, proverbial discourse, which further undermines the represented judgment of mankind: alternative “ordinary” discourses are in dialogue. The multi-voiced nature of discourse here means that languages combine and “ideologically interanimate” one another. Such a discourse incorporates the “ordinary”, accusative voice of the afflicted individual, the voice of the callous, judgmental conservative, and the proverbial voice of the

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<sup>54</sup> See Bakhtin, pp. 429-30, for a gloss on this concept.

<sup>55</sup> Bakhtin, p. 354.

<sup>56</sup> Bakhtin, p. 45.

social critic. Through this method, the text enacts a dialogue across boundaries of class and social position.

By analysing this blend of conservative, “ordinary”, dissenting, and proverbial languages in this part of the text, we can see that it is impossible technically, word for word, to distinguish one from the other: the “utterance” itself is a site of struggle for competing “language consciousnesses”.<sup>57</sup> The dissenting voice, for example, is part of the “ordinariness” of “For mankind says with one voice [...]”, part of the represented language of the capitalist, “How much is he worth?”, and part of the proverbial “let him eat dirt” image. Languages are not “pure” in this poem; multiple “language-intentions”<sup>58</sup> interweave with one another, actively displaying their fundamental interdependence. According to Bakhtin, this quality of language only manifests itself in the novel. He describes it as a means of distinguishing novelistic discourse from poetic:

[...] double-voicedness in the novel, as distinct from double-voicedness in rhetorical or other forms, always tends toward a double-*language*dness as its own outside limit. Therefore novelistic double-voicedness cannot be unfolded into logical contradictions or into purely dramatic contrasts. It is this quality that determines the distinctiveness of novelistic dialogues, which push to the limit the mutual nonunderstanding represented by people who speak in different languages.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Bakhtin, pp. 354-5: “Within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one’s own and another’s word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other. The utterance so conceived is a considerably more complex and dynamic organism than it appears when construed simply as a thing that articulates the intention of the person uttering it, which is to see the utterance as a direct, single-voiced vehicle for expression.” Such a “reified” conception of the “utterance” has in fact been predominant in conventional literary criticism on *Pansies*. As we saw earlier, the multiplicity of discourse in *Pansies* is reduced by critics to the single voice of Lawrence himself, dogmatically propounding his own autonomous and integral creed.

<sup>58</sup> Bakhtin, p. 359.

<sup>59</sup> Bakhtin, p. 356.

This dialogue of “mutual nonunderstanding” is continually enacted in Lawrence’s poem. The lines following the image of a conservative discourse are a striking example of this:

And if I have no money, they will give me a little bread  
so I do not die,  
but they will make me eat dirt with it.  
I shall have to eat dirt, I shall have to eat dirt  
if I have no money.

It is that that I am frightened of.  
And that fear can become a delirium.  
It is fear of my money-mad fellow men.

These lines introduce a whole new “language-intention” into the poem. It is a voice containing fear and isolation as *experiences*, not merely as concepts. It is the image of a language which perceives an impersonal “they” sadistically desiring the bearer of that language to suffer the ignominy of eating “dirt”. The repetition in these lines, combined with the extremely personal register, makes this language the language of nightmare. In relationship to the former self-authorising language of harsh judgment and dismissal, this new language can neither understand nor be understood by its predecessor. This is mainly owing to their opposite positions in relation to the problem being addressed; one perspective comes from inside experience, the other outside of it, treating it purely as an idea (“How much is he worth?”). Significantly however, the voice speaking from within experience still maintains an element of middle-classness reminiscent of many earlier moments in “Money-Madness” (compare, for example, the earlier “fearful cruel power” with “And that fear can become a delirium.”). This is peculiar since the subject of the poem, the style of the poem, and the perspective of the speaker at this point in the poem are all extremely antagonistic to conventional middle-class ideology. The

disorientating mixture of a very personal form of register, a clear middle-class overtone, and a language directing itself towards and opposing itself to an orthodox middle-class belief-system, all contained within a very “unpoetic” poem, allows many voices to meet and clash; and the reader’s resulting sense of alienation parallels the alienated voice of the poem here, where a bewildering “ordinariness” of language (“It is that that I am frightened of”) meets both a middle-class experience of “delirium” and the powerful voice of dissent (“my money-mad fellow men”). The confusion created by these multiple “language-consciousnesses” appears to be both the product of middle-class disillusionment and ideological disintegration and the source of the reader’s alienated experience of Lawrence’s poem.

Estrangement is a continual process in Lawrence’s poem - we have no time to adapt to the language since the language is continually shifting in point of view, register, and the code by which it needs to be read. Every moment in the poem has a sense of immediacy and unexpectedness:

We must have some money  
to save us from eating dirt.

And this is all wrong.

The three lines preceding these are three single sentences but they do not, however, have the abruptness of these very short, simple lines which reduce language to a bare minimum: it is the brief, straightforward language of propaganda. Discourse is now entirely stripped of its circumlocutory tendencies and we are left with two forceful statements which are given as if they were indisputable facts. The first statement insists that “We” (once again, the speaker subsumes himself and us under a collective identity) are in an economic system which will compel us to eat “dirt” if we have no money, and

the second statement morally denounces this system. The first of these declarations brings a fresh tone into the poem since it represents itself as the concluding words on the poem's subject. It is separated from the rest of the text as the shortest section of the poem so far. This is demagoguery at the climax of its assault. It is both a language that presents itself as irrefutable and a language that appeals to the simplest of issues (the need for money to live) in the crudest of terms. However, the second pronouncement goes one step further - five short words standing alone, containing the first direct, absolutely unequivocal moral judgment of the poem. The first sentence having *described* how society is, the next *judges* how society is. The world of heteroglossia seems now to be entirely shut off from the poem, all dialogue exiled.

According to Bakhtin's theory, this assumption would be definitively made. Polemical language, for Bakhtin, excludes heteroglossia and dialogue. Bakhtin ironically attacks polemic, a mode of discourse which he relates to the rhetorical genres; genres which he describes as inferior to the novel:

Double-voiced discourse is very widespread in rhetorical genres, but even there - remaining as it does within a single language system - it is not fertilized by a deep-rooted connection with the forces of historical becoming that serve to stratify language, and therefore rhetorical genres are at best merely a distanced echo of this becoming, narrowed down to individual polemic.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, Bakhtin contrasts the novelist's technique with this limited employment of discourse:

[...] double-voicedness makes its presence felt by the novelist in the living heteroglossia of language, and in the multi-languedness surrounding and nourishing his own consciousness; it is not invented in superficial isolated polemics with another person.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Bakhtin, p. 325.

<sup>61</sup> Bakhtin, pp. 326-7.

However, when these theoretical statements are applied to the case of Lawrence's *Pansies* an obvious contradiction arises, for Bakhtin's conception of polemic and heteroglossia as mutually exclusive entities. *Pansies* are agitational in the extreme and yet they are "multi-linguaged". How can this radical inconsistency be explained?

One of the reasons for the coexistence of these seemingly incongruous qualities in Lawrence's poems is that any didactic language adopted is continually undermined by alternative infiltrating languages, and that other didactic, yet ideologically distinct and often opposing, languages work against it in other poems in the collection. Lawrence himself, in fact, wrote of the poems that they contained "merely the breath of the moment, and one eternal moment easily contradicting the next eternal moment".<sup>62</sup> I have already examined the dynamics of the relationship between these clashing, discordant voices in my discussion of the poems as a whole and their "dialogic" interaction.

However, it is Bakhtin's preconceptions of what polemic is which are the main cause of the contradictions that arise from an application of his theory to *Pansies*. Polemic is seen as "isolated" from heteroglossia and "narrow" in its capacity to describe the world. However, not only is a didactic voice always one of many voices vying for attention within Lawrence's work, but *Pansies* are vying for attention within the real world of myriad, conflicting languages and, consequently, myriad, conflicting *Weltanschauungen*; and the reason for this is that the actual concerns of polemical language in *Pansies* are at the

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<sup>62</sup> Lawrence, "Foreword" to *Pansies*, *Complete Poems*, p. 424.



centre of real social conflicts (as is the case with all polemic). Bakhtin describes the “object” of prose discourse in terms that would be highly appropriate if applied to Lawrence’s poems:

For the novelist working in prose, the object is always entangled in someone else’s discourse about it, it is already present with qualifications, an object of dispute that is conceptualized and evaluated variously, inseparable from the heteroglot social apperception of it. The novelist speaks of this “already qualified world” in a language that is heteroglot and internally dialogized. Thus both object and language are revealed to the novelist in their historical dimension, in the process of social and heteroglot becoming.<sup>63</sup>

“Money-Madness” is saturated with this world of heteroglossia at the height of its propagandist force:

Bread should be free,  
shelter should be free,  
fire should be free  
to all and anybody, all and anybody, all over the world.

We must regain our sanity about money  
before we start killing one another about it.  
It’s one thing or the other.

The fact that “bread”, “shelter”, and “fire” are not “free” gives the words their meaning. The fact that Lawrence’s society is one in which these essentials are not “free” makes this subject a point of contention. The highly polemical language of the poem exists only in relation to the reality that opposes it and, therefore, to the fact that other people oppose it with different languages and perspectives of their own. Heteroglossia is therefore absolutely essential to the existence and meaning of the poem’s words at this point, which direct themselves to an “object of dispute that is conceptualized and evaluated variously”. Consequently, the text is in dialogue with a surrounding “already

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<sup>63</sup> Bakhtin, p. 330.

qualified world"; its intrinsically oppositional nature ("Bread should be free") assumes a conflicting consensus and reality.

Unlike the self-contained, unitary discourse of the epic which is, for Bakhtin, extra-historical and removed from the world of heteroglossia, polemic is "internally dialogized". By its nature, polemic knows itself as one voice and one perspective among many. Polemic assumes opposition in order for it to speak in the first place: the word "should" contains the "linguistic consciousness" that there is a contesting voice saying "should not". The agitational nature of polemic, clear in *Pansies*, does not mean that the voice successfully excludes opposition. It is, in the first place, a response to an already produced and "qualified" world - the beginnings of dialogue. Furthermore, as critics of *Pansies* have illustrated in their passionate and unanalytical responses, agitation provokes debate, not simple agreement. When reading *Pansies* our reactions are very likely to vary widely from rage or irritation to enlightenment or rebellion, but are more likely to be extreme than indifferent. Such a range of response creates fertile foundations for dialogue. The didactic voices of *Pansies* are an aid to dialogue not a hindrance - they provoke a response. Lawrence himself knew this when he said that the poems "shall rouse hostility".<sup>64</sup> *Pansies* are poems that bring into the poetic genre the "multi-linguagedness" of the world which Bakhtin reserves for the novel. In doing so they bring voices into poetry that were previously excluded, voices which embody values that could not previously be contained within the genre. In Lawrence's poems, these values are frequently anti-middle class, populist and socialist. This is not, however, to give primacy to one ideological

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<sup>64</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 31 December 1928, p. 111.

discourse alone in the world of language, above that of the others that *Pansies* introduces. It is to redress the balance of languages and beliefs. It is to provide a voice for the hitherto voiceless which is able to speak against the established world of literary discourse from within a form that, in Bakhtin's view, could only contain a "single unitary language";<sup>65</sup> a form which refused contradiction. The anti-literary form, discourse and ideology of *Pansies* transform poetry into another genre that is not a genre. Poetry is thus novelised and rendered open for dialogue to invade its replenished linguistic world. Like the novel, Lawrence's *Pansies* make:

[...] available points of view that are generative in a material sense, since they exist outside literary conventionality and thus have the capacity to broaden the horizon of language available to literature, helping to win for literature new worlds of verbal perception, worlds that had been already sought and partially subdued in other - extraliterary - spheres of linguistic life.<sup>66</sup>

The dominant languages of *Pansies* - unpoetic, propagandist and demotic - utter what was then (and still is) "subdued" in both poetry and "extraliterary" linguistic worlds. Even the conventional criticism levelled at *Pansies* - that of being too "polemical" - provides an example of such linguistic censorship, in its blatant attempt to exclude polemic from literature as if it were a form of language that did not exist. This kind of criticism tries to deny didactic language (and the range of *Weltanschauungen* that it inevitably embodies) a place in literature to be represented and to represent - and to dialogically interact with other languages: this denial, ironically, possesses the kind of Draconian quality often ascribed to polemic.

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<sup>65</sup> Bakhtin, p. 47.

<sup>66</sup> Bakhtin, p. 323.

Contrary to Bakhtin's theoretical distinctions, then, the exclusion of polemical discourse from literature would constitute a reduction in that world's heteroglossia. As the single poem "Money-Madness" demonstrates, polemic - like novelistic discourse - "deals with discourse that is still warm from [social] struggle and hostility, as yet unresolved and still fraught with hostile intentions and accents".<sup>67</sup> It is more peculiar therefore that it should be found in poetry, contrary once again to Bakhtin's theory.

### Conclusion: A Deviation of a Deviation

I have tried to suggest a new way of reading Lawrence's *Pansies*. This has involved a method of selectivity since criticism, by its nature, cannot be all-embracing. Thus, my analysis is not intended to attack selection *ipso facto*, but a certain kind of selection which re-writes and evaluates the work according to arbitrary criteria and refuses to adequately address dominant elements. My intention here has been to redress the balance which has, by necessity, involved a bias in my attention towards the substantial political, demotic and propagandist aspects of *Pansies*, since they have been so obviously neglected.

This examination has also entailed a rejection of two major, conventional assumptions about poetry: namely, that it is neither novelistic nor polemical. Correspondingly, I have attempted to show that any theoretical reduction of *Pansies* into such categories as the "honorable tradition" of literature ignores the complex variety of discourses which are fused together in

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<sup>67</sup> Bakhtin, p. 331.

the work. Criticism's tendency to impose limits upon form - whether it be for the ends of appraisal or attack - is fundamentally flawed: the "poetic" is continually blending into the "ordinary" and the "ordinary" blending into the "poetic", language is naturally shifting, and to assume a set of linguistic limits to a discourse is to posit an abstraction. Moreover, to describe Lawrence's *Pansies* purely either as poems or as pieces of propaganda is a substantial reduction of form. "Money-Madness" is a good example of this, with its slipperiness of language and rhythm. Through such means the poem as a whole denies any attempt at subsumption under a linguistic or literary category.

It seems reasonable to argue that *Pansies* is generally ignored because of this transgression of boundaries, which alienates critics and readers alike: the merger of poetic discourse with a substantial quantity of conventionally "extraliterary" discourses seems to have led critics either to reject them on the grounds of their lack of poetic qualities or to discuss merely those "using various poetic techniques",<sup>68</sup> while staying embarrassingly silent on the remainder. In this final section, I aim to show how, from an historical perspective, such a subversive work might have arisen. As we have seen through a comparison with the Russian Formalist notion of "literariness", *Pansies'* deviation from the conventional deviatory tactics of poetry can account for much of its estranging effect. However, as I hope to illustrate, it is not only in the formal qualities of *Pansies* that the poems are deviatory and alienating, but in the very choices (inseparable from those formal qualities) that Lawrence made in terms of subject matter and treatment of that subject

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<sup>68</sup> Dougherty, p. 166. Those few "illustrative" poems which Dougherty says critics most concentrate upon are described in the following terms: "those which illustrate a point, using various poetic techniques [...] rather than expounding a point". Dougherty does not endow the largely ignored "non-illustrative" poems with any poetic attributes in his classification of the

matter. In short, *Pansies* speak of the very things poetry must not speak of in order for it to be read or even exist at all: *Pansies* are poems which refuse to deviate where they should.

The most startling aspect of these poems - for even the reader well-acquainted with the rest of Lawrence's artistic output - is their clear and persistent focus upon political issues, ranging from a preoccupation with broader ideological questions, through problems of class and education, to issues of work, money and property. Although some of Lawrence's readers would be aware of his profound interest in politics through his essays and novels (in particular the *Aaron's Rod* (1922), *Kangaroo* (1923), *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) line), never before had Lawrence allowed himself to be committed, in his so-called artistic work, to such a frank and sustained engagement with these problems. The novels allow him to slip in and out of political issues through their exploration of individual lives in a whole complex of social relationships.

Certainly *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) had paved the way for Lawrence openly to use art as a means of simply and confrontationally conveying his thoughts ("Pensées") on society. As John Worthen has pointed out, Lawrence's discovery of the world of private publishing allowed him to re-write the novel in a whole new manner:

Knowing that he had a plan which would 'fling it in the face of the world' (vi, p. 293), his revision could also address itself directly to the stultifying social world which would directly oppose any such publication or venture. The book would also address itself to modern men and women as a pamphlet might address them: it would take its chance of saying exactly what Lawrence wanted to say about modern sexuality. The book would

in fact become a devastating attack upon Lawrence's contemporaries: 'a kind of bomb: but a beneficent one, and very necessary' (vi. p. 316). It was revised in the white heat of that new conception; Lawrence, a rather ill man, wrote every word of a new 724-page manuscript of it in less than six weeks.<sup>69</sup>

There are two extremely relevant points in this small passage. Firstly, Worthen explicitly connects the new method of private publication with the new, blatantly direct method of Lawrence's writing - he has gained a greater freedom of expression since there is no need to worry about the fears of a publisher. Of course, Lawrence published *Pansies* both with his publisher, Martin Secker, and privately, but he was now much more confident that he could sell his poems regardless of their content (or form), both because he knew he could now publish privately and because he was aware of the new market for his work (created by the scandal of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*). Astonishingly, for a writer normally so desperately dependent upon his publisher's approval, he even told Secker (his English publisher since 1918), "don't touch them if you don't like them."<sup>70</sup>

Secondly, there is Worthen's important description of Lawrence's novel as addressing itself to "modern men and women as a pamphlet might address them". We can clearly see in the form, tone and content of *Pansies* that Lawrence not only adopted this new "pamphlet"-type approach to the novel but to his subsequent collection of new poems also. Furthermore, there are frequent references in his letters which suggest that he knew many people

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<sup>69</sup> John Worthen, "D. H. Lawrence and the 'Expensive Edition Business'", *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace*, ed. Ian Willison, Warwick Gould and Warren Chernaik (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 118. This passage's reference to Lawrence's poor health at the time of writing his 724-page novel is relevant to the critical heritage of *Pansies*: many critics have made excuses for the poems by referring to Lawrence's illness, even suggesting that it accounts for their brevity as well as their quality.

<sup>70</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 7 January 1929, p. 123.

would resent this kind of deliberately provocative method: to Mabel Dodge Luhan he wrote, "I've done such an amusing book of rag poems [...] make them all cross again";<sup>71</sup> to Nancy Pearn, "a number of them I guess you'll hate";<sup>72</sup> to Secker, "You may just dislike them as you disliked *Lady C*";<sup>73</sup> to Pollinger, "They may just displease you, so be prepared";<sup>74</sup> and to Charles Lahr, "[the *Pansies*] shall rouse hostility". Indeed, having already written what he himself called an "anti-middle-class" novel and received such an unwelcoming reception from its predominantly middle-class readership, Lawrence knew perfectly well what he was doing when he wrote his "very anti-middle-class" poems.<sup>75</sup> It is not therefore unfair to suggest that the thoroughly unsympathetic response to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* only encouraged Lawrence to raise the level of his attack to the degree of the didactic, biting satirical and often virulent *Pansies*.

Moreover, Lawrence even wrote to P. R. Stephensen in the midst of the poems' construction: "We *must* make a hole in the bourgeois world which is the whole world of consciousness today. If your mandrake is going to grow, let

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<sup>71</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 25 December 1928, p. 95. It is interesting to note the use of the word "rag" by Lawrence here, since it says a great deal about his vision of the poems. Here are some definitions of the word "rag" particularly relevant to the style of *Pansies*: "A small worthless fragment or shred of some woven material; *esp.* one of the irregular scraps into which a piece of such material is reduced by wear and tear"; "Used (*esp.* in negative phrases) to suggest the smallest scrap of cloth or clothing"; "A fragment, scrap, bit, remnant; a torn or irregularly shaped piece"; "of immaterial things"; "Applied contemptuously to things"; "An act of ragging; *esp.* an extensive display of noisy disorderly conduct, carried on in defiance of authority or discipline"; "A musical composition written in ragtime, a ragtime tune"; "To scold, rate, talk severely to. Also to examine or question"; "To annoy, tease, torment; *spec.* in *University slang*, to annoy or assail in a rough or noisy fashion; to create wild disorder"; and "To wrangle over a subject", *The Oxford English Dictionary: Volume XIII*, prep. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 113-5. The definition of "rag" as a "ragtime" composition is interesting with specific regard to one of the definitions of "ragtime" itself: "Ragged; irregular, inferior, disorderly; disreputable, mean", p. 122.

<sup>72</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 15 December 1928, p. 65.

<sup>73</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 7 January 1929, p. 122.

<sup>74</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 7 January 1929, p. 122.

<sup>75</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 31 December 1928, p. 111.



him shove up under the walls of this prison-system, and bust them.”<sup>76</sup> Perhaps even more curious is the echo in these words of Lawrence’s remarks on poetry in an essay written earlier that year:

This is the momentous crisis for mankind, when we have to get back to chaos. So long as the umbrella serves, and poets make slits in it, and the mass of people can be gradually educated up to the vision in the slit: which means they patch it over with a patch that looks just like the vision in the slit: so long as this process can continue, and mankind be educated up, and thus built in, so long will a civilisation continue more or less happily, completing its own painted prison. It is called completing the consciousness [....] [Poets] show the desire of chaos, and the fear of chaos. The desire for chaos is the breath of their poetry. The fear of chaos is in their parade of forms and technique.”<sup>77</sup>

The freedom granted to Lawrence by his first venture into the private book trade, combined with the consequent discovery of a new conception of his art and its objectives - like those of a “bomb”, to make “chaos” or, at the very least, a “hole” in the “prison” of middle-class “consciousness” - helped to create the form, or rather “chaos”, and subject-matter of *Pansies*; there was, after all, a method behind the madness.

However, there is still a significant change in the direction of the attack in *Pansies* from that of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* which has yet to be addressed: *Pansies*’ peculiarly relentless attack on the political and economic situation. For *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* focuses predominantly on issues of sex and morality and, while it does carry out a high degree of political or (as Lawrence

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<sup>76</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 20 December 1928, p. 79.

<sup>77</sup> This passage is from “Chaos in Poetry”, written 17-29 April 1928 as the introduction to Harry Crosby’s *Chariot of the Sun*. See “*Chariot of the Sun*, by Harry Crosby”, *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Edward D. McDonald (London: Heinemann, 1936), pp. 255-62, 256-7.

described it) "class analysis",<sup>78</sup> such analysis does not dominate the work as it does in *Pansies*. Conversely, the poems can and do close in on specific political issues with an uncomfortable persistence. What are the origins of this new focus? In order to answer this question, we must examine some significant changes in Lawrence's life in the four-year period leading up to the publication of *Pansies*.

In March 1925, Lawrence was officially diagnosed as having tuberculosis. That same year, after a period of relative prosperity, he had split with his American publisher, Seltzer, who was slowly subsiding into financial collapse. As a consequence, Lawrence's market was radically reduced at a time when he most needed financial security.<sup>79</sup> It was not only, as Lawrence himself pointed out to Curtis Brown in November 1927, "not cheap, being ill and doing cures"<sup>80</sup>, but there was Frieda's future to consider now that Lawrence knew that his time was short. Hence the financial pressure of these last years was one major reason why Lawrence was particularly attracted to the idea of publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover* privately. Helen Stone outlines some major advantages of such a venture:

the British Government's introduction of a new 20% royalty tax to be levied on the earnings of expatriate British subjects was a major blow to an author with earnings like Lawrence. Coupled with the usual 10%

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<sup>78</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 31 December 1928, p. 111.

<sup>79</sup> See John Worthen, "D. H. Lawrence and the 'Expensive Edition Business' ", p. 109: "Lawrence's income from 1925 to 1930 was savagely reduced, as his whole American publishing career ran into the sand [...] For the first time in four years he was having to rely primarily upon his English sales, which had never been very good; and, for the first time in his life, he knew that his health was seriously in danger [...] The doctor in Mexico City who had told him [that he had TB] in March 1925 had in fact given him at most two years to live; and although he lived for nearly five, his health - never good at the best of times - was henceforward to be a constant problem. Not only would he simply not be able to work so hard (and therefore earn so much) as a writer; he was increasingly going to have to pay doctors' (and/or sanatorium) bills; and would also live the relatively expensive life of the European who requires sun and warmth during the winter - along the shores of the Mediterranean."

<sup>80</sup> *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, vol. VI, ed. James T. Boulton and Margaret H. Boulton, with Gerald M. Lacy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 18 November 1927, p. 222.

deduction claimed by his literary agents, Lawrence felt pessimistic at the possibility of making much money from his work, particularly now his failing health had made him noticeably less prolific.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, privately producing the novel gave Lawrence his best chance of providing for both his and Frieda's thoroughly precarious future. As Worthen elaborates:

The usual financing of a book would be turned upside down: Curtis Brown would not be involved; Orioli, as helper, would get 10% of the profits of the Florentine publication...Lawrence, as author, organiser and paymaster, would get 90%. And as the book was published outside England, there would be no 20% tax for the British government either.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, Lawrence's financial position had especially deteriorated during the course of 1927 and, as we can see from his letters towards the end of that year, had evidently begun to worry and irritate him. He wrote to Richard Aldington, "I damn well ought to have enough to live on - so I have, by living like a road-sweeper."<sup>83</sup>

This sense of bitterness and anxiety over his position as a professional writer was further heightened at this time by a chance meeting with his former acquaintance, Michael Arlen, a highly successful novelist as a result of his best-selling *The Green Hat* of 1924. This encounter, which involved a discussion of their highly contrasting fortunes, must have deeply affected Lawrence, for following the meeting Lawrence commented: "Definitely I hate the whole money-making world, Tom & Dick as well as en gros. But I won't be done by them either."<sup>84</sup> This expression of frustrated anger at the

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<sup>81</sup> Helen E. Stone, "The Lost Ladies: The Marketing and Sale of the Florentine Editions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*" (MA Dissertation, University of Nottingham, 1995), p. vii.

<sup>82</sup> John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 144.

<sup>83</sup> *Letters*, vol. VI, 18 November 1927, p. 220.

<sup>84</sup> Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: A Literary Life*, p. vi. Worthen gives his source as

contradictory situation of a radically anti-bourgeois writer within a capitalist scheme of production is pertinent to the focus of many of the *Pansies* ("Money-Madness" being an obvious example), which intensify the criticism of capitalism which had become so prevalent in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (particularly in the treatment of the character Michaelis, who was based on Arlen).

Lawrence's almost simultaneous encounter with Norman Douglas helped to confirm his feeling of angry acceptance: an acceptance of the only means by which he could realistically tackle an increasing inability to earn his livelihood. Helen Stone has described the significant influence of Douglas's methods of publication upon Lawrence's own:

For Douglas, too, shortage of money had prompted him to publish his work privately; the turning point in both his life and career was perhaps the establishment of his friendship with Pino Orioli in 1922. Douglas milked the tourist trade for all it was worth with his expensive, collectable deluxe editions. By 1927, he was marketing *In The Beginning*, one of his particularly lucrative novels. It is probable that Lawrence gained the idea of 700 copies at 2 guineas each from this novel [...] [in the event, Lawrence published 1000 copies at £2 each] In *Late Harvest*, Douglas gives advice that Lawrence was to follow to the letter:

....print your book in a small signed edition handsomely and expensively...then, when the edition is exhausted or begins to show signs of falling off, sell it outright to your publisher for whatever you can get.<sup>85</sup>

Four days after his meeting with Douglas, Lawrence asked Orioli, a Florentine bookseller and publisher, for his help.

From this point onward, the kind of contradictions I have described only intensify. A glance at Lawrence's letters in the months from November

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"Memorandum by Lawrence, 19 November 1927".

<sup>85</sup> Stone, p. viii.

1928 to January 1929 (the period in which the majority of *Pansies* was written) will serve well as an overview of the astonishing range of conflicting contexts in which money came into Lawrence's life and thoughts as a professional writer, after the publication of the two Florentine editions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*: to Herbert Seligmann, Lawrence wrote "I'm afraid I'm not the stuff prosperity is made out of. I expect little myself [...] and get along well enough on what comes my way";<sup>86</sup> to the Brewsters, "we ought to be thankful [....] So many people have so much less";<sup>87</sup> to Maria Huxley, "Do hope the book [Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point*] makes *real* money!";<sup>88</sup> to Dorothy Brett, "I've done little articles for newspapers [...] make a little money to go on with. Anyhow, I've got all I need - and am not bothering";<sup>89</sup> to Seltzer, "you can knock something off that old debt to me [Lawrence estimated this to be \$4,000 in accumulated royalties]";<sup>90</sup> to Brett, "I'm sick of being swindled";<sup>91</sup> to the Huxleys, "If only I had 2,000 I could kill the pirates [of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*]";<sup>92</sup> to Orioli, "the profits are just about £1,000 [for *Lady Chatterley's Lover*]";<sup>93</sup> to Orioli again, "I think they will do my pictures in a *book* at ten guineas!";<sup>94</sup> to Baroness Anna von Richthofen, "It seems mad to me - but it's his money, and he'll also pay me well [...] But how crazy people are [...] *de luxe* books costing 40M. or 100M. or even 500 Marks. I hate it";<sup>95</sup> to Sylvia Beach (on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*), "I'm sure it would be a paying

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<sup>86</sup> *Letters*, vol. VI, 8 November 1928, p. 607.

<sup>87</sup> *Letters*, vol. VI, 8 November 1928, p. 609.

<sup>88</sup> *Letters*, vol. VI, 8 November 1928, p. 610.

<sup>89</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 23 November 1928, p. 26.

<sup>90</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 3 December 1928, p. 38.

<sup>91</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 10 December 1928, p. 55.

<sup>92</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 10 December 1928, p. 57.

<sup>93</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 14 December 1928, p. 61.

<sup>94</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 19 December 1928, p. 71.

<sup>95</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 19 December 1928, p. 74.

thing: and I want the book sold, I want the public to get it, and not too dear either";<sup>96</sup> to Charles Wilson (under the heading of "New Years Greetings to the Willington Men"), "You've got to smash money and this beastly *possessive* spirit";<sup>97</sup> to Charles Lahr, "I'm glad you are Clifford Mellors: hope you've got the spunk of the one and the money of the other: how nice!";<sup>98</sup> to Secker (on *Pansies*), "If you did publish them, I should like just a limited edition of 500 or so, signed at a guinea or thereabouts, then a cheap edition, say 2/6, because I should like them to be easily accessible to poorer people";<sup>99</sup> to Lahr, "don't make money - it's the ruin of a man";<sup>100</sup> to Emily King, "They will print only 500 copies at 10 guineas a copy [...] I shan't make a great deal out of it myself";<sup>101</sup> and to Pollinger, "I escape paying the govt. tax on the money for the pictures - which is in no way a royalty".<sup>102</sup>

The problematic and contradictory situation of a writer who hates money but needs it is shown here with painful clarity. Two major sources of this intensified internal conflict can clearly be identified: firstly, the financial and organisational problems involved in the process of privately publishing, marketing and selling *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; and secondly, the emergence of numerous opportunities for Lawrence to publish his books in the form of an expensive, limited edition. These new factors, specific to Lawrence's life in 1928, combine with his typical (though fluctuating) desire to reach the public and affect people's ideas, and what I have already shown to be an increasing

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<sup>96</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 19 December 1928, p. 75.

<sup>97</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 28 December 1928, p. 99.

<sup>98</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 31 December 1928, p. 110.

<sup>99</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 7 January 1929, p. 123.

<sup>100</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 7 January 1929, p. 121.

<sup>101</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 11 January 1929, p. 128.

<sup>102</sup> *Letters*, vol. VII, 12 January 1929, pp. 130-1.

anxiety over his and Frieda's future economic situation, to create the irreconcilable contradictions which produced *Pansies* – the most violent attack Lawrence was ever to make on capitalist society.

Perhaps the most significant factor figuring in these contradictions, however, is that of Lawrence's involvement in the expensive edition business. Despite having a very negative initial experience of this form of publishing with Beaumont's publication of *Bay* in 1919,<sup>103</sup> Lawrence kept returning to it in the last years of his life. His motive for doing so in 1925, with *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*, is vital to an understanding of this intensely contradictory and significant aspect of Lawrence's writing life: he told David Jester of the Centaur Press (the publisher of *Reflections*), "I am glad to be doing this book, really, *not* through a 'public channel'. I feel you are half private: which suits me better".<sup>104</sup> This is a surprising explanation for a writer who was always so intent on reaching his "public" (a desire to which the letters quoted above surely testify). We can see the contradiction in process, however, in David Ellis' description of Lawrence's response to his chosen method of publication for his book of paintings:

[...] financed by Edward Goldston, a rich antiquarian bookseller [...] the book of paintings [...] sold in its ordinary edition at 10 guineas and made a profit of £2,000. Lawrence would be embarrassed to be associated with a book which was so dear [as the letters quoted above illustrate] and several times in this period stressed how anxious he was for his work to be seen by poor people - at one point he even began exploring schemes for publishing his pansies in cheap broadsheet form.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> See Worthen, "D. H. Lawrence and the 'Expensive Edition Business' ", pp. 110-12.

<sup>104</sup> *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, vol. V, ed. James T. Boulton and Lindeth Vasey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 12 August 1925, p. 284.

<sup>105</sup> David Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game 1922-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 458.

An account of Lawrence's exploration of this "cheap broadsheet form" of publication is given by Ellis.<sup>106</sup> The final reversal of his decision to use such a form of publication after a long period of deliberation confirms how profound an ambivalence Lawrence felt at this point in his writing life over his relationship with his audience.

The growth of such a complex and problematic sensibility in the writer's attitude towards their audience is seen, by Raymond Williams, as originating in the Romantic period. As Williams says, although the birth of the "literary market" provided the possibility for a "raised social status", the usual "liabilities to caprice and [...] obligations to please" were now "not liabilities to individuals personally known, but to the workings of an institution which seemed largely impersonal". As a consequence, the feeling of discontent with the "public channel" became "acute and general".<sup>107</sup> This two-fold effect of intensification and expansion led to what Williams calls "an important criticism of the new kind of social relationships of art: when art is a commodity, taste is adequate, but when it is something more, a more active relationship is essential".<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> See Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence*, p. 702: "DHL's interest in reaching a working-class public was stimulated by his correspondence with Charles Wilson, a journalist and poet from the North East, who had first written to him towards the end of 1927 (vi. 229), and who was later to invite both Joyce and Huxley to lecture to the Durham miners. In response to what seems to have been a request from Wilson for some kind of 'message' for the miners, DHL sent him five of his recent *pansies* on 28 December [...]. On 11 January 1929, DHL told Davies that Stephensen 'liked the *Pansies*, was pining to take a pamphlet or broadside from them, for the working-classes' (vii. 128). DHL was attracted by the idea and on 18 March, to the dismay of his agent Pollinger ('He's crazy'), suggested that he might have some of his *pansies* done as 'a broadside at 2d., for the election' - due to take place on 30 May (vii. 218). On 18 April he told Charles Lahr, 'I have no MS here now from which to choose an election broadside. But you choose one, and let me know, and we can go ahead with that' (vii. 256). A month later, however, he admitted to Kot that he felt 'hesitant about a broadside for electioneering purposes - it's not quite my line' (vii. 282)."

<sup>107</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 50-51.

<sup>108</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture*, p. 58. Christopher Caudwell has discussed the consequences of these changes for art's relationship with society in general, defining the most explicit



Thus, Lawrence's dissatisfaction with the "public channel" can be understood not only in terms of his lack of success through it, but in terms of his alienated sense of the commodification of his art: Lawrence's work was neither appreciated in the "active" way in which he felt it should be, nor was he even free to make his art the way he wanted it. Ironically, the medium Lawrence chose to overcome this inadequate and impoverishing relationship with his audience - the expensive edition - was one which both embodied the decadent materialism so repulsive to him (Lawrence often felt guilty about the expensive price and, as I quoted earlier, he thought the trade in expensive "*de luxe*" editions "crazy"), and was incapable of granting him the appreciation he so greatly desired.<sup>109</sup> The privately printed *Lady Chatterley's Lover* allowed

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outcome as aestheticism. Caudwell writes of a "phase of bourgeois poetry [...] that of 'commodity-fetishism' - or 'art for art's sake' - " which is "given in the false position of the bourgeois poet as producer for the market, a position forced on him by the development of bourgeois economy. As soon as the pessimism of Arnold and the young Tennyson, and the even sadder optimism of Browning and Swinburne and the old Tennyson when dealing with the contemporary scene, made it inevitable that the poet quit the contemporary scene, it was equally inevitable that the poet should fall a victim to commodity-fetishism. This meant a movement which would completely separate the world of art from the world of reality and, in doing so, separate it from the source of art itself" (*Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry* [1937; London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977], p. 116). It is one of my contentions in the following argument that *Pansies* arises out of a struggle with such a predominant aestheticism. Lawrence had been attracted to "art for art's sake" as the young writer of novels such as *The White Peacock* and *The Trespasser*, but had grown to detest it, commenting in 1925: "I can't bear art that you can walk round and admire. A book should be either a bandit or a rebel or a man in a crowd [...] I hate the actor and audience business. An author should be in among the crowd, kicking their shins or cheering them on to some mischief or merriment [...] After all, the world is not a stage [...] And art [...] [is] not little theatres where the reader sits aloft and watches - like a god with a twenty-Lira ticket - and sighs, commiserates, condones and smiles [...] whoever reads me will be in the thick of the scrimmage, and if he doesn't like it - if he wants a safe seat in the audience - let him read somebody else" (*Letters*, vol. V, 22 January 1925, p. 201). Here, both the distinction drawn between a passive, consuming aestheticism and an active, participatory art and the related contrast between a bourgeois spectator and a man in a crowd seem to prefigure the foundations of *Pansies*' techniques. Furthermore, as in *Pansies*, the author himself is toppled from his Romantic pedestal above quotidian life, proletarianised and radicalised.

<sup>109</sup> Lawrence's choice of medium can perhaps be understood, however, as an attempt to partially retrieve for the artist the world of pre-capitalist social relations. Caudwell describes those relations, economically possible only through upper-class patronage, as "idyllic". However: "Such an 'idyllic' relation means that the poet writes non-idyllic poetry. He still sees himself as a man playing a social rôle [...] It imposes on him the obligation to speak the language of his paymasters or co-poets [...] the ruling class. Johnson - dependent on subscribers - bridges the gap between the poet by status and the poet as producer. Thus poetry remains in this sense collective. It talks a more or less current language, and the poet writes for

Lawrence the freedom to say what he liked, liberating him from the alien, “impersonal” constraints of the market while also allowing him - without the intermediary of a publisher - the product of his labour. However, despite these gains, the novel did not serve to liberate him from either censorship or his audience’s overwhelming rejection of his art. Furthermore, the lack of a copyright on the novel allowed it to be pirated on a considerable scale, thus actually denying Lawrence, to a substantial extent, the fruit of his labour.

It is not surprising therefore that, following the novel and out of this whole context, Lawrence was so courageously radical in the writing of his new poems: he had nothing to lose from being so, and must have guessed he could gain financially from the scandal created by *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, regardless of the nature of his work. Nor is it peculiar that, paradoxically, he was unable to produce *Pansies* in the “cheap broadsheet form” he had been considering: such a “public channel” was, by this stage of disillusionment, impossible for Lawrence. Moreover, in *Pansies*, these deeply-felt contradictions experienced by him are manifested at the level of production. Produced both privately and publicly,<sup>110</sup> the poems peculiarly combine a personal and direct tone with a general appeal to a wide, and particularly English, audience. However, more crucially, there is an intensified sense of the freedom of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and a new sense of entrapment: *Lady*

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an audience he has directly in mind, to whom perhaps he will presently read his poems and so be able to watch their effect. Poetry is still for him not so much a poem - a self-subsisting work of art - as a movement from writer to reader [...] Hence he realises himself as playing a social rôle: inspirer of humanity or redresser of the follies of mankind. He has not yet become a self-conscious artist” (Caudwell, p. 99-100). We can see how the publishing of an expensive edition (through subscription) compares to this form of production: both possess the attraction of a more or less known audience.

<sup>110</sup> Although Lawrence did not know he would publish the poems using both these methods, he evidently held both options as fairly equal possibilities while writing them: he wrote to Pollinger, “I don’t mind a bit if [Secker] doesn’t publish them”, *Letters*, vol. VII, 7 January 1929, p. 122.

*Chatterley's Lover* had only reinforced Lawrence's alienated sense of his audience and of the "whole scheme of things". The poem "There Is No Way Out" is a good example of this ambivalence:

There Is No Way Out

There is no way out, we are all caged monkeys  
blue-arsed with the money-bruise  
and wearing our seats out sitting on money.

There is no way out, the cage has no door, it's rusted  
solid.

If you copulate with the finest woman on earth  
There's no relief, only a moment's sullen respite.

You're a caged monkey again in five minutes.  
Therefore be prepared to tackle the cage.<sup>111</sup>

This poem embodies the overriding feeling of *Pansies*: the new-found freedom of expression and relentless, positive attempt at visualising a "way out"<sup>112</sup> is combined with a sense of complete, maddened frustration at the capitalist system.<sup>113</sup> The origins of such an unorthodox and double-edged

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<sup>111</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, pp. 485-6.

<sup>112</sup> See *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography: Volume Three, 1925-30*, ed. Edward Nehls (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), in which Rhys Davies remarks that Lawrence once "rapped out at me: 'All you young writers have me to thank for what freedom you enjoy, even as things are, for being able to say much that you couldn't even hint at before I appeared. It was I who set about smashing down the barriers'" (p. 275). Lawrence's sense of himself in this passage as a writer who enhances both individual and collective freedom connects with the powerful freedom of expression and sense of didactic intention so characteristic of the poems he was at this time producing.

<sup>113</sup> See *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, in which Rhys Davies provides an interesting account of this frustration during the period of *Pansies*' construction: "his arraignment of the young was not so wholehearted as his fierce raging hatred of the generation that sat in tight yet flabby ruling of the world, the moneyed and the governing classes particularly. It was they who were rotting the world, it was they who closed themselves to the voice of the spirit and lived only in the vulgar transaction of being worldlily successful, of attaining at all costs the power to grind down someone else. The young he blamed for allowing them to do it without protest [...] he spoke of the way those elders had tried to curb him, how, indeed, they *had* curbed him. 'I know I'm in a cage,' he rapped out, 'I know I'm like a monkey in a cage. But if anyone puts a finger in my cage, I bite— and bite hard'" (p. 273). What is significant here is not simply the overt parallelism between these words and the language of "There Is No Way Out", but the surrounding context which Davies provides for Lawrence's remarks. Notably, it is "the moneyed and governing classes" who establish the "cage", and hence it is they who possess the "power" to "grind down" and "curb" others. This socialistically class-conscious position, unorthodox for Lawrence, is further emphasised by

feeling, not to be found in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, are made manifest in the directly related contradictions - conscious in Lawrence, as we can see from such poems as the one above - in the actual conditions of production of *Pansies* itself: the first edition, mass-produced for the public yet capitalistic in its mode of production; the second edition, privately printed yet socialistic in the absence of an external profit-making publisher.<sup>114</sup> Although *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was eventually published in both private and public editions, the cheap Paris edition published by Titus at 60 francs was only published as an afterthought in response to the numerous pirated editions of the novel. *Pansies*, on the other hand, was conceived with two audiences equally in mind: the private and public editions were published within weeks of each other. This duality of intended readership is evident from the various forms of

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Davies: "though he would speak with contempt and anger of the economic poverty of his childhood and the horrible dreariness that trails behind mining village life, his days in those districts [...] seemed, as he talked, to have given him glee and satisfaction" (p. 276). In allying himself with the "curbed" class from which he came and in expressing such antagonism to the "ruling" classes, Lawrence here is adopting a Marxist position. Thus, although frequently hostile to socialism, Lawrence often adopts socialistic or even Marxist standpoints, as many of the poems indicate. This ambivalent relationship with socialist and Marxist ideas is apparent in Lawrence's comment to Charles Lahr: "I shall ask Secker to send review copies to the *Sunday Worker* [a short-lived radical paper of 1929] - little snob. But you'll see, the socialists will hate me most of all. I should like to see real Labour or Socialist or red reviews of *Pansies*" (*Letters*, vol. VII, 8 August 1929, p. 413).

<sup>114</sup> The term "socialistic" requires some qualification. Charles Lahr was the publisher of the private edition of *Pansies* and did take a portion of the profits. However, Lawrence took a much greater percentage of the profits than Lahr (it appears to be approximately double), gaining £500 from the edition of 500 copies, each copy retailing at 40/-: a considerably greater proportion of the product of his labour than he received from Secker's public edition. In turn, although dissatisfied with the quality of Lahr's edition ("they've made rather an awful book of it", *Letters*, vol. VII, 6 August 1929, p. 407), he did not have the problems which hounded him with Secker and Knopf (publisher of the American public edition). These difficulties included expurgation ("I simply don't want to come out with a bourgeois 'inoffensive' *Pansies*", *Letters*, vol. VII, 5 April 1929, p. 242), disputes over royalties ("why should my royalty be only ten per-cent?...why this beautiful margin *always* for the publisher?", *Letters*, vol. VII, 27 April 1929, p. 267), disputes over the profits from Lawrence's signatures ("I will not merely sign money into Martin Secker's pocket", *Letters*, vol. VII, 22 May 1929, p. 297), and demands on the level of Lawrence's output ("I dont [sic] care if Knopf doesn't publish *Pansies* [...] Agree to bind myself to two more books of poetry I will not", *Letters*, vol. VII, 31 May 1929, p. 313). With Lahr, Lawrence evidently felt more relaxed (he attempted to persuade Lahr to take an equal share in the profits) and, although disappointed with the final product's appearance, was grateful and "glad it's done entire" without expurgations (*Letters*, vol. VII, 5 August 1929, p. 406).

address the poems use. Some, in their calls for revolution and use of regional dialect, are (such as the poems Lawrence sent to the Willington miners) intended for a working-class audience, while others, such as "Let the Dead Bury their Dead" and "How Beastly the Bourgeois Is", with their more metaphorical language and poetic diction, seem to be aimed at a middle-class audience who are expected to pay for the privilege of being insulted.

Thus in one sense we have the freedom of a writer who has significantly more control over his labour and its product than ever before, and who is attempting to address a wider audience whom he still feels has potential for social and political action; while in another sense we have the profound and anarchic sense of alienation<sup>115</sup> of a writer who is still producing his work within a capitalistic mode of production, who is aware of the largely middle-class audience he is, in reality, reaching, and who is frustrated by their inertia. By contrast, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, not intended for a public edition and therefore not produced with a large audience in mind, let alone a working-class one, does not possess this alienated and alienating quality. This is the salient characteristic of *Pansies* and is highly significant when it is recalled that it was such a marked feeling of alienation which Karl Marx insisted was indispensable from the nature of capitalist production.

For according to Marx, under capitalism, the worker does not actualise

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<sup>115</sup> This sense of alienation can be related in part by the unresolved tension in Lawrence between what he called the "sort of esoteric public" and the "great stupid exoteric public" (*Letters*, vol. VII, 3 September 1929, p. 462). Despite his patronising contempt for the latter, he was clearly keen on reaching ordinary people and repeatedly asked Secker, as was usual for commercial publishers, to produce a "cheap edition" (*Letters*, vol. VII, 2 August 1929, p. 402). This, however, did not appear until April 1930 (priced at 3/6 per copy), by which time Lawrence was dead. Similarly, Lawrence tried to persuade Lahr to sell his edition at two guineas rather than three. This was successful, Lahr eventually selling them at 40/-. However, Lawrence still felt that "Forty shillings a copy is fairly high" (*Letters*, vol. VII, 19 August 1929, p. 434) and his use of Secker as a publisher, considering all the problems this entailed, alone indicates that he wanted to reach the "great stupid exoteric public" despite his frustration

himself through his labour but experiences it as a “loss of reality” due to the expropriation of both the product and activity of his labour by the capitalist. Hence the worker’s labour becomes “an object, an exterior existence” existing “outside him”, independently, as something “hostile and alien” to him, thus becoming “a self-sufficient power opposite him.”<sup>116</sup> Correspondingly, the “act of production”, the “productive activity itself”, confronts the worker as an act of self-estrangement: the worker is thus even alienated from his own being which performs that activity.<sup>117</sup> Yet more crucially, however, the worker is alienated from others as well as himself:

What is valid for the relationship of a man to his work, of the product of his work and himself, is also valid for the relationship of man to other men and of their labour and the objects of their labour.<sup>118</sup>

The style of *Pansies*, both alienated and alienating, might be read as a product of such an experience. The consciousness of this kind of experience is, after all, a major element in the choice of subject-matter in *Pansies*. The poem “All That We Have Is Life” is a good example of this dominant consciousness:

#### All That We Have Is Life

All that we have, while we live, is life;  
and if you don’t live during your life, you are a piece of  
dung.

And work is life, and life is lived in work  
unless you’re a wage-slave.  
While a wage-slave works, he leaves life aside  
and stands there a piece of dung.

Men should refuse to be lifelessly at work.  
Men should refuse to be heaps of wage-earning dung.

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with it.

<sup>116</sup> Karl Marx, “*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*” (1930), *Karl Marx: selected writings*, ed. David McLellan (1977; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 2000), pp. 83-121, 86-87.

<sup>117</sup> Marx, p. 88.

<sup>118</sup> Marx, p. 91.

Men should refuse to work at all, as wage-slaves.  
Men should demand to work for themselves, of  
themselves, and put their life in it.  
For if a man has no life in his work, he is mostly a heap  
of dung.<sup>119</sup>

Not only is "All That We Have Is Life" explicitly about the alienation of the wage-earner (he "leaves life aside"), but every aspect of the poem, typically for *Pansies*, alienates its audience. From the propagandist tone to the philosophical style (the poem is set out at the beginning, through its chain of connecting statements, as if it were logically deducing all of its propositions) and "unpoetic" quality of its content, "All That We Have Is Life" is antagonistic to its readership.

However, this technique of double alienation - the work's estrangement of both the conditions of its own production and the "norms" of "literature" (registered by Russian Formalism) - is only possible in *Pansies* as a result of the simultaneous freedom from and imprisonment within capitalist production. Paradoxically, the sense of alienation in *Pansies* is actually dependent upon the liberating effects of private publishing, post-*Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The fact that Lawrence was now released from the fear of failing to live by his work allows him, in *Pansies*, to attack the very system of which he is still a part. The Lawrence who produced *Pansies* was thus both estranged and enlightened, both connected and isolated, both within the system and without, both subjectively experiencing the system and objectively scrutinising it: without both positions, moreover, such an immanent critique would have been impossible. Hence, one moment the speaker is capable of incorporating the reader in a general "We", and in the next, he is isolating himself while

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<sup>119</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, pp. 449-50.

attacking “you” or the whole of “mankind”. Hence also, the dialogue of opposing voices which is now made possible in Lawrence’s poetry: both reactionary and revolutionary languages, as in for example “Democracy” and “Money-Madness”, and all those voices operating ideologically between them are given space in *Pansies*.<sup>120</sup>

Crucially, however, the author’s unique position, both inside and outside the capitalist mode of production, allows the work to critique the conditions of its own production, saying things a product of capitalism should not say. “Nottingham’s New University” is an outstanding example of the poems’ outrageous method of undermining, metaphorically, both the conditions of their production and those of their reproduction:

#### Nottingham’s New University

In Nottingham, that dismal town  
where I went to school and college,  
they’ve built a new university  
for a new dispensation of knowledge.

Built it most grand and cakeily  
out of the noble loot  
derived from shrewd cash-chemistry  
by good Sir Jesse Boot.

Little I thought, when I was a lad  
and turned my modest penny  
over on Boot’s Cash Chemist’s counter,  
that Jesse, by turning many

millions of similar honest pence  
over, would make a pile  
that would rise at last and blossom out  
in grand and cakey style

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<sup>120</sup> It may be objected that an exception to the dialogical character of *Pansies* is to be found in its tendency to allow misogynist discourses a presence without the counterbalancing representation of feminist voices. However, although misogynist discourses are indeed frequently found in *Pansies*, they too are dialogically undermined by both assertive female voices and self-conscious male voices - the latter showing a comic bewilderment at, or an explicit acceptance of, the women’s movement and the social changes attendant on it. See, for example, “What Ails Thee?”, “It’s No Good!”, “Don’t Look At Me”, and “The Jeune Fille” (Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 540, p. 541, p. 541, and pp. 564-5 respectively).



into a university  
where smart men would dispense  
doses of smart cash-chemistry  
in language of common sense!

That future Nottingham lads would be  
cash-chemically B.Sc.  
that Nottingham lights would rise and say:  
—By Boots I am M.A.

From this I learn, though I knew it before  
that culture has her roots  
in the deep dung of cash, and lore  
is a last offshoot of Boots.<sup>121</sup>

Here, metaphorically speaking, both the conditions which enabled Secker's edition to be published and the potential conditions which might enable it to be republished are brutally and nonchalantly ridiculed. Not only is capitalism itself criticised as in "Money-Madness" and "All That We Have Is Life", but also the "literary", middle-class world of critics and readers: in short, those in control of the work's future. If we recall both Macherey's and Williams's notions of the commodification of literature, we can see how a poem such as this undermines its own existence as a commodity.<sup>122</sup> We cannot "walk round and admire" *Pansies* as we might with a product of aestheticism, thus reifying it. Correspondingly, any "norms" or "rules" we appeal to in order to judge the work's worth as a commodity are redundant in the face of such a hostile and hybrid anti-genre. Furthermore, the passive relationship of the reader to the work of art when it stands solely as a commodity is destroyed in *Pansies*, through the poems' agitational method of arousing response. As Lawrence himself said of the poems, they are - like the flowers that share their name -

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<sup>121</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, p. 488-9.

<sup>122</sup> This attack upon the reduction of literature to a commodity is especially sharp if we are aware that Boots also owned a lending library: although Lawrence did not perhaps know this, the depiction of "lore" as a "last offshoot of Boots" is highly apt in this respect.

“not merely pretty-pretty”, but contain “in their fragrance an earthiness of the humus and the corruptive earth from which they spring.”<sup>123</sup> Unlike lyrical poetry, which can be passively contemplated, *Pansies* are unpleasant and mention everything that poetry should avoid - such as the world of politics, from which conventional poetry must always deviate in order to be successful. Moreover, they actually attack their audience in their anti-literary form and content and in their “anti-middle-class”, anti-capitalist propaganda, thereby forcing readers into an “active” recognition of what is being said: after all, these “very anti-middle-class” poems, Lawrence knew, would mainly be read by the middle classes.

As a consequence, the critics and censors presiding over the literary work’s future reproduction (i.e. its continuing existence as a commodity) are not only ignored but attacked in advance through *Pansies*’ revolutionary methods. The *Pansies* rail against their status as commodities, both by haranguing those who mediate their status as an exchange-value, and through emphasising an “active” relationship with their audience and, therefore, their use-value. The tastefully pretty lyric and the subtle bourgeois work of art, which attempt to encourage profound contemplation and liberal, relativist thinking while downplaying any desire to act or make political commitments, are critiqued both in the *Pansies*’ form and in their content: the poems are outspoken in language and irregular in form, and they overtly attack the “mealy-mouthed truths”<sup>124</sup> of the “god-damn bourgeoisie.”<sup>125</sup> The importance of this kind of challenge can only be seen if we understand the political

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<sup>123</sup> Lawrence, “Foreword” to *Pansies*, *Complete Poems*, p. 423.

<sup>124</sup> Lawrence, “Don’ts”, *Complete Poems*, p. 458.

<sup>125</sup> Lawrence, “Red-Herring”, *Complete Poems*, p. 490.

implications of bourgeois literature. Culture, in the middle-class sense of the word, is humorously described by Eagleton, and worth quoting at length:

To be civilized or cultivated is to be blessed with refined feelings, well-tempered passions, agreeable manners and an open mind. It is to behave reasonably and moderately, with an innate sensitivity to others' interests, to exercise self-discipline, and to be prepared to sacrifice one's own selfish interests to the good of the whole. However splendid some of these prescriptions may be, they are certainly not politically innocent. On the contrary, the cultivated individual sounds suspiciously like a mildly conservative liberal. It is as though BBC newscasters set the paradigm for humanity at large. This civilized individual certainly does not sound like a political revolutionary, even though revolution is part of civilization too. The word 'reasonable' here means something like 'open to persuasion' or 'willing to compromise', as though all passionate conviction was *ipso facto* irrational. Culture is on the side of sentiment rather than passion, which is to say on the side of the mannered middle classes rather than the irate masses. Given the importance of equipoise, it is hard to see why one would not be required to counterbalance an objection to racism with its opposite [...]. Since moderation is always a virtue, a mild distaste for child prostitution would seem more appropriate than a vehement opposition to it. And since action would seem to imply a fairly definitive set of choices, this version of culture is inevitably more contemplative than *engagé*.<sup>126</sup>

The similarity in style between this passage and Lawrence's "The English Are So Nice"<sup>127</sup> is not without significance. The *Pansies*' target of attack is just this "version of culture" that Eagleton outlines. *Pansies* are, in this sense, alienating a certain kind of audience. In many ways they are less hostile to, and more on a level footing with (in their "unpoetic" ridiculing of

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<sup>126</sup> Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 18.

<sup>127</sup> See Lawrence, *Complete Poems*, pp. 659-60. The poem opens: "The English are so nice / so awfully nice / they're the nicest people in the world. / And what's more, they're very nice about being nice / about your being nice as well! / If you're not nice, they soon make you feel it."

literariness), a working-class readership. However, as much as Lawrence wanted to reach “poorer people”, he knew that his audience would inevitably be predominantly from the upper and middle classes: the very people whom *Pansies* attacks. So it is those readers who uphold the interests of capitalism, and who seek to commodify the work of art, who are the target of *Pansies*. The power of the poems is perhaps, therefore, to be found in the contradictory quality of this target: an object of attack and a market to be exploited. Judging from the lack of criticism over the last 71 years, the poems have evidently been more successful in attack than in capturing their niche of the poetry market: Lawrence’s *Pansies* have so far succeeded in warding off those individuals who wish to make them a commodity.

**2: Living the Death of Liberal England:  
Touch and Go and Aaron's Rod, 1918-1922**

Lawrence's acute sense of entrapment and his hostility towards his native country during the war, and his subsequent departure from England in 1919 for the life, in most part, of an exile are well-known. This basic narrative, in fact, underpins many assumptions made about Lawrence, and without a full engagement with his work at an ideological level, it is easy to fall into the trap of understanding this process of rejection as a straightforward abandonment of liberal England. Familiar with the striking authoritarian politics of Lawrence's later work, we can fail to read his writing life in solution and thus allow these more explicit qualities to obscure a text's ideological complexity: we deny the fact that the writing was lived through, rather than produced in an ideological stasis. Hence, a work's most glaring feature becomes its label, and its struggles and conflicts, which make it worthy of attention, are consequently suppressed.

This does not mean to say that we can or should avoid an analysis that attempts to make necessary connections between a work's significations and its contextual sphere of systematised ideologies. Historical analysis is always fundamentally a retrospective, precipitating activity. However, we must recognise that Lawrence and the individuals and social circles (such as the Garsington group) with whom he associated were not living embodiments of consistent political doctrines. Many of them, such as Bertrand Russell, were attempting to think beyond existing world-views. They were living at a time of acute social and political crisis in which contradictions, especially within liberal circles, were all the time emerging. Lawrence was torn at various points by a field of contending socio-political forces, and at no point therefore can he

be reduced to a single one of these forces. The point is to attempt both an understanding of a period from our inevitable vantage point in history and to appreciate the various ideologies which are at work in any given period in which human beings are more than passive receivers and carriers of fixed thought-forms.

In this chapter, I aim to show that liberalism never fully relinquished its hold upon Lawrence and that, contrary to critical orthodoxy, liberalism's struggle with conflicting interests in the social and the individual never ceased to be Lawrence's struggle. The tendency to envisage Lawrence as an idiosyncratic individualist, defiantly dismissive of the major creeds and practices of contemporary British politics, has frequently allowed his work to evade the nets of a proper historical analysis. However, if his post-war output is looked at closely, I believe it is possible to trace the deep and lasting effects of the British political climate on Lawrence, without reducing his work to a mere regurgitation of congealed ideology. Beginning with the play *Touch and Go* (written in 1918, published in 1920), I aim to undertake this examination.

### *Touch and Go*

Lawrence's numerous verbal renunciations of "that old 'advanced' crowd"<sup>1</sup> during the latter half of the war, and his repudiation of "the social passion and social insistence"<sup>2</sup> towards the war's end, are belied in *Touch and Go*, a play which illustrates the fatality of taking what the writer says *about*

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<sup>1</sup> *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, vol. III, ed. James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 11 December 1916, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, vol. III, 26 September 1918, p. 288.

himself for the writer himself.

Macdonald Daly has outlined the major liberal influences on Lawrence during the war and set *Touch and Go* within its historical context as an unabashed enactment of “the consolidation of liberalism, the fact of its historical success, achieved through tactical support of a labour movement which obeys its leaders”.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, Daly has focused mainly upon the ideological correspondences between the play and the “corporatization into trade unions” of working-class activism by a “recuperated liberalism”.<sup>4</sup> However, he also suggests, on numerous occasions, a deeper ideological fixture of *Touch and Go* within the complex and contradictory web of wartime liberal thought. For example, he notes that:

In January [1915] [Lawrence] could tentatively but seriously draw a distinction between ‘politics’ and ‘life’ (corresponding respectively to the public and the private spheres) which (he felt) legitimized ostensible contradictions between community and individual values.<sup>5</sup>

Daly is referring here to Lawrence’s assertion to Lady Ottoline Morrell that “I am no democrat, save in politics [...] life itself is an affair of aristocrats”.<sup>6</sup> Daly goes on to add that “in counterposing an integrated public sphere to an aggregate of merely individual wills, this still left space for open commitment to liberal democratic values”.<sup>7</sup> Considering the ambiguous position of Lawrence’s correspondent this is perhaps unsurprising: Lady Ottoline Morrell was both an aristocrat and the patroness of a group of liberal artists and

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<sup>3</sup> Macdonald Daly, “D. H. Lawrence and Labour in the Great War”, *Modern Language Review* 89, 1994, pp. 19-38, 36.

<sup>4</sup> Daly, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> Daly, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, vol. II, ed. George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 3 January 1915, p. 254.

<sup>7</sup> Daly, p. 23.

intellectuals who opposed the war. However, as Daly suggests, what is significant about Lawrence's remarks here is that he draws a distinction between the individual and society which is typical of traditional liberalism.

This conceptual division is continually made by Lawrence in order to establish taxonomies that share more than a passing affinity with those formed by liberals of this period. His conception of guild socialism on his return to Derbyshire in December 1915 provides a conspicuous instance of this:

These men [...] they understand mentally so horribly: only industrialism, only wages and money and machinery. They can't think anything else. All their collective thinking is in these terms only. They are utterly unable to appreciate any pure, ulterior truth: only this industrial — mechanical — wage idea. This they will act from — nothing else. That is why we are bound to get something like Guild Socialism in the long run. Which is a reduction to the lowest terms.<sup>8</sup>

For Lawrence, here, political solutions are not grounded in economic transformation but in a mode of thinking uncontaminated by base material issues - a "pure, ulterior truth" is the key. The way in which human beings collectively reproduce the conditions of their existence is subsidiary, as a politically determining factor, to the way in which they perceive their lives. Furthermore, the two are not interrelated: economic changes do not have repercussions on the mental life of individuals but merely involve the "lowest terms". This is a marked proclivity of liberal thinkers in this period - the tendency to relegate economic factors for the sake of "higher" aims, owing to a perceived split between the political, socio-economic freedom of the individual as a worker and the freedom of the "private" individual.

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<sup>8</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 27 December 1915, p. 489.



This is illustrated in liberal intellectuals' own response to guild socialism. As Michael Freeden explains, liberals felt that, on the "question of freedom", guild socialism offered as many "possibilities of oppression" as those of "expression". For example:

[Ramsay] Muir gave guild socialism short shrift. Not only was it hard to see how liberty could be increased within the guild, but "it is obvious that it would not increase the liberty of consumers" [....] The liberal fear of sectionalism was here at work, coupled with distrust for a class that had not yet enjoyed the benefits of a liberal, rational education.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the role of producer is seen as a distinguishable element of the individual - a distinct 'social' role. However, J. A. Hobson, a leading figure of British left-liberalism at this time, attempted to move away from this line of thinking:

while other liberals rested content with dismissing guild socialism for ignoring the importance of the consumer and, indeed, the sovereignty of the consumer-cum-citizen [...] Hobson had moved one step ahead. To assert the primacy of the consumer under present conditions misrepresented social facts [...] "man, as worker, is closely associated with his fellow man, as consumer is a detached unit."<sup>10</sup>

This seemingly cohesive sense of the individual's relationship to his working life, and its apparent stress upon the determining nature of the social relationships inherent in industrial organisation for the individual's whole way of life, are undermined, however, by Hobson's proposed solution. For his answer is to promote "a notion of human nature liberated from industrialism", so that "economic values would play a reduced role in personal and social

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Freeden, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought 1914-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 69. Freeden quotes from "Muir, *Liberalism and Industry* (London, 1920)" (p. 55). Muir's abstract notion of the individual who abandons all connection with work once the distinguishable role of consumer is taken on is similar, as we shall shortly see, to Lawrence's sense of work and life as fundamentally distinct modes of being.

<sup>10</sup> Freeden, p. 71. Freeden quotes Hobson from "'The New Industrial Revolution', *CR*, 118 (1920)" (p. 54).

life", thus allowing time for the development of individuals' "other activities and interests".<sup>11</sup> The relationship is, therefore, once again one-way: guild socialism is rejected on the grounds that an empowerment of the working classes in their industrial capacity cannot empower them in the rest of their capacities. This mode of thought is ideologically comparable to Lawrence's and receives one of its earliest airings in his "Study of Thomas Hardy", a text written in 1914:

Work is, simply, the activity necessary for the production of a sufficient supply of food and shelter: nothing more holy than that. It is the producing of the means of self-preservation. Therefore it is obvious that it is not the be-all and the end-all of existence. We work to provide means of subsistence, and when we have made provision, we proceed to live. But all work is only the making provision for that which is to follow.<sup>12</sup>

What distinguishes this argument as a liberal rather than a Marxist theorisation of labour is that it (typically for Lawrence) forms part of a critique of industrialism rather than industrial capitalism. As Lawrence makes clear, he conceives all labour as alienating regardless of its specific historical and material nature: "The dream of every man is that in the end he shall have to work no more. The joy of every man is, when he is released from his labour [...]"<sup>13</sup> Again, compare Hobson:

in line with Hobson's total, organic approach, work was to undergo two transformations. It was to reflect "the freedom of pleasurable production" as a sphere of self-chosen activity in which physical, emotional and rational aspects of human personality were to be invested. But it was not the be-all and end-all of personality which, precisely due to its release from the

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<sup>11</sup> Freeden, p. 72.

<sup>12</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy [1936] and Other Essays*, ed. Bruce Steele, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence, *Study*, p. 35.

oppression of mechanical thralldom, could increasingly engage in the non-industrial side of human life.<sup>14</sup>

The key point here is that neither Hobson nor Lawrence historicise labour. For Hobson too, “industrial work could not, on the whole, be made pleasurable,” though “it could become ‘tolerable and of willing acceptance’.”<sup>15</sup> This is a vision of all industrial labour as estranged labour – a vision which omits the real and historically distinct conditions of capitalist production within which labour occurs. For Hobson’s alternative to guild socialism is to promote “a notion of human nature liberated from industrialism” (not industrial capitalism) through an “organicis[t]” conception of society.<sup>16</sup> Thus Hobson and Lawrence’s mutual assertion that work is not the “be-all and end-all” of an individual’s “existence” / “personality”, although sharing an affinity with socialism’s call for the liberation of human beings from enslavement to the industrial machine, makes no distinction, in a way typical to liberalism, between historically distinct forms of labour. Consequently, their proposed solutions are ahistorical and transcendental; Lawrence turning to metaphysical abstraction and Hobson to the illusory past of the organic society.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, they do not perceive work as a constitutive part of a human being’s “species-being”. By contrast, Karl Marx argues that “it is in the working over of the objective world that man first really affirms himself as a

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<sup>14</sup> Freeden, p. 54. Freeden cites Hobson’s “‘The New Industrial Revolution’” once again and also refers to his “*Problems of a New World* (London, 1921)” (p. 44).

Lawrence’s method of thinking about work in 1914 is, then, no less a feature of the immediate post-war liberal debates. Liberalism’s ahistorical and transcendental analysis of labour is evidently a familiar pattern of thought to the Lawrence of 1914.

<sup>15</sup> Freeden, p. 53.

<sup>16</sup> Freeden, p. 72.

<sup>17</sup> See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 252-3, where Williams illustrates how the term “organic” is always used nostalgically to posit a desired past that has never existed: “If there is one thing certain about ‘the organic community’, it is that it has always gone” (p. 253). It is, furthermore, “a characteristically industrialist, or urban, nostalgia – a late version of medievalism, with its

species-being". "This production", furthermore, "is his active species-life. Through it nature appears as his work and reality". Thus, when labour is non-alienated labour it is not divided from the rest of a human being's "active species-life" as a "tolerable" chore or as simply "a means for his physical existence"; rather, it pervades all his "free activity", his "active species-life".<sup>18</sup> Under capitalism, however, labour is alienated labour, due to the expropriation of the worker's product of labour by the capitalist. Marx's vision of communist society is, therefore, historically grounded since, while it calls for the "all-round development of the individual" and for labour to be "not only a means of life but life's prime want", it insists that the accomplishment of these demands is dependent upon a revolution in productive relations.<sup>19</sup> Thus the transfer of the means of production from private to collective ownership is actually seen as the enabling force behind individual development. This is because, unlike Lawrence's view of social relationships, Marx argues that "every relationship in which man stands to himself, is first realized and expressed in the relationship with which man stands to other men".<sup>20</sup>

Clearly no such outlook governs *Touch and Go*. Individual freedom is beyond the influence of a set of social relations dominated by private and material gain. Oliver Turton, the Lawrencian persona of the play, is adamant about this in his attempt to subdue the miners in the final scene:

I want every man to be able to live and be free. But we shall never manage it by fighting over the money. — If

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attachments to an 'adjusted' feudal society" (pp. 252-3); a feature which makes it all the more conducive to appropriation from an idealist, liberal standpoint.

<sup>18</sup> Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" (1930), *Karl Marx: selected writings*, ed. David McLellan (1977; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 2000), pp. 83-121, 91.

<sup>19</sup> Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme", *Karl Marx*, pp. 610-6, 615.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts", p. 91.

you want what is natural and good, I'm sure the owners would soon agree with you.<sup>21</sup>

Here we find assumptions central to the tenets of liberalism: a faith in rational debate as a solution to the pitfalls of capitalism, a subordination of material issues to ethical ones, and an idealist conception of freedom as extricable from material conditions. It is even made clear by Lawrence, in his "Preface to 'Touch and Go'", that these assumptions are intended. In this preface Lawrence explicitly calls for "some men" to acknowledge that their material struggle is "merely a pretext, another hollow *casus belli*".<sup>22</sup> This not only trivialises the mass exploitation of labour power by the few, but idealistically dissociates the material world from consciousness. Furthermore, he suggests that this acknowledgement, if obtained from "two or three living individuals" on either side of the struggle of "Labour vs. Capitalism", could resolve social conflict.<sup>23</sup> This liberal rationalism is only sharpened by its "distrust for a class that had not yet enjoyed the benefits of a liberal, rational education"<sup>24</sup> when Lawrence describes the majority of miners: "most miners may be pick-cum shovel cum ballot implements, and no more".<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the ethical language of the preface, with its biblical imagery, calls for a "creative suffering" in the transition from "death to birth" which will leave the "whole great structure" of society intact.<sup>26</sup> It contends that "if we could deeply believe in what we were fighting for, then the struggle [for "new freedom, new life"] might have dignity, beauty, satisfaction for us".<sup>27</sup> Thus, Lawrence argues for a moral and

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<sup>21</sup> Lawrence, "Touch and Go" (1920), *The Plays*, ed. Hans-Wilhelm Schwarze and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 430.

<sup>22</sup> Lawrence, "Preface to 'Touch and Go'", *The Plays*, p. 367.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence, "Preface to 'Touch and Go'", p. 365.

<sup>24</sup> Freedon, p. 69.

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence, "Preface to 'Touch and Go'", p. 365.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence, "Preface to 'Touch and Go'", p. 368.

<sup>27</sup> Lawrence, "Preface to 'Touch and Go'", p. 367.

psychological resurrection rather than a material one; a demand which ironically subverts its ethical claims with its blatant concern for maintaining the fundamental material order:

we pile accident on accident, we tear the fabric of our existence fibre by fibre, we confidently look forward to the time when the whole great structure will come down on our heads. Yet after all that, when we are squirming under the debris, we shall have no more faith or hope or satisfaction than we have now. We shall crawl from under one cartwheel straight under another.<sup>28</sup>

Underlying this moralistic cynicism over radical social and economic change is a religious fatalism: "the whole business of life, at the great critical periods of mankind, is that men should accept and be one with their tragedy".<sup>29</sup> Such are the perspectives through which Lawrence introduces the themes of his play in the preface.

The fear for the "whole material substance of life" which the labour struggle inspires in Lawrence, and his consequent hope that the "combatants" of either side will learn to perceive their struggles as less about material issues and more about "a new freedom",<sup>30</sup> points to one of the key implications of the play: namely, that a peaceful and morally just agreement can be attained between the members of groups with radically opposing interests, within a set of specific power relationships. In his discussion of *Touch and Go*, Daly draws out the unquestioned ideological assumptions of the play which allow Lawrence to depict this agreement as a potentially positive political solution. These consist of a shallow conception of social conflict as "constituted at no deeper level than interpersonal disharmony", an ideology of "respectability"

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<sup>28</sup> Lawrence, "Preface to *'Touch and Go'*", pp. 367-8.

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence, "Preface to *'Touch and Go'*", p. 368.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence, "Preface to *'Touch and Go'*", p. 367.

with its "concealed but structural hierarchical assumption that the working classes need leaders", and a belief that "strikes are simply a form of 'bullying'".<sup>31</sup> However, these assumptions, deflecting, as they do, attention away from the real conditions of existence which enable the capitalist order to be reproduced, not only pave the way for the contradictory ideology of "equity between the different individuals and groups produced by the existing social order",<sup>32</sup> but affirm the liberal's ethical, rationalist faith in and desire for their agreement.

Let us look, for example, at the words of Oliver Turton, the (characteristically for Lawrence and appropriately for the play's politics) classless and rootless individual who attempts to defuse the miners' confrontation with the mine-owner, Gerald, when he lectures the miners on the natural necessity of the focalization of power: "As for power, somebody must have it, you know. It only rests with you to put it into the hands of the best men, the men you *really* believe in".<sup>33</sup> What is significant about this "common sense" postulate is its ideological relatedness to the network of mutually supporting definitions which I have been describing. For instance, connected with this "hierarchical assumption" about social relationships (highly undemocratic relationships which are based upon workers *believing* in their leaders and upon the hegemonic activity of capitalists) are transcendental notions of choice and moralistic definitions of what constitutes a good leader: "You can tell what people want, by the leaders they choose, do you see. You

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<sup>31</sup> Daly, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society* (1976; London: Fontana, 1988), pp. 286-7.

<sup>33</sup> Lawrence, "*Touch and Go*", p. 430.

choose leaders whom I respect, and I'll respect you, do you see".<sup>34</sup> Firstly, the idea that people "choose" capitalists, such as Gerald, as leaders lays bare the liberal illusion of choice under capitalism: for who "choose[s]" a capitalist to control their life? Secondly, to "believe in" a leader is very close to *respecting* him: both terms are part of the same ethical language which, when used to make political judgements, often dangerously attempts to visualise human personality as finalised prior to political practice. Regardless of this, however, what people understand as ethically correct is to be determined by capitalists rather than by the people themselves: "You choose leaders whom I respect, and I'll respect you". Moreover, this potent ethical content is not merely reactionary in its support of the ideology of leadership: it is bound up with notions of class which are scattered throughout the play.

"Respect" and "belief" are, after all, attributes which the miners and their union leader, Job Arthur, simply do not possess or inspire in their characterisation. Where to strike is to "bully",<sup>35</sup> to passively accept an exploited condition is to learn and gain "respect". When social conflict is no more than a "quarrel",<sup>36</sup> "belief" is a reaction appropriately abstract. Thus, working-class direct action against an undemocratic social order is already dismissed by these class-ridden concepts – which are presented as given requirements for acceptance into the arena of serious discussion - before it has begun. Fundamentally, the apparent dialogue between opposing class perspectives is undermined by the play's subtle linguistic method of interlocking unquestioned political assumptions across characters. Even the

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<sup>34</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 430.

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 429.

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 429.



poorly characterised socialist, Willie Houghton, for example, is dismissive of the miners in the same arrogantly class-based terms:

Couldn't you contrive that the pits belonged to you, instead of you belonging to the pits, like so many old pit-ponies that stop down till they are blind, and take to eating coal-slack for meadow-grass, not knowing the difference. — If only you'd learn to think, I'd respect you. As you are, I can't, not if I try my hardest. — All you can think of is to ask for another shilling a day. That's as far as your imagination carries you [...] You can't think beyond your dinners and your 'lowance."<sup>37</sup>

How the miners might “contrive” their ownership of the pits is uncertain: an imaginative feat of some proportions appears to be suggested here. Certainly it is an “imagination” which must be sufficiently abstracted from unpleasant material realities to ignore the “low” desires of food and money. Willie's language here shares with Gerald's the “ideology of respectability” which moralistically demeans concern for one's own material well-being and even goes as far as to divorce its connection to any notion of freedom. Moreover, it lays bare the contradiction inherent in this middle-class, ethical challenge to industrial action: that this challenge, in spite of its appeal to “higher things”, is ultimately (if unwittingly) a defence of the material well-being and profit of capitalists. It is in this respect an ethic of the utmost practical, material and - conventionally, though in this case Willie's goals are socialistic - self-interested nature. Furthermore, Willie's patronisingly literary dehumanisation of the miners mirrors Lawrence's terminology in the preface, which transforms the miners into “implements”. What is at stake here is no less than a radical attempt to deny not only the language and belief-systems of working-class

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<sup>37</sup> Lawrence, *“Touch and Go”*, p. 373.

people in a remarkably monologic dialogue, but the very reality of their existence as human beings.

This is perhaps brought most sharply into focus through the play's stage directions which portray the miners in an extremely negative light, especially in contrast to the individual characters who act as their leaders. Stage directions enable a more single-voiced and authorial representation than is normally given through the characters' speech (which speaks for the character as well as the author) and are therefore potentially more illuminating, ideologically, in their descriptive judgements.

When the miners appear at the beginning of the final scene (in order to strike in protest over the office clerks' rejected request for a wage increase) they are stripped of all verbal eloquence and individuality: they are reduced to a series of discordant "voices" which interrupt one another continuously with fragments of aggressive speech, slang and inarticulate shouts. Job Arthur and Willie Houghton's speech, by contrast, is scattered with puns, metaphors, and biblical allusions in a calm, collected style. As a consequence, they are the individuals who are discussing the miners' objectives: the miners themselves are only capable of the passivity of listening and then reacting crudely through repetitive, dogmatic, and uninspired shows of approval or derision. The stage directions make the representation clear if it were in any doubt how we should evaluate the miners. Here are some examples: "*His words are heard through an ugly, cold, jeering commotion*";<sup>38</sup> "*Crowd sways and surges on the car. OLIVER is suddenly dragged out — GERALD stands up — he too is seized from behind — he wrestles — is torn out of his great-coat — then falls,*

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<sup>38</sup> Lawrence, "*Touch and Go*", p. 424.

*disappears — loud cries — Hi — hoi hoiee — all the while — the car shakes and presses uneasily*";<sup>39</sup> *"amid a threatening scuffle"*";<sup>40</sup> *"The crowd press on GERALD — he struggles — they hit him behind the knees, force him down"*";<sup>41</sup> *"They force a lump of newspaper into OLIVER'S mouth, and bear down on GERALD"*";<sup>42</sup> *"The crowd surges and begins to howl — they sway dangerously — GERALD is spread-eagled on the floor, face down"*";<sup>43</sup> *"The crowd had begun to sway and heave dangerously, with a low, muffled roar [...] the roar breaks into a yell, the crowd heaves"*";<sup>44</sup> *"GERALD rises slowly, and faces the mob. They roar dully"*.<sup>45</sup>

Deprived of any intelligence, attractiveness, warmth or positivity of purpose, the miners are portrayed as a destructive, negative and inhuman force. Their acrimony is contrasted heavily with the social ideals of Willie, Oliver, and Gerald: those ideals of "respect", belief in one's leaders and "decency".<sup>46</sup> Moreover, not only is each of these interconnected ideals shared to varying extents and in various combinations between three out of the four political standpoints offered by the play, but they are the only ideals discussed by the play. The miners appear only to want money and power, as we can see when Job Arthur attempts to put forward the miners' case:

[JOB ARTHUR] [...] the others, such as Gerald Barlow, they keep the money — *and* the power —  
 OLIVER: You see, if you wanted to arrange things so that money flowed more naturally, so that it flowed naturally to every man, according to his needs, I think we could soon agree. But you don't. What you want is

<sup>39</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 424.

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 425.

<sup>41</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 426.

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 426.

<sup>43</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 427.

<sup>44</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 428.

<sup>45</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, p. 428.

<sup>46</sup> Lawrence, *"Touch and Go"*, pp. 424, 430.

to take it away from one set and give it to another — or keep it yourselves.

JOB ARTHUR: We want every man to have his proper share.

OLIVER: I'm sure *I* do. I want every man to be able to live and be free. But we shall never manage it by fighting over the money. — If you want what is natural and good, I'm sure the owners would agree with you.<sup>47</sup>

The miners are only “fighting over the money”, not “what is natural and good”. What exactly *is* “natural and good”, however, is appropriately vague in that it is not only taken for granted but the means of achieving such a state are couched in the most indistinct and fanciful terms. For according to Oliver, the miners only have to “want” to “arrange things” so that “money flow[s] more naturally” in order to resolve the political crisis. How money ever “flow[s]” “naturally” is beyond comprehension, and the idea that by simply wanting this (highly unspecific) arrangement real change will be achieved is similarly transcendental. Morality itself, however, as well as a recalcitrantly uncommunicative discourse, is against the miners, or the “mob”, whose violence makes Gerald’s earlier attack on Job Arthur seem mild in comparison. For though Gerald kicks Job Arthur to the ground in Act III, scene I, shouting “Get out! — Get out! — Vermin! — Vermin! — I’ll vermin you! — I’ll put my foot through your phrases. — Get up, I say, get up and go — go”,<sup>48</sup> his ex-lover, Anabel, manages to calm him quickly and lead him away, so that susceptibility to female persuasion provides Gerald with an emotional humanity denied to the miners in their “*ugly, cold, jeering*” anger.

Similarly, the miners share Gerald’s desire for power but do not possess the “respect” he and Willie demand and invoke, nor Oliver and

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<sup>47</sup> Lawrence, “*Touch and Go*”, p. 430.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence, “*Touch and Go*”, p. 421.

Willie's desire for "decency". Consequently, power is not something that should be entrusted to them, especially since they only want "to take it away from one set and give it to another — or keep it [themselves]". (The fact that the miners' strike is in sympathy with the office clerks against one man, Gerald, seems to be strangely overlooked here. Furthermore, Gerald's identical claim that the strike is an example of "one lot [wanting] what the other has got" is not significantly weakened by the voice's reply that "you've got everything"<sup>49</sup> since this response still operates within the morally enfeebled sphere of economic interests.) Willie explains this, while also indicating that straightforward incompetence is an obvious factor:

You're either going to make *such* a mess that we shall never get out of it — which I don't think you will do, for the English working-man is the soul of obedience and order, and he'll behave himself tomorrow as if he was at Sunday school, no matter what he does today — No, what you'll do, Job Arthur, you'll set up another lot of masters, such a jolly sight worse than what we've got now. I'd rather be mastered by Gerald Barlow, if it comes to mastering, than by Job Arthur Freer — oh *such* a lot! You'll be far less free with Job Arthur for your boss than ever you were with Gerald Barlow. You'll be far more degraded. — In fact... if you're going to start killing the masters to set yourselves up for bosses — why, kill me along with the masters. For I'd rather die with somebody who has one tiny little spark of decency left — though it *is* a little spark — than live to triumph with those that have none.<sup>50</sup>

It is at this point that the miners, after telling Willie to "Shut thy face",<sup>51</sup> turn "ugly". In doing so they prove the entire contents of Willie's speech: their "ugliness" does not correspond to the ideal of "decent" conduct and their "mob" violence demonstrates that they will make "a mess". Even Willie's

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<sup>49</sup> Lawrence, "Touch and Go", p. 431.

<sup>50</sup> Lawrence, "Touch and Go", pp. 423-4.

<sup>51</sup> Lawrence, "Touch and Go", p. 424.

claim that the “English working-man is the soul of obedience and order”, and will therefore “behave himself tomorrow [...] no matter what he does today”, is confirmed in Oliver and Gerald’s successful pacification of the miners and in their acceptance of Gerald’s evasion of their central contentions.

Their “threatening” behaviour, then, denies the miners access to “decency” and “respect”, yet their subsequent capitulation to authority only seems to exacerbate these weaknesses to reveal a pathetic psychological instability: as a collective political force they are fractured by irresolution and unthinking submission to individual authority. This provides Oliver with a foundation for his reemphasis of Willie’s main criticisms of the miners: that they are “bullying”<sup>52</sup> like Gerald and yet, worse than Gerald, have no “higher aim” than “fighting over the money”. Furthermore, and yet more suggestively, Oliver repeats one of Willie’s keywords: “why can’t we have the *decency* to agree simply about money, just agree to dispose of it so that all men could live their lives [my italics]”.<sup>53</sup> “Decency” is a crucial link in the ideological chain of bourgeois morality that the play enacts and endorses, for the term possesses a history in Lawrence’s letters which helps to unlock this chain’s political significance. It is therefore necessary to examine these letters in order to elucidate the wider politico-social implications of the belief-systems upon which Lawrence’s play turns.

One of the earliest politically meaningful references to “decency” in Lawrence’s letters comes in October 1915 with regard to the small journal entitled *The Signature* which Lawrence ran with John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield for a brief period of that year. This reference is

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<sup>52</sup> Lawrence, “*Touch and Go*”, p. 429.

<sup>53</sup> Lawrence, “*Touch and Go*”, p. 430.

particularly significant since it relates to a publication that Lawrence intended to use as a means of disseminating his political/philosophical ideas. Furthermore, the term is used in a letter to the British aristocrat and Prime Minister's daughter-in-law, Lady Cynthia Asquith: "I think my papers are very beautiful and very good. I feel if only people, decent people, would read them, somehow a new era might set in. But I don't think people care."<sup>54</sup> What constitutes a "decent person"? The audience Lawrence intended to reach provides a clue.

Though Lawrence attacked the Liberal M. P., Harold Baker, in a letter earlier that year,<sup>55</sup> he told Lady Cynthia Asquith in September, "You must be a subscriber, and ask some of your friends, like Harold Baker and Catherine Asquith – people who care, somewhere in their souls: Perhaps even Arthur Balfour will read it."<sup>56</sup> The Rt Hon. Harold Baker, previously a barrister, was a Liberal M. P. from 1910 to 1918, a member of the Army Council from 1914, and the Inspector of Quartermaster General Services from 1916; Katherine Asquith was another of the Prime Minister's daughters-in-law; and Arthur Balfour was the Conservative Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905. This did not by any means constitute the entirety of Lawrence's desired readership for the paper yet it does denote a continued faith, despite occasional doubts during this period,<sup>57</sup> in both the political activity of the upper classes and the leading

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<sup>54</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 2 October 1915, p. 405.

<sup>55</sup> See *Letters*, vol. II, 21 July 1915, p. 369: "men like Harold Baker are really no good - they've got no going-forward in them - or has he, I might be mistaken".

<sup>56</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 20 September 1915, p. 398.

<sup>57</sup> One such example is his comment later that month to William Hopkin: "I'm due to meet Bernard Shaw and Arthur Balfour directly. But I don't think that men who have had any public position for long will be any good" (p. 402). However, Lawrence was later, in 1918 (approximately a month before the writing of *Touch and Go*), to consider contacting such well-known political figures, connected with the Independent Labour Party, as Philip Snowden (chairman of the I. L. P. and M. P. for Blackburn), Mary Macarther, (trade union leader and wife of William Anderson, chairman of the I. L. P. Executive) and the President of the Scottish

figures of the establishment - even those involved in prosecuting the war to which Lawrence was highly antagonistic. Indeed, Lawrence reiterated in a self-consciously laudatory manner, again to Lady Cynthia Asquith: "Above all - no, not above all - but really I want Arthur Balfour to read it. It may mean something to him, in truth. But I don't know".<sup>58</sup>

However, in typical liberal style, Lawrence attempted to attract "a body of believers"<sup>59</sup> across the political spectrum, even asking the socialist and suffragist Alice Dax<sup>60</sup> and William and Sallie Hopkin,<sup>61</sup> also socialists, if they would like to subscribe to the journal. The language in which he addresses his potential contributors/subscribers clarifies this liberal faith in uniting individuals across classes and political beliefs (or else his desire to maximise his readership, in which case it displays a liberal preference for the free market over honesty of communication): to Russell, "I shall be the preacher, Murry will be the revealer of the individual soul with respect to the big questions, particularly he will give an account of the real freedom of the individual soul as he conceives it, Katharine will do satirical sketches";<sup>62</sup> to the Hopkins, "Get me a few people in Sheffield, will you - people who care vitally about the freedom of the soul - a few people anywhere - but only those who really care";<sup>63</sup> and to Lady Cynthia Asquith "I hope to God the new religious era is

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Miners' Federation, Robert Smillie (though Smillie was relatively reactionary in comparison with his political connections).

<sup>58</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 22 September 1915, p. 399.

<sup>59</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 22 September 1915, p. 399.

<sup>60</sup> See John Worthen, *The Early Years 1885-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 359-61, for a summary of Alice Dax's striking radicalism in contrast to the conventional political milieu of Eastwood and Lawrence's smugly dismissive attitude towards her political outlook.

<sup>61</sup> Significantly, however, *Touch and Go's* Willie Houghton is based upon William Hopkin.

<sup>62</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 5 September 1915, p. 387.

<sup>63</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 14 September 1915, p. 391. As the editors state: "Hopkin was in close touch with the left-wing intelligentsia in the Sheffield area (30 miles from Eastwood); among them was Edward Carpenter". However, though Lawrence told Hopkin to find those of his contacts in Sheffield who might be interested and even specifically asked him to send a leaflet to the



starting into being [...] and that soon there will be a body of believers, in this howling desert of unbelief and sensation".<sup>64</sup>

Though preceding *Touch and Go* by three years, the connections made here in Lawrence's discussion of *The Signature* are the same: "decent people" are those who, like Oliver Turton, "really believe" and who perceive freedom primarily as an issue of the "individual soul" rather than as a state constituted by its material circumstances. Furthermore, like the older Lawrence of the "Preface to 'Touch and Go'", Lawrence evidently did not believe "decent people" were likely to become a majority. Not only was *The Signature* published by private subscription, but Lawrence continually emphasised that it was not meant for "average stupidity",<sup>65</sup> insisting that it must reach "one or two people who care about the real living truth".<sup>66</sup>

These sentiments are perfectly compatible with the politics of Lawrence's contribution to *The Signature*. The three issues of the paper which were published contained the first three instalments of Lawrence's essay, "The Crown", a piece of writing explicitly denouncing democracy. In its dismissal of the reality of the class structure and its double-barrelled attack on

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socialist and anti-war campaigner Edward Carpenter, he nonetheless acknowledged that Carpenter "is not in my line. But he may give the paper to some young creature" (*Letters*, vol. II, 25 September 1915, p. 401). In some aspects, however, Carpenter was in Lawrence's "line". Emile Delavenay, for example, has shown that while Lawrence had a "preference for ethical rather than political theory" (*D. H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter* (London: Heinemann, 1971), p. 27), Carpenter's association with the "Fellowship of the New Life", a socialist movement "founded in 1883 [...] for the purpose of 'the cultivation of a perfect character in each and all' through the subordination of material things to spiritual", betrayed similar idealist traits (p. 16).

<sup>64</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 22 September 1915, p. 399.

<sup>65</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 14 October 1915, p. 411.

<sup>66</sup> *Letters*, vol. II, 5 September 1915, p. 386. Lawrence's scepticism of wider audiences can be compared to his mistaken belief during this period that "there is no doubt that the government does represent the country" (*Letters*, vol. II, 5 May 1916, p. 604). The idea that bourgeois democracy reflects the majority's real desires and the absence in this statement of any acknowledgement of the state's ideological role in formulating public opinion, suggest that Lawrence's reaction to a wider public may be explained in part by a false equation of the state with democracy.

democratic and aristocratic ideals alike, the essay's appeal for a "new heaven and a new earth"<sup>67</sup> appears meaningless in the face of its ambivalent and immaterialist liberal conservative politics. Lawrence's rejection of the class problem is in fact not only appropriate to his hopes for the paper's cross-class/cross-political appeal to "decent people" who "care", but clearly comparable to Oliver's perspective on money in *Touch and Go*:

We are all alike. The distinction between rich and poor is purely accidental. Rich and poor alike are only, each one, a pit-head surrounding the bottomless pit. But the rich man, by pouring vast quantities of matter down his void, gives himself a more pleasant illusion of fulfilment than the poor man can get: that is all. Yet we would give our lives, every one of us, for this illusion. There are no rich or poor, there are no masses and middle classes and aristocrats. There are myriads of framed gaps, people, and a few timeless fountains, men and women. That is all.<sup>68</sup>

Though attacking the materialism of a capitalist consumer-orientated society, Lawrence here, in anticipating Margaret Thatcher's notorious claim that society is non-existent, and while displaying his disparaging attitude towards a wider public for *The Signature*, again ignores the material basis upon which greater fulfilment rests. Oliver's distinction between "life" and "money" betrays a similar idealist politics,<sup>69</sup> and his precarious attempt to adjudicate between opposing political factions contains the same element of liberal tight-rope walking as Lawrence's two-fold attack on democracy and aristocracy here.

Lawrence's "decency", therefore, is a concept bound up with certain politico-philosophical, social and ethical/religious ideologies. Certainly, a

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<sup>67</sup> Lawrence, "The Crown", *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays* (1925), ed. Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 306.

<sup>68</sup> Lawrence, "The Crown", p. 274.

<sup>69</sup> Lawrence, "Touch and Go", p. 430.

politics which focuses primarily upon material issues such as class and money is, for Lawrence, far from “decent”. However, the term finds its most frequent and explicit use in letters concerning the departure of the Liberal Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, in 1916. It is connected with the passing of a nation’s spirit:

We have got Lloyd George for Prime Minister. That is a bad look-out for England. There was in Asquith the old English decency, and the lingering love of liberty [...]. God alone knows where [Lloyd George] will land us: there will be a very big mess. But the country at large wanted him.<sup>70</sup>

That Lawrence places such significance on the replacement of one Liberal Prime Minister for another illustrates both an extreme political narrow-mindedness and a reduction of politics to the level of personality characteristic of the growing power of the media as a major psychological tool for the shaping of middle-class consciousness under capitalism. Also, “decency” is equated with “liberty” and placed in opposition to “the country at large” who rejected “decency”. As a consequence, there will be “a very big mess”, as feared by Willie in *Touch and Go* and Lawrence in the play’s preface. If there is any doubt over the conservative nature of Lawrence’s “decency”, with its overt fear of social conflict (he did after all predict accurately that Lloyd George would increase the authoritarian measures of the war-time government), Lawrence makes his meaning clear in another letter of that period:

Oh, and *do not think* I blame the government, or howl at it. The fools who howl at the government make my blood boil. I respect the Prime Minister because I believe in his real *decency* – and I think Lloyd Georges are toads. – I must assert here again, that the war is, and

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<sup>70</sup> *Letters*, vol. III, 7 December 1916, p. 48.

continues, because of the lust for hate and war, chiefly hate of each other [...] and [the people's] worship of Ares and Aphrodite [...] both Gods of destruction and burning down.<sup>71</sup>

As in *Touch and Go*, political and social institutions are banished from debate and the state's prosecution of the war is envisaged as a malaise of the spirit and a loss of belief. Just as Oliver calls for the miners to recover their "decency" and choose the leaders they "*really* believe in", and just as Gerald and Willie insist on respectability in both the miners and their leaders, Lawrence here proclaims his own "respect" and "belief" in the Prime Minister's "decency". Moreover, the war itself, as the product of real political and economic forces, is obliterated, becoming a mere quality of the heart, just as for Oliver "fighting over the money" is immaterial to the pursuit of freedom:

Peace and war lie in the heart, in the *desire*, of the people – say what you will. Germany, nations – are external material facts. The reality of peace, the reality of war, lies in the hearts of the people: you, me, all the rest.<sup>72</sup>

Significantly, Bertrand Russell's political treatise, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* - published in the very month in which Lawrence wrote the above remarks - offers a similar level of understanding of the war. For Russell's brief friendship with Lawrence in 1915-6 culminated in a rift which suggests an extreme divergence of political views. For example, Lawrence wrote in the following month, December 1916:

I am convinced, if one is to do anything real in this country, one must eschew all connection with Fabianism, socialism, Cambridgism, and advancedism of all sorts, like poison [...] One must go out on one's own, *unadhering*. I would rather, myself, appear in the *Morning Post* than anywhere: but of course it is

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<sup>71</sup> *Letters*, vol. III, 25 November 1916, p. 39.

<sup>72</sup> *Letters*, vol. III, 25 November 1916, pp. 38-39.

unthinkable. – I have not read Bertie Russell's book,  
but I can assure you it is no good.<sup>73</sup>

However, in 1915 Lawrence had discussed with Russell much of the material which was to form *Principles* with a view to lecturing together, and the confluence of Lawrence's perspectives with those of Russell's left-liberalism<sup>74</sup> can be seen with particular acuity when we compare their interpretations of the war. Russell, for instance, writes of war in general: "What makes war difficult to suppress is that it springs from an impulse, rather than from a calculation of the advantages to be derived from war".<sup>75</sup> Russell's emphasis here on "impulse", like Lawrence's on "*desire*", betrays a profound idealism. Furthermore, Russell goes on to speak of England and Germany as "almost mythical representatives" of "cold pride and hot envy",<sup>76</sup> depicting the "mood"<sup>77</sup> of nations as the motivating force of history. Hence, it is no surprise to find a rationalism comparable to that of *Touch and Go* when Russell imagines a potential conflict between England and Canada in order to put forward his case against the war: "If England and Canada have a disagreement, it is taken as a matter of course that a settlement shall be arrived at by discussion, not by force."<sup>78</sup> Similar idealist traits are in fact to be found in abundance: for example, when he describes a conflict between Manchester and Liverpool as "a quarrel",<sup>79</sup> or when he calls for both England and capitalists to admit their "responsibility" in the causes of conflicts:

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<sup>73</sup> *Letters*, vol. III, 11 December 1916, p. 50. The *Morning Post* was an extremely conservative paper.

<sup>74</sup> Russell's book displayed a great deal of syndicalist influences yet maintained, particularly with regard to the war, a definite adherence to certain fundamental liberal tenets.

<sup>75</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (1916) (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 55.

<sup>76</sup> Russell, p. 59.

<sup>77</sup> Russell, p. 60.

<sup>78</sup> Russell, p. 73.

<sup>79</sup> Russell, p. 73.

It never occurs to them that by opposing changes without considering whether they are just, the capitalists share the responsibility for the class war. And in exactly the same way England shares the responsibility for Germany's war. If actual war is ever to cease there will have to be political methods of achieving the results [...] and nations will have *voluntarily* to admit adverse claims which appear just in the *judgment of neutrals*. [my italics]<sup>80</sup>

That people in positions of power will "admit" this "inwardly"<sup>81</sup> is Russell's first hope. Realisation of the necessity to surrender power is what Russell places a great deal of his faith in and this ideology is not only anticipatory of *Touch and Go* but also of Lawrence's novel of 1922, *Aaron's Rod*:

If we had realized the futility of empire, and had shown a willingness to yield colonies to Germany without waiting for the threat of force, we might have been in a position to persuade the Germans that their ambitions were foolish, and that the respect of the world was not to be won by an imperialist policy.<sup>82</sup>

Similarly, in *Aaron's Rod*, the Lawrencian persona, Rawdon Lilly, attempts to make Aaron Sisson realise that he has "the need livingly to yield to a more heroic soul, to give yourself".<sup>83</sup> Moreover, this effort is represented not merely as a personal call but a political one: "men must submit to the greater soul in a man, for their guidance: and women must submit to the positive power-soul in man, for their being".<sup>84</sup> Here, Lilly is asking for the majority of people to "yield" any power they might have over their lives to what they recognise as a "greater soul than theirs",<sup>85</sup> just as Russell hoped that those who have the

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<sup>80</sup> Russell, pp. 61-62.

<sup>81</sup> Russell, p. 60.

<sup>82</sup> Russell, pp. 60-61.

<sup>83</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod* (1922), ed. Mara Kalnins (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 299.

<sup>84</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, pp. 298-9.

<sup>85</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 299.

power to exploit others' lives for their own ends will perceive the world's lack of "respect", and "voluntarily" "yield". Thus, although Lilly is not Lawrence mimetically realised in fiction (and the novel works well in putting Lilly's views into radical conflict with those of other characters), *Aaron's Rod* demonstrates that despite the clear bifurcation of Lawrence and Russell's politics from mid-1915 onwards, they were still both deeply embroiled with liberal ideological problems.

### *Aaron's Rod*

For not only is *Aaron's Rod's* concluding conservatism tainted with liberal conscience in the final "Words" of Lilly, but Aaron, the novel's eponymous hero, is struggling with the central conflicts of his time – foregrounded in the form of a burgeoning split between the Left and the Right in post-war European politics. That Lilly's solution to society's unsatisfactory and destructive network of relationships is not accepted by Aaron (it is left open whether or not he will accept it) and that the consistency of the solution itself is diluted by Lilly's emphasis on "free submission", not "fixed authority" to "bully" or "force" people with,<sup>86</sup> is indicative of the novel's account of a man torn by the increasingly explicit contradictions of his time; those of a liberal democratic capitalism in crisis.

The paradox which is "free submission" is one which is paradigmatic of the novel as a whole. A liberal form of dualism operates throughout the novel, separating such concepts as freedom from security and the social from

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<sup>86</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 298.

the individual. These modes of being are closed off from one another and remain antinomies until their pseudo-reconciliation in the liberal conservative paradox of “free submission”. However, this dichotomising method creates the powerful political tensions of *Aaron’s Rod* which function on every level of Aaron’s experience, from familial/sexual relationships and friendships, through economic questions regarding the making of a living, to problems of political affiliation.

The first chapter, “The Blue Ball”, sets the pattern for the novel through its sophisticated politicisation of the relationships in Aaron’s family, allowing political and personal conflicts to interpenetrate one another. In this sense, as in the novel’s ending, a dichotomy *is* resolved: personal and political worlds are interconnected. However, as we will discover, this union of categories is hierarchised in favour of the personal as the determinant of the political.

Aaron, we are told in the second paragraph, is “secretary to the Miners Union for his colliery” and is just returning from a meeting in which he had “heard a good deal of silly wrangling that left him nettled.”<sup>87</sup> On his return home he is questioned by his wife about the meeting’s events and his response is both terse and evasive. We are told that he “did not talk much, but seemed to think about something”.<sup>88</sup> The main question at the meeting had concerned the “throw-in”, which signifies the allocation of wages by the butty (a contractor who is paid for the coal mined by his team and who then pays the miners from this sum). Evidently, the miners are dissatisfied with the butties’ wages but are attempting to come to an agreement with them. However, Aaron says, “they’ll

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<sup>87</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 5.

<sup>88</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 7.



come out if it isn't satisfactory".<sup>89</sup> His wife's response is to fervently oppose the miners and in the ensuing dialogue her Christian conservatism is counteracted by Aaron's restrained and non-committal hostility to the whole question:

"The butties won't have it, I know," she said.

He gave a short laugh, and went on with his meal  
[....]

"And what are they going to do about Job Arthur Freer? Do they want him?"

A faint smile came on her husband's face.

"Nay, I don't know what they want.—Some of 'em want him—whether they're a majority, I don't know."

She watched him closely.

"Majority! I'd give 'em majority. They want to get rid of you, and make a fool of you, and you want to break your heart over it. Strikes me you need something to break your heart over."

He laughed silently.

"Nay," he said. "I s'll never break my heart."

"You'll go nearer to it over that, than over anything else: just because a lot of ignorant monkeys want a monkey of their own sort to do the Union work, and jabber to them, they want to get rid of you, and you eat your heart out about it. More fool you [....] If you cared about your wife and children half what you care about your Union, you'd be a lot better pleased in the end. But you care about nothing but a lot of ignorant colliers, who don't know what they want except it's just more money for themselves. Self, self, self—that's all it is with them—and ignorance."

"You'd rather have self without ignorance?" he said, smiling finely.

"I would, if I've got to have it. But what I should like to see is a man that has thought for others, and isn't all self and politics."

Her colour had risen, her hand trembled with anger as she sewed. A blank look had come over the man's face, as if he did not hear or heed any more.<sup>90</sup>

Aaron's wife is portrayed here, as she is throughout the novel, as the conservative housewife who, in response to her material position within

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<sup>89</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 7.

<sup>90</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, pp. 7-8.

society as an economic dependant with a family to provide for, attacks her husband's union involvement and his self-assertive independence. Furthermore, she is portrayed unsympathetically and ironically as self-oriented and materialistic herself. To reinforce her representative quality as the head of the suffocating and constrictive, materialistic family, during this scene their children quarrel with possessive lust over the Christmas decorations and Millicent, the eldest, smashes a blue ball after "gloating" with self-importance<sup>91</sup> at having obtained it for herself. That Aaron himself is not implicated in this materialist anarchy and that Lottie, his wife, is, becomes clear when first Millicent and then Lottie ask him to buy some Christmas tree candles: the former insists "desperately"<sup>92</sup> while the latter demands "with barren bitterness".<sup>93</sup> When Aaron enters the market to buy the candles he is, moreover, struck by the "violent but quiet contest" of "people struggling to buy things". He is set apart from the scene, an outsider critically observing the shoppers' sublimated "outlet for their feelings" of "hostility",<sup>94</sup> just as before Aaron is psychologically disassociated from his family – a state reinforced by his departure from them altogether in the following chapter.

Simultaneously, however, the narrative does not allow Aaron to be divested of responsibility for his family. For in "The Blue Ball", as later in the novel when the Frankses defend Lottie, Aaron is also perceived from his wife's perspective. As Aaron leaves for the pub Lottie sees him: "well-dressed, handsome-looking. She felt there was a curious glamour about him. It made her feel bitter. He had an unfair advantage—he was free to go off, while she

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<sup>91</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 10.

<sup>92</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 13.

<sup>93</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 14.

<sup>94</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 15.

must stay at home with the children.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, her position is given in part - and though the novel marginalises the female voice, in the literal sense, the power of the female makes itself felt, as we shall see, through the acts and consciousness of the male.

However, it is clear that Aaron represents not a concrete but an abstract freedom, his departure signifying an idealistic denial of his wife as the embodiment of material, self-regarding values. This freedom is abstract since he only duplicates his wife’s idealist dualism. It is worthwhile examining this dualism in order to perceive accurately how Aaron’s consciousness and the novel as a whole is permeated with such conceptual divisions.

Lottie, in her criticism of Aaron’s attachment to his union, does not perceive a connection between a concern for “money” and intelligence, nor between “self” and a regard for “others”. In this she shares an affinity with Willie Houghton and Oliver Turton of *Touch and Go* who, with the liberal conception of education which they embody and their perception of the miners’ sympathy strike as selfish “bullying”, perform a similar political function. Jonathan Rée has excellently described what the pejorative liberal concepts of “utilitarian education” and “‘modern’ subjects” fundamentally ignore:

[...] the effective knowledge actually acquired by earners: techniques and theories for handling the physical world; skills in holding down a job or holding off oppression; imagination to make unexpected choices or to fend off threats to personal cheer or survival; words and concepts for setting and contesting social goals and political programmes.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 14.

<sup>96</sup> Jonathan Rée, “Socialism and the educated working class”, *Socialism and the Intelligentsia 1880-1914*, ed. Carl Levy (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 211-8, 214.

Such vital skills are dismissed in Lottie's attack on unionised miners as "ignorant monkeys" since these are the kinds of knowledge which the Labour movement was helping to foster. Furthermore, as Rée also points out, "By the 1920s there were tens of thousands of people studying philosophy in Britain, co-ordinated by the Marxist-inspired National Council of Labour Colleges."<sup>97</sup> The idealist division of practical and theoretical knowledge is an important issue which I will return to later in my discussion of the relationship between Lilly and Aaron.

Equally, Lottie's representation of the miners as self-interested is historically significant. Perhaps most importantly, the formation of the Triple Industrial Alliance in December 1915 had helped to initiate a period of intensified struggle on a co-operative level between the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, the National Union of Railwaymen and the National Transport Workers' Union; a period which both saw the miners strike in sympathy with the other unions, and saw them denied support from the more conservative union, J. H. Thomas' National Union of Railwaymen. Moreover, on the wider scale of class, workers' struggles frequently entailed calling for increases in wages to keep pace with the rapid post-war increases in the standard of living. When they did not, however, they were meant to prevent wage cuts for the benefit of private profiteering, improve working conditions, or precipitate major political changes, such as nationalisation and the removal of British troops from Russia and Ireland. The miners, who are a seldom seen yet persistent presence in *Aaron's Rod*, provide a good example. For instance, if

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<sup>97</sup> Rée, pp. 217-18.

we note the major event in the mining industry of the year before the novel's publication, 1921, we can see that Lottie's remarks are misplaced:

The colliers had expected demands for a reduction of wages because of the trade slump, and the fall in the cost of living from mid-winter onwards. But the reductions demanded, in some Districts halving the wages of certain grades, went far beyond their worst expectation. Never in the recorded history of coal-mining had there been a cut so drastic as this.<sup>98</sup>

Meanwhile, the Government "compensated" the coal-owners by paying the full standard profit up to the end of 1920 and nine-tenths of that up to the end of the first quarter of 1921"<sup>99</sup> - an action which could not easily be described as socially cohesive. In contrast to the owners, however, the miners' self-concern is bound up with the working class's concern as a whole and, since this class is exploited under capitalism, their struggles are against all exploitation. Lottie does not perceive this, as the wife of a union secretary whose position is more at risk as the miners' militancy increases. Neither, therefore, does she see that workers' economic demands set precedents for the entire working class.

Such is the idealism and atomistic conception of the individual in Lottie, Aaron's wife. Similarly, Aaron does not understand that his wife's social position dictates *her* self-regard and material interest. He can leave his family and enjoy the freedom he does because he is a man within a patriarchal capitalist order. He is critical of the materialism of the world around him which he perceives, like his wife, in the miners (he leaves their "silly wrangling" as well as his family), but also in her and the Christmas Eve shoppers. However, by disengaging himself from organised labour, Aaron, like Lottie, dismisses

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<sup>98</sup> R. Page Arnot, *The Miners: Years of Struggle: A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (from 1910 onwards)* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 296.

<sup>99</sup> Arnot, p. 294.

not only the importance of material life for freedom but also the practical quality of knowledge: his journey through Europe leads him into a hierarchical relationship in which he, the artisan, depends upon and venerates Lilly, the artist and, for Aaron, the man of “freedom”.<sup>100</sup>

In his departure from this world of relationships, Aaron rejects both a consumerist capitalism and a mining community with fierce economic and political demands. The solution, however, is an ideal one and its abstraction from the possibilities the world has to offer is revealed once Aaron finds himself restlessly roaming around Europe, eager despite himself for social relationships as well as individual liberty. The novel thus sets up its most powerful themes in the first chapter: the conflict between freedom and responsibility, spirituality and materialism, adventure and security, self and other, ideas and their practice, relationship and individualism.

These polarities are revealed more starkly as the novel progresses. For example, through his departure and subsequent travels, Aaron is drawn towards notions of freedom rather than responsibility, yet he nonetheless encounters intense ideological opposition – frequently through others, sometimes from himself. When, for instance, Aaron hears that Lilly (a friend he has only recently made) is to part company with him, having “had enough of this”,<sup>101</sup> he reacts enviously yet angrily at his friend’s easy “freedom” and insists that Lilly will “try somebody else” in “the next five minutes”.<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, having abandoned his wife with a comparably abrupt termination of their relationship, Aaron adopts here the stereotyped reaction of the

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<sup>100</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 109.

<sup>101</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 106.

<sup>102</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 107.

housewife at her husband's potentially adulterous wanderings –and Lilly even remarks that Aaron “talk[s] to me like a woman”.<sup>103</sup> Thus, Aaron is placed ironically in the position he himself placed his wife, Lottie. Aaron's jealous accusation of infidelity is, yet more significantly, accompanied with a desire for Lilly's “freedom”. This elevated notion of “freedom” is undermined, however, both by Aaron's own simultaneous wish for Lilly's companionship and by the inherently bogus nature of this “freedom” as revealed by Lilly himself.

For though Aaron recognises that Lilly, as a writer, is not bound to the routinised life of the ordinary working individual (unlike Aaron who is “tied to a job”), Lilly has to point out to him that “at this very moment you could buy me up, lock, stock and barrel”. Lilly is, after all, neither materially better off than Aaron, nor less at the mercy of money – in fact, he lives a more precarious existence as a price for his “freedom”. However, what Lilly does not comprehend in Aaron's claim that he, Lilly, has “got the advantage of me”, is that class divides the two men, providing one with a higher degree of this, though dubious, “freedom”.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, Lilly is dismissive, evidently perceiving Aaron's interrogations as concerned with a “fictitious advantage” of jobs rather than a real one.<sup>105</sup> Thus Lilly denies the determining role of class in an individual's form and quality of life. Aaron, by contrast, is aware of Lilly's unconscious acknowledgement of his “advantage” through the latter's manner of assuming superiority in their relationship. Aaron even psychologically corners Lilly, confronting him with the decisive question: “You believe you

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<sup>103</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 105.

<sup>104</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 109.

<sup>105</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 110.

know something better than me—and that you are something better than me. Don't you?"<sup>106</sup> That Lilly, with his characteristic rhetorical skill, evades the question and turns it back upon Aaron ("Do you believe it? [...] if you don't see it, it isn't there")<sup>107</sup> only makes it more evident that he does feel "better".<sup>108</sup> Of course, when Lilly suggests to Aaron at the end of the novel that men should "submit to the greater soul in a man", the reader is perfectly aware that Lilly is asking Aaron to submit to him - Aaron's question, "whom shall I submit to?", and Lilly's reply, "Your soul will tell you", together already contain in microcosmic form the seeds of such a power relationship.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, though Lilly insists that class is immaterial, he tacitly accepts it as a determining factor in his relationships.

In Lilly and Aaron's relationship, then, responsibility and freedom haunt one another, and the materiality of life weighs upon the ideal forms with which both characters attempt to adorn it. Class plays a vital role in these antagonisms because, though they are from "the same district, the same class",<sup>110</sup> Lilly is a "literary" artist<sup>111</sup> while Aaron is a "miner's checkweighman" by profession,<sup>112</sup> only giving this up during the course of the novel to become a wandering flautist. Their contrasting educations, however, constitute a particularly striking factor in their frictional relationship. For unlike Lilly, whose vocation and language indicate a high degree of formal education, Aaron has "a curious quality of an intelligent, almost sophisticated

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<sup>106</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 111.

<sup>107</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 111.

<sup>108</sup> Although we are told at the end of this chapter, "The War Again", that Aaron "rather thought he did" feel "superior to his unworldly enemy" (Lilly), he does not attempt to enact this feeling through their relationship as Lilly does (p. 121).

<sup>109</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 299.

<sup>110</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 106.

<sup>111</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 45.

<sup>112</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 65.



mind, which had repudiated education". We are also informed that "on purpose he kept the midland accent in his speech". Furthermore, he "understood perfectly what a personification was—and an allegory. But he preferred to be illiterate".<sup>113</sup> This discrepancy between Aaron and Lilly in education and speech consequently becomes a source of conflict in terms of what constitutes honesty and lucid, meaningful expression.

For example, Aaron insists that Lilly only gives his desire for "amusement" "a lot of names" in order to "make out as if you were looking for the philosopher's stone". He argues that Lilly uses "talk" to "make a man believe you've got something he hasn't got", while all Lilly has is "a bigger choice of words". When Lilly describes his relationship with his wife Tanny, saying that "we are, together and apart at the same time, and free of each other, and eternally inseparable" and that their "Nirvana[s]" are separate yet coinciding, Aaron insists that he doesn't "understand all that word-splitting". Fundamentally, Lilly cannot engage with Aaron's criticism but only restate his case in his own fluent, highly literary discourse – a discourse which, appropriately considering his reference to "the Buddhists", seems to be more directed to himself than to Aaron.<sup>114</sup>

This method of negotiation between conflicting class-consciousnesses (Lilly has exiled himself both physically and psychologically from his former class) is historically important in that the novel's period is one of endless negotiations over industrial conflicts between workers, union leaders, capitalists, and the government. In June 1917, for example, a subcommittee established by the government and chaired by the Liberal M. P. J. Whitley

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<sup>113</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 65.

<sup>114</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, pp. 103-5.

released a report suggesting the creation of “joint standing industrial councils for each industry on a national basis” along with “subordinate district councils and works’ committees”. These “Whitley Councils” were “to consist of equal numbers of representatives of the employers’ associations and of trade unions”. However, their “permanent functions” were to cover:

[...] negotiations on wages and the conditions of employment, the improvement of industrial techniques, technical education and research, discussions on security of earnings and employment, the prevention of differences between the two sides of the industry, and proposals for industrial legislation.<sup>115</sup>

Not only, then, did the subcommittee omit any consideration of workers’ participation in management, but it naturally outlined functions for the Councils which involved the liberal concepts of social harmony and industrial peace. The failure of the Whitley Councils, however, “reflected the fundamental weakness of the liberalism of their supporters—the conviction that institutional devices could bring about a social harmony that would eradicate conflict from human relationships”.<sup>116</sup>

In Lilly’s antagonistic relationship with Aaron, we see the former attempt (and with some degree of success) to assume power over Aaron, and induce him to abandon his former, highly socialised life in the working class as a Miners’ Union secretary for the pursuit of a paradoxical existence as both a follower of Lilly and an individualist – or what Aaron describes as the “life single”.<sup>117</sup> This connects historically with such initiatives on the part of the Liberal government of the period to create social harmony between groups of opposing interests, through such mechanisms as the Whitley Councils, and

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<sup>115</sup> Freeden, p. 56.

<sup>116</sup> Freeden, p. 59.

<sup>117</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 128.

through what Keith Middlemass hypothesises as the government's emerging corporatism which attempted to institutionalise the labour movement in the trade unions.<sup>118</sup>

In the context of this political climate, Aaron's movement away from an immersion in social relationships (through his marriage and his trade union role) towards an individualism based on a hierarchical, cross-class relationship with the expert rhetorician, Lilly, reflects the "divide and rule" method intrinsic to corporatism and the "the Whitley spirit", which was in a major sense "a vehicle for 'philanthropic employers to break up the solidarity of the union and to create a special community of interest between themselves and the workers in their factories'".<sup>119</sup> Also, the neglect of the material basis to all human relationships which marks the abstract political solution offered by Lilly at the novel's end possesses a clear affinity with the Councils' blindness to the opposition between workers' and employers' material interests. Thus, one of Lilly's roles is to help transform Aaron's life and consciousness, disrupting his strong sense of rootedness in a collectivist culture and seducing

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<sup>118</sup> See Keith Middlemass, *Politics in Industrial Society: The experience of the British system since 1911* (London: André Deutsch, 1979), pp. 120-173, for an historical account of the various ways in which this corporatism manifested itself in the period from 1917 to 1922. Middlemass argues that, in the arena of industrial politics, Lloyd George "shifted away from Liberal radicalism towards a corporatism best described as the creation [of] [...] a triangular collaboration in which employers' organisations and TUC [Trades Union Congress] should make themselves representative of their members and in return receive recognition as *estates* by government" (p. 151). This "collaboration" had a significant effect on the channels of class consciousness: "the very divergent philosophies of industrial reality held at the end of the war by NCEO [National Confederation of Employers' Organisations] and TUC tended, in the circumstances of the 1920s, and through the process of institutionalisation itself, to become increasingly compatible. Class conflict did not disappear [...] but organisations emerged which had a vested interest in its accommodation" (p. 162). In other words, the conventional channels of fundamentally opposing interests converge, through the institutional mechanisms, into one of containment – an approach which leaves the balance of power between the classes unaltered. In such a political climate, does Lilly attempt to dissolve the class consciousness of Aaron and affiliate him to the ideology of his own domination and that of Lilly's own, more powerful class?

<sup>119</sup> Freedon, p. 58.

him with an individualism which tears him away from the oppressed social groups of women and the working class.

In class terms, the idea of the individual artist is a powerful one in the novel, and it is seen initially as a direct alternative to the practical and social creativity which Aaron's work as a checkweighman and union secretary afford him – for Aaron abandons this to become a flautist. However, the character of Lilly represents the novel's attempt to fuse these apparently very different skills into the individual. This results in an appropriation of both manual and intellectual forms of labour into the middle-class Lilly, who desires complete self-sufficiency in the face of a threatening world of political forces, the sources of which are paradoxically both in the state and in Bolshevism, anarchism, and the growing radicalism of women, as the chapter "XX Settembre" makes violently clear. Hence, when Aaron has lost "proper control of himself",<sup>120</sup> both physically through influenza and constipation, and psychologically through the delirium of mental breakdown, Lilly takes on the role of nurse and religious saviour, domestic and philosopher. This gathering of traditionally working-class and female roles into the bourgeois, artistic, and "independent" individual is depicted in all its insidious details:

He put on the kettle, and quietly set cups and plates on a tray. The room was clean and cosy and pleasant. He did the cleaning himself, and was as efficient and inobtrusive a housewife as any woman. While the kettle boiled, he sat darning the socks which he had taken off Aaron's feet when the flautist arrived, and which he had washed. He preferred that no outsider should see him doing these things. Yet he preferred to do them himself, so that he should be independent of outside aid.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 91.

<sup>121</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 98.

The “indomitable stillness” with which Lilly darns Aaron’s socks does not indicate any utopian harmony between Lilly’s class and the classes whose roles he has appropriated. It does not imply a personal revolution of the kind which, on a microcosmic level, collapses the various divisions of labour in Lilly’s particular class society. For no women exist in this world other than symbolically through Lilly, whose feeling of shame in enacting the role of a housewife is indicated in his preference that “no outsider should see him” and whose ideal woman is the “efficient” and “inobtrusive” housewife.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, the working class are most explicitly represented here in the form of the sick Aaron who can only convalesce in the hands of Lilly, as “his patient”.<sup>123</sup> Rather, this “indomitable stillness” is the rigidly controlled surface of self-imposed calm (there is simultaneously “a tension” in his “knitted” brow)<sup>124</sup> in the act of asserting “individual authority” over “the mass, the mob”.<sup>125</sup> As we can see from Lilly’s solipsistic philosophising in this scene, though he has appropriated the roles of other classes and attempted to reconcile manual and intellectual labour, he has nonetheless failed to unite the kind of social creativity which Aaron had earlier possessed with the individual role of the bourgeois artist. This is because Lilly has condemned people for yielding to what he abstractly calls “the mob power”, which includes both conservative

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<sup>122</sup> Steven Vine has given a brief account of the various ways in which both Lilly and Aaron adopt conventionally feminine roles (see his “Introduction” to *Aaron’s Rod*, pp. xv-xxxvi). However, though Vine perceives the ambivalence of this feature of the novel as “not an elimination of woman, but a usurpation of her traditional powers” (p. xxx), he does not distinguish between the use of these powers to undermine Aaron (particularly, as I explained earlier, *vis-à-vis* Lottie) and Lilly’s absorption of them as both a symbolic method of male self-reinforcement, and a form of subordination of women as an actual social group. Moreover, his notion that “*Aaron’s Rod* [...] feminizes man not in neurasthenic disempowerment, but in metaphoric re-empowerment” (pp. xxx-xxxi) marginalises this latter subordinative role for Lilly.

<sup>123</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 96.

<sup>124</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 98.

<sup>125</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 97.

forces such as “the nation, Lloyd George and Northcliffe and the police and money”<sup>126</sup> and – by implication through his recommendation of “a bit of healthy individual authority”<sup>127</sup> – the “mass” in Raymond Williams’s sense of the word, meaning “other people”.<sup>128</sup> This leads Lilly into a release of racist vitriol at “Europeans, Asiatics, Africans” who are “craven and cringing” in their “individual quick” and a eulogy on the merits of “the true blood” and “living pride” to be found in “the Aztecs and the Red Indians [...] the American races—and the South Sea Islanders—the Marquesans, the Maori blood”.<sup>129</sup> It also spills into his hostile sense of women as a social group, both through Lilly’s self-confessed obsession with his own “power”<sup>130</sup> and “individual authority” in general, which makes him revile the social institution of marriage as “*Egoisme a deux*”, a “self-conscious egoistic state” between two people, and through his revulsion at “the millions and billions of people” of the world which makes the thought of having children with a woman a repulsive fear of adding “my quota to the mass”.<sup>131</sup>

Aaron, however, can still offer opposition to Lilly at this point in the novel. Indeed, we are told that “there was a profound hostility between them”, and that “Lilly’s skilful housewifery always irritated Aaron” since it was “so self-sufficient”. However:

[...] most irritating of all was the little man’s unconscious assumption of priority. Lilly was actually unaware that he assumed this quiet predominance over others. He mashed the potatoes, he heated the plates, he warmed the red wine, he whisked the eggs into the milk pudding, and served his visitor like a housemaid.

<sup>126</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 96.

<sup>127</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 97.

<sup>128</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture*, p. 289.

<sup>129</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 97.

<sup>130</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 96.

<sup>131</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 99.

But none of this detracted from the silent assurance with which he bore himself, and with which he seemed to domineer over his acquaintance.<sup>132</sup>

Lilly thus adopts the role of the subordinate unconsciously in order to obtain power over his guest: the appropriation of a lower class role is used to maintain or even strengthen the pre-established hierarchy. Nonetheless, though Aaron goes on to argue with Lilly and temporarily fall out with him, it is suggested that this important insight into Lilly's psychology is due to be pacified. For we are told that the "hostility is not antipathy".<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, the previous chapter had already shown Aaron shift partly into consent with Lilly over his sense of an abstract opposition between the individual and the "mass". For Aaron and Lilly's attack on "sacred children, and sacred motherhood" not only cuts the male off from the female but the individual from the "millions and billions of people" which children "grow up into".<sup>134</sup>

Thus what is steadily being rejected here, primarily by Lilly through his hatred of the "mass", his repudiation of social purpose and creativity, and his emphasis on "individual authority" as essential to both personal and political relationships, is collective ideas as a whole - and though these may often be superficially used, with insidiously effective power, by a nation-state intent on war, they are on the whole oppositional to "bourgeois culture". For as Raymond Williams has explained, "'working-class culture'" is "the basic collective idea, and the institutions, manners, habits of thought, and intentions which proceed from this", whereas "bourgeois culture" is "the basic individualist idea" in all these respects. He summarises: "working-class culture

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<sup>132</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 106.

<sup>133</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 106.

<sup>134</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 100.

[...] is primarily social (in that it has created institutions) rather than individual (in particular intellectual or imaginative work)".<sup>135</sup> Lilly then, as a now-middle-class producer of "intellectual or imaginative work", tries to sever Aaron from the "masses and groups", the "mass-consciousness" and "mass-activity",<sup>136</sup> and attract him to his ideal of the "sacred and holy individual".<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, he attempts this deceptively (and ironically) through the adoption of oppressed social groups' practical skills.

So it is then that Aaron and Lilly move into yet more politically tumultuous waters as society and the individual become further polarised; that is, both characters, through their relationship, turn towards an idealist conception of social harmony paradoxically based on individualist notions of human agency. While Lilly believes in and acts from a sense of the importance of "individual authority" in human relationships, Aaron – after briefly returning to his wife in "More Pillar of Salt" – begins to conceive of "sheer, finished singleness" as the "only way to final, living unison".<sup>138</sup>

That this conception of relationship offers no harmony but, rather, a perilous balancing of opposites, has already been reflected in Lilly's argument with Aaron over the war, in which the two characters are set against one another at the poles of the liberalism with which they are struggling. For the antagonism between the ideal of individual liberty, and the socio-economic demands of capitalism which is represented in this altercation, is at the heart of the centrifugal forces of liberalism – forces which the war exacerbated to an unsustainable level.

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<sup>135</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture*, pp. 313-14.

<sup>136</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 119.

<sup>137</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 282.

<sup>138</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 128.



Lilly vociferously defends one half of this equation by setting up an opposition between the conflated and heralded concepts of the individual and freedom on the one hand and “all masses and groups” on the other, which are culled together, regardless of political standpoint, as a “horrible heap”, a “swarm” of “nightmare and nullity”. Conversely, Aaron, in his virtual acceptance of the necessity of the war, embodies both the “mass-psyche” which Lilly damns and the material pragmatism of the capitalist nation-state: “It’s the wide-awake ones that invent the poison gas, and use it. Where should we be without it?”.<sup>139</sup> Aaron’s analysis of the “face of things” contrasts heavily with Lilly’s bold idealism which opposes the war from the “sacred” nature of individual liberty, rejecting any “mass-activity” against it. This brings sharply into focus the fissuring of liberalism during the war over such issues as conscription and the Defence of the Realm Act.

As Freeden has shown, a “schism in liberal opinion” was created over conscription. From a moderate liberal position, for example, “curtailment of liberty was necessary for national survival, but in order to preserve liberty, popular submission should as far as possible ‘be that of enlightened free-will, not that of mechanical compulsion’”. However, as perhaps is clear from this passage’s affinity with Lilly’s untenable, oxymoronic ideal of “free submission”, liberals tended to fall on either side of this contradiction in their philosophy, either insisting that “serving the flag” had priority over individual freedom (it “had always been considered by liberals to be a fundamental citizen duty”), or condemning the Liberal government for its attack on liberty.

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<sup>139</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 119.

For the latter group of liberals, "the Liberal government was no longer the liberal government".<sup>140</sup>

In Lilly and Aaron's discussion of the war, the polarised values of a divided liberal capitalism enter in the form of a violent altercation. Lilly, representative of self-possession, the "individual", and the "spirit", turns furiously on Aaron, whose hard-headed and nihilistic acceptance of the "machines of war" and "men and nations" as they are, lead him to welcome the use of "poison gas".<sup>141</sup> Consequently, the economic imperatives of a capitalist nation-state are, through Aaron, seen in direct contradiction to the reigning political ideals of liberal democracy as embodied in Lilly: individual freedom is an ideological illusion within the reality of an unfree social system. Moreover, what survives this dialogue, through Lilly's growing ideological power over Aaron, is the notion that the freedom of the "sacred and holy individual" can be preserved without recourse to "mass-activity". For just as "all masses and groups" are equated with the armed violence of imperialist capitalism in "The War Again", the individual is set up on a pedestal against all "bullying" in "The Broken Rod".<sup>142</sup> This final separation of the individual from her inescapably social existence leaves Lilly, like liberalism itself in the post-war years, in a political no-man's land: he is neither able to attack the capitalist and state exploitation of miners by supporting their campaign for nationalisation (since he detests all "mass-activity", though apparently he is unable to bear the bullying of individuals!); nor able to defend state prosecution of the war for the expansion of British capitalism (since he loathes

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<sup>140</sup> Freeden, pp. 21-22.

<sup>141</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>142</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 282.

all “*bullying*” even on behalf of a system based on individualism).

Furthermore, Lilly’s professed desire to “break the old forms”,<sup>143</sup> through the opaque, spiritualistic ploy of facing “the world as we’ve made it [...] our own souls as we find them” and taking “the responsibility”, leads him into something of a quandary since his notion of the “old forms” conflates politically opposed social groups and institutions, including “sacred motherhood” and “money”. Consequently, as the novel progresses (or retreats), his new conception takes on more and more of an ideal form which, in its transcendence of material and social life, ironically acquiesces in the perpetuation of many of those “old forms”. Meanwhile, though Aaron acts as a fissuring device in his row with Lilly over the war, his contempt for mass consumerism and, as the early chapters indicate, his loss of faith in the labour movement, lead him to sympathise with Lilly’s idealist rejection of the material world in all its contemporary forms. The seeds of this rejection are sown early in the novel in the bohemians’ discussion over the nationalisation of the mines and Bolshevik revolution.

The characters of Jim Bricknall, a former army officer and a “sort of socialist [...] a red-hot revolutionary of a very ineffectual sort”,<sup>144</sup> and his fiancé, Josephine Ford, an artist and also an advocate of Bolshevik revolution, who feature prominently in this discussion, act as representatives of material disorder and psychological malaise. They are symbolic figures whom Lilly and Aaron must later reject in order to find a potentially satisfying state of being and relationship. What is especially significant about them is that they provide

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<sup>143</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 120.

<sup>144</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 73.

a voice, like the miners of the second chapter, "The Royal Oak", both for immediate contemporary history and for social being and material life.

Aaron and Lilly, however, are at best indifferent to this voice. When, for instance, Jim enquires of Aaron "What do you make of the miners?", Aaron's absurdly non-committal response is not without humour: "I don't make anything of them". More amusingly, Aaron is seemingly unconcerned and even ignorant of his former co-workers' current and widely-publicised struggle – that is, for nationalisation – and its purposes:

"Do you think they'll make a stand against the government?"

"What for?"

"Nationalisation."

"They might, one day."

"Think they'd fight?"

"Fight?"

"Yes."

Aaron sat laughing.

"What have they to fight for?"<sup>145</sup>

As a former "secretary to the Miners Union for his colliery" who, in the first chapter of the novel, discusses a potential industrial action with his wife, Aaron is eccentrically playful here, and yet simultaneously removed from and hostile to the materialist politics which he has left behind: his apparently amused indifference is indicative of a profound disillusionment with his class interests. It is not so much that he does not want to engage with those interests, but that he has ceased to be able to engage with them – he has after all "only just left" his fellow miners, "for good".<sup>146</sup>

Aaron's "rather indifferent" tone, however, is not politically indifferent. The miners' "silly wrangling" which had "nettled" him in the opening scene is

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<sup>145</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 59.

<sup>146</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 60.

part of his judgement here also: “They’ll do a lot of cavilling”. Josephine, on the other hand, wishes that the miners would “make a bloody revolution”. The effect of this is to stun the others and polarise response. A “symbol of young disaster”, Josephine insists that “I don’t believe in revolutions that aren’t bloody”, that she would “love it”, and in a “real fight” would “love” “getting killed”. This is accompanied by Jim’s “luscious” voice, exclaiming “What price machine guns at the end of the Strand! That’s a day to live for, what?”, Clariss’s “deep laugh” and Tanny’s comment that a “bloody revolution” would “be rather fun”. In contrast, Julia reacts “hysterically”, crying “I should be frightened”, while Robert questions the idea both on the grounds of its violence and of a vague personal sense of it, like the Great War, “work[ing] out rather stupid and unsatisfying”. Lilly identifies the difference between the First World War and a “civil war” with a typically depoliticising metaphor: a revolution is “pulling the house down”.<sup>147</sup> By implication, however, this metaphor recognises that the Great War was part of “the house”. This recognition reminds us of the novel’s opening:

[...] the War was over, and there was a sense of relief that was almost a new menace. A man felt the violence of the nightmare released now into the general air. Also there had been another wrangle among the men on the pit-bank that evening.<sup>148</sup>

Here, the prose reflects an important perception that the wider war between imperialist nation-states has helped to precipitate a new, internal, class conflict. Yet the conditions of domination and anarchic competition which created the First World War are obscured here, whereas Lilly’s later metaphor both hints at these conditions and re-directs the discussion away from the real nature of

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<sup>147</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 60.

<sup>148</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 5.

“the house” as a system of violence and anarchy itself. The kind of consciousness which substitutes the word “house” for capitalism is both repressed and repressive.

Josephine and Jim’s sense of the importance of the mobilisation of the miners’ economic interests for a wider political and moral struggle for “freedom, liberty, an escape from this vile system”, acts as a crucial redefinition to counter Lilly and Aaron’s idealist division of material life from intellectual life.<sup>149</sup> In fact, the only method Lilly possesses of dismissing this synthesis is through his domestication of political discourse (a similar manoeuvre to Oliver Turton’s description of the miners’ dispute in *Touch and Go* as a “quarrel”) which allows him to pretend that “the house” “pall[s]” on him.<sup>150</sup> I say “pretend”, for throughout the novel Lilly affirms his ideals of individual freedom and an escape from “bullying”, both of which entail a rigorous attack on the present system of material organisation, or what Lilly simply calls “money”. This is shown most forcefully through Aaron, who both agrees with Lilly that “the house” inspires a lack of interest rather than hatred, and who gradually falls more into an ideological line with Lilly. For Aaron, like Lilly, is bitterly hostile to bourgeois materialism and its attendant ideals of security, respectability and the family. For example, Aaron comes into conflict with the bourgeois Frankses and their friends in “Novara” when they accuse Lilly of failing to write “with any eye to the market”. Aaron responds by affirming “the spirit” in Lilly which “move[s] him dead against the market” and by insisting on his own individualistic belief in “chance”: “I believe, if I go my own way, without tying my nose to a job, chance will always throw

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<sup>149</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 60.

<sup>150</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 61.

something in my way".<sup>151</sup> Notably, these words are spoken *after* the dialogue in which Aaron shows envy towards Lilly for his "freedom" from the orthodox labour of a "job". Similarly, when Aaron is accused of being "pretty selfish, to marry a woman and then expect her to live on very little indeed, and that always precarious, just because you [...] believe in Providence", Aaron's matter-of-fact way of stating that his wife has "no right" to "security" and "provision" if he himself does not, represents a repudiation of the family, responsibility and the other which has already been agreed upon between Aaron and Lilly in their discussion of "sacred motherhood".<sup>152</sup>

Thus, the pair's agreement that "the house" bores them seems contradictory in the light of the anti-bourgeois sentiments which necessarily accompany their ideals: for if Aaron desires freedom he must also oppose what he calls the "money we live for" and which the bourgeois accepts and idolises.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, the irony of Aaron and Lilly's acceptance of the economic system in "Talk" is supplemented by the fact that the language they use for their political desires is identical to Josephine's. For Josephine's affirmation of "freedom, liberty, [and] an escape from this vile system" sounds strikingly similar to Lilly's terms – the difference is, that Lilly and Aaron want political and spiritual change without any disruptive material transformation. Thus material questions become, for the pair, such a reduced sphere of interest that the economic system in which "the money" is what "we live for" is only to be altered by ceasing to be interested in it altogether: by individuals allowing it to "pall" on them. As a consequence, the "violence of the nightmare" of early

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<sup>151</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>152</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 144.

<sup>153</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 21.

twentieth-century capitalism, which is desublimated in Josephine as a revolutionary “symbol of young horror”, forces Aaron and Lilly into a political and philosophical corner. For Lilly and Aaron cannot choose “the house”, yet, simultaneously, they cannot choose its destruction. They reject the ideology of security on a personal level for the sake of a precarious freedom for themselves and their spouses, yet they will not risk the uncertainty of destabilising the system upon which such barren notions of freedom and security rest. They desire a superior moral universe based on liberty, but do not desire the socio-material transformation upon which such a world would be based. They reject “cavilling”, “*bullying*” and “wrangling”, but in their acceptance of the material status quo which is “the house”, they agree to its systematised “*bullying*”. In short, their ideological position is in such turmoil that the ideal plane is the only refuge in which to continue their partnership in political thought.

This ideal plane is a refuge in a double sense: it is at once a haven from thinking anything which one may feel impelled to act upon, and at the same time an attempt to repress the memory of material history. The former is indicated particularly forcefully in “XX Settembre” after Aaron witnesses the Italian police clash violently with a socialist protest. His response is to use the art of music as a cathartic instrument:

Aaron withdrew into his room. His mind and soul were in a whirl. He sat down in his chair, and did not move again for a great while. When he did move, he took his flute and played he knew not what. But strange, strange his soul passed into his instrument. Or passed half into his instrument. There was a big residue left, to go bitter, or to ferment into good old wine of wisdom.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 187.



Here, having seen the socialists, at first “vicious” in their “demon-like set purpose”<sup>155</sup> and then “all cowed and hang-dog once more”<sup>156</sup> following the “wild and indiscriminate” attack of the “carabinieri”, who rushed at them, “beating them wildly with truncheons”, Aaron “withdr[aws]” and channels his emotional response into his flute.<sup>157</sup> The depiction of this scene, with its equal distaste for the police and the socialists, supports Aaron’s aesthetic disengagement from the decisive political struggles of his time. With the institutions of liberal democracy collapsing in the Italy of 1920, Aaron’s reaction is to use art as a depoliticising instrument. Insofar as he is able to do this, his “soul” evades any consideration of political position. Insofar as he is unable, he defends those almost obsolete institutions through a combination of the inertia of bitterness and an illusory faith in the power of individual “wisdom”.

The latter sense in which this ideal plane is a refuge can best be illustrated by placing Aaron’s understanding of the miners’ campaign for nationalisation in the context of social and political history. For Aaron’s cynical estimation of this campaign as a mere process of “cavilling” marks a turning point in the novel with regard to the process of political engagement and speculation. In the second chapter of the novel, “The Royal Oak”, Aaron had speculated on the cause of class conflict in mixed terms. While holding that “it’s money as is between the masters and us”, Aaron adds that “for as long as one holds [one end of the rope], the other will pull”.<sup>158</sup> These interpretations clash ideologically in that the former recollects the material

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<sup>155</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 183.

<sup>156</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 186.

<sup>157</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 185.

<sup>158</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 21.

foundations of an existing power relationship, which involves a consciousness of oneself as the subservient group (“money” is “between” the “masters” and “us”), while the latter has forgotten these features, and implicitly allows for the workers’ surrender to be a positive solution to the conflict. However, Aaron’s method of political speculation, here based both on a process of remembering one’s experience in material history and on a process of overlooking it, is significantly altered in his removal from the social milieu of the local public house and the company of fellow miners to the middle-class circle of artists and bohemians in London. In Aaron’s notion of the miners’ nationalisation programme there is no longer any recollection of a (both personal and shared) material history. Instead, political interpretation is based on a method of idealism and cynicism: a mode of historical prediction which denies itself access to both the past and the future.

For the notion of the miners’ demands as “cavilling” is certainly not based on any historical precedent of the period. To recall the deep and lasting effects of war-time inflation:

Prices, not only of coal but of all commodities, rose steeply during the winter of 1914-15 with the result that in the New Year wages demands were put forward in several industries. In the mining industry changes in wages had hitherto been regulated in Conciliation Boards where the sole factors taken into account...were the selling price of coal and the volume of output. Prices of other commodities, which made up the cost of living, had been left out of the reckoning. In this respect the living standards of the miners had considerably worsened in the twenty years of rising prices since the English Conciliation Board had been set up in 1894.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Arnot, pp. 161-2.

Thus, the immediate past does not offer much substantiation to the claim that miners might be expected to raise trivial objections. More importantly, however, the campaign for nationalisation was to reveal the nature of those the miners confronted. For the Sankey Commission, a "Committee of Inquiry" into the coal trade set up by the government in early 1919 to pacify the miners, exposed the appalling reality of private ownership in the mining industry.<sup>160</sup> It emerged, for example, how "profits were immensely increased during the war by price guarantees being fixed to ensure profits to even least paying collieries" at the expense of both the miner and the consumer.<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, evidence showed "how huge profits were concealed by the capitalisation of reserves or other readjustments of capital".<sup>162</sup> In terms of the debate between the proponents of nationalisation and private control, the Commission made it clear that "nationalisation provided the only really adequate method by which to preserve and raise the miners' standard of life, besides being the only effective safeguard for the consumer",<sup>163</sup> illustrated that private ownership "was characterised by wastefulness and extravagance",<sup>164</sup> and became "less of a cold enquiry" and more of "an open trial of private capitalism in the coal-mining industry".<sup>165</sup>

Aaron not only represses history in "Talk", therefore, but decides that he will no longer attempt to understand the significance of future historical events. His prediction that the miners will "do a lot of cavilling" is

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<sup>160</sup> The Inquiry examined, in particular, the miners' requests for wage increases, a reduction in hours and nationalisation of the industry.

<sup>161</sup> Arnot, p. 192.

<sup>162</sup> Arnot, p. 193.

<sup>163</sup> Arnot, p. 194.

<sup>164</sup> Arnot, p. 197.

<sup>165</sup> Arnot, p. 201.

uninterested in its own potential vindication since Aaron's confirmation that he has "left" the miners "for good", and his "indifferent" attitude to the question of nationalisation, betray his desire to forget even the future – that is, the future of worldly events.<sup>166</sup> Thus, Aaron must shift his sense of what constitutes an effective historical indicator of the *zeitgeist* in order to maintain any concern for either the past or the future. Having rejected, then, the conventional signals of historical and political development (for Aaron, whether or not the government nationalises the mines is unimportant), Aaron begins to use similar historical yardsticks to Lilly. These are frequently religious, aesthetic and philosophical, and suggest (with their reference-points being those of an intellectual "high" culture) a new kind of 'high' politics as a substitute for the "low", worldly politics of (both) parliaments and protests.

In order to illustrate this point, rather than offer a detailed analysis of the novel's second half, I shall provide a brief account of how this feature of the novel recreates itself continuously in different scenes. For the novel possesses this tendency of repeating itself through a plethora of various scenes and dialogues: this is, in fact, the *modus operandi* of *Aaron's Rod*. Unlike its predecessors, *Aaron's Rod* is entrapped in a narrative cycle of perpetually offering up the competing opposites of its epoch, only to abandon them unreconciled, to seek refuge in idealism. *Kangaroo* (1923), similarly, adopts a cyclical narrative procedure which is self-consciously exploited by its narrator with defiant playfulness:

Chapter follows chapter, and nothing doing [...] We can't be at a stretch of tension *all* the time, like the *E* string on a fiddle. If you don't like the novel, don't

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<sup>166</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 60.

read it. If the pudding doesn't please you, leave it,  
leave it. *I don't mind your saucy plate.*<sup>167</sup>

Like *Aaron's Rod*, *Kangaroo* uses this method in order repeatedly and stubbornly to re-establish the political quandaries and sanctuaries of post-war liberalism. Both these novels, then, tend towards a repetition rather than a progression of these themes. Hence, a brief over-view of the latter half of *Aaron's Rod* should suffice to demonstrate the novel's prevailing *modus operandi* and should also be understood as an analytical paradigm for a discussion of *Kangaroo* (though there is not the space for such a discussion here).

Idealist patterns of thought, then, permeate Aaron's consciousness in the latter half of the novel. This is particularly striking in Aaron's evolving ideas on money, property, and class, which awkwardly attempt to over-ride social conflicts. For example, as a reflex to his "self-conscious embarrassment" at being chauffeured away from the Frankses in their "soft and luxurious car", Aaron idealises third-class train travel both as more "alive" and as a stubborn defiance of social snobbery. His rejection of "riches" here, through a connoted anti-materialism, also appears to reject comfort in general and "money" as "power" (it is only "a kind of numbness"): consequently, Aaron fails to understand that money *is* a form of power in his current society, and thus devalues material opposition to it.<sup>168</sup>

Similarly, later in the chapter "XX Settembre", the Italian socialists, whose anti-nationalist march results in a violent clash with the police, are imbued with a dehumanising, destructive purpose on a metaphysical and

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<sup>167</sup> Lawrence, *Kangaroo* (1923), ed. Bruce Steele (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 284.

<sup>168</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 179.

depoliticised level: "There was [...] something inhuman and possessed-looking in their foreign, southern-shaped faces, so much more formed and demon-looking than northern faces".<sup>169</sup> Alongside this abstract and dualistic biological thinking, moreover, is the implication that socialism or political protest in general is a perverted sublimation of male sexuality – the sexualising language, the demonisation of the men, and the emphasis upon the absence of women all suggesting this: "There were no women—all men—a strange male, slashing sound. Vicious it was".<sup>170</sup> This sense of radicalism as a warped form of sexuality thus also hints at an historical role for depoliticised gender identities; a role which Aaron later ascribes to the Florentine male.

In the following chapter, "A Railway Journey", the historico-material grounds of class conflict are again psychologically evaded, when Aaron's seat in the third-class carriage is taken by a "stout",<sup>171</sup> "insolent" man,<sup>172</sup> creating an altercation between the man and Aaron's two companions of "the upper middle classes" (who are travelling first class).<sup>173</sup> From this spectacle Aaron stands moralistically aloof, seemingly ridiculing both the upper middle classes for "hang[ing] on" to their "artificial cash superiority" (while also possessing "an exaggerated respect for him and his life-power"),<sup>174</sup> and the lower classes for their "insolent" and "jeering" robbery. Consequently, class conflict is rejected as a reality founded upon concrete socio-economic conditions ("The third class carriages were packed. For those were the early days after the war,

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<sup>169</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 183.

<sup>170</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 183.

<sup>171</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 200.

<sup>172</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 201.

<sup>173</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 197.

<sup>174</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 197.

while men still had pre-war notions and were poor”),<sup>175</sup> paving the way for ideas of class (such as “life-power”), morality and justice abstracted from materially constituted social relations.

Such abstract notions of historical agency are prominent, moreover, in the chapter “Florence”, in which Aaron’s personal feeling of aesthetic awe when he enters the Piazza della Signoria is transmuted into a mythologisation of the city and its history, its various social and economic classes liquidating into a “town of men”, whose quintessential feature is that of a “curious individuality” without “apology and without justification”. This idealist interpretation of both history and the present diagnoses the spirit of both Florence and the Italian Renaissance as one of “unbroken”, physically potent masculinity, while then proceeding to draw the conclusion that, though it has generally degenerated, this formerly dominant quality is still present and could potentially rejuvenate the forces of world-history, so depleted by the epoch of “sweet Christendom”.<sup>176</sup> However, the “one manly quality” of “undying, acrid fearlessness” required for this *historical* purpose and perceived in this “town of men” is paradoxically without any more substantial historical referent than the Florentine men’s “sharp, almost acrid, mocking expression, the silent curl of the nose”, and constitutes a myth of masculine power and opposition of such an indistinct nature and agency (an “acrid unbelief”) as to have no more clear a political target than “sweet Christendom”, and (by implication from the novel as a whole) all that can possibly be contained within the idea of the established

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<sup>175</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 200.

<sup>176</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, pp. 212-13.

order.<sup>177</sup> Gender identities are thus to be constructed outside the fields of active politics and world history while paradoxically changing them.

Towards the end of this important chapter, furthermore, this transcendentalist tendency is radically extended, as property is naturalised as an extension of the self. For when Aaron is robbed in the streets by soldiers, he interprets it as an attack on his “life-spirit” which he had not kept “guard over”,<sup>178</sup> and sees the incident as a revelation of the “power of evil” which had taken advantage of his “absolute trust” in assuming that “mankind and the life-spirit were a playground for enkindled individuals”.<sup>179</sup> This metaphysical language of absolutes spiritualises the material as an attribute of the soul or “life-spirit” and, in its fundamental implications for Aaron’s future way of life, creates a rigid, non-transgressable boundary between the self and the social: “in the midst of the deepest passion or the suddenest love, or in the throes of greatest excitement or bewilderment [...] the sentinel of the soul must not sleep: no, never, not for one instant.”<sup>180</sup> Thus, the individual self becomes private property, and yet the sense of material life as morally contaminated is removed through its spiritualisation within the self.

The individual self thus atomised, Aaron unsurprisingly agrees with Lilly, in their discussion of female power in “High Up over the Cathedral Square”, when he advocates a position later practically embraced by Aaron in response to his affair with the Marchesa: “in love most intensely of all, alone”.<sup>181</sup> Moreover, with comparable abstraction, Aaron and Lily do not

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<sup>177</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 213.

<sup>178</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 230.

<sup>179</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, pp. 229-30.

<sup>180</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 231.

<sup>181</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron’s Rod*, p. 246.



question the Marchese and Argyle's disillusionment with "the bourgeoisie[s]" subservience to his wife,<sup>182</sup> as a misunderstanding of the contradictions involved in bourgeois sexual relationships: rather, it is answered with Lilly's "metaphysical" language of male individualism.<sup>183</sup> Thus, Aaron's "life-spirit" has converged yet further with Lilly's idealist philosophy which has, from the start, analysed politics on the ideal plane of binary opposites: the character of the psychosomatically debilitated socialist, Jim Bricknall, as a representative (for Lilly) of the spirit of love and Christianity, being a significant example, with respect to Lilly's various speeches on the importance of individual power.

However, as we discover in "Cleopatra but not Antony", with the self thus privatised Aaron has no room left for relationship. Hence, with his last attempt at a relationship with a woman, the Marchesa, Aaron idealises his own estrangement, perceiving her as "like a priestess utterly involved in her terrible rites" and himself as "part of the ritual only, God and victim in one".<sup>184</sup> For the establishment of an "aloof soul" not only admits no relationship, but leads to a Romantic division of the mind from the body – the Marchesa, "absolutely gone" in an unconscious sensuality, while Aaron's "remote soul", knowing "itself alone", pontificates upon the possible mystic motives for their sexual behaviour.<sup>185</sup> Aaron thus attempts, through quasi-religious terms, both to justify his judgement upon her as a perverted example of female sexuality, and to rationalise his own alienation. Consequently, Aaron denies his, and the Marchese's, socio-material power position (as males) over the Marchesa, while the politics of her sexuality is incriminated and his own sensuality repressed.

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<sup>182</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 244.

<sup>183</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 247.

<sup>184</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 273.

<sup>185</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 273.

In "The Broken Rod", having mocked both socialism and authoritarianism, Lilly professes a similarly mystical belief, this time in a "sacred" individuality which can be preserved from "bullying" regardless of socio-historical limits on freedom. However, this liberal idealism, which separates society from the individual as two hostile actors, and (in utopian vein) imagines the ahistorical creation (stripped of history's attendant social and material threats to the individual) of an inviolable individuality, is rebuked with the terrible dramatic irony of an exploding anarchist bomb. This "awful" moment, where the material world avenges itself terribly on Lilly and Aaron's idealism, is broadly paradigmatic of the novel as a whole, which stubbornly refuses to successfully reconcile the contradictions of the society it represents, despite the transcendentalist attempts of Lilly and Aaron to adjust the individual to society and thus repress their own social alienation.<sup>186</sup>

For though, by the novel's close, Aaron has moved substantially towards the "finished singleness" which he had considered as a coping strategy after his final confrontation with his wife<sup>187</sup> (all he is left with in "Words" is Lilly and his ideal of the "innermost, integral unique self"),<sup>188</sup> this intended "isolation" of the "soul"<sup>189</sup> does not create a politically transcendent space from which social integration is then possible. It merely takes the most fundamental element of liberalism, the notion of the free individual, to its logical conclusion – the barren transcendence of the individual into the "silence, beyond speech" that is the idealist politics of personal relations.

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<sup>186</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 282.

<sup>187</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 128.

<sup>188</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 295.

<sup>189</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 105.

Consequently, even the politicisation of these personal relations, with its emphasis on the relationships between men and between men and women, is made redundant since Lilly's proposed society has neither a material basis nor a realistic conception of power: he assumes people will "livingly" "submit" to the "deep power-soul in the individual man".<sup>190</sup> That Lilly's talk is mere "Words" and rests upon a set of obscure and incommunicable religious beliefs is made evident through his emphases on "silence", the "soul", and "isolation", and his rejection of "mental power" and "wisdom".<sup>191</sup> Thus, not only the individualism of this politics but its celestial quality leaves it perfectly in harmony with the debilitated liberalism of its period.<sup>192</sup>

Hence, the absurd triumph of one element in each of the dichotomies set up by the novel betrays the fundamental evasiveness of Lilly's proposals. The conflicts portrayed in all their complexity are toppled, allowing personal freedom to oust social responsibility, spirituality to overcome the material, self to dominate other, ideas to absorb practice, and individualism and power to form the basis of relationship. Yet the contradictions are still present. They are contained in the retained liberal combination of individualism and hierarchy:

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<sup>190</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 298.

<sup>191</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 297.

<sup>192</sup> This political transcendentalism is also reminiscent of the utopian socialism so witheringly critiqued by Marx and Frederick Engels. Lilly, as the self-proclaimed prophet of the new society, is not dissimilar to what Engels called the "individual man of genius", desired by the utopian socialists, "who has now arisen and who understands the truth" (Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, trans. Edward Aveling [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1892], p. 7). Similarly, the binary opposites which inform so much of Lilly and Aaron's thinking (for example, the "two urges" of "love" and "power" which Lilly speaks of to Aaron - Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 297) resemble the utopian socialists' use of such concepts as "absolute truth, reason, and justice" (Engels, p. 27) which, due to their inadequacy in explaining how the materially constituted contradictions of their society may be historically resolved, meant that they adopted the approach of "the metaphysician" who "thinks in absolutely irreconcilable antitheses" (Engels, p. 31). As a consequence, both the utopian socialists and Lawrence's protagonists believe that, (as Marx and Engels put it), "historical action is to yield to their personal inventive action, historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones" (Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl

for how can Lilly's society decide who should have liberty and who should "submit"? One assumes that Lilly is sufficiently confident that his own "deep power-soul" will enable him to become one of the chosen leaders/individuals of this society, despite his lack of realisation that this faith is precarious in a society devoid of any material organisation. Equally, liberalism's championing of individual freedom appears awkwardly diluted in the form of a capitalism which only allots that liberty to the few entrepreneurs who best exploit the market (and thus myriad others). Thus, Lilly's last "Words" make a mockery of liberal individualism by extending it to its obvious conclusions and parodying liberalism's dismissal of its own contradictions. For if such individualism is not to crumble into anarchy it must maintain a rigid power structure which allows individual liberty at the top to reek the ordered havoc of capitalistic competition at the bottom, in the form of mass unemployment and exploitation. Such a contradictory society it is, grotesquely idealised through Lilly's spiritualistic omission of material questions, that we see parodied at the end of *Aaron's Rod*.

Simultaneously, however, beneath Lilly's continued and culminating emphasis on the "higher self" of the individual, earlier his "life-spirit"<sup>193</sup> now his "soul", there haunts a recollection of the repressed sensuousness of Lilly and Aaron's relationship. That no form of sensuousness is any longer available to Aaron in his new life is evident in the final dialogue of the novel. The earlier physical, pleasurable relationship between the pair, which had brought Aaron's convalescence about, is conspicuous by its absence. Similarly,

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Marx, pp. 245-72, 268). Though "emancipation" is hardly the goal of Lawrence's characters at the end of *Aaron's Rod*, utopian socialism has evident affinities with it.

<sup>193</sup> Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*, p. 120.

Aaron's search for a relationship uncontaminated by power struggle is forgotten and repressed by Lilly, though not by the reader of the novel, which stretches out behind this concluding scene as a lasting reminder of the history of violent and intense conflict which constituted and continues to constitute the divided and antagonistic era of liberal capitalism.

In conclusion, then, in contrast to the general critical consensus upon the bulk of Lawrence's post-war output as broadly conservative and monologic (the popularity of the term "leadership novels" providing a crucial index), I have tried to suggest an alternative reading of its ideological landscape by focusing on two texts which straddle the period 1918-1922. My reason for this focus has been to provide a detailed analysis of trans-generic, aesthetic/ideological processes which may be understood as paradigmatic of much of Lawrence's post-war work - including that subsequent to this period.

Though both Graham Holderness and Peter Scheckner have dissented from the consensus<sup>194</sup> - Holderness, for example, seeing *Touch and Go* as radically "unresolved",<sup>195</sup> and Scheckner providing an account of *Aaron's Rod* sensitive, to some extent, to its ideological contradictions - their approaches similarly deny the deep-seated liberalism of both texts, an understanding of which, I believe, is paramount in attempting to explain the ideological nature of Lawrence's post-war corpus. *Touch and Go* is, as I have shown, ultimately constrained by conceptions of historical change, labour, class, and class conflict which prevent it from releasing itself, in any radical sense, from the

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<sup>194</sup> By "the consensus", I mean the evaluative contempt in which these texts are held by liberal humanist critics, such as F. R. Leavis, Frank Kermode, Graham Hough, and John Worthen.

<sup>195</sup> Graham Holderness, *D. H. Lawrence: History, Ideology and Fiction* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982), pp. 211-4, 213.

problems it sets out. *Aaron's Rod*, however, has a far greater complexity to it than is suggested by Scheckner's analysis, which fails fundamentally to challenge the view of the novel as one of the "three so-called leadership novels".<sup>196</sup>

For Lawrence's work is, in fact, riddled with an irresolvable anxiety over (what are seen as) the mutually hostile yet legitimate demands of social reconciliation and individual liberty, in an increasingly divided social and political arena; and is thus consistently unable to proceed imaginatively from the irreconcilable antitheses of post-war liberalism. This anxiety seems, on the one hand, to be based upon a profoundly ingrained liberal idealism, which either attempts to evade or resolve social conflict through abstraction and/or hopeful rationalism, or which sees an abstract individual liberty as a more worthy competitor than its diametric opposite of social responsibility. Equally, however, and on the other hand, these texts seem unable to avoid a concern for political and historico-material questions, and perpetually return to the same ones (for example, those surrounding the mining industry).

As I hope to have shown, this period's work is at its most sophisticated when this anxiety is so contained by its ambivalence as to foster the dialectical capacity (so adept in *Aaron's Rod*) to illuminate both the socio-historical inadequacy of liberalism as an emancipatory or reconciliatory mode of thought, and the irrepressible recurrence of material life within the commonly distinguished and elevated spheres of culture, politics and individual privacy – by allowing both to illuminate each other. Even when this is not the case, however, as in *Touch and Go*, a deeper understanding of the problematic at

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<sup>196</sup> Peter Scheckner, *Class, Politics, and the Individual: A Study of the Major Works of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Associated University Presses, 1985), pp. 89-110, 89.

stake – that of liberalism’s ideological ability to superficially reconcile the binary opposites of its own creation, while obscuring and thus maintaining the status quo of a divisive class structure – can, I hope, be gained from a non-reductive materialist analysis which attends both to the sociological nature of a text and to its constitution as a form.

### **3: "Is England Still a Man's Country?": Images of Englishness in Lawrence's Late Essays**

The substantial array of journalistic articles which Lawrence published during the last years of his life have received little attention. This is most likely because they are not perceived as worthy of intellectual discussion – their style is not literary, their arguments not well-reasoned, their treatment of contemporary issues often bathetic, and their politics confused. This should not, however, be a sufficient reason to ignore this significant quantity of work from a writer who is normally seen as both a serious, literary author and a major contributor to the collection of works which compose the particular phase of culture known as modernism.

In fact, from the perspective of the historical materialist critic, the absence of analysis in this area of Lawrence's work should indicate a blind spot in the critical conception of the writer's labour and the culture of which he is perceived as being such an important member. For the very fact that Lawrence's work is granted such a high cultural status and seriousness of thought should lead one to question an inability or indisposition to consider the products of his work which are not of great intellectual weight, but are of importance in other ways: namely, in understanding the nature of working as a writer and the highly distinct and selective formation of a cultural conception of that writer and his labour.

Lawrence's late articles are illuminating in this sense, since they were both vital in allowing him to earn a living as a writer in the last, difficult years of his life, and significant in establishing a wider reception of his work through the popular press, and thus the conception of Lawrence as a writer in his



contemporary period. The articles, after all, would have been widely read to an extent that the fiction could not have been. Moreover, they are significant in the lack of critical consideration they have received since they were written. For this fact alone should lead one to address the question of how a writer becomes “a writer” – that ponderously pronounced version of the term which connotes the stubbornly persistent, Romantic conception of the uncompromising and flamboyant artist who lives above the material world of money and markets. This long-standing and widespread notion of the artist is the outcome of a wider process of cultural commodification which reifies the writer and his work, and it is with this in mind as an implicit object of critique that the present analysis will proceed.

Part of the reductive effects of the commodification of Lawrence’s work has been the perception (usually led by the sense of him as being predominantly a novelist) that Lawrence abandoned England emotionally as well as physically when he left the country in 1919. However, Lawrence’s late essays, as with *Pansies*, seem preoccupied with contemporary English debates and offer a variety of versions of what it means to be English. Thus, this analysis will focus on Lawrence’s relationship with the idea of English national identity in terms of his engagement with and use of it rather than, as the orthodox discussion would have it, in terms of his negation of any such concept.

For the purposes of this study, I will employ the Bakhtinian notion of dialogue by setting two texts, which offer alternative constructions of Englishness to that of Lawrence’s, into dialogic interaction with Lawrence’s essays in order critically to illuminate the nature of his image of England.

These two texts are George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) and Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), and I have chosen them for their affinities with, as well as their differences from, Lawrence's conception of Englishness, with the intention of showing how similar notions of an identity can be grounded in radically different, if not opposing, social values and criticisms. Since Orwell's book provides an image of England which is, in certain central ways, closer to that of Lawrence's than Rhys's, it is with *Homage to Catalonia* that I will begin my dialogical analysis of Lawrence's articles.

### Political England: Lawrence in George Orwell's "Sneering Civilization"

At the end of *Homage to Catalonia*, George Orwell describes his impressions of England on returning from action in the Spanish Civil War. Orwell's sense of an anaesthetised culture, "sleeping the deep, deep sleep of England" forms a striking contrast to his portrayal of a Spain torn not only by fascism and workers' revolution but by the internecine feuds of the Republican war effort. England is a "peaceful" and parochial place, nostalgically suffused for Orwell with the atmosphere of his childhood. Moreover, this England is "southern England, probably the sleekest landscape in the world", and the "industrial towns were far away, a smudge of smoke and misery hidden by the curve of the earth's surface".<sup>1</sup>

When this image of England is placed alongside Lawrence's late essay, "Dull London",<sup>2</sup> we can see significant connections in both writers' representations of the nation. Both Orwell and Lawrence focus on England as

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<sup>1</sup> George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (1938; London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 186-7.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence, "Dull London", *Assorted Articles*, (London: Martin Secker, 1930), pp. 83-87.

southern England - they begin their constructions of Englishness by recounting train journeys from a southern port into London. Both perceive the English national character to be inactive, unimaginative, and devoid of vitality; and both accounts of England are given from the perspective of the worldly traveller, disheartened by his native land's painful familiarity. However, upon closer inspection, significant discrepancies emerge between these two constructions of Englishness.

To begin with, Orwell's image of England is transparent as a construction. The delusion inherent in the selectivity of its self-construction is represented as part of its failings as a culture: for example, the polluting "smoke" and neglected "misery" of England's northern "industrial towns" are "hidden" from view in this particular England's self-perception.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the England of Orwell's ironical vision not only relies on a myth of the present but also draws upon anachronistic signs of political, military, economic, and even aesthetic hegemony. It is a culture living through its past at the expense of the present. For the hybrid collection of images that Orwell selects to depict this England are grounded in notions of an imperialist past, a nostalgia for the monarchy, a history of global military power, a rural England, and an orderly, gentle, and quiescent people:

the railway-cuttings smothered in wild flowers, the deep meadows where the great shining horses browse and meditate, the slow-moving streams bordered by willows, the green bosoms of the elms, the larkspurs in the cottage gardens; and then the huge peaceful wilderness of outer London, the barges on the miry river, the familiar streets, the posters telling of cricket matches and Royal weddings, the men in bowler hats, the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, the red buses, the blue

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<sup>3</sup> Orwell, p. 187.

policeman – all sleeping the deep, deep sleep of  
England [...]<sup>4</sup>

Orwell's England, here, is an empty cultural hieroglyph - an absurd concoction of disparate cultural indices. Some of the images, for example, reflect contemporary fashions (such as the "bowler hats") or arbitrary conventions (the "red buses" and "blue policeman"), while others denote more long-standing national pastimes connected with the age of the British Empire (such as the "cricket matches"). Moreover, this is an England in love with its past – a past which is in the process of being destroyed by such historical forces as industrialism, colonial revolution, international capitalistic competition, and social and industrial unrest. However, such an England is not only oblivious of these forces at work within itself, but unaware or indifferent to upheaval elsewhere (and its potential effects upon England):

It is difficult [...] to believe that anything is really happening anywhere. Earthquakes in Japan, famines in China, revolutions in Mexico? Don't worry, the milk will be on the doorstep tomorrow morning, the *New Statesman* will come out on Friday.<sup>5</sup>

Part of the power of *Homage to Catalonia* thus arises from the threat which Spain (and Orwell's account of his experiences there) represents to such complacent insouciance. For Orwell, then, England is fundamentally an unstable entity, lacking any real existence in the present, any consciousness of the importance of its international relationships, or any coherence as a container of signs.

For Lawrence, on the other hand, England's past represents a lost and glamorous era of "adventure" to be mourned. This is shown through a

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<sup>4</sup> Orwell, p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> Orwell, pp. 186-7.

rhapsodic and nostalgic passage in "Dull London" which offers a personal recollection of London "twenty years ago":

It used not to be so. Twenty years ago London was to me thrilling, thrilling, thrilling, the vast and roaring heart of all adventure. It was not only the heart of the world, it was the heart of the world's living adventure. How wonderful the Strand, the Bank, Charing Cross at night, Hyde Park in the morning!<sup>6</sup>

If the two images of England are put into dialogic interaction with one another, Orwell's construction offers a satirical critique of Lawrence's rendering of England's former glory. For Orwell mocks the Englishness which manufactures itself around nostalgic notions of past hegemony, whereas Lawrence revels in such conceptions of the past and imbues them with the grandeur of the personal and emotional. The unconscious sado-masochism inherent in a passion for London's previous dominance as a centre of world power is thus sublimated into a subjective and sentimental nostalgia for the spirit of a place. The image of the "wonderful" "Strand" is a dream-like condensation of what would otherwise have been a political language – a way of writing for hegemony with emotion. In contrast, Orwell's picture of an England still absorbed in "Royal weddings" is portrayed as ridiculous and naïvely oblivious to the dangers of both insularity and power; its "deep sleep" being perhaps only interrupted by the "roar of bombs".<sup>7</sup>

The points of comparison for Orwell's England are that of a rising fascism, an oppressive contemporary capitalism, and the potential (in Spain) for a revolution to overthrow these oppressive forces – all of which England ignores both in spite of its unavoidable entanglement with this political

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<sup>6</sup> Lawrence, "Dull London", p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> Orwell, p. 187.

landscape, and because of its complicity in political reaction. Lawrence's terms of comparison, on the other hand, are either a fondly recalled London of imperial power ("the heart of the world's living adventure"), or the excitements of other dominant Western capitals: "No doubt if you stay longer you get over it, and find London as thrilling as Paris or Rome or New York".<sup>8</sup> Thus, although Lawrence's negative portrayal of southern England as seamlessly "inoffensive", "dull", and "poky" resembles Orwell's uneventful landscape, Lawrence's concerns in his attack on London and England are far from being the political ones which motivate Orwell's.<sup>9</sup> Lawrence's interest in "Dull London" is primarily in the way in which a culture affects the individual's spiritual vitality. The problem, therefore, of the "pervasive anaesthetic" which fills England's "air" is one limited entirely to the potentially damaging effects of such a cultural atmosphere upon individual psychology.<sup>10</sup> Lawrence's English are too "nice, safe, easy", but all they are lacking is purpose (the London traffic is "going nowhere"), "adventure" and "vitality", whereas Orwell's English are lacking a sense of their (national and global) social relationships which is potentially fatal.<sup>11</sup> Lawrence is, then, a victim of the very culture that Orwell satirises. "Dull London" harbours under the illusion of an England which is politically "free and individual" (though it lacks these qualities at the level of individual psychology)<sup>12</sup> - an illusion which Orwell mocks in his ironic vision of the "hidden" misery of the industrial north from the parochial consciousness of the southern English. Unlike

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<sup>8</sup> Lawrence, "Dull London", p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence, "Dull London", pp. 83-84.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence, "Dull London", p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence, "Dull London", pp. 85-86.

<sup>12</sup> Lawrence, "Dull London", p. 85.

Orwell's, then, Lawrence's version of Englishness is not self-conscious of its mythical status as a selection of (in this case favourable) values from a much more complex culture which can neither confirm nor deny the authenticity of such values in the absolutist terms which such a construction of identity requires. Furthermore, Lawrence's failure to register the global consequences of the imperial glory glamorised in his vision of an old London is similarly ridiculed for its socio-political narcissism through Orwell's emphasis on the world of "earthquakes", "famines" and "revolutions" of which England is only dimly aware.

Such are the differences between these writers' diagnoses of England's inertia and introspection. Yet there are also significant points of comparison in their proposed solutions to England's cultural malaise. For Lawrence's article, "Red Trousers", addresses the idea of using "a crusade" to cure "London dulness", such as "the Salvation Army", "Socialism or politics, freedom of little nations, and the rest";<sup>13</sup> while Orwell's *Homage* is an account of the writer's experiences in a workers' militia fighting against fascism and for socialism (a fight which, as Orwell makes clear, is largely ignored by a complacent England).

Lawrence's "Red Trousers" is a light-hearted piece of writing which treats such normally weighty spheres of interest as "politics" with an irreverent flippancy which reduces them to the level of a hobby or lifestyle choice. For example, the "crusades" which may cure London of its dulness include both "Votes for Women" and "tee-totalism", as if such social practices were comparable.<sup>14</sup> This comparison, however, is seemingly justified because "it is

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence, "Red Trousers", *Assorted Articles*, pp. 88-93, 88-90.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence, "Red Trousers", pp. 88-90.

for his leisure that man needs a crusade":<sup>15</sup> thus, if "crusades" are merely different leisure activities, "Votes for Women" and "tee-totalism" can be compared in terms of how much "fun" they are as "adventures" for one's leisure-time.<sup>16</sup> Making "money", therefore, is only "an adventure to a certain degree" because the economic world is not the field of action for a "crusade".<sup>17</sup> In fact, Lawrence implies that this is one of the reasons why people have such limited options in the "world of adventure" – there is so little time outside working life for a "crusade":

The world of adventure is pretty well used up, especially for a man who has a wage to earn. He gets a little tired of being spoon-fed on wireless, cinema, and newspaper, sitting an inert lump while entertainment or information is poured into him. He wants to *do* something.<sup>18</sup>

The world of "hobbies" ("golf, jazz, motoring")<sup>19</sup> and cultural consumption in general is insufficient to inject the English capital with new life, mainly owing to the domination of individuals by their labour – their "wage to earn" – and their consequent alienation from activity once it is freely chosen. Nonetheless, Lawrence suggests that, since "our flippant world takes life with a stupid seriousness", people need to "[treat] life as a joke again, as they did in the really great periods like the Renaissance". The absurd solution finally offered, then, is that "a dozen men" walk though London's streets wearing "tight scarlet trousers", "gay little orange-brown jackets" and "bright green hats" since "it takes a lot of courage to sail gaily, in brave feathers, right

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<sup>15</sup> Lawrence, "Red Trousers", p. 91.

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence, "Red Trousers", p. 89.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence, "Red Trousers", p. 91.

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence, "Red Trousers", pp. 91-92.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence, "Red Trousers", p. 92.



in the teeth of a dreary convention".<sup>20</sup> Lawrence's perspective on England is therefore still a bourgeoisified one, constrained by a touristic conception of history. At one point this conception consists of the famous "sights" of London, from "the Strand" to "Hyde Park in the morning", while at another it consists of an innovation in national fashion which stands in for history as an aesthetically pleasing and artificial substitute. Furthermore, Lawrence's proposed national cure - the "Red Trousers" of Italian Renaissance fashion - is significant in that it is indicative of a mind alien to its contemporary English culture: the article suggests a Lawrence in exile from both his country and modernity.

While Lawrence takes recourse to the glib notion of using alternative clothing fashion as a remedy for English, socio-psychological ill health, Orwell concerns himself (and attempts to concern England) with the potentialities of an actual revolutionary process and the struggle against fascism. Rather than perceiving "dreary convention" as England's problem and flippant subversions of sartorial customs as its salvation, Orwell claims that this apathetic world itself, with its immersion in the distractions of a "spoon-fed" culture (of "cricket matches and Royal weddings" as well as Lawrence's "wireless, cinema, and newspaper"), is the social disease of an increasingly bourgeois England which obscures the need for international political and economic struggles. The significance of these struggles is illustrated in Orwell's portrayal of revolutionary Barcelona:

the bread-queues were often hundreds of yards long. Yet so far as one could judge the people were contented and hopeful. There was no unemployment, and the price of living was extremely low; you saw very few

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<sup>20</sup> Lawrence, "Red Trousers", pp. 92-93.

conspicuously destitute people, and no beggars except the gipsies. Above all, there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom.<sup>21</sup>

This description of social and economic change illuminates Lawrence's expressed fear in "Red Trousers" that, though "a crusade is a sovereign remedy against dulness", its fulfilment may be "a greater dulness still" – and hence, "Socialism [...] might be dull, duller even than what we've got now".<sup>22</sup> For Orwell's passage suggests that this question of "dulness" is rather beside the point: the "crusade" for a higher quality of material life is inextricably connected with the "freedom" to begin considering "the world of adventure" and the "crusade" against "dulness".

Moreover, the fight against fascism, which Orwell's England refuses to involve itself in (as a capitalist nation preferring fascism to socialist revolution), is – at the very least for Orwell – far less a frivolous "crusade" than an attempt to prevent "serfdom" and "clerico-military" control from being established.<sup>23</sup> Orwell's form of social action is thus intended to transform or at least influence the world of labour and economics which Lawrence's essay implicitly acknowledges as a problem, and yet fails to solve in its reduction of social action to the commodified, lifestyle options offered by the "leisure" and culture industry – the very malaise which Orwell defines as peculiarly English at the end of *Homage*. After all, "Royal weddings", those unusual occasions tinged with aristocratic flamboyancy, are not so dissimilar from the "scarlet trousers" of "a dozen men" walking through London's streets.

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<sup>21</sup> Orwell, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Lawrence, "Red Trousers", pp. 89-90.

<sup>23</sup> Orwell, p. 133.

It is a typically English attitude, for Orwell, to cynically fear the worst as Lawrence does in his suspicion that "Votes or Socialism or politics, freedom of little nations [...] might be dull, duller than even what we've got now". However, Lawrence shares with Orwell a perception that being English involves a certain kind of indifference or cynicism – though the two writers' perceptions contain significant qualitative differences.

The prevailing version of English identity which Orwell presents is a national character that is over-proud, "money-tainted",<sup>24</sup> apathetic, bourgeois, anaesthetised by personal comfort, parochial, and controlled by (and through) hierarchy and fear: a portrait of a collective psychology which supports Orwell's politicised identification of an ingrained cynicism in English culture. This culture's cynicism appears to be defined by the language itself (rather than by a notion of national character) when, early in the book, Orwell boldly contrasts the propagandist culture of revolutionary Spain with the "hard-boiled, sneering civilisation of the English-speaking races". He suggests that, despite the privation of war, there was in Barcelona "a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom". This was reflected in such forms of signification as the Anarchist notices in the barbers' shops "solemnly explaining that barbers were no longer slaves", the "coloured posters appealing to prostitutes to stop being prostitutes", and the "revolutionary ballads of the naïvest kind, all about proletarian brotherhood and the wickedness of Mussolini". However, from the perspective of "anyone" from the stolid and cynical world of "the English-

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<sup>24</sup> Orwell, p. 83.

speaking races", there was "something rather pathetic in the literalness with which these idealistic Spaniards took the hackneyed phrases of revolution".<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, Lawrence's late essays often play with ideas of "indifference" or nonchalance in relation to Englishness in a sense that is less suggestive of a "dull" national character than it is comparable to Orwell's notion of a peculiarly English sardonicism.<sup>26</sup> In this case, Lawrence's English are less *boring* than they are *bored by* the world which surrounds them. In the essay "Ownership", for example, it is property (both private and national) which is the object of indifference and ennui to the "young Englishman".<sup>27</sup> Such a disengagement from questions of material ownership is portrayed, however, not as a form of bourgeois cynicism (as in Orwell), but as a positive turn towards a "religious" perspective which ought to be embraced.<sup>28</sup> Orwell's "money-tainted air of England"<sup>29</sup> is perceived by Lawrence to be an atmosphere inhabited by past generations which the modern "young man" has predictably not inherited:<sup>30</sup>

Our fathers got a great thrill out of making money, building their own houses, providing for their old age and laying by something for the children. Children inherit their father's leavings; they never inherit their father's and mother's thrill [...] The young don't believe in the sanctity of work, they are bored by the thought of saving up for their children. If they do build themselves a little house, they are tired of it in ten minutes. They want a car to run around in, and money to spend; but possessions, as possessions, are simply a bore to them.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Orwell, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence, "Ownership", *Assorted Articles*, pp. 52-56, 54. The articles "Ownership", "Insouciance" (pp. 31-36), and "Master in His Own House" (pp. 57-62) all explore notions of "indifference" or "insouciance" with regard to an idea of the nature of being English.

<sup>27</sup> Lawrence, "Ownership", p. 54.

<sup>28</sup> Lawrence, "Ownership", p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> Orwell, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence, "Ownership", p. 54.

<sup>31</sup> Lawrence, "Ownership", p. 53.

By contrast, Orwell's England is incurably materialistic. Its scepticism is, furthermore, in response to attempts at radical social change rather than an older generation's bourgeois ideals of private property and the self-made man. Lawrence's England, however, is for him a politically progressive one which must "face" its "change in feelings", towards a potentially dangerous apathy, in order to make positive "changes in the world" and "[save] us from the bogey of Bolshevism".<sup>32</sup> For Orwell, on the other hand, there is nothing remotely new or radical about "indifference" to such issues as ownership – he sees it, in fact, as bound up with the "money-tainted", "sneering civilisation". For example, when Orwell describes the "air of equality" in the Spanish workers' militias as an astounding contrast to the "political consciousness" in "most countries", the image of England already set up is implicitly a target: "One had been in a community, where hope was more normal than apathy or cynicism, where the word 'comrade' stood for comradeship and not, as in most countries, for humbug".<sup>33</sup>

What is striking and peculiar about Lawrence's essay, however, is its limited conception of English identity in terms of class, age and gender. For Lawrence's orthodox Englishness is implicitly middle-class and explicitly young and male. This can be seen in his representation of the everyday thoughts of the "young Englishman":

I'm bored! I'm bored by making money slowly and meagrely, I'm bored at the thought of owning my own little bit. Why haven't I a maiden aunt who'll die and leave me a thousand a year? Why can't I marry a rich wife? Why doesn't somebody set me up for life?<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Lawrence, "Ownership", p. 54-56.

<sup>33</sup> Orwell, p. 83.

<sup>34</sup> Lawrence, "Ownership", p. 54.

This, Lawrence argues, is “peculiarly the attitude of the young Englishman”. It is “not riches he’s after” but “independence” which signifies “not real independence [...] but freedom from the bore of having to make a living”.<sup>35</sup> This is a highly restricted conception of Englishness, confined to a small stratum of the middle class - namely, its young bohemian males. Orwell’s image of England (in *Homage*) is also, like Lawrence’s, frequently a picture of a bourgeois nation. However, Orwell’s vision is a critical one, grounded in the concept of class conflict, unlike Lawrence’s which abandons its initial emphasis on the “serious” nature of “earning” and “property” for most people, for an advocacy of political apathy to it.<sup>36</sup> In an echo of his earlier reference to the “sneering civilisation of the English-speaking races”, for example, Orwell speaks of the absence in Aragon of “the normal motives of civilised life – snobbishness, money-grubbing, fear of the boss, etc.”, and the lack of “the ordinary class-division of society” which had “disappeared to an extent that is almost unthinkable in the money-tainted air of England”.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Orwell’s portrayal of the English Press as a centralised institution almost entirely harnessed to the interests of British capital depicts middle England as a much more property-conscious class than Lawrence’s article suggests: both the “Right-wing version” of events in Spain, and the “Left-wing version” concealed the revolutionary nature of much of the force against General Franco, in order to protect British investments: “And since the revolution had to be crushed, it greatly simplified things to pretend that no revolution had happened”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Lawrence, “Ownership”, p. 54.

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence, “Ownership”, p. 54.

<sup>37</sup> Orwell, p. 83.

<sup>38</sup> Orwell, pp. 192-3.

In short, whereas Lawrence's article represents class conflict and its attendant opposition between "national or private ownership" as features of society from which the Englishman is nonchalantly and religiously detaching himself,<sup>39</sup> Orwell perceives them as the very "air" of England which one has no choice but to breathe – for Orwell's England is one enslaved by its class system and the ruling class's material interests.

In a more vehement and personal article entitled "Insouciance", Lawrence takes this detached position one step further: political issues such as "ownership" are not merely worth psychologically detaching oneself from, they are "abstract" in the first place.<sup>40</sup> This observation, significantly, arises from a depicted situation in which the Lawrence of the article is placed in a comparable position to that of Orwell's awakened collective subject in the prophetic, concluding remarks to *Homage* on the potential fate of the English people: he is, as it were, awoken from "the deep, deep sleep of England" through a conversation with two English women. For in the article Lawrence portrays himself as one forced to emerge from his dream-like immersion within the peaceful, rural surroundings of his hotel balcony "into the troubled ether of international politics":

we speak of the men mowing; how plainly one hears the long breaths of the scythes!

But now we are *tête-à-tête*. We speak of cherries, strawberries, and the promise of the vine crop. This somehow leads to Italy, and to Signor Mussolini.

Before I know where I am, the little white-haired lady has swept me off my balcony, away from the glassy lake, the veiled mountains, the two men mowing, and the cherry trees, away into the troubled ether of international politics.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Lawrence, "Ownership", p. 55.

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence, "Insouciance", *Assorted Articles*, pp. 31-36, 35.

<sup>41</sup> Lawrence, "Insouciance", p. 32.

The cause of complaint in this article, for Lawrence, is that the “abstract” world of “right and wrong, politics, Fascism, abstract liberty” too often invades modern people’s thoughts, and they consequently ignore, to their detriment, the more immediate and “sensuous” world of “actual living”.<sup>42</sup> For there is, Lawrence tells us, a “deadly breach between actual living” and “this abstract caring” about “international politics”, which he scathingly dismisses: “For everything on earth that doesn’t concern her she ‘cares.’”. According to Lawrence, instead of “this abstract caring”, we should focus more upon “actual living” – which is “a question mostly of direct contact” (such as the contact between Lawrence and “the lake” or “mountains”) rather than an “invisible” Fascism with its “hypothetical Italians wear[ing] black shirts”.<sup>43</sup>

Through this atomisation of human experience, the Lawrence of this article becomes symptomatic of the very problem of Englishness which Orwell outlines in the closing passages of *Homage*. What, for Lawrence, is a perception pertaining to psychological health is, for Orwell, a cultural logic which threatens the nation’s physical existence: Orwell fears that if England does not awake from its “deep sleep”, it will be “jerked out of it by the roar of bombs”. Lawrence’s separation of an individual’s field of “direct contact” from the wider field of “international politics” which encompasses it, is critiqued by Orwell’s satirical yet pathetic portrayal of an England which is blissfully and parochially oblivious of its own contradictions – from the northern “misery” which is obscured from the eyes of southern prosperity, to the material and ideological complicity in fascism and counter-revolution which haunts a moralistic national press. Such contradictions illuminate

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<sup>42</sup> Lawrence, “Insouciance”, pp. 33, 35.

<sup>43</sup> Lawrence, “Insouciance”, pp. 34-35.



Lawrence's article in the sense that they are indicative of all individuals' unavoidable involvement and relationship with their wider societies.

Furthermore, the experience given in *Homage* is one of rooting out the "abstract" world of fascism – gaining "direct contact" with it in order to fight against it. When put in dialogue with "Insouciance", this removal of the boundary between immediate experience and "abstract" politics explodes Lawrence's "English" (from Orwell's perspective) distinction between private and public spheres, and his consequent elevation of the former over the latter: for Orwell writes of those who are not free to make such a comfortable distinction. Moreover, Orwell's recounted experience is both of the reality of fascism for those who are in "direct contact" with it, and of its reality for those who (like the parochial Englander) are, though physically far from it, in danger of its acquaintance:

there was the question of the international prestige of Fascism, which for a year or two past had been haunting me like a nightmare. Since 1930 the Fascists had won all the victories; it was time they got a beating, it hardly mattered from whom. If we could drive Franco and his foreign mercenaries into the sea it might make an immense improvement in the world situation [...]<sup>44</sup>

The idea of cynically dismissing a discussion of an "invisible" fascism is, in this context, an act of great irony. That fascism's very nature is to spread its power internationally and to invade and control individuals' private lives makes the concept of a division between immediate, personal experience and "hypothetical" fascists an "abstract" one.

What ought not to be overlooked, however, is the oddly Burkean nature

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<sup>44</sup> Orwell, p. 134.

of Lawrence's seemingly trivial statement in "Insouciance". The stance, though seemingly apolitical, is (as supposedly apolitical positions often are) in fact political, and can be located within a strong lineage of thinking in the conservative tradition. This lineage arguably begins with Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in which Burke distinguishes between the visceral bonds of the private sphere, and the rational, political ties which bind an individual in a social contract to a public sphere beyond his immediate experience. In making such a distinction Burke prioritises the personal and emotional realm over the rational, public realm in a critique of the revolutionary ideals of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment proclamation of "the rights of men". For example:

We begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen. We pass on to our neighbourhoods, and our habitual provincial connections. These are inns and resting-places. Such divisions of our country as have been formed by habit, and not by a sudden jerk of authority, were so many little images of the great country in which the heart found something which it could fill. The love to the whole is not extinguished by this subordinate partiality. Perhaps it is a sort of elemental training to those higher and more large regards, by which alone men come to be affected, as with their own concern, in the prosperity of a kingdom so extensive as that of France. In that general territory itself, as in the old name of provinces, the citizens are interested from old prejudices and unreasoned habits, and not on account of the geometric properties of its figure.<sup>45</sup>

Here Burke argues that socio-political obligations are felt through the individual's direct, personal experience of families and neighbourhoods, rather than consciously realised through abstract reasoning. Lawrence's argument accords a comparable precedence to the private sphere and endows it with a

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<sup>45</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), ed. L. G. Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 198.

higher metaphysical authenticity: "When it comes to living, we live through our instincts and our intuitions". Furthermore, "actual living", for Lawrence, is "a question mostly of direct contact".<sup>46</sup> Burke defines this natural and instinctive field of "direct contact" mainly in terms of familial relations. Here is an extract from a further polemic against the French Revolution:

As the relation between parents and children is the first among the elements of vulgar, natural morality, they [the Revolutionary government's "legislators"] erect statues to a wild, ferocious, low-minded, hard-hearted father, of fine general feelings; a lover of his kind, but a hater of his kindred. Your masters reject the duties of this vulgar relation, as contrary to liberty; as not founded in the social compact; and not binding according to the rights of men; because the relation is not, of course, the result of *free election*; never so on the side of the children, not always on the part of the parents.<sup>47</sup>

Burke argues, furthermore, that "[the Revolutionists] despise experience as the wisdom of unlettered men" and they have as a poor substitute "the rights of men".<sup>48</sup> For Burke, the French assembly imposes abstract social principles or "metaphysics" upon "human nature", which can only be understood through "experience".<sup>49</sup> Thus Burke, like Lawrence, presupposes an authentic or a primary mode of being: that is, we are ontologically most ourselves in our immediate, sensory, non-rational experiences. It is, then, an ironically philosophical and rational distinction which both Burke and Lawrence are making in their ontological hierarchy of the experiential over the rational.

Moreover, in positing an authentic mode of being or true "human nature", Lawrence and Burke deny the provisional nature of human activities –

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<sup>46</sup> Lawrence, "Insouciance", p. 35.

<sup>47</sup> Burke, "Appendix: Letter to a Member of the National Assembly", *Reflections*, pp. 251-292, 272.

<sup>48</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, p. 58.

<sup>49</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, p. 185.

that they are traditions of behaviour and in that sense, however broadly, ideological constructions. It is therefore significant to note that what in Burke's period is a conservative tract against progressive (republican) revolution becomes, in Lawrence's era, an argument for apathy in a time of Fascist revolution: there is nothing natural, authentic or inherently right about one's immediate relationships and environment and their prioritisation. On the one hand, Burke's familial relations are, though emotional attachments also, based on the thoroughly historical and ideological foundations of private property. On the other hand, the experience which Lawrence uses as his central example of "direct contact" is highly remote from the radically industrialised "actual living" which had become so widespread by the year of 1928 in which the article was written. Lawrence's example is the labour of "two mowers mowing with scythes" on the hill outside his hotel – a thoroughly abstract, Romantic and nostalgic image of pre-industrial work rather than a typical example of "actual living" in 1928.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, while Burke's familial and local relations depend upon wider political institutions which themselves were created through brutal upheavals (for example, through land enclosures), Lawrence's tranquil paradise beyond the world of "abstract caring" depends entirely for its preservation upon the fact of others "caring" sufficiently to fight against fascism. Thus, the very "English" empiricism of Burke and Lawrence is itself grounded in a philosophical transcendentalism saturated with ahistorical abstractions. This irony is reinforced elsewhere in Lawrence's articles, for example in "Dull London", where we are provided with an account of the author's experience of a seemingly metaphysical alienation as he travels

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<sup>50</sup> Lawrence, "Insouciance", p. 31.

into England from a mysterious point of departure: “the vivid flame of your individual life” begins “to sink”.<sup>51</sup>

Orwell’s *Homage* demonstrates that abstractions might need to be called upon if our personal lives are to continue positively or be truly improved. In contrast to Burke, Orwell (and Jean Rhys also, as we shall later see) illuminates the constructed nature of human relationships, and their historical dimension, through an account of his own political intervention in the fluid human relationships of a class-war-ridden Spain. By analysing the parallels of thought between Lawrence and Burke, it appears that Orwell’s attack on the parochiality of Englishness not only critically exposes Lawrence’s own very “English” advocacy of insouciance but can also be read as a critique of Lawrence’s peculiar brand of philosophical conservatism – a critique which indicates the intellectual poverty and complicity of such conservatism in the face of fascist reaction.

The pervasive idea in both Lawrence’s and Orwell’s writing, however, of an English mistrust of (and contempt for) radical social change, and that response’s corresponding shames and prejudices, may be linked with the anachronistic and residual feeling of English pride and superiority inherited from the era of British imperial supremacy. I mention this association since it points towards another category of social division (like class) which throws the two writers’ Englands into contrast – namely, that of race.

Orwell seems to have this residual colonial snobbery in mind when he defends the Spanish against the accusation from foreigners and journalists that they were “bitterly jealous of foreign aid”.<sup>52</sup> In this defence, Orwell describes

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<sup>51</sup> Lawrence, “Dull London”, p. 85.

<sup>52</sup> Orwell, p. 10.

an incident in which a group of Spanish militiamen were “talking excitedly about their experiences”:

[They] were full of enthusiasm for some French troops who had been next to them at Huesca. The French were very brave, they said; adding enthusiastically: ‘Mas valientes que nosotros’— ‘Braver than we are!’ Of course I demurred, whereupon they explained that the French knew more of the art of war — were more expert with bombs, machine-guns, and so forth. Yet the remark was significant. An Englishman would cut his hand off sooner than say a thing like that.<sup>53</sup>

In his admiration for the militiamen’s modesty, Orwell implicitly criticises what he sees as a typically English, imperialistic and military pride. This notion of a peculiarly English pride and obstinate refusal to admit one’s inferiority in any capacity, particularly in conventionally masculine activities, is endowed with positive value in Lawrence’s essay, “On Coming Home”, which mourns the loss of a defiant British imperial power.<sup>54</sup> When put in dialogue, Orwell’s vision of a conceited England sheds its corrosively politicising light upon Lawrence’s attempts at outlining an English pride which both surmounts class boundaries while simultaneously attacking the English bourgeoisie’s “conceit” and “rancour” for their “impotence”, and constructs an ideal Englishness in terms of a rightful racial superiority.<sup>55</sup> Here is Lawrence’s myth of a deservedly “proud” imperial England:

England’s prestige wasn’t based on money. It was based on the imagination of men. England was supposed to be proud, and at the same time, free. Proud in her freedom, and free, to a certain extent generous, truly generous, in her pride. This was the England that led the world. Myself, I think this was a true conception of England at her best. This was how the other nations

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<sup>53</sup> Orwell, pp. 10-11.

<sup>54</sup> Lawrence, “On Coming Home”, *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose Works by D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore (1968; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp. 250-6.

<sup>55</sup> Lawrence, “On Coming Home”, p. 256.

accepted her: at her best. And the individual Englishman got his certain honour, in the world, on the strength of it.<sup>56</sup>

Orwell's distinction between the atmosphere of "equality and freedom" in revolutionary Spain and the world of "snobbishness, money-grubbing, fear of the boss" and "class-division" which is his England, opens up the contradictions in Lawrence's own construction of Englishness. For the very "pride" which Lawrence exalts is, for Orwell, based on the twin foundations of imperial power and socio-economic hierarchy: an historical order hardly committed to such ideals as "freedom" and "generosity", and incontestably grounded in and dependent on the interests of "money-grubbing". Conversely, the egalitarian and internationalist environment of Orwell's militia is alien to the recalcitrant national pride Orwell's own Englishness expects. The recipients of Lawrence's "pride", "freedom", and "generosity", then, are evidently not all "Englishmen", nor all those who have contact with Lawrence's England. This is clear from the anecdotes which Lawrence provides to illustrate his point that the old England is lost. For example:

A man is building a railway with nigger labour. Some insolent Jamaica nigger – British subject, larger than life – brings a charge against his boss. Solemn trial by the British, influence from the government, the Englishman is reprimanded, and the nigger smiles and spits in his face.

Long live the bottom dog! May he devour us all.

Same story from India, from Egypt, from China. At home a lot of queer, insane, half-female-seeming men, not quite men at all, and certainly not women! The women would be far braver.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Lawrence, "On Coming Home", p. 254.

<sup>57</sup> Lawrence, "On Coming Home", p. 255.

Though Lawrence attempts to distinguish a contemporary, false “superiority”<sup>58</sup> from his version of English “pride”, not unlike Orwell’s “snobbishness”, it is clear here that such a distinction is based on a notion of “pride” as a legitimate “superiority” based on concrete power. For the intersection of the social divisions of race, class and gender in this passage indicates the kind of individuals who would not be fortunate enough to become acquainted with English “freedom”, “pride”, or “generosity”: anybody non-white, at the “bottom” end of the class structure, or female. If the patronising concession to women at the end of this passage leaves the reader in any doubt about the gendered nature of Lawrence’s Englishness, his nostalgic reference to “the old brave, reckless, manly England” and his bold claim that there is “not a man left inside all the millions of pairs of trousers” should suffice to dispel any hopes of a more sophisticated notion of national identity.<sup>59</sup>

Lawrence’s Englishness is in fact patently predicated on a masculinised conception of national identity. For example, in “Ownership” the “Englishman” is the primary focus until the article’s conclusion. Just as the image of the young bohemian England obscures and pompously devalues a working-class England and a poor England which may be much more concerned with the ownership of such means of production as “land” and “coal mines”, the man’s “religious” vision of England demeans the “women of Britain” and conceals the nature of their social and material position.<sup>60</sup> For it is proposed at the essay’s end, in a curiously patronising manoeuvre, that England (that is, English men) deals with its problem of boredom over the

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<sup>58</sup> Lawrence, “On Coming Home”, p. 255.

<sup>59</sup> Lawrence, “On Coming Home”, p. 256.

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence, “Ownership”, p. 56.



question of ownership by “hand[ing] it all over to the women” since “the modern excessive need of money is a female need”.<sup>61</sup> This flippant suggestion acts as an implicit denigration of the growth, within the women’s movement of the 1920s, of welfare feminism, whose fundamental focus was on social and economic reforms.<sup>62</sup> Significantly, this deprecating reference to the women’s movement makes yet clearer the link between gender and class in Lawrence’s Englishness, since this is simultaneously an attack on working-class interests. As Cheryl Law explains, the more middle-class, “equalitarian” feminists of the 1920s, who focused on political demands such as the extension of the franchise rather than the socio-economic ones of the welfare feminists, “failed to appreciate the grim reality of many working class [sic] women’s lives and the urgent necessity of release from industrial oppression” and “assum[ed] that all women were equal in their oppression, using the term ‘women’ without reference to class”.<sup>63</sup> That Lawrence’s contempt focuses on the “money” component of the women’s movement suggests a welding of class and gender in this particular conception of English identity which emphasises a middle-class and patriarchal form of Englishness.

Correspondingly, such a potent fusion of class and gender interests in our main object of analysis (Lawrence’s notion of Englishness) would suggest the need for a double-barrelled critique. Similarly, since Lawrence also constructs his Englishness partly by referring back to a “proud” imperial England, more successful at racial exploitation, it would seem appropriate to

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<sup>61</sup> Lawrence, “Ownership”, p. 56.

<sup>62</sup> See Cheryl Law, “Old and New Feminism”, in *Suffrage and Power: The Women’s Movement 1918-1928* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 161-80, for a discussion of the emerging welfare feminism of the 1920s and its equalitarian opponents.

<sup>63</sup> Law, p. 176.

place in dialogue with Lawrence's articles a text which commands a view of English national identity as grounded in racial as well as class and gender divisions. It is on the first point rather than the latter, however, that the use of Orwell's image of England as a critical and dialogical tool by which to expose the constructed nature of Lawrence's late Englishness begins to become difficult. For while Orwell is sensitive to the political effects of class and imperialism (and thereby race) on national identity, he is seemingly less conscious of the processes by which such a construction of identity obscures the divisive and alienating power of patriarchy.

This political myopia can be perceived through Orwell's early suggestion that his "idealistic" Spain is unstable: Soviet Communism is gradually taking its reactionary hold over the Republican war effort:

There were perhaps a thousand men at the barracks, and a score or so of women, apart from the militiamen's wives who did the cooking. There were still women serving in the militias, though not very many. In the early battles they had fought side by side with the men as a matter of course. It is a thing that seems natural in time of revolution. Ideas were changing already, however. The militiamen had to be kept out of the riding-school while the women were drilling there, because they laughed at the women and put them off. A few months earlier no one would have seen anything comic in a woman handling a gun.<sup>64</sup>

To begin with, this recognition of the volatility of the world of ideas in times of radical social conflict within a nation stands awkwardly alongside the representation of international politics as ruptured by competing (English and Spanish) cultures. How, for example, is such a mocking cynicism over women's altered social position in war-time Spain different from the

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<sup>64</sup> Orwell, p. 5.

apparently peculiar political scepticism of the English? Lawrence's late essays indicate the level of derision which faced the British women's movement of the 1920s: how does that climate differ from the Spain which Orwell describes? It appears that women's inferior social position and the attitudes which reproduce such a status are so entrenched in both English and Spanish societies as to be scarcely surprising even within a period of revolutionary transformation in dominant values. The abolition of such social divisions is certainly not imbued with great importance, since women's place alongside men in the militias appears merely "natural in time of revolution", as if this were an understandable lapse in the otherwise orthodox atmosphere of derisive laughter limiting women's capacities outside that time. It would appear, anyhow, that the "hard-boiled, sneering civilisation" is a more widespread and grounded force than the notion of "Englishness" affords it, and it draws its objects of mockery as often along the lines of gender as it does class.

It is striking, for example, that prostitution in Spain is seen as a problem for women, not men, to struggle against – a male repudiation of responsibility which Orwell's self-conscious and critical sense of himself as an Englishman does nothing to attack: "Human beings were trying to behave as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine [...]. In the streets were coloured posters appealing to prostitutes to stop being prostitutes".<sup>65</sup> Orwell, moreover, appears to be a victim of his own (class-oriented) diagnosis of Englishness as proud and prejudicial, and dismissive of political idealism, when he describes his shame at being helped by a Spanish girl with his military equipment:

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<sup>65</sup> Orwell, p. 4.

It was rather humiliating that I had to be shown how to put on my new leather cartridge-boxes by a Spanish girl, the wife of Williams, the other English militiaman. She was a gentle, dark-eyed, intensely feminine creature who looked as though her life-work was to rock a cradle, but who as a matter of fact had fought bravely in the street-battles of July. At this time she was carrying a baby which was born just ten months after the outbreak of war and had perhaps been begotten behind a barricade.<sup>66</sup>

Significantly, it is Orwell's implicit criticism of himself as an Englishman here which creates a remarkable contrast between the author's dismantling of sexual stereotypes (the girl's robustness, both in the "street-battles" and throughout her war-time pregnancy, is revealed by Orwell) and his unnervingly conventional response to the girl in emotional terms. Orwell's sense of degradation in receiving female assistance within a traditionally masculine sphere of activity, his dehumanising depiction of the girl as a "creature", and his assumption that it should be anybody's "life-work [...] to rock a cradle" undermines the power of his implicitly self-critical revelation concerning her real activities. Orwell's attack on Englishness, then, awkwardly suggests, and yet fails to fully recognise, the fissuring effects of gender on national identity in a patriarchal society. The critique itself perceives its object largely as a masculine one: "England", to answer the question in the title of Lawrence's essay, "is still a man's country".<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore, the ambiguity of Orwell's position in relation to his notion of a "hard-boiled" Englishness - a quality which suggests a shrewdness not entirely negative - can be effectively used for an immanent critique of Orwell's own (degendered) sense of nationhood. For Orwell emphasises an

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<sup>66</sup> Orwell, p. 12.

<sup>67</sup> Lawrence, "Is England Still a Man's Country?", *Assorted Articles*, pp. 77-82, 77.

English “civilisation” in opposition to an implied Spanish primitivism, and he views the “idealistic” Spanish as “rather pathetic in the literalness” with which they “took the hackneyed phrases of revolution”. Firstly, it should be noted that such aspects of Orwell’s language, while evidently being used as a method of exposing English political cynicism, nonetheless implicate him in his own version of an Englishness both destructive and (in this case, racially) patronising in its intelligence. However, the shrewdness which is a constitutive part of such a “hard-boiled” attitude would have been potentially invaluable to the Spanish revolutionaries in their fight against the betrayal of an insidious Communist reaction. In other words, in his critique of political “apathy” and scepticism of radical social change, Orwell fails to emphasise the equal necessity of shrewdness in political consciousness – the capacity to know one’s enemies. For the Civil War’s female revolutionaries, who were suffering from the process of political reaction long before the open suppression of the militias, such knowledge, at least with the benefit of hindsight, would have seemed all the more exigent. Jean Rhys’s novel, *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), appears to me, however, to balance these not incompatible attitudes (of shrewdness and contempt for cynicism) in a devastating depiction of an England divided by gender, class and race. It is to this work that I will shortly turn, in order to construct a dialogue between Rhys’s Englishness, with its expanded sense of social divisions, and the England of Lawrence’s articles.<sup>68</sup>

Before doing so, however, I wish to provide a brief theoretical discussion of the concept of national identity. The purpose of the following comments is to come to some conclusions about Lawrence’s and Orwell’s

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<sup>68</sup> Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* (1934; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

sense of Englishness while also reflecting upon how such conclusions colour our understanding of nation-ness. Furthermore, in the process of this discussion, I hope to have prepared the foundations for a final commentary on Rhys and how her distinct sense of Englishness might be used to interpret Lawrence's.

### Nations and Individuals

Benedict Anderson writes in *Imagined Communities* that "something of the nature of this political love" of one's nation "can be deciphered from the ways in which languages describe its object: either in the vocabulary of kinship [...] or that of home". He continues:

Both idioms denote something to which one is naturally tied. As we have seen [...] in everything "natural" there is always something unchosen. In this way, nation-ness is assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth-era – all those things one cannot help. And in these "natural ties" one senses what one might call "the beauty of *gemeinschaft*". To put it another way, precisely because such ties are not chosen, they have about them a halo of disinterestedness.<sup>69</sup>

Anderson goes on to draw a distinction between the concept of the nation as ideological (for example, in the "idea of 'national interest'") which is found largely in the fields of academia and politics, and the wider, more "ordinary" sense of the nation as an emotional, "interestless" attachment.<sup>70</sup>

In the foregoing analysis, we have seen both the ideological features and the emotional qualities of the two writers' different senses of national

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<sup>69</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 143.

<sup>70</sup> Anderson, p. 144.

identity. Anderson's claim, however, is that the *experience* of nation-ness "for most ordinary people of whatever class" is based upon its "unchosen" quality; and the power of the nation as an idea resides in its "disinterestedness" and in the "natural" aura of its bond, *not* in its ideological character.<sup>71</sup> Certainly, both Lawrence's and Orwell's writing appear to register, in the contrasting ways already demonstrated, the primarily *felt* nature of the experience of Englishness as an "unchosen" identity, whether this be in the form of a soporific "apathy" and cynicism (as in Orwell) or a feeling of futile "dulness" (as in Lawrence). We might therefore fruitfully examine how this emotional bond is coloured differently according to each writer's different relationship to the society known as England. Since if national identity is largely a visceral tie, then the actual individual relationship which the writer in question has with that nation as a society will evidently be important.

Lawrence left England in 1919 in exasperation with the British government's suppression of his work and its repressive war against Germany, and thereafter lived in various locations abroad until his death, returning to England only rarely. Lawrence can be reasonably described, then, as an exile in his relationship to his country. The posthumously published essay of 1919 entitled "Democracy" strongly evokes the sense of an impending national exile:

*Nation* is a dead ideal [...] England, France, Germany – these great nations, they have no vital meaning any more, except as great Food Committees and Housing Committees for a throng of people whose material tastes are somewhat in accord. No doubt they *had* other meanings.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Anderson, p. 143-4.

<sup>72</sup> Lawrence, "Democracy", *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Edward D. McDonald (London: Heinemann, 1936), pp. 699-718, 702.

Nations have lost their "vital meaning" owing to "the great development in collective expression in mankind" which "has been a progress towards the possibility of purely individual expression".<sup>73</sup> Significantly, Lawrence tells the reader that we must "drop the *ideal* [my italics] of England or Europe or anywhere else".<sup>74</sup> The idea of a national or international community is, we are told, only "a business concern masquerad[ing] as an ideal concern".<sup>75</sup>

Lawrence, though he rightly establishes a connection between the nation state and economics, uses this insight to argue that the concept of the nation should be nothing more than an economic one. For Lawrence, the problem with the nation is that it has become an abstract, "automatic" ideal superimposed on the "spontaneous" individual's "living self".<sup>76</sup> This argument then leads to the claim that all collective identities, "oneness and collectiveness", are "inferior" to "singleness" – "the true identity...of the living self": a claim which isolates the concepts of the individual and the social and places them in mutual antagonism.<sup>77</sup>

This argument is powerfully suggestive about the nature of the exile's position in relation to his society. For Raymond Williams, "the exile is as absolute as the rebel in rejecting the way of life of his society, but instead of fighting it he goes away". Furthermore, most commonly:

[the exile] will remain an exile, unable to go back to the society that he has rejected or that has rejected him, yet equally unable to form important relationships with the society to which he has gone [....] [he] is committed to waiting: when the society changes, then he can come

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<sup>73</sup> Lawrence, "Democracy", p. 702.

<sup>74</sup> Lawrence, "Democracy", p. 703.

<sup>75</sup> Lawrence, "Democracy", pp. 702-3.

<sup>76</sup> Lawrence, "Democracy", pp. 705, 708.

<sup>77</sup> Lawrence, "Democracy", p. 708.



home, but the actual process of change is one in which he is not involved.<sup>78</sup>

We see the seeds of this process of estrangement from all society in "Democracy". Lawrence assumes that the concept of society, whether it takes the form of the nation or a democracy, can be isolated from the individual "living self", and that material life is not a contentious part of the ideal sphere of intellect and rationality. Yet, as Williams argues, "these substances are forms of relationship which we can never finally isolate, since the organization, throughout, is in interlocking terms".<sup>79</sup> Lawrence's separation of these terms in "Democracy", particularly those of individual and society, marks the position of an incipient exile. It is ironic, however, that this isolation of concepts continues into the late essays and problematises Lawrence's position through his return to the "ideal" notions of England and Englishness.

For it is just such a division of the individual from his society which creates so many of the dominant features of Lawrence's later perception of Englishness. We have already seen, in the article "Insouciance", an assumed split between the authenticity of the individual's immediate, emotional experiences and the inauthentic, "abstract" world of politics. However, this appears awkwardly alongside the earlier "Democracy" since "Insouciance" forms part of a book of articles which are embroiled in generalisations about Englishness: "*Nation*" is evidently not "a dead ideal" and Lawrence's emotional experiences even inform the abstract generalisations he makes about it. What is more striking, though, is that Lawrence's perceptions of Englishness contain all the hallmarks of an individual who is estranged and in exile from

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<sup>78</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (1961; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), pp. 107-8.

<sup>79</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. 116.

the society on which he is writing – all the characteristics of someone who has ceased to *experience* England. Hence, his writing on England is full, ironically, of metaphysical abstractions, nostalgia for the Empire, and touristic versions of English history.

What seems clear, then, is that the division of the individual and experiential from the rational and social, which Lawrence himself lived, is a disabling one when Lawrence attempts to write about national identity: the abstract or “imagined” notion of nation-ness requires the insight of emotional experience. As an exile from England and society at large, Lawrence was, when concerned with national identity, reduced to a highly “abstract” thinking despite his continued emphasis upon the importance of “direct contact”. Lawrence had a positive relationship with neither England (he is not engaged in its “process of change”), nor an alternative society (Italian society appears, for example, in the somewhat meagre form of Renaissance fashion). His emotional attachment to England is that of the exile – an attempt to recover a *former* relationship with the society into which he was born, which is necessarily doomed to the double failure of abstraction and nostalgia. The posthumously published articles, “Return to Bestwood” and “Nottingham and the Mining Countryside”, are characteristic of this futile struggle for a lost attachment in both their abstract proposals for socio-political change (“life” and “beauty” are the fundamentals here) and their representation of English history (industrial politics was apparently non-existent and Eastwood, we are told, was “still the old England of the forest and agricultural past” in Lawrence’s youth).<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Lawrence, “Return to Bestwood”, *Phoenix II*, pp. 257-66, 266, and “Nottingham and the Mining Countryside”, *Phoenix*, pp. 133-40, 140 and 133. See also John Worthen, “Lawrence

While Lawrence was “alien” to his “home place”, Orwell stood both outside and within it.<sup>81</sup> Raymond Williams writes in *Orwell* of Orwell’s “conscious double vision” which arose from having rejected both the English bourgeois class to which he belonged and the imperialism of which he had been a part.<sup>82</sup> This “double vision” of Orwell’s, as I have already shown, entailed a radical criticism of bourgeois England *and* a continual acknowledgement that he himself was implicated in that criticism as a bourgeois Englishman. However, Williams describes Orwell’s attempts to depict and affiliate himself to a kind of ordinary England as fundamentally flawed, since they represent “the emotions of the exile from a lost country, a lost class”.<sup>83</sup> The central example of Orwell’s failure, for Williams, is his representation of England as “a family with the wrong members in control” in the essay “England Your England”.<sup>84</sup> Williams argues that this is one of many instances in which Orwell is unable to create an accurate sense of the “social structure” and the complexity of its economic and political relationships. Orwell consequently often resorts to the conveyance of “a climate, an atmosphere” – “a mood” rather than “a theory”.<sup>85</sup>

Although it is clearly desirable to locate the ideological features of any emotive language, as Williams does here (and as I myself have been attempting to do), it must be stressed that to speak of what England or Englishness is, is not to offer “a theory” but is precisely to offer “a mood”. To expect Orwell’s

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and Eastwood”, *D. H. Lawrence: centenary essays*, ed. Mara Kalnins (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1986), pp. 1-18, for a good discussion of the historical inaccuracy of Lawrence’s representation of Eastwood.

<sup>81</sup> Lawrence, “Return to Bestwood”, p. 257.

<sup>82</sup> Raymond Williams, *Orwell* (London: Fontana, 1971), p. 18.

<sup>83</sup> Raymond Williams, *Orwell*, p. 28.

<sup>84</sup> Orwell, “England Your England” (1941), *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (1957 as *Selected Essays*; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), pp. 63-90, 78.

<sup>85</sup> Raymond Williams, *Orwell*, pp. 23, 27.

portraits of Englishness to be theoretically sound is perhaps to expect the impossible. The “very middle-class image of England as a family” is evidently a conservative formulation which can indeed be read as indicative of an exile’s striving for “a lost country”.<sup>86</sup> However, as I think *Homage* shows, this is an unfair summary of Orwell’s “double vision” of England. For such a “double vision” is more accurately described as that of the “self-exile” or “internal émigré”, a position which Williams himself describes:

The self-exile could, if he chose, live at ease in his society, but to do so would be to deny his personal reality [....] [he] lives and moves about in the society into which he was born, but rejects its purposes and despises its values, because of alternative principles to which his whole personal reality is committed [....] He may support the principles of dissenting causes, but he cannot join them: he is too wary of being caught and compromised. What he has principally to defend is his own living pattern, his own mind, and almost any relationship is a potential threat to this.<sup>87</sup>

Orwell “could” have lived “at ease” within the England of the bourgeois imperialist class and yet he spent his life attacking that England, frequently through his experiences of working-class life and poverty. At one point Orwell even deliberately became a vagrant – a positive evasion of his class, though he inevitably remained an outsider. On the other hand, he never lived in exile from his country or ceased to have hope for it, but was always politically engaged with it. Furthermore, at various points he supported “dissenting causes” such as revolutionary socialism (after his experience in Spain), yet he could never fully commit to them: Orwell was only ever consistent in what he opposed – capitalism, fascism, and Communism. Hence, his most powerful attachment was, paradoxically, to the “unchosen” England into which he was

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<sup>86</sup> Raymond Williams, *Orwell*, p. 26.

<sup>87</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. 108.

born and that, as we have seen, he held in such contempt. Through this negative attachment, Orwell shows us the powerfully paradoxical nature of relationship: the strength of the bond appears to legitimise and enable criticism. For Orwell's narrative of the Spanish Civil War is as much about attacking England as it is about anti-fascism and his "personal" socialist principles. *Homage* offers less the position of the exile, who has lost all social bond, than that of the "internal émigré" whose bond is an incitement to assault.

Yet, to repeat, Orwell does not provide "a theory" of Englishness: we are still given a "climate" or "atmosphere". The central images, after all, are those of the "money-tainted air of England" and the "hard-boiled, sneering civilisation of the English-speaking races". To evaluate these in terms of their sophistication as theoretical formulations of a "social structure" is to miss the point of such images of nation-ness, which is not to deny their ideological nature. Images of national identity are abstractions which are grounded in the emotional experience of an "unchosen" bond. As we have seen, Lawrence's writing on England acts out the process of social isolation and exile which he lived, through its separation of the concepts of individual and society. Orwell, on the other hand, demonstrates, through his persistent self-criticisms and ideologically revealing comments on his conception of gender, that the power of his critique arises from his own implied association with, and relationship to, its object: Orwell is against England because it is the only bond he cannot deny, as an "internal émigré" who will not wholly leave his country. This contradictory position of relationship and antagonism is only weakly registered in Orwell's notion of England as "a family with the wrong members in control" and the expression is thus a highly "middle-class" and liberal one. Yet, notably,

Orwell draws on the “vocabulary of kinship” in a very different manner to the way in which Lawrence uses the language of “home”. While Lawrence is “alien” to “home”, Orwell is struggling with it as a “family” – and his refusal to leave England emphasises the fact that he is not in simple exile from it. The position of relationship and antagonism is heightened however in *Homage*, in which Orwell’s positive experience of an alternative society (an incipiently socialist Spain) allows him to critique England, temporarily, from a position external to it as well as from the point of view of an Englishman. It is the strength of this tension in *Homage*, I would argue, that produces the power of the critique of a notion of Englishness.

For Orwell makes it clear, particularly at the end of *Homage*, that he is depicting a *version* of England, and this is indicated in the blurring of his representation of England with the voice of what is presumably supposed to be the typical attitudes of a bourgeois Englishman. Thus, English national identity is transformed into the identity of the dominant socio-economic class of England, the bourgeoisie. The other Englands, for example working-class England, are written out of the image so that it is ostensibly a particular version of England that we are being given – a middle-class England. This is the England which Orwell wishes to attack: *the England of which he has been a part*. Orwell’s experience of Spain allows, therefore, not the portrayal of an intricate “social structure”, but the contrasting of two *dominant* social orders – that of an egalitarian, working-class Spain and that of a class-ridden, bourgeois England. Orwell thus attacks England, not as some true sociological entity, but as its dominant class – that is, the class to which he originally belonged.

Moreover, Orwell is critiquing this dominant class's own representation of England, the ways in which it mythologises itself. The myths of the proud imperial England, the aloof, "English" political superiority, the homely, rural Englander, and the touristic, middle-class portrait of English history and culture as "cricket matches", "Royal weddings", and "red buses", are debunked as cynical and self-deluding images through a narrative that reveals the pernicious force of "money" which connects England to the rest of the world, and leads to its apathetic collusion in the progress of fascism. Orwell is, then, not offering a complex picture of social forces. Rather, he is exposing national mythology while also holding up two opposing abstract conceptions of society and asking us to make a choice: capitalism/fascism or socialism.

Of course, Orwell's position both within and outside England, emotionally attached to English society and ideologically hostile to it, also stimulates many of the admirable moments of self-criticism in *Homage* in which Orwell criticises or exposes his own Englishness. However, as I have argued, Orwell's critical sense of England as a "man's country" is not as sharp as that of Jean Rhys's, to which I will now turn.

### This Gendered Isle: Lawrence in Jean Rhys's Other England

In emphasising the importance of individuality in the essay "Democracy", Lawrence speaks of the "strange recognition" of the individual's "*present otherness*".<sup>88</sup> For Lawrence, however, this appreciation of "*otherness*" is incompatible with all forms of "modern democracy" since

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<sup>88</sup> Lawrence, "Democracy", p. 715.

these are forms of *material* organisation concealed beneath a meretricious language of “ideals”.<sup>89</sup> Lawrence thus characteristically argues for a separation of collective and material life from individual “being”: the former should not attempt to interfere with the latter. This way of thinking, as we have seen, informs a substantial part of Lawrence’s method in his construction of England. Lawrence is more concerned with imagining England in terms of individual psychology than envisioning it as a particular kind of material society. By contrast, however, Jean Rhys illustrates in her fictional portrait of England how a participatory democracy is vital in order to create a society in which an individual like Anna Morgan, who is representative of so many forms of “*otherness*” and oppressed identity, can live fully and without exploitation. As Williams writes:

[...] all human individuals are unique: it was one of the worst results of the old individualism that in asserting the importance of certain individuals, it moved, consciously or unconsciously, to denying the importance of others [....] If man is essentially a learning, creating and communicating being, the only social organization adequate to his nature is a participating democracy, in which all of us, as unique individuals, learn, communicate and control.<sup>90</sup>

Although Lawrence argues for the “recognition” of “*otherness*” in “Democracy”, his images of England in the late essays, “consciously or unconsciously”, emphasise a highly middle-class and male England and, in the process, deny the importance of the other Englands – the Englands which Rhys movingly creates.

The thematic concerns of Lawrence and Rhys are nonetheless not without their affinity. For while Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark* explores the social

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<sup>89</sup> Lawrence, “Democracy”, p. 717.

<sup>90</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. 118.



position of women in England from the foreign perspective of a West Indian immigrant named Anna, Lawrence's essay, "Is England Still a Man's Country?", discusses English women's social status within the context of the 1920s women's movement and the pervasive male insecurity it entailed. These two perspectives are therefore quite different from the start, since Lawrence is beginning from an idea of the historically emerging social ascendance of women, whereas Rhys locates her Anna within a narrative structure brutally determined by the social disempowerment of women. Similarly, Lawrence is addressing a new masculine perception of a radical social change in sexual power relations, based on the sense of a history of patriarchal stability, while Rhys is describing the experiences of a foreigner in England who finds herself a complete outsider as a West Indian and a woman with little money.

Both Rhys's and Lawrence's accounts of women's relationship to England as an economic entity, however, possess a degree of affinity. Anna Morgan, of *Voyage in the Dark*, attempts to escape from the barren poverty of life working for a touring company through an affair with a businessman called Walter Jeffries. However, Anna only succeeds in travelling from the hardships of wage labour to a prostituted life of material dependency on men. The socially despised life of a "tart" (for the pleasure of married men) is, in other words, the substitute for her legally and morally sanctioned economic impoverishment: women are, on the one hand, economically powerless in the world of labour, and both sexually exploited and socially outcast by bourgeois sexual hypocrisy on the other.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Rhys, p. 26.

Lawrence, similarly, states the case against his male contemporaries' insecurity by revealing part of the stark material reality for women:

If England is not a man's country, it isn't a woman's country either. That's obvious. Women didn't make England. And women don't run England to-day, in spite of the fact that nine-tenths of the voices on the telephone are female voices. Women to-day, wherever they are, show up; and they pipe up. They are heard and they are seen. No denying it. And it seems to get on the men's nerves. Quite! But that doesn't prove that the women own England and run England. They don't. They occupy, on the whole, rather inferior jobs [...]<sup>92</sup>

Such a vision of female England, with its straightforward economic realism, is not incompatible with Rhys's nation. However, the English femininity of Lawrence's essay is adorned with the heavily sexualised and genteel clothing of the objectified, bourgeois "lady": women "embellish" their "inferior jobs" with "flowered voile and artificial silk stockings and a number of airs and graces".<sup>93</sup> Just as the means by which such women afford such "embellish[ment]" is obscured though the prose, so too is the strength of the bond between gender and class. The contradiction between the "inferior[ity]" of the "job" and the superiority of the clothing is exposed through its dialogic confrontation with *Voyage*. For the women of Rhys's novel, who are struggling in such "inferior jobs" are incessantly preoccupied with their lack of good clothes – and this obsession is shown to have its origins in an objectifying masculine discourse. As Maudie, a friend of Anna's, comments with regard to a boyfriend:

'Isn't it awful losing a chance like that because you haven't got a little money? [...] I'm so damned shabby and, you know, when you're shabby you can't do anything, you don't believe in yourself. And he notices clothes [...] He said to me the other day, "If there's

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<sup>92</sup> Lawrence, "Is England Still a Man's Country?", p. 78.

<sup>93</sup> Lawrence, "Is England Still a Man's Country?", p. 78.

anything I notice about a girl it's her legs and her shoes." Well, my legs are all right, but look at my shoes. He's always saying things like that and it makes me feel awful.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, Maudie "was sure she could get him to marry her if she could smarten herself up a bit".<sup>95</sup> This passage thus illuminates the dissonance of Lawrence's image of the Englishwoman, and shatters it as a patriarchal distortion of the class position of women. Lawrence's vision of "airs and graces", "flowered voile and artificial silk stockings" is, in the mirror of Rhys's world, a commodifying fantasy of bourgeois femininity, rather than a description of working women, which serves to psychologically reinforce the class oppression of England's women.

Moreover, though Lawrence's essay is in part satirically targeting the "blame" affixed by men to women for "usurping England" ("Do the men envy the women these rather inferior jobs?"), both sexes are "so busy blaming one another" that "Old England" is "forsaken".<sup>96</sup> Once again, in a manner reminiscent of *Touch and Go*, socio-economic conflict is portrayed as a merely foolish quarrel. Rhys shows the issue, however, to be beyond that of a squabble, or even a debate: for Anna, it runs so deeply into the structure of society that there is no situation in which she can give a voice to her suffering. For example, when Anna considers her own clothes, she is "too sad to cry", recognising the extent of her social isolation:

Everything makes you want pretty clothes like hell. People laugh at girls who are badly dressed [...] As if that isn't enough. But no, it's jaw, jaw and sneer, sneer all the time. And the shop-windows sneering and smiling in your face.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Rhys, p. 136.

<sup>95</sup> Rhys, p. 136.

<sup>96</sup> Lawrence, "Is England Still a Man's Country?", pp. 77-79.

<sup>97</sup> Rhys, p. 22.

The mental effect on Anna of such cogitation is one of degraded desperation: “All right, I’ll do anything for good clothes. Anything – anything for clothes”.<sup>98</sup> Though she attempts to accept that “perhaps it will always be like this”, her fear that she will “be one of the ones with beastly lives”, “without any money”, is dominant, and the next scene shows her spending Walter’s gift of money on clothes, as he requested – marking the beginning of her slide into a prostituted life of dependency on men.<sup>99</sup> Anna’s is such an impotent life, in short, that it could not possibly offer her the opportunity for a scenario of mutual “blame”, since such a concept assumes some kind of sexual equality beyond socio-material relations.

More crucially, the “inferior” economic position of women is less the contemporary social issue for Lawrence than the psychological fragility of men who, in being too “soft and nice and comfortable”, have abdicated “responsibility” by “pretend[ing]” that women have “usurped the land”. Meanwhile, this male infirmity has created its binary opposite in the women of England who are predominantly “hard and unkind and uncomfortable”.<sup>100</sup> This representation of English gender identities is, however, disassembled if placed in dialogue with *Voyage* which offers actual explanations of its constructions of identity. For example, the veneer of Vincent (a friend of Walter’s), which resembles the “soft and nice and comfortable” male of Lawrence’s creation, is depicted as the social polish of a cold, exploitative man, cynically bribing Anna in order to ensure Walter’s safety from social embarrassment, following his abandonment of his affair with her. Anna describes Vincent’s manner:

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<sup>98</sup> Rhys, p. 22.

<sup>99</sup> Rhys, p. 23.

<sup>100</sup> Lawrence, “Is England Still a Man’s Country?”, p. 79.

Making his voice very kind, but the look of his eyes was like a high, smooth, unclimbable wall. No communication possible. You have to be three-quarters mad even to attempt it.<sup>101</sup>

The “soft and nice and comfortable” man thus appears more illusory in Rhys’s fiction, which envisions such qualities as the polite conventions of the bourgeois English male designed to conceal his sexual manipulation of women’s class position. Similarly, Lawrence’s “hard and unkind and uncomfortable” women of England are not, when they appear in Rhys’s creation, a product of a male abdication of “responsibility”. They are, rather, a response to a male parody of “responsibility”. Vincent, for example, expects Anna to be grateful for the money given to her as payment for Walter’s sexual use of her:

‘You must have known Walter would look after you.  
And he’d fixed everything up [...]’

‘So much every Saturday,’ I said. ‘Receipt-form enclosed.’

‘It’s no use talking like that. You’re going to be pretty glad of it now, aren’t you?’

I didn’t answer.<sup>102</sup>

The “Englishman” here has certainly not renounced all “responsibility” for women; rather, he cynically exploits the “responsibility” which the bias of the socio-economic structure affords him should he wish to accept it. Through her succession of transitory affairs with men in the novel, Anna encounters this psychology continually since her need of both material subsistence and affection allows her to fall prey to men in search of extra-marital sex. Rhys thus confronts Lawrence’s “comfortable” image of an enfeebled English masculinity with a disturbing vision of the English bourgeois male as a

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<sup>101</sup> Rhys, p. 147.

<sup>102</sup> Rhys, pp. 147-8.

pernicious parodist of “responsibility”: *Voyage* substitutes for Lawrence’s inert and indifferent male, an *active* masculine manipulation of power.

From this notion of contemporary English masculinity, however, the myth of a true English manhood, derived from a construction of a more authentic past, is manufactured: “The Englishman hated being bossed or bullied [...] Which is a real man’s spirit, and the only spirit that makes a country a man’s country”.<sup>103</sup> The implication here is evidently that England is not a “man’s country” though *it was and should be*. This idea is based on a constructed image of the Englishmen of the past as lovers of “freedom” and enemies of “the boss and bully”.<sup>104</sup> However, the modern Englishman, Lawrence tells us, “won’t mind” if his “political freedom” is “taken from him again, after his forefathers fought so hard for it”. This leads Lawrence to argue that, though the Englishman has “political freedom”, he does not possess “economical freedom” and this is the reason for his “blaming [of] the women”: he must “tackle” the “insuperable difficulty” of “economic bondage”.<sup>105</sup>

The focus has shifted, therefore, from a criticism of male bitterness over the women’s movement to the importance of male economic freedom in the re-establishment of England as “a man’s country”. *Voyage*, on the other hand, portrays an England which is still very much “a man’s country”, and in which women are economically subordinate to and at the mercy of men’s “economical freedom”: Anna’s body is bought by wealthy men. Her affections are manipulated by the greater material power of the men she encounters. For example, when she begins dating Walter, her emotional

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<sup>103</sup> Lawrence, “Is England Still a Man’s Country?”, p. 79.

<sup>104</sup> Lawrence, “Is England Still a Man’s Country?”, pp. 79-80.

<sup>105</sup> Lawrence, “Is England Still a Man’s Country?”, pp. 80-81.

responses to him are significantly confused. When Walter asks her if her stepmother thinks she has “disgraced the family” by “gadding about on tour”, her initial feeling of repulsion at his scarcely concealed contempt for her as a woman of little money is counteracted by a more material sense of warmth and comfort:

I looked at him, and he was smiling as if he were laughing at me. I stopped talking. I thought, ‘Oh God, he’s the sneering sort. I wish I hadn’t come.’

But when the waiter brought in coffee and liqueurs and shut the door [...] and we went over to the fire, I felt all right again. I liked the room and the red carnations on the table and the way he talked and his clothes – especially his clothes. It was a pity about my clothes [...]<sup>106</sup>

The scene is characteristic for its representation of Anna’s alternating emotions of hatred for Walter as an individual, and the feelings of pleasure and security stimulated by the material environment he offers her. Male “economical freedom” in itself is not therefore, as in Lawrence’s article, an issue distinct from women’s economic freedom, or a means by which men can take a benevolent “responsibility” for the country once again. Instead, in the England of Rhys’s fiction the degree of economic power which men do possess, though they are still confined (as Lawrence points out) to the “treadmill” of alienated labour, is inseparable from the material impotence of women, and in fact exploits it, owing to the division of society by class.<sup>107</sup>

Lawrence’s essay, however, through its welding of masculinity with nationality, and its sense of male political and economic freedom as synonymous with freedom in general, evades the question of women’s social power as if it could be subsumed under the issue of men’s power. The whole

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<sup>106</sup> Rhys, p. 19.

<sup>107</sup> Lawrence, “Is England Still a Man’s Country?”, p. 80.

problem of national economic organisation becomes an exclusively male one rather than one for both men and women to engage with through their complementary experiences of exploitation within the interconnected webs of gender and class relations. Women's struggle for jobs in order to claim economic power is perceived as minor compared to the necessity for men to cast off their status as the alienated labourers of a capitalist economy. In fact, women's improved status is explained as a consequence of male contempt for labour rather than as a result of female activism: men have "push[ed]" their jobs "over to the women" owing to their secret "hate [of] the job".<sup>108</sup> England is therefore "a man's country" *by definition* since social changes only occur as a result of male activity or inactivity. As Lawrence says in the article, "Master in His Own House":

We may take it for granted, that wherever woman bosses the show, it is because man doesn't want to. It is not rapacity and pushing on the women's part. It is indifference on the man's. Men don't really care. Wherever they do care, there is no question of the intrusion of women.<sup>109</sup>

Lawrence's England always-already belongs to *Englishmen* rather than *Englishwomen*. The gendering of Lawrence's construction of Englishness is, moreover, contained in his feminising of the nation when he speaks of "the men" of England having "forsaken her" (that is, the nation).<sup>110</sup> Thus, the activity of being English is a masculine one, while the nation as a territory and national property is feminised.

Rhys's novel, on the other hand, critiques both the commodification of women and the patriarchal world of norms which women are expected to

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<sup>108</sup> Lawrence, "Is England Still a Man's Country?", p. 80.

<sup>109</sup> Lawrence, "Master in His Own House", *Assorted Articles*, pp. 57-62, 59-60.

<sup>110</sup> Lawrence, "Is England Still a Man's Country?", pp. 78-79.



inhabit. For example, Maudie's account of a man's flippant remark to her, comparing the price of a woman's clothes to an abstract notion of the cost of a woman herself, provides a brutal illustration of the transference of the socio-economic power of men over women to the psychological reduction of female beings to exchangeable objects of monetary value. In short, the terms of Lawrence's essay, such as male "responsibility" or men's "forsak[ing]" of women, are ironised as remnants of a mythical epoch of untainted patriarchal benevolence. For Rhys identifies the commodification which such a powerful "responsibility" entails:

'D'you know what a man said to me the other day? It's funny, he said, have you ever thought that a girl's clothes cost more than the girl inside them?'

'What a swine of a man!' I said.

'Yes, that's what I told him,' Maudie said. ' "That isn't the way to talk," I said. And he said, "Well, it's true, isn't it? You can get a very nice girl for five pounds, a very nice girl indeed; you can get a very nice girl for nothing if you know how to go about it. But you can't get a very nice costume for her for five pounds" [...] And then I had to laugh, because after all it's true, isn't it? People are much cheaper than things.'<sup>111</sup>

This economic comparison of women with clothes enacts a homogenising and dehumanising process in which the female is transported into the realm of objects and valued in terms of an abstract exchange-value. In this manner, *Voyage* presents a grotesque affront to Lawrence's diplomatic evasion of the problem of women's "political" and "economical freedom". While Lawrence evades it by absorbing it into the prioritised issue of male "freedom", Rhys provides a horrific image of women as no more than commodities for male purchase – an image that re-inserts the rupturing force of gender into the

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<sup>111</sup> Rhys, pp. 39-40.

concepts of England and Englishness.

The fact that Anna's economic impotence compels her to conform to both male conceptions of femininity and bourgeois notions of respectability confines her to an extremely narrow code of conduct and set of norms. On the one hand, she must be both sexually accessible and socially superior (for example, in her clothing) in order to gain the security which only men can provide, while on the other hand, she must obey bourgeois, patriarchal morals on sexual behaviour. This imprisoning existence is reflected in the oppressive "sneer" of the English people that Anna encounters and even the buildings she enters. For example, while the socially snobbish and sexually exploitative Walter is "the sneering sort", Walter's house at Green Street is also "sneering faintly, sneering discreetly, as a servant would. Who's this? Where on earth did he pick her up?".<sup>112</sup> This "sneer" pervades the novel as an image of Englishness, particularly masculine Englishness, and is significantly reminiscent of Orwell's "sneering civilisation" which I read earlier as a critique of the kind of apathy towards radical social change which Lawrence's essays often celebrate. However, in *Voyage*, the image of a "sneering" England provides a critique of the cynicism embedded in the relations of power existing between men and women. Lawrence's late England, by contrast, employs a conception of the nation that elevates men's social issues over women's, to the extent of reducing the latter to a passion for "stockings" and cigarettes", and idealises male political activity as a universal solution to social ills.<sup>113</sup> This is exposed in Rhys's England as a symptom of the problem rather than a

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<sup>112</sup> Rhys, p. 43.

<sup>113</sup> Lawrence, "Is England Still a Man's Country?", p. 78.

diagnosis of it, since her England is fissured by a conflict of interests both at the level of social class (like Orwell's) and at the level of gender.

Furthermore, Rhys's English landscape is a homogenised one, reminding us of Orwell and Lawrence's "sleep[y]" and "dull" southern England. However, while Lawrence's landscape expresses a lack of individuality and spiritual vitality in the English, and Orwell's vision is a satirical picture of a depoliticised and nostalgic England, Rhys's homogenised and homogenising English landscape is an aggressive one which constrains and demands conformity to its structure. This landscape differs radically from Orwell's and Lawrence's in that it possesses the quality of nightmare: Anna imposes the poverty, confinement and uniformity of her existence upon her wider social environment. For example:

'I believe this damned room's getting smaller and smaller,' I thought. And about the rows of houses outside, gimcrack, rotten-looking, and all exactly alike.<sup>114</sup>

She was exactly like our landlady at Eastbourne. Was it Eastbourne? And the shapes of the slices of meat were the same, and the way the cabbage was heaped was the same, and all the houses outside in the street were the same – all alike, all hideously stuck together – and the streets going north, east, south, west, all exactly the same.<sup>115</sup>

Rhys's England is the experience of those it oppresses rather than the simply soporific and inert Englands of Orwell and Lawrence. The idealised images of England as "peaceful", and English people as lovers of "freedom" and enemies of the "boss and bully", are dialogically undermined through a vision of England as experienced through the eyes of the exploited and socially outcast

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<sup>114</sup> Rhys, p. 26.

<sup>115</sup> Rhys, p. 89.

Anna. *Voyage* therefore offers Orwell and Lawrence an England whose class-based *and* gendered socio-economic divisions inspire cynicism towards existing relationships as well as potential future ones. Anna herself poignantly voices Rhys's attack on such cynicism with her utopian reflection: "Money ought to be everybody's. It ought to be like water. You can tell that because you get accustomed to it so quickly".<sup>116</sup> However, unlike Orwell's critique of a shrewd, "hard-boiled" England, Rhys's tragic narrative suggests that such qualities are potentially empowering. For Anna's repressed consciousness of Walter's manipulative nature appears painfully ironic following his departure and her subsequent demise, thus implying that a certain amount of shrewdness is desirable in an England where, for the substantial social groups embodied in Rhys's Anna Morgan, "dulness" is a grotesque euphemism for impoverishment and "freedom" is others' freedom to exploit.

Rhys's novel, then, provides an image of nation-ness which sits somewhat uncomfortably alongside Anderson's argument that "nation-ness" is centrally about the sense of being "naturally tied" to a positively conceived, "unchosen" bond. For Rhys's vision of England, through the eyes of Anna, provides a sense of national identity which is powerfully imagined through the prisms of gender, class and race. Anderson hints that "nation-ness" has its competitors for affiliation when he remarks that it is "assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth-era – all those things one cannot help".<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, he conceives national identity almost entirely in terms of a sympathetic and direct relationship or bond. What I hope to have conveyed in this chapter is how nation-ness is always imagined through the web of social

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<sup>116</sup> Rhys, p. 24.

<sup>117</sup> Anderson, p. 143.

relationships which the particular individual inhabits. In the case of Anna Morgan her “unchosen” relationship to England, as a member of the British Empire, is perceived as one of extreme antagonism and fear rather than “kinship”, and this is evidently the consequence of the fact that the various identities which Anna occupies are those both marginalised and oppressed by English society. As a woman, a member of the lower classes, and an immigrant from the edge of the British Empire, Anna is confronted with a menacing Englishness which reduces her to the position of a servant (she is, in terms of her socio-economic class, a prostitute). National identity is thus not merely assimilable to but inextricably bound up with such factors as “skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth-era” and, in addition, class – all of which are originally “unchosen” though we may evade them all. In fact, peculiarly (considering Anderson omits class in his list of the categories to which nationness is assimilable), national identity has a greater resemblance to class than these other formative aspects of identity in that it is much more easily evaded owing to its cultural quality: nationness is indicated predominantly by language, while class is most manifestly represented by such external, cultural features as accent and appearance. This is perhaps highlighted by the doubleness of Lawrence and Orwell’s respective positions in terms of these identities. Lawrence’s attachment to, yet paradoxical exile from, England, and Orwell’s disdainful, critical engagement with the imperial, upper-middle-class England into which he was born, both suggest that there is a flexibility in the bond that one has to one’s nation – though our national identity may be “unchosen”, we can leave our country (and learn a new language) or critically distance ourselves from it. Similarly, Lawrence moved into a literary, middle-

class culture from working-class origins, though he never felt at home in such a world; while Orwell abandoned his upper-middle-class career in the imperial administration to assume the various roles of writer, socialist militiaman in the Spanish Civil War and, for a period, vagrant, though he too could not truly abandon his class as a formative part of his identity. It would appear, then, that class shares with nationhood a certain degree of culturally constituted malleability. Both nation-ness and class are certainly more evadable forms of identity than “skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth-era”, none of which are easily avoided.

Our relationship to our nation, therefore, does not come prior to our other social relationships through which alternative identities emerge and become meaningful. What Rhys’s fiction shows is that the relationships into which we are born are formative in the constitution of our sense of nation-ness, and these relations may foster alienated as well as sympathetic bonds to nation, and thus be competitors for our sense of belonging. In *Voyage in the Dark*, it is clear that Englishness as an identity is in direct antagonism to the identities Anna represents: one person’s sense of belonging is another’s social exclusion. Anderson’s vision of national identity, however, though highly sensitive to its ideological modality, appears to deny its emotionally double-edged nature through his emphasis on it as a “political love”.

Lawrence and Orwell, by contrast, omit in their creations these other Englands and their alternative forms of belonging and identity. Rhys’s Anna belongs neither to Lawrence’s England nor even Orwell’s. Orwell engages with and critiques a self-deluding bourgeois, southern England and reveals its self-satisfied parochiality and unsavoury connection with the seemingly

external world of international politics. Lawrence's England, however, is the abstract and touristic image of the national exile. Lawrence *was* able, to counter David Gervais, both to "tear himself away from the drama of England's defacement in the hope of finding refuge in some England of the mind", and to make "the usual association of 'Englishness' with a declining rural way of life" - points which an essay such as "Insouciance" makes clear.<sup>118</sup> Lawrence's image of England is, in fact, the very cynical, middle-class England which Orwell attacks: that is, the parochial, idealised, and commodifying vision of the nation as a depoliticised and classless emotional unity (occasionally fractured by superficial quarrels) - a bourgeois world of tourist attractions and lifestyle choices. However, Orwell himself does not critique such an image comprehensively owing to his paradoxical position both inside and outside the England of his creation - the necessary contradiction and cost, perhaps, of an immanent critique. Rhys, by contrast, offers those other sides of England which Lawrence so strongly suppresses - the England of patriarchy and the England of colonial exploitation. For Lawrence, such Englands - representative of England's "*otherness*" - are a reality to be smothered for the sake of a merely notional individuality which denies both its own status as a typically bourgeois perspective and its inescapable social relationships. As Williams remarks, "man is born into relationships. [However] the abstraction of the bare human being, as a separate substance, is ordinarily

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<sup>118</sup> David Gervais, *Literary Englands: Versions of 'Englishness' in Modern Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 86. Though I disagree with Gervais's comments here, his discussion of Lawrence is an illuminating one, in particular his analysis of *The First Lady Chatterley*. However, Gervais (typically, for critics of Lawrence) fails to take Lawrence's late articles into proper account, and thus is able to state that: "[Lawrence's] later work assumed no specific English public such as we can still feel ourselves to be continuous with" (p. 85). See Gervais, pp. 156-84, also for a comparative discussion of Evelyn Waugh and Orwell.

taken for granted".<sup>119</sup> It is this abstraction, characteristic of the exile, which suffuses Lawrence's late images of Englishness.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. 94.

<sup>120</sup> I stress "late" Englishness. As Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson point out, while emphasising the liberal idealism and Romanticism of much of his work, Lawrence's earlier story, "England, My England", registers the futility and tragedy of such abstraction, even locating it at the heart of a certain liberal brand of Englishness. However, the authors (typically, for Lawrence's critics) do not dispel the widespread assumption that Lawrence was a stubborn anti-nationalist, a claim which this chapter should at the very least unsettle. Nonetheless, for their brief yet brilliant analysis of Lawrence and a fascinating overview of his contemporaries' literary Englands, see Brooker and Widdowson's essay, "A Literature for England", *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, ed. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 116-63.



#### **4: The Culture of the Death Drive: Violence, Culture and the Unconscious in the work of Lawrence and Inter-War Psychoanalysis**

Lawrence and Lawrencians have typically separated aesthetics from politics, the personal from the socio-political, and the instinctual from the cultural. Nowhere perhaps is this more pronounced than in their treatment (or, rather, neglect) of Lawrence's relationship to violence.<sup>1</sup> In the first section of this chapter I want to trace, by focusing on the Cambridge Biography of Lawrence, the tensions and contradictions of this dualistic methodology. While Lawrence's work frequently engages with violence as a social phenomenon and politically symbolic act, Lawrence's biographers have shied away from this prominent feature of his work, confining it to a personal ethic of non-repression of the impulses.

Comparable issues are raised in the field of inter-war psychoanalysis – particularly in the work of Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein. For their equally determined desire intellectually to examine the glaring fact of human destructiveness in an unprecedentedly violent century, led to both a split in the school of British psychoanalysis and the alienation of psychoanalysis's liberal

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most pernicious examples of Lawrencian critics' separation of the instinctual from the cultural in the treatment of violence is to be found in Stanley Renner, "Sexuality and the Unconscious: Psychosexual Drama and Conflict in *The Fox*", *DHLR* 21 (3), 1989, pp. 245-73, in which Renner accepts Lawrence's dichotomy between repressed feminine spirituality and unconscious male instinctiveness while intellectually relishing Henry's sexual subjugation of the virginal March through the employment of a crudely reductive, biological psychoanalytic theory. Ironically, of course, Renner's execrable analysis (which implies that rape and sexual murder are natural characteristics of male sexuality) is deeply implicated in the kind of *cultural* brutality which Lawrence read as the exploitation of ideas for the purpose of violence. The issue of violence, however, is certainly neglected. The extent to which critics avoid the discussion of violence is exemplified by Carol Sklenicka, who, in her book-length study *D. H. Lawrence and the Child* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1991), neglects to mention that Lawrence advocated, in his non-fiction, violent rituals of initiation into adult sexuality and the violent beating of children; in one case, children of only a "few weeks old" (see Lawrence, "Education of the People" (written between 1918 and 1920), *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Edward D. McDonald [London: Heinemann, 1936],

supporters, who evidently wished to protect the realm of human instincts from an increasingly anti-humanist political culture (of war and fascism). In the second part of this chapter, then, I will read Lawrence's own attempt to divorce culture from the unconscious (by trying to establish a critical position outside culture from which to critique its violence), alongside the controversial efforts of inter-war psychoanalysis to understand destructiveness by negotiating the problematic relation between inside and outside.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this section, which will handle two of Lawrence's non-fictional works, will be to explore the ways in which the project of formulating an idealised unconscious is doomed to failure: culture, repression and violence are inextricable from the unconscious life. In fact, the repression of the historical materiality and cultural nature of the instincts (the sense in which they cannot entirely evade repression), and the severance of the impulses from the desire for knowledge (which might challenge an oppressive cultural authority), result in the very kind of abstraction of the unconscious from culture which constitutes cultural violence. At the same time, I will also demonstrate the ways in which Lawrence's writing sheds light upon psychoanalysis through its notion of knowledge as death and its emphasis on the necessity of instinctual affirmation, which highlight the limits of both the earlier psychoanalysis' Enlightenment faith in the therapeutic success of self-knowledge and the later

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pp. 587-665, 639). Typically, however, Sklenicka is keen to emphasise Lawrence's distance from such violence in his fiction and his "respect for the child" (see pp. 109-110, 166).

<sup>2</sup> Such an approach is criticised by Sklenicka, who argues that such comparisons between Lawrence and psychoanalysis are regrettable both because Lawrence's work suffers as a consequence (since it is "different *in kind*" from Freud's), and because, "technically speaking... there was no debate" (pp. 164-5). What I hope to illustrate, however, in the following argument, is the fruitfulness of such a comparative analysis, not only because Lawrence's concerns are intriguingly similar to those of inter-war psychoanalysis, but also because such a reading allows both kinds of thought to illuminate one another. Certainly, it would seem painfully ironic to allow a Lawrencian fear that Lawrence's work may suffer from such a reading to inhibit criticism on such an issue as the unconscious.

psychoanalysis' pessimistic emphasis on repression through such concepts as the death drive.

In the third and final sections of this chapter, I want to argue that the movement of the non-fictional work – from a critique of the concealed cultural violence of modernity, through a moral reaction to all repression and violent cultural conflict from an extra-cultural space, to a paradoxical return to a brutal, authoritarian culture of the instincts and aesthetic destruction which masquerades as an idealised unconscious – is the intellectual trajectory taken by Lawrence's late fiction. However, while short stories, such as "The Woman Who Rode Away", illustrate the potential in art for symbolic violence when abstracted from the culture in which it is embedded, the earlier novel, *Women in Love* – while paving the way for such abstraction – can be read as an important reminder of the necessity of conflict and opposition to cultural authority – an illuminating critique, that is, of psychoanalysis's attempts (such as Klein's depressive position and Freud's dominant death drive) to produce selves dominated by guilt and the repression of conflict.

### Violence in a Vacuum: Lawrence and the Cambridge Biography

In its impressive scholarly endeavour to provide the most comprehensive and authoritative account of Lawrence's life since his death in 1930, the recent three-volume Cambridge Biography of D. H. Lawrence has necessarily been compelled to encounter the numerous accounts of Lawrence's vitriolic verbal outbursts and acts of physical violence. As this was an academic project which was attempting to restore Lawrence to posterity in the

aftermath of what could easily have been assumed, in the 1970s, to be his canonic death at the hands of orthodox feminist and Marxist critics, the task must have been an unenviable one. While the theoretical driving force behind the Cambridge Biography remained the renovation of Lawrence's literary credibility through the meticulous reconstruction of his personal life, the fact of Lawrence's frequently violent temperament (including attacks on his wife, Frieda, and vows to kill his friend, Mabel Dodge Luhan) would, for many, have sat uneasily alongside the process of literary restoration: violence is not culture's happiest of bed-fellows.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, to discover explanations of Lawrence's various acts of violence in the Cambridge Biography which are conceived in terms of the notion of an ideal selfhood beyond the instinctually inhibitory constraints of culture.<sup>3</sup> For it is a common transcendental manoeuvre of culture to attempt to extricate itself from the confines of its painful and unavoidable materiality. As Lyndsey Stonebridge points out, "the idea of transcending culture...is an illusion that is sustained and enabled by culture itself".<sup>4</sup> This is especially evident in the post-Romantic approach adopted by David Ellis (author of the third volume of the Cambridge Biography) in his interpretation of Lawrence's absurd attack on his dog, "Bibbles". Ellis recounts a narrative in which Lawrence reacts with comic jealousy and rage to the realisation that "Bibbles", a bitch and a "small French bull terrier", has inter-

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<sup>3</sup> I should note that, both because of the period (1918-1930) to which this thesis confines itself, and because Lawrence's concern with violence as a writer only emerges as a significant interest in his later work, I will not be discussing here John Worthen's first volume of the Cambridge Biography (*D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885-1912* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]).

<sup>4</sup> Lyndsey Stonebridge, *The Destructive Element: British Psychoanalysis and Modernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 2.

bred with an Airedale, by pursuing and cursing at his dog until finally he kicks and hurls her through the snow.<sup>5</sup> Ellis's description relies upon the first-hand account of Knud Merrild, a Danish painter of Lawrence's acquaintance, who describes the "dark, mysterious forces" which ruled Lawrence's "fury towards Pips [Bibbles]".<sup>6</sup> However, rather than distancing himself from Merrild's ridiculously idealised account of the events, Ellis offers the reader a bizarrely Romantic reading of Lawrence's behaviour:

[...] for Lawrence emotional repression was an unmitigated evil, and likely to make one ill. When he shocked Merrild with his description of how he would like to murder Mabel he was following his belief that any *genuine* impulse [...] needed to find expression. Actually killing Mabel rather than merely talking about it would have created difficulties, but if Lawrence could come closer than most to an uninhibited living it was because he and Frieda had for years now lived in a way which allowed him to "be himself". It was a long time since he had been obliged to accept the social restraints of a schoolmaster's life, and he was not therefore likely to be inhibited in his fury against Bibbles by the presence of two friendly and financially dependent Danes [....] Certainly the Bibbles episode demonstrates that [Lawrence] was the possessor of what Dryden called a "fiery soul".<sup>7</sup>

The kind of inverted bathos here which transforms a grotesque act of abuse into a manifestation of sublime selfhood is hugely ironic when we consider that Lawrence's work is often praised for its appreciation of and respect for the otherness of animal life and its psychological excavations of the symptoms of cultural malaise in the human treatment of animals.<sup>8</sup> However, Ellis's appeal to

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<sup>5</sup> David Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game 1922-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> Ellis, p. 97. Ellis quotes from Knud Merrild, *With D. H. Lawrence in New Mexico* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 541.

<sup>7</sup> Ellis, p. 98.

<sup>8</sup> The 1923 poetry collection, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (incorporated in D. H. Lawrence, *Complete Poems* (1964), ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993]) is the most prominent example of such tendencies in Lawrence's work, while *Women in Love* contains numerous passages in which individuals are characterised in terms of

the literary unconscious is consistent both with what Stonebridge describes as the widespread need for culture to transcend itself (and by this I take her to mean culture's desire to evade its necessary materiality and social dimension – and all of the conflicts which these entail) and with the particular task of constructing a Lawrence who successfully survives the pitfalls of gender and history dug out by the criticism of the 1970s. This is most clear in Ellis's flippant remark that “actually killing Mabel rather than merely talking about it would have created difficulties”. What this obscures is the simple fact that such extremities of violence for Lawrence were not merely personal affairs confined to spontaneous moments in the individual's imagination: on the contrary, they are the subject of sustained exploration in both Lawrence's fictional and non-fictional works and, though they are obviously imagined, are realised concretely within all the “difficulties” of the social relationships which such acts in reality inescapably inhabit. Furthermore, such realisations are resonant with social and political implications – they do not appear as ideal representations of an individualistic, “uninhibited living”.

Paradoxically, the socially symbolic nature of Lawrence's engagement with the destructive instincts implicates his work in the very problematics of culture which Lawrencians and Lawrence himself have sought to elude. As Linda Williams has observed of Lawrence's work:

Culture is as much the context and vehicle as the object of his critique. Lawrence is a writer whose deep suspicion of mental acts takes place *in* the text; the only “body” these ideas have is the body *of* the text. Life, for Lawrence, inhabits and animates the book, the Word [...] even if it is also betrayed by it.<sup>9</sup>

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the way they relate to animals.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Ruth Williams, *D. H. Lawrence* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997), p. 32.

That Ellis largely confines his remarks on Lawrence's relation to violence (a profound relation which I believe is important for an understanding of his texts) to the sphere of the individual, appears to neglect, then, Lawrence's strong interest *as a writer* in the potential role of violence in the social transformation of a *culture*. To say that "Lawrence's rages" can be partly explained by his conviction that "anger did more harm in than out" is, in terms of Lawrence's conception of his own personal conduct, probably true, but simultaneously ignores the fact that his own writings imply a less simplistic opposition than that between the harmful consequences of instinctual repression and the liberatory benefits of the unimpeded unconscious, despite Lawrence's explicit attempts to maintain such a dualism.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Ellis's desire to emphasise that Lawrence's physical attacks on Frieda were due to his instinctual volatility and were not part of a "systematic abuse" is undoubtedly true. Yet, as a comment upon Lawrence's general use of violence in his *work* (which, after all, is the only reason why such a leviathan biography has a market),<sup>11</sup> such statements leave out a great deal. For Lawrence's writings, particularly of the 1920s (the period which Ellis largely covers), *consciously and continuously* engage with and imaginatively produce acts of brutal violence – the short story "The Woman Who Rode Away", for example, laboriously representing the terrible process through which a white woman comes to be brutally executed by a native American Indian tribe. Thus, what I want to suggest here is that too

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<sup>10</sup> Ellis, p. 98.

<sup>11</sup> Ellis himself is clear about this in his "Preface", pp. xi-xv, despite his open desire partially to extricate Lawrence from his writing activity as an object for analysis: "The biography of a literary figure is not solely to be judged by the light it throws on the subject's work but, for many of us, literary value is in the end what matters most, and it is only because Lawrence is generally considered a great writer that the degree of attention his life has received can be justified" (p. xiv).

narrow a focus on the writer's life in isolation from his work can easily lead to the construction of a Romantically charged image of a volatile yet spontaneous literary personality venomously challenging cultural orthodoxies in a kind of literary vacuum devoid of *cultural* or *social* implications: in short, the creation of a mythic cultural figure who stands safely outside culture while attacking it.

It is in this light, I think, significant that, in his earlier discussion of Lawrence's homicidal feelings towards Mabel, Ellis offers little comment upon the clearly extra-individual implications of Lawrence's perspectives on violence:

Merrild remembered [Lawrence] saying with great earnestness how he felt he could enjoy killing someone and that some killings were necessary for the world at large. When asked who would be his first victim Lawrence replied that he would kill Mabel – cut her throat. Feelings of this intensity are unlikely to have been provoked merely by her refusal to put him up, and were more probably the consequence of rumours about the Lawrences which, Mabel admits, she and her son began spreading [...]. The gist which seemed to have reached Lawrence's ears was that they were spongers whom she had been forced to turn out.<sup>12</sup>

Firstly these are evidently not, as Ellis later suggests, the thoughts of somebody who is responding solely to his unconscious instincts in the manner of the truly impulsive Romantic; they are the meditations of an individual who is consciously exploring – and thus unavoidably affecting – his own homicidal impulses. Secondly, the unwillingness here to engage with what is evidently more than a quarrel over living arrangements, but a major attitude of Lawrence's which has a marked relationship to his artistic labour, seems to indicate a reluctance to deal with the deeply contentious social and political

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<sup>12</sup> Ellis, p. 86.



issues which Lawrence's work raises in this area.

Mark Kinkead-Weekes, in the second volume of the Cambridge Biography, displays a similar reservation in his treatment of Lawrence and violence. Kinkead-Weekes, however, does not assume a selfhood outside the social relations of a culture: rather he appears to postulate, as Ellis and Lawrence himself (explicitly) do, a binary opposition between unconscious instincts and culture in the sense of mental knowledge and self-consciousness. For example, he appears to accept uncritically Lawrence's distinction, in the essay "Education of the People", between spontaneous action or "bodily learning" and "mind-knowledge".<sup>13</sup> Though Kinkead-Weekes refers briefly to rather obvious "sillinesses" which are "unlikely to go down well now", his vague and fleeting subsequent emphasis on "a challenge, and a kind of wisdom" and his tendency to merge Lawrence's voice with his own when describing the text, imply a disinclination to become involved in a debate over the highly controversial claims, which depend so greatly upon the dualism between mind and body, made in this non-fictional work for the benefits of violence against women and children.<sup>14</sup>

Kinkead-Weekes's tendency to identify himself with Lawrence through a paraphrasing of Lawrence's arguments, thus sacrificing a great deal of critical distance, is particularly striking. In his description of Lawrence's "Education of the People", Kinkead-Weekes writes:

The trouble begins with self-conscious modern mothers trying to make their infants conscious of them and of themselves, too soon, and with over-emphasis on love. So children should be left alone as much as possible, seized away from (s)mothering if necessary. Childhood

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<sup>13</sup> Mark Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 590.

<sup>14</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 593.

should be primarily a bodily learning, with mental consciousness allowed to grow at its own natural pace.<sup>15</sup>

However, Kinkead-Weekes follows this unquestioning description of Lawrence's argument with an equally uncritical commentary on Lawrence's views on "bodily learning" – perspectives which do not square easily with those above:

Moreover the volitional centres *must* develop - parents should immediately take sloppy children to task, be angry with them when they deserve it and smack their bottom when necessary so that they can be outraged too. For that will put fire into the backbone, that "long sword of the vivid, proud, *dark* volition of man, something primal and creative". A child needs more than love. Why are we so afraid of anger, of an element of danger, of fighting, when we see how wonderfully these make other creatures vital and on the qui vive?<sup>16</sup>

The tension between these two passages appears to lie in competing notions of authority which are founded on bipolar oppositions between instincts and consciousness, and masculinity and femininity. For Lawrence, the dangerous authority of a feminine and mental culture means that "children should be left alone as much as possible". However, at the same time Lawrence insists that parents must intervene violently with a male, bodily authority for the sake of the child's masculine "volitional centres". This superficially clear-cut definition of what constitutes legitimate authority in the parental relation to the child rests on an awkward dualism between body and mind, male and female. Yet this difficulty is masked by Kinkead-Weekes's gradually more transparent enthusiasm for Lawrence's idiosyncratic style of essay-writing, and thus his seeming acceptance of the hierarchical dualisms of the physical over the

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<sup>15</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 590.

<sup>16</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 590.

mental, and the male over the female, which it asserts: "away with love and merging! Switch off the upper consciousness! Exult in your own dark being!".<sup>17</sup> The important tension within Lawrence's heralded male authority between physical spontaneity and "volitional" power is thus lost, as is the tension between a masculinising parental authority and binary gender opposites.

It could be argued, however, that the remarks above are beside the point. Is not the Cambridge Biography a scholarly biography rather than a critical one? Does it need to engage critically at all with Lawrence's works? The first point I would make here is that the Cambridge project (Cambridge have, over the last quarter of a century, also been reproducing Lawrence's works in an "authoritative" edition) constitutes a hugely impressive attempt to rehabilitate Lawrence for the English literary canon (how many writers of the twentieth century have been given such large-scale scholarly treatment?), and therefore is already intellectually positioned in relation to Lawrence's work. In fact, the extent to which it is silent about Lawrence's texts would appear to be an index of its critical approval: their literary quality does not *need* to be argued. Thus, though the biographers do occasionally offer critical opinions and defences of the work, their hope appears to be that the life will stand in for such criticism. This would certainly be compatible with the treatment of Lawrence historically. As Linda Williams has remarked:

Writing about D. H. Lawrence has traditionally been infused with a myth of the individual wrought in epic proportions. With the exception of suicides such as Virginia Woolf or Sylvia Plath [...] perhaps no other

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<sup>17</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 591.

twentieth-century writer has been so strongly interpreted through the lustre of biography.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, I would argue that it is this very attempt to separate the individual life from the work, the biographical from the critical, while privileging the former categories (*despite* the Cambridge Biography's own claims to recognise the fact that "it is only because Lawrence is generally considered a great writer that the degree of attention his life has received can be justified"), which enacts the kind of problematic dualisms between instincts and culture, the unconscious and the conscious, which I have been describing. For these hierarchical dualisms lead to confusion within the biography itself since it is dealing with a subject who is in fact a *cultural* figure, and it is thus compelled to address the complex dialectic between culture and nature – a dialectic which becomes most controversial in the discussion of violence.

So, while the biography takes account of the "hierarchical class- and gender-thinking" of works such as *Fantasia of the Unconscious*,<sup>19</sup> and asks "why", in response to Lawrence's remarks in "Education of the People", "shouldn't girls fix machines?" if "boys can darn socks",<sup>20</sup> it responds to such wider social and cultural perspectives by explaining and justifying their existence in terms of Lawrence's personal life. For example, we are told that "if [Lawrence's wife, Frieda] tended to colour his whole view of woman and gender, feminists critical of his male chauvinism should also take her, and her

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<sup>18</sup> Linda Ruth Williams, p. 1. She notes that "Lawrence's own apparent enthusiasm for living his own life has infused the eulogies of Lawrentians" (p. 19). In addition, Williams observes that Lawrence's anti-intellectualism was "dutifully echoed in the anonymously penned biographical legend at the start of every Penguin edition of his work: 'Lawrence spent most of his short life living'" (p. 20). Significantly, this emphasis on "life" over intellect is continued in the biographical information at the beginning of each work in the more recent Penguin edition of the *Cambridge* texts: "Lawrence's life may have been short, but he lived it intensely".

<sup>19</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 660.

<sup>20</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 592.

power over him, into account". What Kinkead-Weekes seems unclear about here is whether or not he is judging an individual on a merely personal level or a literary author's social views. What seems certain, however, is that the "dynamic" and impulsive individual has primacy over the often distasteful intellectual writer who is the reason why Kinkead-Weekes has any biographical research to conduct in the first place. For his explanation of Lawrence's claim, in "Education of the People", that "'men who can only hark back to woman become automatic, static" is that it is part of Lawrence's belief that "stasis...is always death", whereas "it is the instability of every consummation that is precious for him, the 'quick' in both senses, of the living moment, and the guarantee of further life".<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Kinkead-Weekes emphasises that:

[...] the complex *chemistry* of Lawrence the writer – even putting together the need to stiffen the backbone, exult in one's darkness, dethrone the too-uppish woman, feel more male and more independent, find the love of comrades, and scout ahead of the pivotal and central woman – *must have had a deeper dynamic* than could be sufficiently explained by trying to measure the temperature of his marriage, or his potency.

We would also, in any case, have to allow for the ways in which Frieda seems changeless by comparison: a bit heavier or a bit thinner from time to time perhaps, but quite unworried about dependence since she was always so very much herself; rather the opposite of submissive; believing herself as intelligent and creative as he; and never acknowledging him or giving herself – as he would say – 'finally'. To that, too, the new attitude is a cumulative reaction [...]. Yet his writing was always more than imaginative compensation, too. *There is a courage of self-inquiry, ready to face up to his own impulses and explore wherever they led* [my italics].<sup>22</sup>

Significantly, Kinkead-Weekes's explanation of Lawrence's essay erects the same binary oppositions of the impulsive over the mental and "dynamic"

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<sup>21</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 593.

<sup>22</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 593.

masculinity over “static” femininity as Lawrence does in his work. Ironically, however, such divisions are confused by the fact that Lawrence’s essay is also a self-conscious act of “self-inquiry” and a mentally “imaginative” attempt to contribute to cultural and social debates. Moreover, what is most patently absent from the analysis here is that the instinctually dynamic Lawrence who is being celebrated is the same Lawrence who is outlining a *theory of education* which argues for husbands and fathers *consciously* to choose to act spontaneously upon destructive impulses towards wives and children.

While it is clear that Kinkead-Weekes, like Lawrence, has a conception of the relation between the instinctual life and culture which allows for the former’s capacity to act upon the latter, he does not allow for the *inescapably* formative nature of culture’s influence upon the instincts if we are to conceive of their relationship as at all dialectical. This deterministic feature of his treatment of Lawrence’s work mirrors, as we shall see, Lawrence’s own notion of this relationship. However, to conclude this section, I want to illustrate how this determinism becomes unsustainable when an attempt is made to understand Lawrence’s own violent behaviour *alongside* his attitudes as a writer.

This is perhaps best demonstrated by Kinkead-Weekes’s account of “the worst instance of marital violence by Lawrence of which we have evidence”.<sup>23</sup> This violent beating of Frieda, which follows an argument (begun by her) between the couple about a poem of Shelley’s, is explained by Kinkead-Weekes in the following manner:

[...] she was the aggressor. Nobody has ever asked why she should, so suddenly, have denounced Shelley when Katherine mentioned him; but she knew what she was doing and what effect it might have. For she, to

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<sup>23</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 319.

whom Lawrence read all his work, must have known how Shelley, and specifically that poem 'To a Skylark' (1820), occupied a crucial role in his dialectic thought. It represented for him [...] the extreme of mental and spiritual consciousness as opposed to the life of the body and the blood [...] Behind her onslaught, then, is her rage that Lawrence was betraying himself, and her [...]<sup>24</sup>

Leaving aside the fact that this earlier Lawrence of 1916 is more torn between what he sees as the rival claims of the unconscious and the intellectual/spiritual life, Kinkead-Weekes, in taking into account the likely intellectual motivations of Lawrence's "worst instance of marital violence" undermines his general conception of Lawrence as an impulsive individual who is best understood outside questions of culture. Thus, despite Kinkead-Weekes's attempt to keep the Romantic violence of the unconscious safely apart from the perversely destructive influences of culture, his description of Lawrence's personal life becomes contaminated by cultural violence. Much later in his biography, Kinkead-Weekes even interprets Lawrence's "rages" as "not jealousy nor sadism so much as taking down the upper-class magna mater, a male worker-bee's revolt against the big lazy Queen on whom he nevertheless depends".<sup>25</sup> What is perhaps most striking and disturbing about these two examples is that they draw upon social and cultural explanations which Lawrence and the Cambridge biographers conventionally disdain, in order to romanticise an individualist ethic of instinctual liberation – explanations, furthermore, which are grounded on an insidious use of the ideology of class conflict in order to bolster a patriarchal conception of gender relations. It is notable, however, that when the biographers address the cultural violence of Lawrence's essays they

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<sup>24</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 322.

<sup>25</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, pp. 518-19.

are less enthusiastic to situate them within such ideological debates, perhaps because their position within them is much clearer. Rather, the violence of Lawrence's non-fiction is interpreted in the language more common to the primary explanations of the violence of Lawrence's personal life (which, happily for the biographers, "sometimes" involved physical violence on Frieda's part too):<sup>26</sup> for example, Lawrence's desire for a "spontaneous opposition-and-relation of contraries" and a release from destructive "repression".<sup>27</sup>

To sum up, then, Lawrence's impulsive "life" is the means by which the Cambridge Biography accounts for the embarrassing arguments for male violence against women and children in the non-fiction and, in general, for the violent behaviour of Lawrence himself. However, in contradiction to the biographers' Lawrencian hostility to the cultural sphere, the Cambridge Biography occasionally ransacks the world of social and cultural meanings in order to justify further Lawrence's otherwise illiberal and uncivilised shortcomings – literary biography too, it seems, is part of culture and the notion of civilised values. As for the biographical treatment of Lawrence's fiction, the general tendency of Kinkead-Weekes and Ellis to conceive of Lawrence's relationship to the question of violence as primarily about Lawrence's ethic of non-repression in his *personal* life, is to divorce that idealised personal life from the wider social significance of Lawrence's cultural interest in the uses and political potential of a destructive violence. This proclivity appears to

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<sup>26</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 145: "their life may be stormy and occasionally violent; but it was she who taught him to express and live out his feelings as she does, she is not afraid of him and is sometimes violent herself and their life together is far more vital and interesting than anything she had known before".

<sup>27</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 327.



foster a neglect of that cultural interest in the biographical analysis of the fiction. That Kinkead-Weekes is, for example, keen to stress that the early short story, "The White Stocking", contains "no endorsement of violence" seems to belie a severe discomfort with both the later Lawrence's blatant non-fictional endorsements of violence and his clearly enthusiastic narrative explorations of it.<sup>28</sup> However, I will turn properly to the fiction later in this chapter. For now, I must turn to an analysis of Lawrence's non-fictional perspectives on violence and, in doing so, extend my discussion of the tensions within Lawrence's dualistic conception of the relation between culture and the unconscious.

Unconscious Culture: Lawrence's "Education of the People" and *Fantasia of the Unconscious*

In "Education of the People" (written between 1918 and 1920) and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922) (an essay elaborating on the ideas of *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* [1921]), Lawrence speaks on several occasions of desirable forms of both familial and social violence. However, the issue of violence is, in both cases, discussed within the context of a highly polemical critique of the role of culture and mental knowledge in education and children's upbringing: culture itself is read as violence. Both "Education of the People" (hereafter "Education") and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (hereafter *Fantasia*) argue that modern education brutally privileges knowledge over "unlearnedness",<sup>29</sup> (the latter calling for the abolition of elementary

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<sup>28</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, p. 140.

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence, "Education of the People", pp. 595-6.

education).<sup>30</sup> Similarly, both works lambast modern parents for bullying their children by forcing ideas and ideals upon them. Modern education and the family are seen as sites of a negative and dangerous violence, education, for example, being “psychologically barbaric” and a “terrible menace to the existence of our race”.<sup>31</sup>

It is in opposition to this pernicious modern culture of mentality and morality, then, that Lawrence argues for a return to a more instinctual being in which the body, power, individuality, and destructiveness are incorporated into social and family structures at the expense of the modern dominance of mental understanding, love, social sympathy, and the “evil” ideal.<sup>32</sup> Thus, one form of violence, the instinctual, is pitted against another, the violence of culture and civilisation.<sup>33</sup>

How successful, then, is Lawrence in maintaining this opposition? Lawrence’s remarks on the Great War are a good starting-point for such a

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<sup>30</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia of the Unconscious*”, *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1922 and 1921) (London: Penguin, 1971), pp. 7-195, 81.

<sup>31</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, p. 82.

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, p. 83.

<sup>33</sup> Sklenicka suggests that “Lawrence’s theory counters the Western dualistic conception of body and mind with a highly specified anatomy and physiology of the biological psyche” (*D. H. Lawrence and the Child*, p. 160), and that Lawrence’s “‘blood consciousness’” is “not” to be understood as “a rejection of mentality” (p. 162). Similarly, in both “Lawrence and psychoanalysis”, *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 217-33, and *D. H. Lawrence: The Thinker as Poet* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), Fiona Becket argues that Lawrence “is engaged in dismantling the Cartesian duality mind/body” (*D. H. Lawrence: The Thinker as Poet*, p. 4). However, such arguments ignore the way in which Lawrence’s attempts to avoid this dualism (for example, by acknowledging a connection between the instincts and the needs of the social, and by arguing that all human activities and perspectives, including his own, are necessarily bound up with morality; see Lawrence, “Education”, pp. 613-15) are unsuccessful. As we will see, Lawrence’s work continually sets up oppositions between the unconscious and culture, between the body and the mind. Thus, for example, Lawrence’s effort to establish the origins of spirituality in the physicality of this “biological psyche” is undermined by both his sustained assault on that spiritual plane, and its conflict with a glamorised lower plane of sensuality. Ellis, meanwhile, who perceives Lawrence’s notion of a “biological psyche” as effecting the fusion of the “Freudian distinctions between consciousness and its opposite”, nonetheless admits that Lawrence is a “dualist” whose syntheses are “frequently weak”, “unconvincing” or “non-existent” (“Lawrence and the Biological Psyche”, *D. H. Lawrence: Centenary Essays*, ed. Mara Kalnins (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1986), pp. 89-109).

discussion. In "Education", for example, he asserts the need for a "physical culture" of "pure *training*", "*contests*" and "*battle*", as a fundamental element of education, which must be devoid of "mental attention", "all idea", and "morality": a "mindless physical spontaneous Consciousness".<sup>34</sup> This culture of battle should contrast heavily with the kinds of violence characteristic of modern warfare, which is not "a primary physical thing" as authentic fighting should be, but "a horrible obscene ideal process, like our last war", "a ghastly and blasphemous translation of ideas into engines, and men into cannon-fodder".<sup>35</sup> The question of violence, therefore, seems to turn on the question of its instinctual authenticity and purity. "The real fight" is experienced as a physical "hand-to-hand contest", involving a reciprocity of pain, and the praising of wounds and "the valour that will be killed rather than yield".<sup>36</sup> Rather than the "monstrous", "ideal business" of death in contemporary machine warfare, death should be "a passional consummation" – the result of an "immediate conflict of physical men".<sup>37</sup>

Here, Lawrence critiques not only the prosthetic methods of modern annihilation but the contradiction between the Christian values propounded by Western democracies and those democracies' barbaric commercial and technological warfare, and impoverishing class systems. However, Lawrence extends this into an attack on the idealism of all progressivism. The attempts of either Christian liberalism, socialism or communism to reform such physical and material violence through education, "universal brotherhood" or "league-

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<sup>34</sup> Lawrence, "Education", p. 657.

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence, "Education", pp. 657-8.

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence, "Education", pp. 657-8.

<sup>37</sup> Lawrence, "Education", pp. 658-9.

of-nations smoshiness and pappiness" will, according to Lawrence, only end "in foul hypocrisy".<sup>38</sup> The solution does not lie in "putting an end to all fighting" and sublimating such destructive energies into capitalistic competition. Rather, this approach to the impulsive need to fight is viewed as the result of a confusion over the distinction between "primal physical conscious activity" and "ideal conscious activity": individuals' physical impulses to fight are substituted by the "terrific conflict of ideas" of modern warfare. Thus Lawrence's critique of the violence of the historical forces which generated the Great War, and the liberal and left-wing internationalism which followed it, is grounded in a dualistic conception ("a polarity of contradistinction") of the relation of the instincts to mental consciousness – men must have "the choice of war" but not "the choice of bombs and poison-gases".<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, Lawrence's proposals for a new form of violence which is liberated from the perverted and dangerous repression of morality or the sublimating and abstracting processes of the mind are dependent upon a nostalgic return to a more technologically and ideologically primitive form of warfare. For example, Lawrence suggests that we "look on the black eye and the bloody nose as insignia of honour, like the Germans of old",<sup>40</sup> and that the British should immediately "destroy all guns, explosives, all poison-gases, and all apparatus for the making of these things".<sup>41</sup> A mythologising of the past combined with an argument for the destruction of knowledge are at work here, and again in Lawrence's bizarre suggestion for British policy in

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<sup>38</sup> Lawrence, "Education", pp. 658-9.

<sup>39</sup> Lawrence, "Education", pp. 655, 659.

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence, "Education", p. 658.

<sup>41</sup> Lawrence, "Education", p. 660.

Ireland which proposes that the British should “take the lead” and send soldiers to Ireland only “armed with swords and shields”, trusting “the Irish to come out with swords and shields as well”.<sup>42</sup> In order to effect this, a system of “martial training” in schools is required so that “every boy and every citizen” can fight with a “sword and spear and shield”.<sup>43</sup> It would seem, then, that Lawrence’s authentic form of violence is not so antithetical to culture as it would first appear. For this new, liberated form of “contest” is suffused with images of chivalrous and honourable “hand-to-hand” combat and a globally-respected imperial Britain – images which are grounded historically in the ideals of medieval society and the self-mythologising requirements of the British Empire, and which even anticipate the ideological programme of Germany’s Third Reich.

Moreover, death itself has become an ideal as a social activity. For not only is death itself to be part of the organised battles of Lawrence’s proposed education programme, but “fighting to the death” is “the real fight”, death is “glorious”, and, if it is violent, death should be “a passional climax and consummation”.<sup>44</sup> Death is, then, invested with a kind of spiritual grandeur which appears to be at odds with Lawrence’s attack on “bullying idealism” and the insidiousness of spirituality.<sup>45</sup> Also, in psychoanalytic terms, death appears in the form of an anti-enlightenment campaign against knowledge: for the obliteration of the means of destruction for which Lawrence argues is also the obliteration of knowledge and therefore an attempt to reverse the course of

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<sup>42</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 660.

<sup>43</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 660.

<sup>44</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, pp. 658-9.

<sup>45</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 595.

human development – an act, paradoxically, of the repressive Freudian death drive.

The correspondences between Lawrence's concerns here and the concerns of post-war psychoanalysis are in fact substantial and worth close examination, as both engage with the apparent contradictions between civilised democracy's ethics and actions, and widespread anxieties over the possibility of human progress in the face of what the historian Eric Hobsbawm has called "the age of total war".<sup>46</sup> If, for example, we turn to Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), we find issues at stake identical to those which Lawrence explores. In this essay, Freud first hypothesises and explores what would turn out to be the most controversial and contested of his concepts - the notion of a death drive.<sup>47</sup> This drive threatens to destroy the fundamental principle upon which psychoanalysis is based: that the liberation of the repressed from repression through analytical treatment is both possible and positive. What the death drive destabilises, then, is the very distinction between unconscious repressed and repressive culture which Lawrence's work struggles to maintain.

Freud initially and tentatively describes this drive as dominant and as a primary feature of all instincts, arguing that "*it seems...that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external*

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<sup>46</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, "The Age of Total War", *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), pp. 21-53.

<sup>47</sup> See Mikel L. Vause, "The Death Instinct Reflected in D. H. Lawrence's 'Love Among the Haystacks'", *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 9 (3-4), 1988, pp. 187-9, for an interesting, though brutally reflectionist, discussion of this concept in relation to Lawrence's work. See, however, Linda Ruth Williams, "'A Short Way by a Long Wandering': Writing the Death Drive", *Critical Desire: Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), pp. 154-85, for a more subtle analysis of the literary (including modernist) exploration of the notion of a death drive.

disturbing forces...the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life.<sup>48</sup> In reading Lawrence alongside Freud, then, we find some illuminating correspondences. Freud's dominant drive is "conservative" and therefore strives for an "earlier state of things".<sup>49</sup> How such a drive could be distinguished from its cultural conditions, however, is problematised by Lawrence's attempt to map out an authentic instinctual life which has death as a focal point of activity and embraces it as its "consummation". In what sense can the death instinct ever escape contamination by the repressive forces most "precious" to culture in order for it to be discerned as an instinct?<sup>50</sup> Significantly, Freud seems to arrive at his notion of the fundamentally reactionary character of instincts through an interpretation of some clinical analyses which appear to suggest that there existed a "compulsion to repeat" – quite a different notion to that of a return to the "inanimate state" of death.<sup>51</sup> Lawrence's proposal, by comparison, for a return to a mythologised medieval era of sword-fighting and "hand-to-hand" combat implies a similar desire to "repeat" history and loses none of the colour of culture. Lawrence's speculations, then, make Freud's death drive towards an "earlier state of things" hard to imagine outside the necessarily repressive workings of a culture; while Lawrence's own educational programme for a life of purified "mindless physical spontaneous Consciousness" ironically resonates with the "external disturbing forces" of Freud's repressive "civilization". The "polarity of contradistinction" between mind and body, culture and instincts, becomes less

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<sup>48</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Angela Richards (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 269-338, 308-9.

<sup>49</sup> Freud, pp. 313-14.

<sup>50</sup> Freud, p. 315.

<sup>51</sup> Freud, pp. 289, 311.

clear.

One of the most striking aspects of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, moreover, is its own attempt to deal with these very tensions. For Freud's profound questioning in this essay of one of the fundamental tenets of psychoanalysis – that psychological processes are “automatically regulated” by a dominant “pleasure principle” – inspires a reworking of the notion of repression which was not only to fracture the British Psycho-Analytical Society with controversy but to severely alienate the liberal interest in psychoanalysis, owing to its unabashed engagement with the fact of human destructiveness in the face of the unprecedented violence of the twentieth century.<sup>52</sup> Formerly, according to Freud's early theory (set out most comprehensively in *The Interpretation of Dreams*), the pleasure principle (a primary instinct for pleasure) dominated mental life by reducing “unpleasurable tension”.<sup>53</sup> This principle was counteracted by the reality principle (a secondary process of repression) - the self-preservative force

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<sup>52</sup> See Pearl King and Riccardo Steiner, eds., *The Freud-Klein Controversies 1941-45* (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991) for a comprehensive collection of the “Controversial Discussions”, between the Anna Freudians and the Kleinians, which split the British Psycho-Analytical Society. Broadly speaking, while Klein's work registers the presence of a violent internal culture (super-ego) of the self from the beginning of infancy, Anna Freud emphasised the absence of the super-ego in the child and the consequent necessity of a pedagogic function to child analysis. Interestingly, Lawrence emphasises, like Klein, the violence of the infantile instincts, while, like Anna Freud, arguing that the infant is a non-cultural being in need of authority. See also Jacqueline Rose, “War in the Nursery”, *Why War? – Psychoanalysis, Politics, and the Return to Melanie Klein* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 191-230, for a critical account of the disputes which explores the inside/outside debate, and the potential relationships between the practice of psychoanalysis, the tyrannical moral authority of the super-ego, and Conservatism. Notably, Rose maintains a similar conception of the self, as both embedded in culture and its laws and motivated by the need to challenge that culture, to the one which I hope animates this chapter: “There is no simple ‘outside’ to the law any more than there is a simple ‘outside’ of sexual norms – it is the participation in *and* refusal of those norms which psychoanalysis so graphically describes (take the first without the second and you get normalization; take the second without the first and you get a euphoric but ineffective liberationist version of Freud)” (p. 222). As we will see, in the light of Lawrence's work, the latter form of “ineffective” liberationism can also be an aesthetically powerful capitulation to the most psychotic of super-egos.

<sup>53</sup> Freud, p. 275.



which created temporary unpleasure through the repression of dangerous pleasures. Thus, the reality principle, though superficially opposing it, acted fundamentally in the service of the pleasure principle since the unhindered pursuit of pleasure endangers the self's existence and its very ability to continue to gain pleasure. When repression became excessive (leading to neuroses), this could be lifted by making the patient conscious of the content of the repressed impulse.

However, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud attempts to adapt his theory to the world after the Great War and to the anomalous discovery in his clinical analyses of what he calls a “compulsion to repeat”. This impulse manifests itself through the repetition of a negative, distressing experience which does not appear to square easily with Freud's pleasure principle. Whereas conventional psychoanalytic wisdom maintained that release from instinctual repression was experienced as pleasurable, Freud explains how the apparent surmounting of a repression can result in unpleasure, implying that repression itself lies elsewhere than in the earlier repressed content.<sup>54</sup>

This leads Freud radically to overhaul his theory of the instincts by interpreting this repetition compulsion as a manifestation of the death *drive* which, he hypothesises, may constitute the dominant tendency in instinctual life rather than the pleasure principle. Furthermore, though Freud emphasises that it is “the same higher strata and systems of the mind which originally carried out the repression” which offer resistance to treatment,<sup>55</sup> he claims nonetheless that the “motives of the resistances, and indeed the resistances themselves” are initially “unconscious”. Repression therefore seems to occur at a deeper level

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<sup>54</sup> See Freud, p. 279.

<sup>55</sup> Freud, p. 289.

than Freud had previously maintained since the “higher strata” of mental processes appear themselves to be unconscious. This ambiguity is further enhanced by the knowledge that, as Freud tells us, the “compulsion to repeat” does not produce pleasure for the repressed and unpleasure for the ego.<sup>56</sup> The drive itself seems to be bound and constituted by processes of repression. Patients instinctively repeat the *negative*, unpleasurable experiences of their past, in the psychoanalytic treatment of transference, as fresh experiences, not as recollected ones.<sup>57</sup> This compulsion to repeat as fresh experience, and to transfer repression to newly created sources of anxiety, which follows the initial triumph of the repressed over the resistances of the unconscious ego, suggests the existence of a deeper, structural form of unconscious repression which, once drained from one instinctual location, searches out new content for punishment.

Similarly, there are tensions in Lawrence’s writing between what is centrally an argument for a selfhood beyond the repression of ideas and ideals and a slippage between the oppositions set up, which separate impulses from ethics, repressed from repressive, and the body from the mind. However, while Freud’s argument for the death drive disrupts this polarisation by bringing repression into the field of the unconscious, Lawrence’s does so, ironically, through an attempt to *extricate* the unconscious self from culture – a project which only succeeds in re-immersing that self more violently in the realm of repression. For although the main thrust of Lawrence’s proposals is that, rather than use democratic ideals and Christian morality to conceal the existence of the class system, there should be an explicit class framework presided over by

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<sup>56</sup> See Freud, pp. 290-1.

<sup>57</sup> See Freud, p. 292.

an intuitively knowledgeable elite,<sup>58</sup> Lawrence is nonetheless unable to evade the cultural violence which is the object of his critique.

This is not immediately transparent in an essay which, on the one hand, assaults the “yearning love” and “aching responsibility” of the manipulative modern mother,<sup>59</sup> the design of education to provide children with “pernicious self-consciousness” and “imagination”,<sup>60</sup> the “personal” relation between mother and child,<sup>61</sup> and the “female mind”; and, on the other hand,<sup>62</sup> proposes as solutions a “fierce” and “vigilant” parental “anger”,<sup>63</sup> an education of the “spontaneous consciousness” provided by “mentally rather stupid” teachers,<sup>64</sup> a “mindless”, “animal” and “passional” conception of the “bond of parenthood”,<sup>65</sup> and the “old male spirit” of “fighting to the death”.<sup>66</sup> However, this polarity between an instinctual and destructive masculine self of power and a mental and moral feminine culture of love is radically undermined by the hierarchy established in which the former *rules over* the latter. For while love, like cultural consciousness, is instrumental to education for Lawrence, “wrath” is at the centre of parental authority, education, and culture in a manner which seems to endanger the ideals of “singleness”, impulsiveness, and spontaneous morality.<sup>67</sup> This suggests that, though Lawrence explicitly affirms the liberation of the unconscious repressed from the constraints of a repressive consciousness, these polar terms irresistibly commingle, predicating repression as the very

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<sup>58</sup> See Lawrence, “Education”, pp. 607-8.

<sup>59</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 621.

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 626-7.

<sup>61</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 625.

<sup>62</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 632.

<sup>63</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 648.

<sup>64</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 644.

<sup>65</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 647-8.

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 658.

<sup>67</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, pp. 637-8.

condition of the unconscious.

Fathers, for example, are encouraged to act forcefully when counteracting the personal bond of love between mother and child we have been discussing. Through the act of violence, of physically seizing the child away from the mental bullying of the mother, and sending "volts of hard, violent anger" into the child's "volitional centres", the "creature" gains its "proud" and powerful sense of "singleness" and spontaneity in the "lower body" and loses its nervous consciousness.<sup>68</sup> This parental violence, moreover, should not possess any "moral or religious justification".<sup>69</sup> However, that this parental violence is necessary if the child is to acquire its genuine impulsiveness seems to blur the boundary between culture and the unconscious. After all, how authentically impulsive is an instinct which can only be gained through a father's "fierce" beating? Similarly, to what extent does violence without "moral or religious justification" escape moral significance or avoid the repression of the impulses which Lawrence so greatly fears? In short, is it possible for Lawrence's return of the repressed to evade the deeper structural repression theorised by Freud?

Indeed, "Education" appears to reinforce the necessity of repression the more it seeks to map out its abolition – a self-undercutting procedure which, through its brave exploration and critique of cultural violence, risks self-destruction. This is particularly striking in Lawrence's conclusion to "Education" where he offers a satirical sketch of the familial and social relations of Christian parliamentary democracy and proposes certain basic changes to the structure of these relationships. The focus of Lawrence's

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<sup>68</sup> Lawrence, "Education", pp. 639-41.

<sup>69</sup> Lawrence, "Education", p. 645.

criticism is a “sliding-scale of shifted responsibility”: the religious hegemony of Christianity has made men ignominiously abdicate authority to women and children within the family, while the rise of liberal democracy has led to ruling class prostration in the face of an increasingly imperious “public” or working class.<sup>70</sup> Part of Lawrence’s critique here is the contradictions and hypocrisies of a Christian, liberal democracy which denies its own violations. While woman is exonerated in Christian discourse, her actual power is confined to the private sphere as head of the family while man dominates the social world, “slink[ing] off to his money-making and his commercial enterprise, and feel[ing] holy-holy-holy about it”.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, while the ruling classes within a parliamentary democracy emphasise the primacy of the “public” or the working people, the latter’s political role is confined to the “stupid and meaningless little mark” of the vote.<sup>72</sup> This is, however, to read Lawrence against the grain, for he interprets these contradictions as the result of a shift of “responsibility” initiated by idealism, and resolves them by reasserting the need for authority in the form of aristocratic rule, a strong parental authority, and a “dethronement” of women from the place of excessive significance granted them by both modern Christianity *and* an emergent feminism.<sup>73</sup>

This image of society is, then, the basis on which Lawrence’s instinctual life rests, in particular the violent male “wrath” of familial and social life. Intriguingly, Lawrence has shifted alternately between a criticism of culture’s educational bullying of its children and more general attacks on the growing status accorded (often through education) to women and working people. In

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<sup>70</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 661.

<sup>71</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 662.

<sup>72</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 663.

<sup>73</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, pp. 663-4.

diagnosing the failings of modern parenting in its protection (or perhaps securing?) of the authentic human impulses, Lawrence is also simultaneously describing and denouncing the inadequacies of post-war liberal democracy in its efforts to contain the social movements of women and working people, labouring under an oppressive and exploitative capitalism. As a result of this slippage between these two arguments, Lawrence's distinction between the repressed and the repressive begins to collapse: while the parental role of safeguarding the child's instincts is likened to that of a political dictator, the supposedly unnatural and externally imposed growth in the social power and education of both women and workers is, through comparison, infantilised as the efforts of a wilful child in need of discipline.

One repressive culture of moral bullying is replaced, therefore, by another which, rather than *mentally* inculcating its values into individuals, inscribes "ideal" identities on to them by defining the field of their *activity*. Culture is, after all, only problematic for Lawrence when its is in the wrong hands. So, in a peculiar discursive twist, the social production of meanings is the responsibility of a few male leaders who, alone, are able to perform the "thinking, abstracting business", the majority of people not being capable of this: the attack on mental *abstraction* turns out to be a highly relative one. Furthermore, a rigid gender division is in place: men are most adept at, and therefore should carry out, the activity of "thinking" and the "mechanical business", while women should "look after the immediate personal life".<sup>74</sup> Women should remain "central", in the family life, while "the men, the leaders, the outriders" go "on ahead, scouting, fighting, gathering provision, running on

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<sup>74</sup> Lawrence, "Education", p. 664.

the brink of death and at the tip of the life advance, all the time hovering at the tip of life and on the verge of death” in the “vast womanless regions of fight [...] pure thought and abstracted instrumentality”.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, Lawrence does not offer, in “Education”, an instinctual form of living free from the perversions of culture, but a culture which enacts a division of the self on a macrocosmic level, allocating certain instincts to different social groups in a strikingly *conventional* manner – such normative descriptions of gender and class being an orthodox stratagem of conservative thinking. The dynamic, impulsive element of raw physicality is apparently allotted to the mass of people and the “static” physical instincts of domesticity and self-preservation to women, both having dangerously attempted to appropriate knowledge and culture for themselves.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile the previously much-criticised, “static” mental understanding is confined to a male elite who are the few able to avoid its abuse. However, this elite is also still closely connected to the instincts and, moreover, possesses the monopoly on the destructive drive as well as the cultural production of meanings. Repression, therefore, far from being removed, is embedded in the very class structure of the society which Lawrence imagines. For this authoritarian elite, with its monopoly on the means of violence and its rigid cultural definitions of social activity and power according to normative psychological conceptions of gender and class, not only controls identity through cultural codes inserted into everyday activity, but inescapably represses impulses through a division of instinctual labour. This is, firstly, because only a privileged few are in a position to define this division, granting them knowledge and mastery of the unconscious; and, secondly,

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<sup>75</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 665.

<sup>76</sup> Lawrence, “Education”, p. 665.

because this division of the self across social groups divorces individuals from certain instincts according to their social position, effectively separating the instincts from one another and placing them in the conflict intrinsic to hierarchy. Furthermore, the death drive's concentration within the hands of Lawrence's proposed political and cultural leadership, who live on the "verge of death" in the "womanless regions of fight" and "pure thought", can be read as the sociological equivalent of Freud's "culture of the death instinct": moral control of the id is granted to a small minority (reminiscent of the overweening super-ego) who possess true knowledge of and can therefore utilise its destructive powers.<sup>77</sup>

It now becomes clearer how the violence of Lawrence's perfect father is implicated in the repressions of culture. For Lawrence's parental violence needs to inculcate different impulses and desires into different sections of society, in particular across a rigid gender division. This patterned authority necessitates a parental role and family life, as well as a wider social system, structured by repression. Lawrence's "Education" is less a treatise against cultural repression than an illuminating demonstration of how the unconscious is unavoidably repressed. For the Cambridge Biography's separation of Lawrence's "hierarchical class- and gender-thinking" from his apparent championing of the unconscious is highly misleading, since it is this very "hierarchical" social thought which exposes the repressive, cultural nature of Lawrence's vision of the instincts which insidiously outlines a culture of elite male domination and violence.

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<sup>77</sup> Freud, "The Ego and The Id" (1923), *On Metapsychology*, pp. 339-407, 394.



As previously suggested, Freud's attempt to understand the nature of repression in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* raises similar questions about the supposed secondary nature of repressive psychic forces. For Freud, the conflictual nature of the *instincts* – their tendency to oppose one another – leads to the various repressions of early childhood.<sup>78</sup> This suggests that repression is a primary rather than a secondary process – it is the incompatibility of the instincts themselves which leads to an inevitable repression. Moreover, as previously explained, Freud's theory of the death drive attempts to theorise this structural repression by describing how an instinctual drive can itself be compelled to repeat a formerly repressed and unpleasurable experience rather than rejoice in its liberation from repression. For Freud, therefore, repression has become more profound than an assault on the instincts: it is as if the instincts themselves are at war with one another.

This becomes clearer when Freud appears to relinquish his contention that the death drive is the dominant principle of psychic reality. In seeking an explanation of how life and conflict continue in spite of the death drive, Freud attributes a properly repressive character to the death drive itself through his incorporation of the sexual instincts within a new, larger category of the "life instincts". The notion of repression as a secondary process aimed at specific instinctual content now appears to be lost in the theorised conflict between opposing *instincts*. While the death instinct drives the self towards death – to die in its own manner – the sexual instincts aim to preserve life and its conflicts.<sup>79</sup> Intriguingly, Freud has returned to a similar "dualistic view of instinctual life" to his earlier metapsychology, with the life instincts now

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<sup>78</sup> See Freud, "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*", p. 279.

<sup>79</sup> See Freud, "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*", p. 313.

working in opposition to the death instincts in a manner which makes repression inevitable, suggesting that our difficulty lies less in our repression of certain unconscious impulses than in our repression of the fact that we unavoidably repress.<sup>80</sup>

Through his denial of the necessity of repression which only reinforces that repression's brutality, Lawrence's essay seems to confirm Freud's suggestion that such a denial is the very kind of abstraction which constitutes cultural violence: we repress that we repress. However, we might also say that the problems posed by Lawrence's text expose the paradoxical nature of Freud's attempt to replace the pleasure principle with the death drive. For if Lawrence's work registers the sense in which the instincts cannot escape repression and even owe their existence to the cultural constraints against which they rail (the essay's proposals themselves only make sense through their opposition to their surrounding culture), then Freud's initial concept of a repressive death drive which overrides the pleasure principle appears as a self-explosive concept which radically undermines the foundations of *its* existence - the achievement of its objective being the abolition of the conflict which it exists to reduce. So, while Lawrence's ideal of instinctual liberation refuses to acknowledge the repressions inherent in the conflicts of culture as the necessary condition of all instinctual affirmation and empowerment, Freud's notion of a dominant death drive rejects the instincts for pleasure and life which are its condition - for the death drive to exist, there must be something to repress!

Freud's attempt to theoretically define the death drive as the dominant psychic principle, then, while discovering culture - in the form of repression -

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<sup>80</sup> Freud, "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*", p. 322.

at work within the instinctual life, also radically undercuts itself in its postulation of the supremacy of a drive whose goal is its own destruction: hence, Freud returns to the notion of psychic conflict in the form of the life and death instincts. Similarly, Lawrence's "Education", while identifying the hidden, unconscious violence at the heart of culture, attempts to locate the forces of social rejuvenation within an idealised unconscious, inadvertently repeating the very idealised form of violence which it condemned – instinctual liberation becoming an abstract and authoritarian concept when it suppresses the repression upon which it is necessarily founded. In this light, Freud and Lawrence offer necessary correctives to one another's arguments in their explorations of violence; Freud emphasising the inevitability of repression, Lawrence the inevitability of impulsive affirmation.

In *Fantasia* Lawrence attempts to theorise more fully the distinction between culture and instincts by distinguishing yet further, through the use of biological and pseudo-psychological categories, mental consciousness from the bodily impulses. In this section, I wish to read Lawrence's critique of cultural violence and his endorsement of impulsive violence alongside inter-war psychoanalysis's notions of the super-ego, unconscious phantasy, and reality-testing, with the aim of both fleshing out the cultural, moral and political nature of Lawrence's unconscious, and highlighting his exposé of the concealed social violence of liberal democracy and its Enlightenment values (which early psychoanalysis shared). I will begin, firstly, by exploring how Freud's concept of the super-ego casts light on Lawrence's understanding of morality, authority and the instincts.

In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud draws connections between the morality of culture, parental authority, and the unconscious through his concept of the super-ego. In psychic reality the super-ego dominates the ego (the part of the mind broadly associated with consciousness and reasoning) in the form of moral conscience or “an unconscious sense of guilt”.<sup>81</sup> The morality of this super-ego or “ego ideal” is derived from identification with the father during the Oedipus complex, and is therefore an internalisation of the repressive forces of both parental authority and culture (in the form of, for example, “religious teaching, schooling and reading”).<sup>82</sup> For Freud, morality, guilt, and culture are present in mental life early on and become unconscious processes themselves. The very notion of the father’s authority is bound up, for the child, with repression of the dangerous drives of Oedipality through identification, so that all authority is cultural in the sense that it impedes and transforms impulses. Culture is thus internalised through the introjection of parental authority, while the instincts themselves are raised to the level of moral conscience: what “belonged to the lowest part of the mental life” is transformed, through the formation of the super-ego, into “what is highest in the human mind by our scale of values” – the super-ego represents the internal reality of the id.<sup>83</sup>

Freud then goes on to discuss the “negative therapeutic reaction” in which the analysand deteriorates when the repressed content – the patient’s unconscious guilt – is made conscious.<sup>84</sup> This clinging to guilt, and even satisfaction gained from guilt through the patient’s attachment to his illness, leads Freud to suggest that the super-ego possesses “intimate relations with the

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<sup>81</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, p. 374.

<sup>82</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, p. 374.

<sup>83</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, pp. 376, 389.

<sup>84</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, p. 390.

unconscious id” from which it has taken the destructive instincts: the super-ego becomes a “pure culture of the death instinct”.<sup>85</sup> Guilt and violence, culture and barbarism have become, for Freud, intimately entwined. Thus Freud argues that guilt can actually motivate criminal behaviour and destructive tendencies, and that “normal man is not only far more immoral than he believes but also far more moral than he knows”.<sup>86</sup> The ego is attacked from two angles by a murderous id and a punitive super-ego; the super-ego’s punishments generating counter-attacks from the id which, in turn, inspire further moral violence from the super-ego in a vicious circle of violence.<sup>87</sup> The cycle of violence is based on a reciprocity of destruction between the death drive and an internalised culture: violence is always-already guilty. Freud’s formulation of a “culture of the death instinct”, then, illustrates a further move towards a psychoanalytical view of the destructive instincts as embedded in cultural phantasy.

Lawrence, in *Fantasia*, shares with Freud a similar interpretation of the dangers of repression. For Freud argues that “the more a man checks his aggressiveness towards the exterior the more severe – that is aggressive – he becomes in his ego ideal”.<sup>88</sup> However, Lawrence takes care to distinguish the release of aggressiveness from the more indirect, sublimated violence of culture. For example, when discussing the issue of corporal punishment, Lawrence states:

The only rule is, do what you *really*, impulsively, wish to do. But always act on your own responsibility sincerely. And have the courage of your own strong emotion. They enrich the child’s soul.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, p. 394.

<sup>86</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, p. 393.

<sup>87</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, p. 395.

<sup>88</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, p. 395.

<sup>89</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, p. 51.

Nonetheless, Lawrence provides some interesting qualifications to this statement throughout his description of the parent's role. First of all, there is a sense of balance in Lawrence's argument which appears to sit awkwardly alongside his idea of authentically impulsive behaviour. On the one hand, there is an emphasis on individual autonomy and nature: "we have no desire to say what men *ought* to be". There are "all kinds of ways of being", which means, for example, that "some men *must* be too spiritual" while others must be "too sensual", "too sympathetic" or "too proud". If two people despise each other's natures, Lawrence argues, it is their responsibility to "fly at one another" if they wish.<sup>90</sup> Yet on the other hand, *Fantasia* adapts its claims for corporal punishment according to the nature of the child in question, implying that parental authority can help to create a balance in personality structure. For instance, "it is no use roughly smacking a shrinking, sensitive child. And yet, if a child is too shrinking, too sensitive, it may do it a world of good cheerfully to spank its posterior".<sup>91</sup> Similarly, the "good-naturedly brutal" love of the father helps to "maintain some sort of equilibrium" between the "two modes of love", the spiritual and the sensual, in the child.<sup>92</sup> Rather than acting impulsively, Lawrence's ideal father seems actually to adapt his authority and punishment according to a particular conception of a normal mental life, evidently with the intention of possessing as great a determining role in the formation of the child's personality as Lawrence lambastes the mother for possessing.

So, while Lawrence delivers a devastating critique of the prosthetic violence of Christian morality within the family (which, of course, has its

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<sup>90</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", p. 47.

<sup>91</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", p. 50.

<sup>92</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", p. 49.

correspondent on the social plane in the form of the ethical self-justifications of the Great War), he is nonetheless unable to extricate morality from his own seemingly more honest and impulsive parental punishment. For though Lawrence explicitly rejects all “bullying”, and claims that “ideal bullying” is “more dangerous” than “sensual bullying” which is more easily detectable, the spontaneous parental violence which this allows Lawrence to argue for is not secured from the “ideal” and repressive realm of which his writing is so wary.<sup>93</sup> This is because the very involvement of the parent in the determination of the child’s personality structure, whether language-based or otherwise, is based on the notion that the child possesses some kind of knowledge about the authority of the parent figure – that very knowledge which Freud sees as formative of culture, morality and guilt in his conception of the super-ego. In other words, for Lawrence to believe that the child can become less sympathetic or sensitive as a consequence of parental punishment, he has also to believe that the child internalises and acts on an authority which tells the child that it *should not be so*. This internal authority cannot easily be distinguished from moral compunction and guilt, and is more than a little reminiscent of Freud’s “dictatorial ‘Thou shalt’” of the super-ego.<sup>94</sup>

This slippage between Lawrence’s desired and desiring id and its feared idealisation into an insidiously moralistic super-ego becomes more striking when, as in “Education”, Lawrence extends his psychological discussions to the field of politics. For Lawrence argues in *Fantasia* that there are “few, few people in whom the living impulse and reaction develops and sublimates into mental consciousness”. This is based, for Lawrence, on a fact of nature: “It is

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<sup>93</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, p. 52.

<sup>94</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, p. 396.

not the *nature* of most men to know and to understand and to reason very far". Those who wish "instinctively" to possess knowledge will ask, while those who do not should be left alone, and not have knowledge "rammed" into them.<sup>95</sup> What is interesting here, I think, is that a certain kind of authoritarian, contemporary education is being criticised, in which knowledge is treated as a moral commodity which must be passively absorbed by the individual, and yet at the same time this is being replaced by a new kind of authoritarian anti-education. In using an abstract assumption about human nature in order to confront a specific historical stage in the growth of education, Lawrence is prescribing in advance the extent of human capacities. This produces a tension between a philosophy that parents and the state should leave children alone mentally, and a belief that those very agents should intervene radically and violently to structure the individual's unconscious according to the historically conservative and extremely prescriptive conceptions of gender and human nature which I discussed earlier.

However, Lawrence justifies his educational ideas with the assumption that much knowledge is "extraneous" to an individual's "experience" and is a repressive and "direct obstruction of his dynamic activity".<sup>96</sup> He even connects knowledge with the death drive:

To know is to lose. When I have a finished mental concept of a beloved, or a friend, then the love and the friendship is dead [....] As soon as I have a finished mental conception, a full idea even of myself, then dynamically I am dead. To know is to die.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", p. 84.

<sup>96</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", p. 84.

<sup>97</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", p. 72.



Meanwhile, the education of the unconscious maintains “dynamic activity”.<sup>98</sup> Yet Lawrence himself appears to adopt an idealist conception of knowledge in his contention that “ethical and philosophic” ideas, such as the “idea of equality”, are divorced from experience, and are therefore an imposed repression of the unconscious and experiential knowledge.<sup>99</sup> For the idea of equality, for such vast social groups as women and workers whom Lawrence attacks in *Fantasia*, has arisen from their material experience of a thoroughly repressive socio-economic system which has its own ideologies (that is, *ideas*) of how human beings should be, who should suffer its own systemic failures, and in what manner men should be unequal. Moreover, Lawrence provides no solution to his own problem of knowledge as an idealism of death since his own proposals for social change only embody an alternative ideal of men as naturally non-mental beings, an ideal which involves a system of leadership, authority, and repression which is difficult to distinguish from the fascism emerging in the Europe of the 1920s. Lawrence seems to argue that, since human beings are different, rather than seeing that difference as a sign of mutual dependence, we can presume that some have the right to dominate others, exploit them, and be authorities on their unconscious. The problem with this, of course, is that it turns against the very notion, which Lawrence supports so emphatically, of the unconscious as “dynamic” and free from repression and “bullying”, since one individual has the power to define the range of another’s instinctive capacities. Like Freud’s domineering death drive, then, which represses knowledge to the point where it has nothing to repress, Lawrence’s anti-idealism suppresses knowledge to the point where it becomes the only

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<sup>98</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, p. 84.

<sup>99</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, p. 85.

knowledge left to possess – a “static” authoritarian scenario rather than a “dynamic” site for flourishing instincts. However, Lawrence’s notion of knowledge as death is important in its suggestion that culture must repress itself in order to perpetuate itself, since it illuminates the problem of the failure, analysed by Freud, of some psychoanalytic treatments. For the early optimism over the psychoanalytic procedure, of curing the patient by allowing them to *know* what they repress, is problematised, in the light of Lawrence’s work, since the result of total enlightenment is the end of enlightenment itself – there is nothing left to know.

Yet Lawrence’s argument is weakened by its dependence upon a notion of the impulses as fundamentally opposed, in most people, to mental consciousness and knowledge. Once again, we find similar issues being tackled by psychoanalysis. The Austrian-born, British-based psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein, had a strong interest in the relationship between intellectual knowledge and repression.<sup>100</sup> Like Lawrence, Klein believed that the “imposition” of “ready-made ideas” was damaging to the child. However, the reason for her objection was not, as was Lawrence’s, because she perceived these ideas as initiating the inhibition of a set of impulses abstracted from mental development. Rather, what Klein calls the “impulse for knowledge” and “the reality-sense” are “threatened” in “such a fashion that the child’s knowledge of reality dares not rebel” and never even “attempts to draw inferences or conclusions, whereby it is permanently and prejudicially affected”.<sup>101</sup> Klein, therefore, has a wider sense of what constitutes repression than Lawrence. For

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<sup>100</sup> See John Phillips and Lyndsey Stonebridge, eds., *Reading Melanie Klein* (London: Routledge, 1998) for a range of critical interpretations of Klein’s work.

<sup>101</sup> Melanie Klein, “The Development of a Child (1921)”, *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis 1921-1945* (1948; London: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 13-67, 34.

Klein, repression through such educational dogmatism is inhibitory of both the impulses and intellectual curiosity; in fact, she conceives the two as intimately bound up. While Lawrence perceives thought as an abstract process, Klein contends that, though such intellectual abstraction occurs and is damaging, true thought is an uninhibited and dynamic process which is neither impeded by fear of some overarching authority nor closed off from new insights. Consequently, Klein argues that "honesty towards children, frank answering of all their questions, and the inner freedom which this brings about, influence mental development profoundly and beneficially."<sup>102</sup> This includes children's questions about sex which, Klein says, should be answered truthfully if parents are to avoid psychically inhibiting their children. By contrast, Lawrence states firmly that children should not be told about sex before puberty and that, post-puberty, they should be informed of the "simple and necessary facts of sex" as "briefly" and "coldly" as possible since "to translate sex into mental ideas is vile, to make a scientific fact of it is death".<sup>103</sup> Instead, boys and girls should go through a "violent" process of "initiation into true adult consciousness" and "sex-life" whereby "a terrible dynamic sense of change in the very being" is effected.<sup>104</sup> The purpose of this, for Lawrence, would be the secured sense of the "mystery" of sex, since "the mass of mankind should *never* be acquainted with the scientific biological facts of sex: *never*".<sup>105</sup>

This opposition between a deathly knowledge and a physically violent yet apparently life-affirming ritual returns us to the issue of the relation

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<sup>102</sup> Klein, "The Development of a Child (1921)", p. 31.

<sup>103</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", pp. 112-3.

<sup>104</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", p. 113.

<sup>105</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", p. 113.

between authority and repression. For Klein, knowledge can be death, but only as a result of the intervention of a lasting sense of an inhibitory authority:

Permanent submission to the authority principle, permanent greater or less intellectual dependency and limitation, are based on this first and most significant experience of authority, on the relationship between parents and the little child. Its effect is strengthened and supported by the mass of ethical and moral ideas that are presented complete to the child and which form just so many barriers to the freedom of his thought.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, repression of the “impulse for knowledge” arises from the presence of an overweening parental authority which permits no contradiction. Moreover, in Klein’s later work, she argues, in an extension of Freud’s notion of the super-ego, that this imposing and violent *cultural* authority is *always phantasised* and internalised through the infant’s introjection of the parental imago into his psychic reality, prior to the Oedipus complex and regardless of the character of the external parents. This means that, for Klein, the violent moral punishments of cultural authority (in the form of extreme guilt, for example) are something we all have to deal with and defend ourselves against, and that any further encroachments of authority which actually take place in external reality should be avoided at all costs.<sup>107</sup>

Returning to Lawrence’s social violence of sexual initiation rituals and gender definition, we find an “authority principle” which attempts to disguise

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<sup>106</sup> Klein, “The Development of a Child (1921)”, pp. 35-36.

<sup>107</sup> See Klein, “Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)”, *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 176-200, 179-80. Here, Klein argues that the death instinct is, through projective phantasy, “at once” transformed into a persecutory anxiety and fear of death at the hands of the external objects or parents which are introjected “to become internal persecutors”. This is the origin of the super-ego. Parental authority is, then, both always-already a threat and, as a product of phantasy, a cultural phenomenon. However, it is also internal and a product of the instincts in the sense that it is the result of a defence mechanism against (and thus, an indirect repression of) the death instinct and an affirmation of the life instinct: “The fear of the destructive impulse seems to attach itself at once to an object – or rather it is experienced as the fear of an uncontrollable overpowering object”. See also “A Study of Envy and Gratitude (1956)”, *The Selected Melanie Klein*, pp. 211-29, 216, in which

its inescapable cultural significations – the fact that it is always, like Klein’s parental authority, cultural, and therefore constitutive of such supposedly “higher” sensibilities as conscience, and such putative abstractions as ideals and ideology. Firstly, the construction, through ritual, of sex as a violent and terrifying act of mysterious power is, rather than being impulsively pure, saturated with mythologised conceptions, not only of “manhood” and “womanhood”, but of primitive religion and spiritual models of authority and domination – for example, if most people are to be ignorant of sexual knowledge and yet worship sex, those few who possess such knowledge provide dangerously convenient objects for deification. Furthermore, Lawrence’s notion of a non-ideal authority reveals its own abstract nature in its efforts to outline forms of practical education which supposedly transcend the impedimenta of culture and ideals – the largely domestic training of women and the pugilistic education of men are *ideologically* specific constructions of gender identities. That this authority inhibits individuals, delimiting their potential to know the full capacity of their identities, suggests that we can read Lawrence as releasing the “dynamic” unconscious with less success than we can interpret his work here as an attempt to re-write instinctual liberation as the repression of the “impulse for knowledge”. Certainly, such an impulse is, though overtly allowed for by Lawrence should the child wish “instinctively” to know, effectively denied women and the “mass of people” through the expectations created by the social structure which Lawrence proposes. It could be said, then, that while Lawrence is mindful of the formative effects of his contemporary culture on the instincts, he is much less able to anticipate the

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Klein speaks of the deflection of the death instinct in the form of projection as a method of defence adopted by the ego in the service of the life instincts.

dialectics of his own proposed impulsive culture: once a framework is established on the basis of what we assume are our instincts, that system in turn re-constitutes us itself in a manner which is unlikely to be identical to an entity as amorphous and eternally re-interpretable as the unconscious drives. Hence, Lawrence argues that, though we cannot remain at an unconscious level, we must “start” every day from “the source”, or “the blood” of the unconscious and “travel away” from it towards consciousness – yet there is no acknowledgement of the inescapable return journey from culture back to the instincts.<sup>108</sup>

While Lawrence’s *Fantasia* offers a portrait of the instincts as non-mental and hostile to culture, Klein’s notion of unconscious phantasy suggests that the impulsive life is bound up with ways of *knowing* our environment. If, as Klein argues, the infant projects his aggressive instincts on to his parents who then become, through introjection, the super-ego whom the child fears internal persecution from, then the unconscious itself is productive of culture and its moral punishments which then incite further transgressions in a vicious circle of violence.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the instincts can only exist through the psychic creativity which is constitutive of culture itself: Klein’s notions of unconscious projection, introjection and splitting (of the object into good and bad objects), in order for the infant to defend itself from the self-destructiveness of the death drive and cope with its own ambivalence towards its parents, are both manifestations of the life instincts and ways of re-creating the external world

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<sup>108</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, p. 183.

<sup>109</sup> See Klein, “The Early Development of Conscience in the Child (1933)”, *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis 1921-1945*, pp. 267-77, 269-70.

internally, and are examples, therefore, of the earliest forms of imagination and play.<sup>110</sup>

For Klein, furthermore, as the infant develops she begins the process of reality-testing whereby the internal world of phantasy, with its idealisation of authority and its corresponding delusions of omnipotence, is judged against the external reality of its parents. Thus, the infant's process of learning about and forming more successful ways of knowing its environment, in this process of mediation between a subjective internal reality and the objective external world, is deeply rooted in a process of learning to challenge authority. Klein sees the real danger of culture as arising when the individual is so overwhelmed by the authority of its super-ego (its introjected parental imagos) that it is unable to perform the necessary task of reality-testing which enables it to develop intellectually by challenging this authority. According to Klein therefore, authority is also, like the unconscious, always entangled in culture and always bound up with the process of intellectual development, whether it be as an inhibitory force or as an obstacle which, in being surmounted, becomes constitutive of the act of learning.<sup>111</sup> The notions of unconscious phantasy and reality-testing, then, have significant implications for Lawrence's notions of a non-ideal authority and unconscious life.

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<sup>110</sup> See Klein, "The Origins of Transference (1952)", *The Selected Melanie Klein*, pp. 201-10, 206-7. Klein argues here that "there is no instinctual urge" which "does not involve objects, external or internal" and that "object relations", which operate "from the beginning", are "at the centre of emotional life" (p. 206). Since infantile phantasy is constitutive of a child's object relations, Klein suggests an inextricable bond between, on the one hand, phantasy and the culture of object relations, and, on the other, the instinctual life. Klein's psychic processes of projection and introjection indeed indicate that there are no impulses which are not bound up with phantasy and object relations.

<sup>111</sup> See Klein, "On Observing the Behaviour of Young Infants (1952)", *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963* (1975; London: Vintage, 1997), pp. 94-121, 112: "The infant's growing capacity to perceive and understand the things around him increases his confidence in his own ability to deal with and even to control them, as well as his trust in the external world. His repeated experiences of the external reality become the most important means of overcoming his persecutory and depressive anxieties. This, in my view, is reality-testing".

For such contentions illuminate Lawrence's *Fantasia* since, as we have seen, he can devise no method of evading the cultural violence he critiques. While Klein's concerns resemble Lawrence's in that they are attempting to account for the violence of culture, Klein contends not only that we *cannot* evade culture, but that the process through which we become cultural beings is *necessarily* violent while also being constitutive of psychic reality and intellectual development. Furthermore, Lawrence's internecine war between unconscious dynamism and a "static" mental consciousness appears less plausible in the face of Klein's notion of unconscious phantasy – Lawrence's proposed society is as much a culture which defines identities and values certain kinds of knowledge as it is a mediated representation of instinctual beings. In fact, Lawrence's social remedies are such rigidly definitional forms of cultural violence, delimiting identities in an ideologically authoritarian manner, that they resemble more the tyrannical unconscious forces of the moralistic super-ego in a grotesque form of instinctual role-playing than they represent the spontaneous forces of an idealised id. In this way, Lawrence's work illustrates both how the unconscious cannot be stripped of an epistemological function and how authority is always embedded in the symbolic order of culture. *Fantasia's* repression of Klein's "impulse for knowledge" embodies not a return to an authentic unconscious, but the very moral "bullying" and fixed idealism which Lawrence attempts so assiduously to condemn. So, while Lawrence argues that knowledge obstructs the instincts, his education defines what kinds of practical knowledge one should have according to class and gender and, therefore, establishes a priori a set of ideal identities. Thus knowledge is not gained through testing authority, but nor is it



absent; rather, it is imposed through a conservative notion of natural identities. We can, then, turn Lawrence's conception of absolute knowledge as death<sup>112</sup> on his own writing: first of all, by saying that *Fantasia's* repression of knowledge and its attendant notion of absolute mystery determine knowledge through the fixture of identities to as absolute an extent as the Enlightenment humanist ideal of the attainment of complete knowledge; and secondly, by suggesting that such a determination of knowledge, particularly in its conservative reaction, is highly reminiscent of the death drive's compulsion to repeat.

Certainly, Lawrence's moralistic scheme of fixed identities suggests not only a kind of living death and absolute knowledge, but (as suggested earlier in a different sense) a kind of "culture of the death instinct": a desire to repeat or return to earlier periods of history as a response to the violent conflicts of the present (conflicts which we might associate with Freud's conception of the life instincts whose goal is conflict). For example, as in "Education", Lawrence's "womanhood" is saturated with the culture of politically conservative *ideas*, in the form of a moral outrage at the women's movement, a desire to return to a pre-industrial era, and a semi-religious notion of sexual segregation.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, Lawrence connects what he calls the "great 'unrest' of a nervous, hysterical proletariat" with the ills of modern education,<sup>114</sup> and argues for boys to be brought up under a "proud, harsh, manly rule" so that they "*know* that at every moment they are in the shadow of a proud, strong, adult authority" – ideas which would certainly have found advocates amongst contemporary conservatives, attempting to make the "mass of people", as Lawrence (perhaps

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<sup>112</sup> See, in particular, chapter 15, "The Lower Self", *Fantasia*, pp. 178-95.

<sup>113</sup> Lawrence, *Fantasia*, pp. 85-87.

<sup>114</sup> Lawrence, *Fantasia*, p. 89.

inadvertently, considering his emphasis on the value of spontaneity) puts it, “fall into line”.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, the sophisticated ideological manoeuvrings of culture are at work to a striking degree when Lawrence proposes that mankind should have the burden of “responsibility”, established by democracy, displaced on to a leadership so that the “mass” can be “free”.<sup>116</sup> Meanwhile, the “individualistic” fighting and warfare which are advocated, and Lawrence’s frank (though modest) praise of the Great War as “not a bad beginning”, despite its “idealism”, only further confirm that his idealised unconscious is complicit, in its very denial of its own materiality and historicity, with the ahistorical ideologies of an authoritarian conservatism.<sup>117</sup> For the objects of Lawrence’s critique (such as proletarian unrest), which are assumed to be consequences of the evils of modern culture, are always stripped of their relationship to other historical forces which include opposing forms of cultural violence (such as capitalist exploitation). Similarly, the aspects of modernity which Lawrence considers worthy of praise are grounded in the violent culture which is supposed to be under attack – the Great War for example being, not a purely instinctive human act of destruction merely adorned with the trappings of “idealism”, but the product of the conflicting material interests of imperial capitalist nations.

Once again, we can read Lawrence’s *Fantasia* as an exploration of the very territory which Kleinian psychoanalysis investigates. Klein’s controversial claim that culture is always-already present in mental life, that phantasy is present from the start of infancy, extends the range of culture to the very first

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<sup>115</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, p. 87.

<sup>116</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, p. 88.

<sup>117</sup> Lawrence, “*Fantasia*”, pp. 87-88.

relationship a child has – its relationship to its parents/parental figures. What is significant about this is that Klein's theory makes it impossible to conceive instinctual life outside its object-relations – the infant possesses no unconscious drives that it does not *do something with* in the microcosmic social dimension of this first relationship. Thus, just as Lawrence cannot imagine a child escaping damage from the world of ideas, Klein cannot imagine a child escaping the violence of culture in its most primary form – the relation between the parent and the child. What Klein does, then, is to take the idea of culture back to its most primary form. If the fixed mental ideas of culture hurt the child for Lawrence, the child is always-already wounded, for Klein, in its first cultural relation with its parents. However, in trying to imagine new forms of family, education and society which might allow the unconscious to flourish without external repression, Lawrence does not avoid the brutal trappings of cultural signification. This implies, in a rather Kleinian manner, that the distinction between inside and outside does not hold. In fact, *Fantasia's* denial of the conditions of its existence, the historical materiality of its deliberations on the unconscious, is what implicates it in the violence of abstraction characteristic of both Klein's persecutory super-ego and the prosthetic culture of violence (the "love-tanks", for example, of Christian warfare) which Lawrence lambastes: its attempt to find a pure inside is the very manoeuvre which constitutes it as cultural violence.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Lawrence, "*Fantasia*", p. 135.

From the Critique of Power to the Fight with Conflict:  
*Women and Love* and "Tickets Please"

*Women in Love* (1920)

*Women in Love* is Lawrence's first sustained fictional engagement with the violence of culture. Its critique of modern power relationships stretches from industrial politics, through gender struggle, to the bohemian world of art. At one level, its response to contemporary cultural conflict (the sweeping criticism of modern power relations), and its location of the instinctual self *inside* the conflicts of culture, raise the possibility of opposition to authority from within culture. The challenge to the repressive hegemonic powers of modernity is represented through the individual character of Ursula and the social body of the colliers. In this sense the novel reads, like Klein and Freud, the unconscious self as both embedded in culture and grounded in conflict. Moreover, it also affirms Klein's notion of a bond between instinctual liberation and the process of knowing about and challenging authority, while also critiquing psychoanalysis's attempts to embrace repression such as, for example, Freud's conception of the death drive as a repressive dictator presiding over psychic reality and its conflicts – for the death drive to dominate, the novel would have no historical conflict to report. At another level, however, *Women in Love* is the story of a moral reaction to culture itself and the violence in which all of its subjects are implicated. Thus, the novel's attempt to imagine the impossible – a life which has departed from the realm of culture with all its brutality – constitutes a repression of the history of conflict upon which it founds its critique. The idea of an escape from, and suppression

of, the conflict of culture is, then, a denial of the repressive power relationships which motivated the novel's exploration of cultural violence. That such an evasion is necessarily an acquiescence in the *status quo* which the novel sought to criticise suggests that the novel, now rather like Freud's dictatorial death drive, unravels its structural coherence by repressing the very conflict which sustains its existence.

However, to begin with, I wish to explore how the novel represents individuals as struggling, inevitably, *within* culture. Certainly, few characters seem to be spared a complicity with a frequently insidious cultural violence. This is strikingly clear in the novel's discussion of the destructiveness of capital. Mr Crich's Christian philanthropy and patriarchal benevolence towards his workers is exposed as an "infallible weapon" and a substitution "for all his hostility" – a method of repressing the violence of the industrial capitalism he is helping to sustain.<sup>119</sup> Gerald Crich, who takes over and modernises his father's mines, is "in reaction against Charity" yet is "dominated by it", rejecting "humanitarianism".<sup>120</sup> For Gerald, who admits the ruthlessly violent nature of the industrial "machine" he is operating, the "sufferings and feelings of individuals did not matter in the least. They were mere conditions, like the weather".<sup>121</sup> Gerald's notion of "the pure instrumentality of mankind", then, which reduces human beings to "distorted" parts of a machine, is merely a new kind of cultural violence through which Gerald represses both the humanity of

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<sup>119</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love* (1920), ed. David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (London, Penguin, 1995), p. 215.

<sup>120</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 219, 223.

<sup>121</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 223.

people and his own positive emotions, or what Freud might call the life instincts.<sup>122</sup>

Moreover, the sado-masochism of Gerald's sexual relationship with Gudrun shows a man unable to escape the relations of domination integral to that political and economic system. Gudrun perceives this early in the novel, in the chapter "Water-Party", when she reveals the proprietorial nature of Gerald's condemnation and concern when she runs at his cattle: "' You think I'm afraid of you and your cattle, don't you?'".<sup>123</sup> Sexuality and gender relations are coloured by the world of private ownership and economic power, so that the individual is unable to escape the violence of culture even in the conventionally separated and idealised sphere of personal relations – an abstraction of which Gerald himself is guilty: "'Between me and a woman, the social question does not enter. It is my own affair'".<sup>124</sup>

Thus, Gudrun, trapped in an individualistic battle with Gerald, cannot be in a sexual relationship where she does not dominate, and this violence too is associated with an illuminating repression:

she felt in her soul an unconquerable desire for deep violence against him. She shut off the fear and dismay that filled her conscious mind. She wanted to do as she did, she was not going to be afraid.<sup>125</sup>

Here, Gudrun's release of impulsive, formerly unconscious, destructiveness is bound up with a simultaneous repression of anxiety and dispiritedness which becomes a question of conflict:

On the edge of her consciousness the question was asking itself, automatically, "Why *are* you behaving in this *impossible* and ridiculous fashion?" But she was

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<sup>122</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 222-3.

<sup>123</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 170.

<sup>124</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 103.

<sup>125</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 170.

sullen, she half shoved the question out of herself. She could not get it clean away, so she felt self-conscious.<sup>126</sup>

In contrast to Lawrence's non-fictional treatment of violence, Gudrun's instinctual disruption of social convention and politeness does not escape the confines of culture. She is "self-conscious" in her suppression of internal conflict – her attempt, that is, to master her own ambivalence. This extends to her art through which Gudrun attempts to achieve total knowledge of the world; an absolutism of "high" culture which defines *finally* the nature or identity of the objects placed under its rigorously scrutinising gaze. However, this cultural authority is part of Gudrun's general attitude towards people. For example, rather than allow herself to feel conflicting feelings towards people or accept that they possess an unconscious which she cannot presume to be an *authority* on, Gudrun, after producing an analysis of the various qualities and flaws of Birkin, summarises Birkin as a "deadly" individual who forces "*his* soul" upon Ursula without allowing her a soul of her own:

This was all so true, that Ursula felt jarred to the bottom of her soul, with ugly distaste [....] Then there started a revulsion from Gudrun. She finished life off so thoroughly, she made things so ugly and so final. As a matter of fact, even if it were as Gudrun said, about Birkin, other things were true as well. But Gudrun would draw two lines under him and cross him out like an account that is settled. There he was, summed up, paid for, settled, done with. And it was such a lie. This finality of Gudrun's, this dispatching of people and things in a sentence, it was all such a lie.<sup>127</sup>

Hermione, an upper-class patron of the arts who is at the centre of a circle of intellectuals and artists, wields a different kind of cultural power which is grounded in idealist progressivism. The extent of this progressivism's

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<sup>126</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 171.

<sup>127</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 263.

attack on the destructiveness of power transforms it, itself, into an authoritarian attempt to abolish conflict. For while Hermione argues intellectually for equality and universal brotherhood, and is a generous and polite host, she uses her social pleasantries and benevolent outlook as methods of controlling people who might potentially oppose her. Her inability to admit the inherently violent and conflictual nature of her challenge to power and authority is such that her “obsession” to “know” becomes a sublimated method by which she can exercise her “*will*” and determine, like Gudrun, the final meanings of the people and things around her.<sup>128</sup> The critique of power, in Hermione, has become so rigorous as to undo itself, embodying its own uncompromising cultural authority. Hermione offers a kind of culture of the death drive, which abstracts itself from, and represses, its inescapable social and material conflicts, and consequently becomes dangerously violent in its quest for control. For example, when Birkin disagrees with Hermione’s ideal of equality in “Breadalby” he feels her “dynamic hatred and loathing, coming strong and black out of [her] unconsciousness”.<sup>129</sup> Hermione cannot cope with others’ opposition to her or their inconsistencies (such as the “chameleon” nature of Birkin’s dancing)<sup>130</sup> since they threaten both her ideal world and her own authority over what that ideal world is. Moreover, her idealist conception of education, in its suppression of the social and material conditions of its existence, is also a form of cultural violation: ““there *can* be no reason, no *excuse* for education, except the joy and beauty of knowledge in itself [....] Vocational education *isn’t* education, it is the close of education””.<sup>131</sup> Yet her

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<sup>128</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>129</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 104.

<sup>130</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 92.

<sup>131</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 85.



own culture has as its foundation the human labour which is the product of vocational education and training.

*Women in Love*, then, shows a modern world in which violence is everywhere, and often in the least conspicuous of areas. This violence is, however, not a purely instinctive entity, but bound up with the repressiveness of culture. While Mr Crich's and Hermione's subtle ferocity is constituted by the fierceness of their morality, Gerald's and Gudrun's destructiveness is grounded in alternative ideals of acquisitiveness, domination, and individualism. These latter ideals are, significantly, not stripped of their repressive powers or idealised as impulsive forces. While both Gudrun and Gerald repress people in their relationships, they also repress parts of their own selves. Both suppress their own desire for emotional connection and relationship – Gudrun, for example, longing for kindness.<sup>132</sup> Gerald, in desiring to have Gudrun "at his mercy", impels himself into a relationship in which he cannot win: for "one destroyed that the other might exist, one ratified because the other was nulled".<sup>133</sup> Gerald's need to dominate is also a repression of the attachment he craves – the goal of the former desire (the drive for power over the other) is the destruction of the latter desire (the impulse for love). His love has become so destructive as to undermine and destroy itself. Gudrun's violence, too, is self-repressive. Her intellectual desire to finalise everything in fixed mental images leads her to an appalling moment of nightmare in which she feels she knows and has therefore annihilated everything, including herself:

She must always see and know and never escape. She could never escape. There she was, placed before the clock-face of life [...] She was watching the fingers twitch across the eternal, mechanical, monotonous

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<sup>132</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 465.

<sup>133</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 242, 445.

clock-face of time. She never really lived, she only watched. Indeed, she was like a little, twelve-hour clock, vis-à-vis with the enormous clock of eternity [....]<sup>134</sup>

In these ways, both Gerald and Gudrun are driven towards death (Gerald, in fact, reaching it) by repressive cultures of violence which, in attempting to control and define others' identities, delimit their own, so that their violent desires become self-subverting. What is being imposed here, we might say, through the domination of others, is an authoritarian control over the unconscious self: to dominate others, we must dominate ourselves.

However, the characters so far discussed (Mr Crich, Gerald, Gudrun, and Hermione) are the characters most heavily satirised by the novel. Birkin and Ursula, by contrast, are evidently protagonists through which the novel offers hope for a liberation from the culture of deathliness which it describes. The question which needs to be asked of *Women in Love*, then, is whether (through Birkin and Ursula) it offers any space for a critique of cultural violence from within culture (that is, an immanent critique), or whether it attempts to find a place outside culture from which to attack (perhaps with a more purified, non-cultural form of violence) the brutality it diagnoses as fundamental to modernity.

Certainly, Birkin is in many ways thoroughly implicated within the kind of cultural violence I have been discussing. His intellectual battles with Hermione are a good example of this. Though the novel satirically describes the intellectual conversations at Breadalby as "like a rattle of small artillery, always slightly sententious", Birkin, the Lawrencian persona of the novel, is unable to

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<sup>134</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 465.

transcend it despite his evident dislike of it.<sup>135</sup> For he too, like Hermione, becomes violently and arrogantly intellectual when he encounters opinions he does not concur with. In response to Hermione's claim that "we are all one, all equal in the spirit", Birkin erupts:

"It is just the opposite, just the contrary, Hermione. We are different and unequal in spirit – it is only the *social* differences that are based on accidental material conditions. We are all abstractly or mathematically equal, if you like. Every man has hunger and thirst, two eyes, one nose and two legs. We're all the same in point of number. But spiritually, there is pure difference and neither equality nor inequality counts. It is upon these two bits of knowledge that you must found a state. Your democracy is an absolute lie—your brotherhood of man is a pure falsity, if you apply it further than the mathematical abstraction [....] I want every man to have his share in the world's goods, so that I am rid of his importunity, so that I can tell him: 'Now you've got what you want—you've got your fair share of the world's gear. Now, you one-mouthed fool, mind yourself and don't obstruct me.'"<sup>136</sup>

Birkin, here, is "so insistent, bearing everybody down" and Gerald accuses him of "megomania".<sup>137</sup> What is significant, however, about this speech is not only its stylistic violence, but the brutality with which it erases the social from the sphere of the individual, as if democracy was only a question of a reified material exchange of "goods" which does not involve social relationships and communication. Birkin's contempt for others "spiritually" is made clear, despite his effort to remove the issue of equality or inequality from the problem, by his vision of society as an obstruction and others' needs as "importunity". Birkin is, then, a figure who, though frustrated and disillusioned with the violence of the culture he inhabits, is still complicit with it, in

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<sup>135</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 84.

<sup>136</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 103-4.

<sup>137</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 104.

particular through his paradoxical desire to avenge a brutal modernity by imagining it out of the sphere of his existence.

In this passage, *Women in Love* illuminates the all-pervasiveness of culture, but offers no space for a critique of its violence: rather, Birkin seems to embody a more radical version of that cultural violence against which he rails. A critique is given, however, through the relationship which Birkin has with Ursula. In "Water-Party", for instance, Birkin speaks apocalyptically of modern civilisation's death drive, or what he calls "the death-process" which is "our real reality".<sup>138</sup> Ursula responds by insisting that Birkin, by idealising this process as "progressive" and "as good as the beginning" of life, only "want[s] us to be deathly". Retorting, Birkin argues that he only "want[s] us to know what we are".<sup>139</sup> However, later in the chapter we discover that Birkin is offering Ursula a kind of death as a solution to the tortuous "life that belongs to death" which is modernity.<sup>140</sup>

For Birkin wants a connection with Ursula that is not passionate or like love, but "like death" and rebirth, through which he and Ursula can emerge "lost" to their old selves, and "different". Strikingly, this relationship is "like sleep" which means that Ursula must "yield" her "very identity", and that Birkin does not want "to know" her.<sup>141</sup> What Birkin is offering here, as a cure for a ferocious modernity, is not only an abstract solution confined to isolated personal relations, as Raymond Williams has suggested,<sup>142</sup> but a model of relationship which is intriguingly both cleansed of conflict and comparable to a

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<sup>138</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 172.

<sup>139</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 173.

<sup>140</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 186.

<sup>141</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 186-7.

<sup>142</sup> See Raymond Williams, "D. H. Lawrence", *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970; St Albans: Paladin, 1974), pp. 137-49.

return to an infantile state: “‘like being born again, vulnerable as a baby that just comes into the world’”.<sup>143</sup>

What is interesting about such a hypothetical state, in this context, is that it returns us to the Freudian notion of the individual as torn between the life instincts and the death instincts. For Freud, the life instincts’ purpose (including Eros’) is to “introduce fresh tensions”, to produce conflict, while the death instincts’ objective is to create “constancy” and abolish conflict.<sup>144</sup> The triumph of the death instincts therefore would be the end of conflict. For Klein, furthermore, the super-ego itself is formed through the splitting or defusion of the life and death instincts as a result of the infant’s inability to cope with its divided feelings of love and hate – that is, its inability to cope with conflict. Klein argues that the death instincts then form the super-ego, which opposes the individual’s life instincts as an “agent of morality, punishment, guilt, repression, and protection”.<sup>145</sup> It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the contemporary British psychoanalyst, Adam Phillips, has described the super-ego as an “unconscious authoritarian order” which could usefully be seen as “the saboteur of conflict”.<sup>146</sup> For Phillips, in other words, real conflict is a condition of democracy.<sup>147</sup>

Thus, we might read Birkin’s ideal relation with Ursula as a way of repressing conflict reminiscent of the psychoanalytic concept of the super-ego. For Birkin wants Ursula to discover an impersonal relationship with him “that

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<sup>143</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 186.

<sup>144</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, pp. 387-8.

<sup>145</sup> Klein, “On the Development of Mental Functioning (1958)”, *Envy and Gratitude*, pp. 236-46, 240.

<sup>146</sup> Adam Phillips, *Equals* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p. 11.

<sup>147</sup> See Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence” (1921), *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (London: Verso, 1979), pp. 132-54, for a discussion of political violence, in particular that of the state and the contradictions produced by its attempt to extricate itself from violence and

is beyond love, beyond any emotional relationship", and which has, as its "root", a "naked kind of isolation".<sup>148</sup> Such "isolation", which is "beyond responsibility", is the basis for a relationship which entails none of the awkwardness of entanglement and opposition which relationships normally involve:

"There is [...] a final me which is stark and impersonal and beyond responsibility. So there is a final you [...]. And there could be no obligation, because there is no standard for action there, because no understanding has been reaped from that plane. It is quite inhuman,—so there can be no calling to book, in any form whatsoever—because one is outside the pale of all that is accepted, and nothing known applies. One can only follow the impulse, taking that which lies in front, and responsible for nothing, asked for nothing, giving nothing, only each taking according to the primal desire."<sup>149</sup>

Since, as mentioned above, both are stripped of their identities, along with their responsibilities, an idealised id seems to be on offer here, but without the vital conflict that that would necessarily entail. It is as if the "sleep"-like or "death"-like quality of this new relationship involves a repression of the emotional and assertive parts of the self which might make for conflict.

The novel, however, seems to register Birkin's idealisation of the unconscious here by pointing towards the culture which he draws upon to suppress conflict. This is done through anthropomorphic symbolism as Birkin tries to draw a comparison between a tabby's "justified" use of violence against a wild female cat, and human sexual relations.<sup>150</sup> Birkin argues that what Ursula calls the tabby's "bossiness" and "lust for bullying" is a desire for

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conflict; and Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin, 1970) for a philosophical investigation of the nature of political violence.

<sup>148</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 145.

<sup>149</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 146.

<sup>150</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 149.

“superfine stability” and an attempt to make the wild cat “acknowledge him as a sort of fate”, since she is “promiscuous” and a “fluffy sporadic bit of chaos”.<sup>151</sup> Ursula, typically, undermines the purity of Birkin’s impulsive ideal here by revealing its true, cultural quality. For she shows how Birkin’s relation of mutual “primal desire” and “stable equilibrium” is in actual fact a containment of the “chaos” and conflict which the female represents and an “assumption of male superiority” reminiscent of the morality of biblical patriarchy: his accidental description of the female as “like a star in its orbit” around the male is, for Ursula, nothing less than “the old Adam” and “old dead morality”.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, the suggestion that Birkin “was almost afraid” of the “recklessness” and “abandon” of Ursula, along with her “dangerous thoroughness of destructivity” implies that Birkin’s ideal relationship is associated with a corresponding desire to contain what he sees as her chaotic nature: the love and passion which Ursula offers him, for example, are potential forms of conflict as well as threats to his ideal of a return to an impulsive, child-like state.<sup>153</sup> In these ways the chapter “Mino” shows how the cultural power relations of gender inform Birkin’s own subtle violence. This is made clearer when we consider that Birkin’s desire for a special relationship with Gerald does not involve a need to curb Gerald’s assertiveness or his “destructivity” despite the fact that Gerald’s violent nature far outstrips Hermione’s or Ursula’s female powers.

Nonetheless, as the novel continues, the conflict which Ursula represents is diminished as she gradually adopts the ideals of Birkin. For, like

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<sup>151</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 150.

<sup>152</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 150, 152.

<sup>153</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 154.

Birkin, Ursula begins to perceive death as a “consummation” and life within the modern, routinised industrial world as a repetitive and “mechanical” process.<sup>154</sup> Her “barren school-week” she sees as a “shameful” degradation compared with death.<sup>155</sup> Any sense of opposition to it, however, is undermined as the abstract notion of death from the social world which Birkin has proposed to her gains ascendance in her perspectives. The “detestable social principle” is now opposed to an idealised death process through which a “new union” might be found.<sup>156</sup>

Similarly, Birkin’s two methods of opposing a violent modern culture are either to acquiesce in a “sensual” process of “disintegration” and “death” (a path apparently similar to Gerald’s capitalistic destructiveness which is at one point dangerously mythologised as the “ice-destructive knowledge” of the “strange white wonderful demons from the north”) or to discover with Ursula a state of “free proud singleness” which “submits to the yoke and leash of love”; a discovery which, as we have seen, also involves a kind of death from the social realm. What is significant here, I think, is that the novel suggests that an idealised, bodily unconscious in the form of an “inverted culture” of “mindless” knowledge might be possible, and that, furthermore, the individual’s freedom is obstructed by the conflictual bondage of emotional contact – in short, that relationship and society should be conceived as hostile to the individual’s “primal desire”.<sup>157</sup>

This process, whereby the social world is aesthetically annihilated, arguably reaches its climax in the chapter “Excuse”. Following a violent

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<sup>154</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 191-3.

<sup>155</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 193.

<sup>156</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>157</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 253-4.



argument, Birkin and Ursula are emotionally reconciled. However, this reconciliation involves both a shift outside of the modernity the novel has so persistently critiqued, and a suppression of the positive opposition to Birkin which Ursula embodied. Once the “old, detestable world of tension” has “passed away”, the transcendent relationship which emerges between the couple is exactly along the lines which Birkin had argued for: Ursula learns to desire what Birkin desires.<sup>158</sup> Their interaction is “neither love nor passion”,<sup>159</sup> and Ursula conceives her new relationship with Birkin in the same biblical, patriarchal terms with which she had previously criticised Birkin’s version of sexual relations:

She recalled again the old magic of the Book of Genesis, where the Sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair. And he was one of these, one of these strange creatures from the beyond, looking down at her, and seeing she was fair.<sup>160</sup>

This repression of conflict through an idealised form of unconscious death is, as we can see here, evidently not without its cultural colouring – ironically, for Lawrence, the culture of an earlier form of Christianity. The novel, however, struggles to imagine a world outside culture through Birkin and Ursula’s resignation from their “responsibilities” and the “world of work”.<sup>161</sup> The material condition on which this act of escape rests – Birkin’s private income – is suppressed by the novel. Moreover, Ursula’s suggestion that it may be impossible to abstract oneself from society in the way that Birkin proposes (he wants them to “wander” into “our own nowhere”) is not answered by the novel

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<sup>158</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 310.

<sup>159</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 313.

<sup>160</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 312.

<sup>161</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 315-16.

which almost transforms Ursula into a Birkinian persona.<sup>162</sup> Here is a comparison of two Ursulas:

“there is only the world [...] I’m so afraid that while we are only people, we’ve got to take the world that’s given—because there isn’t any other [...]”<sup>163</sup>

“I do think that one can’t have anything new whilst one cares for the old—do you know what I mean?—even fighting the old is belonging to it.—I know, one is tempted to stop with the world, just to fight it.—But then it isn’t worth it.”

Gudrun considered herself.

“Yes,” she said. “In a way, one is of the world if one lives in it. But isn’t it really an illusion, to think you can get out of it? After all, a cottage in the Abruzzi, or wherever it may be, isn’t a new world.”<sup>164</sup>

The conflict embodied by Ursula and modernity is surpassed by Birkin and Ursula’s achievement of Birkin’s ideal of a “perfected relation”.<sup>165</sup> Ursula’s opposition is abandoned while Birkin’s victory is insidiously acknowledged by the text – in the form of the couple’s “star-equilibrium”, their non-mental, mystic, “dark knowledge” of each other, and the “death in most marvellous possession” which Ursula undergoes.<sup>166</sup> Meanwhile, the problem of the violent conflict which modernity entails is solved by the novel’s aesthetic destruction of the modern world – its attempt to imagine a dimension, a “perfected relation” or “nowhere” in which Birkin and Ursula can escape from the violence of culture.

As I have already suggested, the relation which the novel’s treatment of conflict bears to psychoanalysis is an illuminating one. For if the super-ego, as Klein and Phillips suggest, is an “unconscious authoritarian order” which is

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<sup>162</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 315.

<sup>163</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 315.

<sup>164</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 437-8.

<sup>165</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 316.

<sup>166</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 316, 319.

“the saboteur of conflict”, then *Women in Love* seems to be, to quote Freud on the implications of the super-ego for human consciousness, “more moral than [it] knows”. For, on the one hand, the novel is an engagement and critique of the destructive power relations of modernity. Yet on the other hand, Birkin’s various solutions to the violence of modern culture (his ideal death processes) are implicated within a cultural violence themselves, and the novel’s critique of cultural power relations returns to haunt them. For example, Birkin’s attack (in his symbolic stoning of the moon in “Moony”) on the apparently feminine cultural ideals of fertility, love, sexuality and spirituality, whilst an attack on female power, is itself a form of destruction: Birkin wants to strip Ursula of her “assertive will” yet cannot keep himself from the cultural bullying of “the Sunday school teacher” and the “preacher”, and attempts to repress, rather puritanically, the “old destructive fires” of sex.<sup>167</sup> More strikingly however, (considering the novel’s frequently ironic attitude towards Birkin’s diatribes), *Women in Love* progressively undermines the reality of the conflicts it represents by creating an abstract space outside culture to which Birkin and Ursula can escape. This, paradoxically, leaves the relations of cultural power intact and, in fact, reinforces them through its aesthetic denial of their concrete significance – the challenge, for example, which the Ursula of modernity represents to Birkin is contained and suppressed, in their supposed removal from the cultural sphere, by the latter’s reinforcement of a gender relation suggestively coloured by allusions to the Old Testament. The critique of power, in its idealised destruction of the social, thus becomes the moral desire to suppress all conflict, leaving the original power relations of the status quo

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<sup>167</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 251.

untouched – since to oppose their authority is both to embody a form of hostile power oneself (which the novel, predominantly through Birkin, condemns) and to initiate a potentially violent cultural conflict.<sup>168</sup>

This is most evident in the novel's repeated insistence that to oppose an authority is merely reactive and therefore embodies fundamentally the same idea as the authority in question. For example, the miners' radical politics is equated with the capitalistic power of Gerald. While the miners have an "instinct for chaos" which is manifested in their "idea of mechanical equality",<sup>169</sup> Gerald "merely represented the miners in a higher sense when he perceived that the only way to fulfil perfectly the will of man was to establish the perfect, inhuman machine".<sup>170</sup> This notion of a correspondence between the miners and capitalists is given an historical concreteness by the novel, as Macdonald Daly has argued, with the effect of gross historical travesty: the miners are said to have "submitted" to "all" of Gerald's ruthless reforms "with some fatal satisfaction".<sup>171</sup> Rather like Ursula, who also embodies a kind of "chaos" which Birkin must contain, the miners have an "instinct for chaos" which is suppressed by the novel's aesthetic destruction of the historical reality of class conflict: "chaos", then, seems to be another word for women's and

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<sup>168</sup> See John Fraser, *Violence in the Arts* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974) for a wide-ranging examination of the treatment of violence in modern art and culture, which includes a critique of idealist assessments of violence, emphasising the impossibility of abstracting politics from involvement in some form of violence.

<sup>169</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 226.

<sup>170</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 228.

<sup>171</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 230. See Macdonald Daly, "D. H. Lawrence and Labour in the Great War", *Modern Language Review* 89, 1994, pp. 19-38, 33: "The miners' fictitious acquiescence to [the "aggressive mechanization of the mines"] represents the very real fragmentation of liberal England, of which the productive and therefore social necessities of war was the catalyst. In 'The Industrial Magnate', these changes are envisaged as a process received passively in the ranks of the industrial workforce (so that it permits a summary judgement on the degeneracy of an entire populace and legitimates demands for authoritarian dictatorship) rather than one which was in some quarters vigorously resisted (an acknowledgement such as that would have validated a politically more problematic declaration of solidarity with the forces of resistance)".

working-class resistance to exploitation and oppression. This aesthetic destruction of resistance, furthermore, is based on the assumption that hierarchy and authority are necessary for society to function: "Mystic equality lies in abstraction, not in having and doing, which are processes. In function and process, one man, one part, must of necessity be subordinate to another".<sup>172</sup> *Women in Love's* critique of the violent cultural powers and authorities of modernity is thus radically undermined by its own naturalising reinforcement of those authorities (of class and gender) and its aesthetic repression of conflict. The "chaos" represented by both the colliers and Ursula is extinguished, rather like the anarchic, unconscious desires of the id are vanquished by a moralistic super-ego, through the novel's moral condemnation of female "will" and working-class "power" (or "rotteness in the will"),<sup>173</sup> which re-emphasises the dominant cultural authorities it sought to condemn.

If we turn to the psychoanalysis of D. W. Winnicott, such aesthetic and, in the widest sense, anti-social destructiveness and conflict-repression take on a heightened cultural character, and can even be identified with the kind of prostheticised violence which, as we have seen, Lawrence's non-fiction critiques. For Winnicott, in discussing how it might be that an infant "destroys the world",<sup>174</sup> contends that there is a kind of "infantile magic" which acts a form of imaginative destruction:

This is of vital importance because it is the residue of this infantile 'unfused' destruction that may actually destroy the world we live in and love. In infantile magic the world can be annihilated by a closing of the eyes and recreated by a new looking and a new phase of needing. Poisons and explosive weapons give to

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<sup>172</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 226.

<sup>173</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 118.

<sup>174</sup> D. W. Winnicott, "Aggression and its roots", *Deprivation and Delinquency*, ed. Clare Winnicott, Ray Shepherd and Madeleine Davis (London: Tavistock, 1984), pp. 84-99, 97.

infantile magic a reality that is the very opposite of magical.<sup>175</sup>

Such acts of what Winnicott calls "*magical destruction*" are reduced as the infant comes to terms with the fact that the world exists "outside his or her magical control". When development occurs, the infant "becomes able to be destructive and becomes able to hate and to kick and to scream instead of magically annihilating that world". Thus, for Winnicott, "in this way *actual aggression is seen to be an achievement*" and "aggressive ideas and behaviour take on a positive value, and hate becomes a sign of civilization".<sup>176</sup> In the light of Winnicott's "*magical destruction*", then, *Women in Love* can be seen as performing an aesthetic violence which overreaches its own critique of culture: for in effect, rather than offering an authentic "perfected relation", Birkin and Ursula's flight from the social world or "death-process", and the novel's flattening out of social conflict, are culturally refined, solipsistic ways of destroying "the world we live in and love". The "perfected relation" is an abstract mental event which brutally cuts off its own potentiality for social significance. By contrast, the passionate argumentation of Ursula and the potent, though shadowy, presence of the miners arguably embody the forms of aggression and conflict to which Winnicott attaches "positive value", particularly in the sense that they do not assume superiority.

We might, then, read *Women in Love* as a text torn between challenging cultural authority and fearing that that challenge may become a new form of domination itself. However, we might also describe the novel's consequent abstraction from culture (which, like Hermione's education, tries to conceal its

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<sup>175</sup> Winnicott, "Aggression and its roots", pp. 97-98.

<sup>176</sup> Winnicott, "Aggression and its roots", pp. 98-99.

own socio-material conditions) as an attempt to idealise an escape-route from its own inescapable entanglement in the power relations of culture, and, finally, as not only re-establishing the dominant hierarchies of modernity, but of aesthetically destroying the conflicts integral to an intra-cultural challenge to those authorities. If this is so, the violence with which the novel performs this last act of destruction, and that violence's re-assertion of modern culture's hegemonies, are the final fruits of Lawrence's first sustained fictional exploration of the insidious ubiquity of the super-ego.

The movement from critique of power to the suppression of conflict in *Women in Love* may, however, inversely shed light on the ways in which Klein's psychoanalysis handles the issue of authority and revolt. For if Lawrence's novel subverts its own critique of cultural power through the aesthetic abolition of conflict, could we not describe Klein's notion of the depressive position – particularly in its concept of art itself as reparation – as less a successful surmounting of cultural violence through the synthesis of love and hate, than a guilty acknowledgement of wrongdoing and an acceptance of the rectitude of authority? After all, Klein describes the “synthesis” of “emotions” primarily in terms of a realisation that the “destructive impulses are directed against a *loved person*”.<sup>177</sup> The question arises, then, whether or not Klein leaves any space for opposition to the oppression of authority. Stonebridge has argued, in an interpretation which reads Klein against the grain, that “the culture of redemption, for Klein, ultimately testifies to the omnipresence of aggression”, and that Klein offers “a version of the ego as continually shattered into culture by the vicissitudes of anxiety”. However,

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<sup>177</sup> Klein, “The Origins of Transference (1952)”, p. 203.

Klein nonetheless uses, as Stonebridge emphasises, “that anxiety” as “the ground for a thesis that turns on the solipsism of an ego bent on re-creating the world in its own image”, and in doing so, “comes close to endorsing a culture of the death drive”.<sup>178</sup> In other words, opposition to authority and the potential for revolt are reduced, in Klein’s hypothesis of a depressive position, to an aesthetics whose central functions are the suppression of conflict and the destruction of the social.<sup>179</sup> In this respect, *Women in Love* can be interpreted as a fictional realisation of what Kleinian reparation might mean *aesthetically* and *socially*. Lawrence’s novel would certainly seem to raise questions about how the individual might challenge the violence of authority in a manner which neither falls into the trap of idealising an extra-cultural space, nor succumbs itself to an obsessive cycle of cultural violence.

#### “Tickets Please” (1922)

Lawrence’s short story, “Tickets Please”, attempts to radicalise the position at which *Women in Love* arrives. It is a bold attempt to re-formulate cultural conflict as a dramatic battle between instinctual being and culture itself. The story’s trajectory is clearly, from its beginning, set towards an extra-cultural space outside a perversely vicious modernity. That modernity is embodied in the character of Annie, a Midlands tram-conductor who, like the other “fearless young hussies”, registers the emergence in war-time labour of a new female presence and power. Lawrence characterises this, however, as an anarchic and violent new authority:

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<sup>178</sup> Stonebridge, pp. 44-45.

<sup>179</sup> See Michael Rustin, “A Socialist Consideration of Kleinian Psychoanalysis”, *New Left Review* 131, January-February 1982, pp. 71-96, for an alternative assessment of the political implications of Klein’s depressive position and her theories in general.



[...] they have all the *sang-froid* of an old non-commissioned officer [...] They pounce on the youths who try to evade their ticket-machine. They push off the men at the end of the distance. They are not going to be done in the eye—not they. They fear nobody—and everybody fears them [...] [Annie] is peremptory, suspicious, and ready to hit first. She can hold her own against ten-thousand. The step of that tram-car is her Thermopylae.<sup>180</sup>

The sense of a violent female invasion into the conventionally male world of the colliers is clear. Yet “Tickets Please” portrays an alternative form of brutality whose hostile relationship to this female authority forms the subject of the story. This antagonistic opponent to the new female labour power is represented by the inspector, John Thomas or, “sometimes, in malice, Coddy”, who is well-known through the “scandal” over his brutal promiscuity with the tram girls:

He flirts with the girl conductors in the morning, and walks out with them in the dark night [...] Of course the girls quit the service frequently. Then he flirts and walks out with the new-comer: always providing she is sufficiently attractive, and that she will consent to walk [...] [Annie] watched him vanquish one girl, then another.<sup>181</sup>

Both the name and the kind of behaviour point towards an impulsive way of being which, in its own way, becomes an intrusion into the female group of tram-conductors.

Annie perceives John Thomas’s nature and keeps him “at arm’s length for many months”.<sup>182</sup> However, the two meet at a fair, and John Thomas seduces Annie with his “warm, cosy way of holding a girl” and his both sexually and physically daring behaviour. A relationship develops in which a

<sup>180</sup> Lawrence, “Tickets Please”, *England, My England and Other Stories* (1922), ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 34-45, 35.

<sup>181</sup> Lawrence, “Tickets Please”, p. 36.

<sup>182</sup> Lawrence, “Tickets Please”, p. 36.

strong physical rapport emerges.<sup>183</sup> However, difficulties arise as a result of Annie's intellectual demands on John Thomas:

But with a developing acquaintance there began a developing intimacy. Annie wanted to consider him a person, a man, she wanted to take an intelligent interest in him, and to have an intelligent response. She did not want a *mere* nocturnal presence [...] And she prided herself that he could not leave her.

Here she made a mistake. John Thomas intended to remain a nocturnal presence, he had no idea of becoming an all-round individual to her. When she started to take an intelligent interest in him and his life and his character, he sheered off. He hated intelligent interest. And he knew that the only way to stop it was to avoid it. The possessive female was aroused in Annie. So he left her.<sup>184</sup>

Hostility is initiated, then, through the kind of cultural "bullying" and female "will" attacked in "Education", *Fantasia* and *Women in Love*. However, as I indicated in my discussion of *Women in Love*, resistance to this "will" for "intelligent response" and refusal to acknowledge another's personal identity or to give oneself in "intimacy" is also a way of controlling relationship and precluding the development of conflict. It could even be read as a way of repressing knowledge about the self that might be gained from such relationship. This is particularly striking here when John Thomas abruptly terminates his relationship with Annie when she becomes interested in and "possessive" of him.

However, for Annie the conflict is not at an end: she is "staggered", indignant, miserable, and in "despair", especially when she discovers that he "had gone away to somebody else", and plots with John Thomas's "old flames" to avenge him.<sup>185</sup> The story thus reaches its climax when those tram girls who

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<sup>183</sup> Lawrence, "Tickets Please", p. 38.

<sup>184</sup> Lawrence, "Tickets Please", pp. 38-39.

<sup>185</sup> Lawrence, "Tickets Please", pp. 39-40.

are his “old flames” wait in the depot for John Thomas to return from his shift and, teasing him about his promiscuity, ask him to choose one of them finally. He is embarrassed but is pressurised further until the girls – led by Annie – assault him violently in order to make him choose the girl he will marry. John Thomas’s attempt to restore order with the voice of “official authority” fails, as the girls become like Dionysian maenads, savaging him until he lies “defeated” like “an animal”.<sup>186</sup> Significantly, while the girls become a “supernatural” power, John Thomas is transformed into a vulnerable creature of nature, emphasising that the violence represented is a cultural one, lacking the natural sensitivity of John Thomas’s instinctive masculinity.<sup>187</sup> This is reinforced also by the “maddened” and “hysteric” quality to the girls’ assault.<sup>188</sup>

The story ends with an ironic twist when, following Annie’s threats to kill John Thomas, he chooses Annie, which leaves her with something “broken in her” and the girls awkward and “stupefied”.<sup>189</sup> “Tickets Please” concludes therefore by exposing the brutality of the “possessive” modern woman who requires “intelligent response” from her lovers, while showing how the impulsive male self who scandalises the local area, represented by John Thomas, is in reality a figure of emotional integrity. Lawrence seems to be suggesting here that the emerging power of women, in both the education and industry of the period, is a threat to the integrity of a more traditional and male, unconscious way of being.

However, what is striking in this story is the way in which this most superficial and obvious reading is disturbed by the peculiar morality of the

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<sup>186</sup> Lawrence, “Tickets Please”, pp. 41-43.

<sup>187</sup> Lawrence, “Tickets Please”, p. 43.

<sup>188</sup> Lawrence, “Tickets Please”, pp. 43, 45.

<sup>189</sup> Lawrence, “Tickets Please”, p. 45.

tale's conclusion. The dangerous promiscuity of John Thomas is transformed at the story's end into an oddly orthodox desire for monogamy. In this sense, "Tickets Please" asserts both a culturally conservative morality (the man "chooses" his wife) *and* a brutally instinctual attitude towards sexual relations (the man "flirts" with numerous women). The question thus arises whether the story achieves the non-cultural space which it requires for its critique of cultural violence, since "Tickets Please"'s instinctual ideal only makes sense through the re-entry of morality in the form of monogamous sexual relations. The effect of this moral underpinning of the male unconscious self is to confuse the binary oppositions which the story had set up. The early flirtations of John Thomas, and his abrupt rejection of Annie, sit awkwardly alongside the rigidity of his final moral position: if he has possessed a fidelity to Annie throughout which her brutality has ruined, how do we square this loyalty with his own violent exploitation of sexual relationships? The story seems to read less convincingly as an anti-cultural defence of the spontaneous unconscious than it does as an ethically reasoned defence of the rights of a dominant, even "official", male authority to determine the course of sexual relationships according to whim. Certainly, nobody could have reasonably assumed John Thomas's fidelity!

"Tickets Please" could be described, then, as Lawrence's first attempt of many to create an idealised instinctual space from which to launch a critique of cultural violence. Significantly, however, the story seems to offer its own kind of cultural brutality in the form of what is in fact a highly conventional version of bourgeois gender relations which hypocritically demands its own sexual flexibility alongside the other's loyalty, and tries to naturalise its own

historical specificity. Culture, once more, appears to be at its most subtly vicious when it denies itself as such.

The Death of Conflict and the Death of Demos:  
Magical Destruction in Lawrence's Late Fiction

Lawrence's fiction of the 1920s continues to explore the possibility of an extra-cultural space. A development occurs, however, from the function of this space as merely forestalling or repressing conflict to its role in establishing new forms of oppositional, anti-cultural authority and violence. In this sense, "Tickets Please" is a transitional text: a new, instinctual authority is in the process of being shaped on the basis of the suppression of cultural antagonisms, yet the violence of this authority has yet to explicitly emerge - though I have tried to show how it is insidiously at work. In comparison, Lawrence's late fiction in many ways realises aesthetically the ideas of such non-fictional works as "Education" and *Fantasia*. The violence of a supposedly pure unconscious self becomes a means of social transformation or a symbolic act of retribution against modernity. There are, however, several of Lawrence's late fictions which deal with violence in this way, and there is not the space here to discuss them all. I will therefore limit myself to a study of the stories, "The Woman Who Rode Away" (1925), "The Princess" (1925), and "None of That!" (1928), since these effectively illustrate the major changes in Lawrence's treatment of violence in his later works.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Other late fictions of Lawrence's which handle the subject of violence and its relationship to culture and the unconscious include *The Plumed Serpent*, which offers a sustained exploration of this central area of Lawrence's work, and "The Last Laugh" and "The Fox" which offer, in their denouements, some of the most brutal acts of the aesthetic "magical destruction" analysed in this chapter.

"The Woman Who Rode Away" is the story of a woman who escapes from the highly repressive civilisation represented by her "idealist" husband, only to undergo, first of all, a kind of psychic death, and then finally, death itself in the primitive Chilchui Indian culture of Mexico. This woman is an American whose husband is an archetypal target for Lawrence's critique of the repressiveness of modern civilisation: he is a "dynamo of energy" who runs his own silver mines yet who, as "a man of principles" and a "good husband", proprietorially perceives his own marriage as part of "his own works": "He was jealous of [his wife] as he was of his silver mine: and that is saying a lot". The unfeeling and abstract nature of the husband's perspective is, therefore, also a violation for the woman: "He admired his wife to extinction", so that, consequently, "her conscious development had stopped mysteriously with her marriage, completely arrested [...] he never meant anything to her, physically. Only morally he swayed her, downed her, kept her in an invincible slavery". The woman suffers, then, under the moral repression of her husband and his hatred of the "physical side of life" means that her bodily unconscious self is thwarted.<sup>191</sup>

Yet her "escape" into the "lawless" landscape of Mexico is not a conventional liberatory experience, though an apparent return to the unconscious.<sup>192</sup> For the woman's dream of "being free", in her own terms, is never attained.<sup>193</sup> First of all, early in her journey into the wilderness, she seems to suffer what I have already described as a psychic death, suggesting that

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<sup>191</sup> Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away" (1925), *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories* (1928), ed. Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 39-71, 40.

<sup>192</sup> Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away", pp. 41, 43.

<sup>193</sup> Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away", p. 43.

authentic freedom might not lie in the direction which the progressive modernity of, for example, the women's emancipation movement would recommend:

[She lay] feeling like a woman who has died and passed beyond. She was not sure that she had not heard during the night, a great crash at the centre of herself, which was the crash of her own death. Or else it was a crash at the centre of the earth, and meant something big and mysterious.<sup>194</sup>

Freedom appears here as a freedom from oneself and one's self-control. This is reinforced when we learn soon after this that she had no "will left" of "her own" and would have returned to the oppressive relationship of her marriage had she had any "will".<sup>195</sup> Moreover, "female power" is aligned with the culture from which she has escaped as a "half-childish, half-arrogant confidence" comparable to the infantile Western domination satirised in the description of her husband.<sup>196</sup>

The woman's first encounter with the Indians involves an extension of Birkin's ideal notion of an "impersonal" form of relationship. However, this relation is, this time, conceived explicitly in terms of domination and violation as well as in terms of the stripping of female identity:

He looked at her with a black, bright inhuman look, and saw no woman in her at all [...] She sat in her saddle in wonder, feeling once more as if she had died. And again he struck her horse, and jerked her badly in the saddle.<sup>197</sup>

Here we have a new form of instinctual, "inhuman" violence to counter the "passionate anger" and "will" of the "spoilt white woman" of Western culture.

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<sup>194</sup> Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away", p. 44.

<sup>195</sup> Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away", p. 45.

<sup>196</sup> Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away", p. 46.

<sup>197</sup> Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away", p. 47.

Yet this conflict is not upheld for any duration by the story – rather, the primitive power of the Indian male succeeds very rapidly, not only in psychically annihilating the cultured white woman and rendering her “powerless”, but in adding to her “supreme anger” a “slight thrill of exultation” in her own death.<sup>198</sup> What is striking here, firstly, is that what the story first described as a repressed unconscious (in the form of a traumatised physical female self under a male-dominated Western culture) has now become the repressive super-ego itself (cultured, female arrogance). Furthermore, the force provided by the tale (a primitive, male instinctualism) has itself to adopt the character of a repressive action – the woman, after all, undergoes a death of “will” (partly effected by the administering of drugs) despite the characterisation of this death as a fulfilment of desire (an “exultation” which, it is later said, “she wanted”).<sup>199</sup> It is difficult, in other words, for the repressive and the repressed to be simply located; a feature which tellingly recalls the structural nature of the repression theorised by Freud in his conception of the death drive.

Certainly, the story does not achieve a refuge from culture. For the violence of “The Woman Who Rode Away” is not only to be found in the Indians’ drugging, suggested rape, and (symbolically sexual) murder of the white woman, but in the aesthetic, “magical destruction” of the conflict which the woman embodies. For the Indians, in ignoring the humanity of the woman, do not even perceive her “resistance” or “challenge”.<sup>200</sup> She is, for them, comparable to a “piece of venison they were bringing home from the hunt” or

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<sup>198</sup> Lawrence, “The Woman Who Rode Away”, p. 48.

<sup>199</sup> Lawrence, “The Woman Who Rode Away”, p. 67.

<sup>200</sup> Lawrence, “The Woman Who Rode Away”, p. 51.



“some giant, female white ant”.<sup>201</sup> In this way, the woman is also stripped of the vitality of her sexuality in an aesthetic vision which annihilates the self’s ambivalence through a violent splitting of the instincts across social groups in a manner reminiscent of the non-fiction discussed above. For the woman is stripped of her potency and “will”, reduced to the shell of her former sexuality and intelligence, while the Indians are devoid of sexual instincts and degraded to mere sexless instruments of destruction and “profound, impersonal hate”.<sup>202</sup> It seems impossible, then, if we read the story in the light of this Kleinian defusion of the instincts across social groupings, to perceive “The Woman Who Rode Away” as a merely anthropological-style account of what it might mean to be primitively non-repressed, since the notion of a viciously ingrained repression seems to be built into the very structure of the story itself.<sup>203</sup> It is significant to note, for example, that the woman herself feels that, with the Indians, “all the real things were kept back”.<sup>204</sup> The life and death instincts are rigidly divided in antagonism across the borders of sex and culture: the latter fatally defeating the former with the reactionary result of a return to primitivism comparable to the death drive. While Klein offers, in her formulation of the paranoid-schizoid position discussed earlier, a version of the

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<sup>201</sup> Lawrence, “The Woman Who Rode Away”, p. 49.

<sup>202</sup> Lawrence, “The Woman Who Rode Away”, p. 66.

<sup>203</sup> Ellis typically isolates the story from its wider cultural significations, reading it as a creative piece of anthropology rather than fiction: in short, a “remarkable effort of imaginative understanding” of the primitive practice of human sacrifice, which makes the reader “feel the reasonableness of this ritual within a ‘primitive’ context”. The story is, for Ellis, “not principally concerned” with explaining “why” such a practice should develop, in spite of the narrative’s evident construction of an explanation. Ellis is of course more cautious when approaching questions pertaining to Lawrence’s personal life. For example, he defends Lawrence against the charge that the tale’s protagonist might be his friend Mabel, emphasising that “what misogyny there is in the story as a whole is clearly general rather than specific, and in any case far less important than an inwardness with ‘primitive’ thinking” (*D. H. Lawrence*, pp. 187-9). Evidently, aesthetic violence is safe from any retributive attacks from the culture of literary biography.

<sup>204</sup> Lawrence, “The Woman Who Rode Away”, p. 58. See also p. 57.

self as dynamically involved in a violent conflict with cultural authority, Lawrence seems here to offer a nightmarish caricature of this position on a social scale, in which society has not only fissured but ossified into two distinct social groupings (cultured female and instinctual male), destined to a fatal battle whereby male destructiveness annihilates the conflict represented by the female life instincts.

Moreover, if we return to Freud's notion of the super-ego, we might say that Lawrence shows the female self as forever fated to the role of the enfeebled ego which has to suffer the male self's violent administration of the devastating revenge attacks of the super-ego for the irresponsible id's violence. For if, as Kate Millett has argued, the white woman is a kind of scapegoat in this story for Western civilisation's guilt in the face of the devastating processes of its colonial project,<sup>205</sup> then "The Woman Who Rode Away" might usefully be seen as representing a macrocosmic version of Freud's "culture of the death instinct": the aesthetic, "magical destruction" of the super-ego as a form of displaced violence upon the female ego, in revenge for the repressed unconscious reality of the id's colonial violence. The Indians "sacrifice" the white woman to "achieve the power" not so much for their own race, as the story suggests, but for the ideological and cultural conscience of a repressed Western colonialism.<sup>206</sup> "The Woman Who Rode Away" is in this sense also an art-work which is "more moral than [it] knows".

The story, furthermore, aestheticises the woman's death as a necessary and positive female return to the unconscious. The woman is, for instance,

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<sup>205</sup> See Kate Millett, "D. H. Lawrence", *Sexual Politics* (1971; London: Abacus, 1972), pp. 237-93, 285-93.

<sup>206</sup> Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away", p. 71.

“under the spell of some other power”, and the Indians appear to “take her will away”.<sup>207</sup> Yet this is coloured by a wider, cultural symbolism which provides a brutal fantasy of social transformation:

Her kind of womanhood, intensely personal and individual, was to be obliterated again, and the great primeval symbols were to tower once more over the fallen individual independence of woman. The sharpness and the quivering nervous consciousness of the highly-bred white woman was to be destroyed again, womanhood was to be cast once more into the great stream of impersonal sex and impersonal passion.<sup>208</sup>

This is associated, in turn, with a gender polarity based on natural metaphors and arbitrary yet conventional divisions between the public and private: for the Indians, ideally, the woman is of the moon and has power over the home, while the man is of the sun and has power over the world.<sup>209</sup> Thus, while the story superficially provides us with an attack on Western culture, it actually reinforces the patriarchal conservatism which has, historically, constituted much of that culture. Also, the return to the unconscious, which is so significant here, is not only grounded in a stark cultural symbolism which allows the male appropriation of the symbolic order, but is also itself split by the death drive into a feminine repressed and a masculine repressive. Such an aesthetic, then, rather than embracing a pristine unconscious, is structured by a more ruthless version of the cultural violence which *Women in Love* had so powerfully critiqued and yet cleared the aesthetic space for. The instincts for pleasure and life are overruled by the instincts for repression and death, which magically annihilate the forces which sustain and motivate them. In this way, Lawrence's

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<sup>207</sup> Lawrence, “The Woman Who Rode Away”, pp. 58-59.

<sup>208</sup> Lawrence, “The Woman Who Rode Away”, p. 60.

<sup>209</sup> See Lawrence, “The Woman Who Rode Away”, pp. 61-62.

tale, like Freud's authoritarian death drive, undercuts itself, suggesting that repression and pleasure, death and life, must coexist for life to maintain itself.

In "The Princess" Lawrence gives an alternative account of his fatal opposition between instinctive and cultural violence: predominantly, the cultural appears as the aggressor, the "inhuman" self as the victim. Dollie Urquhart is the daughter of a man who believes that he has "royal blood",<sup>210</sup> and who encourages her at an early age to believe that people possess indifferent, inner "demon" selves, and that she is a royal "demon" in a "demon" class system, "the last of the royal race of the old people", and "the Princess".<sup>211</sup> This fosters in Dollie a sense of spiritual superiority which becomes a form of cultural violence. For example, her virginal indifference to the male sensuality of the "cabmen and railway-porters" of Europe, her "condescension" towards them, and the brutality of her cold "understanding" which re-creates them as characters in a Zola novel, causes such men to react with "volcanic phallic rage".<sup>212</sup> The "power of her spirit" (which, she fears, does "not extend to these low people") thus provokes the "physical power" and aggression of the Roman cabman who "longed to crush the barren blossom" of the Princess's "sterility" with its "sexless beauty" and "authority". Significantly, Dollie's use of the abstract power of money in such cases enables her to protect herself: "she did not lose her head. She quietly paid out money and turned away".<sup>213</sup> In this way, the tale quickly sets up an antagonism between a feminine culture, in the form of Dollie, and a masculine, physical,

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<sup>210</sup> Lawrence, "The Princess" (1925), *St. Mawr and Other Stories*, ed. Brian Finney (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 155-96, 159.

<sup>211</sup> Lawrence, "The Princess", p. 161.

<sup>212</sup> Lawrence, "The Princess", pp. 162-3.

<sup>213</sup> Lawrence, "The Princess", p. 163.

and “phallic” impulsiveness; a hostility which is initiated by the oblivious “sterility” of cultural provocation which cruelly inflicts its damage from behind the wall of anaesthetised power which is money (her father, notably, sees money as a kind of clothing by which one “cover[s]” oneself from “aggressions”).<sup>214</sup>

Domingo Romero however, the guide at the ranch which Dollie visits in New Mexico, has behind him a history of subjugation to such violence:

It was he who had sold the ranch itself to the Wilkiesons, ten years before, for two thousand dollars. He had gone away: then reappeared at the old place. He was the son of the old Romeros, the last of the Spanish family that had owned miles of land around San Christobal. But the coming of the white man and the failure of the vast flocks of sheep and the fatal inertia which overcomes all men, at last, on the desert near the mountains, had finished the Romero family. The last descendants were just Mexican peasants.

Domingo, the heir, had spent his two thousand dollars, and was working for white people.<sup>215</sup>

The story then implies that this social violence has become internalised so that Romero’s body, which is “strong with life”, bears the mark of the “meaninglessness” which such violence leaves behind. His physique is “characteristic of the Mexicans of his own locality”: “strong” and “healthy”, yet without energy or “*raison d’être*”. He, like the other Mexicans, only finds such “*raison d’être*” in “turn[ing] on their own selves” in “self-torture and death-worship”.<sup>216</sup> Here Lawrence suggests that the cultural violence of the “white man” has become internalised in Romero as a kind of self-destructive death drive. Significantly, this destructiveness is constituted by repression and culture.

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<sup>214</sup> Lawrence, “The Princess”, p. 164.

<sup>215</sup> Lawrence, “The Princess”, p. 167.

<sup>216</sup> Lawrence, “The Princess”, pp. 167-8.

Yet the tale works to remove Romero from the quotidian mundanity of both the political and cultural nature of his destructiveness. For Romero is the “silent, aloof”, impersonal male with the “spark” of “pride” and “dauntlessness”, and the “quick intelligence” typical of Lawrence’s instinctual protagonists who exist beyond the realm of culture, language and thought in order to violently assault it. Moreover, the “spark at the middle of Romero’s eye” is not perceived by the tourists who “were not alive enough to see it”. In other words, despite Romero’s self-destructiveness, he possesses a greater degree of instinctive, physical vitality (he is not “forthcoming” in speech) than those belonging to the Western culture which has violated him.<sup>217</sup> Even Romero’s native landscape, which Dollie in her “recklessness” is drawn to,<sup>218</sup> is described as “so inhuman”,<sup>219</sup> while its animal inhabitants “move about in their wild unconsciousness”,<sup>220</sup> aligning his world with the unconscious which had meant destruction for “the woman who rode away” and personal liberation for Birkin.<sup>221</sup> This extra-cultural position allows Romero to enact punishment upon the specific culture of American colonialism and capitalistic enterprise in the surrogate form of Dollie, when she provokes Romero’s violence by rejecting him shortly after her virginal curiosity had led her to a sexual encounter with him. Dollie is thus constructed as the sexually and physically repressed white woman (she feels vulgarised by activity and repulsed by the “strange squalor of the primitive forest”, while even her “sudden naïve impulse of recklessness” is

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<sup>217</sup> Lawrence, “The Princess”, p. 168.

<sup>218</sup> Lawrence, “The Princess”, p. 171.

<sup>219</sup> Lawrence, “The Princess”, p. 181.

<sup>220</sup> Lawrence, “The Princess”, p. 173.

<sup>221</sup> Significantly, the term “inhuman” is also used in relation to Gerald Crich’s destructiveness (see above).

given the repressed quality of “an obstinacy tinged perhaps with madness”),<sup>222</sup> whose merely transitory and mentally contrived curiosity over Romero’s sexual physicality is met by the impulsive and uninhibited sexual violence of Romero, who rapes her repeatedly. This war between physical violence and cultural violence is emphasised by the fact that Romero’s violence is intensely physical, while the men from the Forest Service, who eventually discover him and Dollie, kill Romero with the prostheticised violence of the shot-gun.

However, the narrative itself destabilises this dualistic reading in two central ways. Firstly, not only is Romero’s violence founded in a reaction to the repressive forces of American colonialist capitalism and is thus culturally constituted, but it delivers an abstract retribution which is so divorced from this target that it resembles the kind of repressed violence which Freud characterises as typical of morality: “Punishment must be exacted even if it does not fall upon the guilty”.<sup>223</sup> Romero’s reference to the wider culture which motivates his violence emphasises its abstraction humorously: “‘You Americans,’ he said; ‘you always want to do a man down.’ / ‘I am not American,’ she said, ‘I am British’”.<sup>224</sup> Such violence represses the specificity of the very object which it seeks to annihilate. Lawrence’s “inhuman” male now actually enacts the kind of prostheticised violence which *Women in Love* had critiqued. What was formerly a reaction to cultural violence has become a form of such violence itself – an idealised unconscious violence which, like fascism, attempts to release itself from its political significations.

Secondly, the internal conflict manifested in Dollie’s desire both for the self-liberatory possibilities of Romero’s “warmth” and “protection”, and for

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<sup>222</sup> Lawrence, “The Princess”, pp. 165, 184, 171-2.

<sup>223</sup> Freud, “*The Ego and The Id*”, p. 386.

self-possession and autonomy is repressed by the story itself which, following her unpleasurable and alienated sexual experience of Romero's "terrible animal warmth", insists that "she had *willed* that it should happen to her". This sense of a conscious and sustained effort to force a sexual encounter is undermined by the former sense of the confusion of Dollie's feelings about Romero, and the fact that the voice which first calls Romero to her in the night appears to emerge from an unknown, perhaps unconscious, self: "Where did her voice come from, and whose voice was it, in the dark?"<sup>225</sup> Similarly, Romero's claim to have a "right" to Dollie's body (despite her refusal of him) because of her instigation of their sexual encounter, follows the kind of abstract, rigid logic, divorced from the dynamism normally associated with Lawrence's understanding of the impulsive male, characteristic of the kind of cultural violence which Lawrence observes in Enlightenment thought.<sup>226</sup> The tale, therefore, could be read as self-repressive, since it attempts to obscure the entanglement of the dichotomies it has set up.

Ellis suggests, in his account of the tale, that "the power and effectiveness" of its conclusion "derives largely from an even distribution of sympathy".<sup>227</sup> Indeed, as Ellis argues, the reader is given an insight into Romero's aggression, and an appreciation of Dollie's predominantly asexual nature. However, the notion of "an even distribution of sympathy" implies an equation of the brutality of Dollie's sexual equivocation and superior self-containment with the violence of Romero's repeated rape. Furthermore, Ellis himself notes that the story "works powerfully against" Dollie since "it is

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<sup>224</sup> Lawrence, "The Princess", p. 190.

<sup>225</sup> Lawrence, "The Princess", p. 188.

<sup>226</sup> Lawrence, "The Princess", p. 192.

<sup>227</sup> Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence*, p. 199.



Dollie who initiates the tragedy with her curiosity, and who has insufficient knowledge to follow the rules of her own nature”.<sup>228</sup> Certainly, as Ellis remarks, the story concludes with heavy irony: firstly, after Romero’s death, the Princess’s claim that Romero had gone insane is “accepted...without more ado”, yet the narrator informs us that “she too was now a little mad”; and secondly, the Princess “seem[s] pleased” by reverting to her virginal self, and marrying an elderly man.<sup>229</sup> Yet significantly, Ellis accepts here, unquestioningly, the text’s moralistic attempt to place blame, for what is seemingly Romero’s natural violence, upon Dollie’s apparently mental contrivance of the violation of her true virginal self. Intriguingly, this reading supports the text’s own opposition between instinctual and cultural violence while illustrating that opposition’s precariousness. For not only does the suggestion of “rules” to Dollie’s “nature” connote the kind of fixed construction of selfhood typical of the educational “idealism” criticised by Lawrence’s non-fiction, but the moral effort to locate responsibility for the course of events undermines both the critical and aesthetic assumption of an instinctual violence beyond ethics or responsibility (significantly, a notion raised earlier in Lawrence’s fiction - as we saw previously - by Birkin). Thus, although Ellis argues that we understand Romero’s behaviour without “finding it attractive”, the notion of Dollie as the initiator of events, suggested by both Lawrence and Ellis, inevitably situates Romero in a morally superior position.<sup>230</sup>

Ironically, then, Dollie’s own instinctual conflicts are suppressed by

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<sup>228</sup> Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>229</sup> Lawrence, “The Princess”, pp. 195-6.

<sup>230</sup> Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence*, p. 199.

both Lawrence and Lawrencians in order to support a highly moralistic narrative which warns of the dangers for culture of intruding on the realm of “wild unconsciousness”: a similarly paradoxical scenario to that of Freud’s death drive, since what is repressed here is the fact of the story’s repression. The narrative’s uneasiness over the dichotomy it sets up between unconscious male self and repressed female self is, moreover, exacerbated by the clearly cultural nature of Romero’s violence, and its absurd abstraction: the avenging of the violence of American colonialist capitalism through the rape of a smugly refined and virginal British woman as an embodiment of the prostheticised violence of the former’s culture. Ellis’s surrender to the story’s binary oppositions and its attempt to extricate itself from the political complexity of culture, therefore, ignores the sense in which “The Princess” aestheticises the instinctual violence of Romero with the naturalising pathos and passivity of a fatalistic death drive, while morally condemning the female culture of Dollie as a surrogate scapegoat for imperialist and capitalist violence. For if these features of the story are recognised, it would seem that “The Princess”, like “The Woman Who Rode Away”, could be read as a particularly ferocious act of cultural violence itself – particularly since, in its imaginative creation of an extra-cultural space, the tale re-imagines the historical reality of class struggle, in grotesque parody, not only as an abstract conflict between the unconscious and culture, but as the fantasised male rape of feminine “sterility”.

“None of That!” returns to the more explicit aesthetic “magical destruction” of “The Woman Who Rode Away” – that is, it is a psychopolitical fantasy of female/cultural death. However, strangely, considering the latter story’s notoriety and the former story’s neglect, “None of That!” leaves

little to the imagination: while “The Woman Who Rode Away” only suggests rape and never finally aesthetically enacts the physical violence of the death of its protagonist (leaving the sacrificial knife suspended in the air), “None of That!” imagines both the sexual violation and the death of its central female character.

The story is narrated in the first person by a man who has met an old acquaintance called Luis Colmenares, a Mexican exile, in Venice. Colmenares tells the narrator the story of Cuesta, a bull-fighter, and Ethel Cane, a rich and powerful American. Typically, Cuesta is the embodiment of the primitive, male unconscious self, physical power and destructiveness, while Ethel is the white, cultured female endowed with the violence of idealism and imagination. However, a more explicitly political touch is added to this story: Cuesta is linked, through the purchasing of a house, to one of “Madero’s generals”, many of whom were, in reality, the political opponents of Madero, the Mexican revolutionary leader; while Ethel is a socialist at the time.<sup>231</sup> Psychological identity is thus mapped on to political identity. This is most striking in Colmenares’ diagnosis of Ethel’s culturally obsessive character: she is a “false innocent”, “diabolic”, possessed by “terrible American energy”, covetous of (particularly, old) “‘things!’” yet eventually tired by her own enthusiasms, lustful for “the most dangerous men”, especially prophets or reformers, and, finally, “a socialist” and “no longer [...] in love with chairs”.<sup>232</sup> Through this catalogue of psychological and political features, leftist politics is finally aligned with obsessive psychological behaviour and fevered idealism and, as

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<sup>231</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!” (1928), *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories*, pp. 211-29, 211, 215.

<sup>232</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, p. 215.

such, even the consumerism it conventionally disdains.

By contrast, the brutal physicality of Cuesta is invested with an enigmatic, animal power which apparently transcends politics and language – but which is, of course, a kind of political identity itself. For example, Colmenares describes Cuesta as a bull-fighter who “play[ed] with the bull and play[ed] with death”, and as a “‘a marvellous animal’” with “‘melting eyes’” which were “‘not like human eyes at all’”: “‘when he looked at you, so strange and cool, you felt your inside melting [...] He looked into the last place of you, where you keep your courage’”. The narrator says of Colmenares, furthermore, that “perhaps the toreador had cast a spell over him, as over so many people in the old and the new world”. Cuesta is represented, then, as a flirtatious master of the death drive who does not look at “you” as a personality, but at the self’s site of unconscious courage. Through this language of mystery and the unconscious, even Cuesta’s faults, such as his inhumanity and mental stupidity, are redeemed. For example, Colmenares is willing to contrast a negative cultural humanity with a positive animalistic nature (one which has obvious bearings on the story’s reading of Ethel) in order to idealise Cuesta: “I have often thought, if human beings had not developed minds and speech, they would have become marvellous animals like Cuesta”.<sup>233</sup> Moreover, the inarticulate quality of Colmenares’ portrait of Cuesta allows Cuesta to escape the limitations of signification and culture necessarily imposed by language:

He did not talk, was very silent. He was not clever at all. He was not even clever enough to be a general. And he could be very brutal and disgusting. But usually he was quiet. But he was always *something*. If you were in the room with him, you always noticed him more than anybody, more than women or men, even very clever

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<sup>233</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, p. 212.

people. He was stupid, but he made you physically aware of him: like a cat in the room.<sup>234</sup>

Cuesta exists beyond the realm of culture and in the non-linguistic animal world of the instincts.

Yet his ability to “play with death”, with its suggestion of mastery over the death drive, problematises Cuesta’s relationship to the unconscious - or, rather, the fact that it implies he has a relationship to it at all problematises his apparent unconscious nature. For the notion of playing here, with its connotation of control and mastery, suggests that Cuesta possesses a kind of knowledge about the unconscious destructive instincts which elevate him above (in a power relation) the endlessly teased and humiliated bull - and, therefore, above the animal nature ascribed to him. If Cuesta is a “marvellous animal” then how is he able to maintain so easily his capacity to dominate animal life? His role as a bull-fighter certainly appears to distance him from the world of animal unconsciousness. There is perhaps something about the capacity to humiliate which is fundamentally cultural. Hence, Colmenares himself insists that Cuesta was “not just a brute!”,<sup>235</sup> while Cuesta is conscious of his powers of “enchantment” and imaginatively re-creates the bull-fight as a set-piece for a mass (and masochistic) female fantasy of sexual humiliation and murder.<sup>236</sup>

Cuesta is, furthermore, implicated in cultural violence through his treatment of Ethel. For instance, while Ethel exploits people, like Colmenares, who are “useful” to her or powerful, in order to gain an indirect cultural power (cultural, particularly because it is a power protected from the consequences of its actions by not being directly accountable for them), Cuesta

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<sup>234</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, pp. 212-13.

<sup>235</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, p. 211.

<sup>236</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, pp. 213, 222.

(though not interested by Ethel's endless attempts to "touch his imagination"), is "roused" when Ethel speaks of money, and his reward for destroying Ethel in their battle of wills is her half her wealth. Significantly, the power which Cuesta desires is that possessed by the Princess and her father – not so much a material, physical power as an abstract power and tool of prostheticised violence. For example, we are told that he was "mean" with his money and that 'he was rich, he had a big hacienda, and many people like slaves worked for him [...] I think he was very proud to be *hacendado* and *padròn* of so many people, with a little army of his own. I think he was proud, living like a king.'<sup>237</sup>

The notion of imagination also raises tensions in the story between culture and the instincts, reminiscent of those discussed earlier with regard to Lawrence's *Fantasia* and Klein's conception of phantasy. On the one hand, we are informed by Colmenares that Ethel could not "touch his imagination [...]" He was utterly uninterested. He actually *had* no mental imagination. Talk was just a noise to him".<sup>238</sup> On the other hand, however, when Cuesta talks himself (a rare occurrence), his words suggest the possession of an alarmingly graphic imagination:

'[Ethel] hates a man as she hates a red-hot iron. She is as easy to embrace as an octopus, her gate is a beak. What man would put his finger into that beak? She is all soft with cruelty towards a man's member. A white devil, as sacred as the communion wafer!'. But they can't leave each other alone! He can't because she is rich, he says: "'she is so rich and so white-skinned and white-souled. And my member is red'".<sup>239</sup>

<sup>237</sup> Lawrence, "None of That!", p. 214.

<sup>238</sup> Lawrence, "None of That!", p. 225.

<sup>239</sup> Lawrence, "None of That!", pp. 227-8.

Thus, while Ethel is attacked by Colmenares for wanting sex to be “an imaginative act”, an “imaginative sort of bullying” which is “death to a man”, Cuesta’s sadistic and hugely ambivalent desire for Ethel likens her to a “cuttle-fish” which he wishes to cook and consume: “Even cuttle-fish is good when it’s cooked in sauce”.<sup>240</sup> In the light of Kleinian infantile phantasy – the orally sadistic, destructive phantasies which Klein attributes to the infant – the distinction between ideal and instinctual forms of violence is once again confused: the imagination appears to be the form through which the unconscious drives manifest themselves – a notion which problematises the very position of Lawrence’s art in relation to its idealised unconscious.<sup>241</sup>

We might say, therefore, that the relation between repressed and repressive in “None of That!” cannot easily be described as a straightforward opposition between the unconscious and culture. Ethel’s desire to control men, including both Colmenares and Cuesta, through her imagination, physically repels them while in most cases (excluding Cuesta and most Mexicans) stimulating their minds. Thus, Ethel manifests both an extreme form of cultural violence and repression of the sexual instincts and a capacity to liberate repressed mental activity: Colmenares admits, for example, that “she was very clever. She flattered me, of course. She made me feel intelligent. She drew me out. There was her cleverness. She made *me* clever”.<sup>242</sup> However, this liberation is only an instrument of Ethel’s megalomania which represses its own and others’ sexuality. In this sense, however, Ethel represents the same kind of (cultural) power as Cuesta:

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<sup>240</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, p. 227.

<sup>241</sup> The paradox inherent in Lawrence’s use of art to convey unconscious processes is one of the themes of Linda Ruth Williams’s *D. H. Lawrence*.

<sup>242</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, p. 218.

'She was cruel to the body of a man. But she excited his mind, his spirit [...] She loved to have a man hanging around, like a servant [...] A man must be *absolutely* her servant, and only that. That was what she meant by the life of the imagination'.<sup>243</sup>

What kind of power is it, we might ask, which needs servants to confirm it? If it is a power which depends upon the need to dominate others, then this would be a highly cultural and repressive form of power which would in fact situate both Ethel *and* Cuesta on the same side of the culture/unconscious divide. It would appear, anyway, that Cuesta's authority over an "army" of servants "like slaves" shares a certain kind of political power with Ethel's control over her male servants (though one is largely economic while the other is primarily sexual).

The cultural quality of Cuesta's violence is further established by the implication both that Ethel's authority is primarily personal rather than social and that she is, like the "woman who rode away" and the Princess, "reckless" and "curious". Firstly, if Ethel is an "unscrupulous" "devil incarnate" in her intimate relationships, but frightened of public situations and "uneasy, like one who has a bad conscience towards society, and is afraid of it", then surely by contrast Cuesta is the master of culture in the public spheres of bull-fighting through the power he possesses over his (particularly female) audience.<sup>244</sup> This would somewhat reverse the terms – the notion of the cultural, external self of the personality, so rigorously attacked by the story, would not incorporate Ethel so successfully as it would Cuesta, since the latter has tapped into the female cultural imagination more deeply and effectively than "Rudolf Valentino".<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Lawrence, "None of That!", p. 219.

<sup>244</sup> Lawrence, "None of That!", p. 216.

<sup>245</sup> Lawrence, "None of That!", p. 213.



Secondly, if Ethel is “reckless” and “curious”, then once again Lawrence’s narrative actually appears to exercise a moral condemnation of such psychological disorderliness and impulsive curiosity, since Ethel, like her predecessors in the short fiction, will be punished by the instinctual male for her “reckless” inquisitiveness. Such a checking of female chaos and impulsiveness echoes Birkin’s rebuke of femininity in *Women in Love*, though of course in this case the violence of that rebuke is carried out to its furthest conclusion.

Nonetheless, the story’s critique of Ethel illuminates the insidiously abstract nature of the violence of the super-ego:

‘She said, the imagination could master everything; so long, of course, as one was not shot in the head, or had an eye put out. Talking of the Mexican atrocities, and of the famous case of raped nuns, she said it was all nonsense that a woman was broken because she had been raped. She could rise above it. The imagination could rise above *anything*, that was not real organic damage [....] One could even commit murder, and rise above that.—By using the imagination, and by using cunning, a woman can justify herself in anything, even the meanest and most bad things. A woman uses her imagination on her own behalf, and she becomes more innocent to herself than an innocent child, no matter what bad things she has done—’

‘Men do that, too,’ I interrupted. ‘It’s the modern dodge. That’s why everybody today is innocent. To the imagination, all things are pure, if you did them yourself.’<sup>246</sup>

It is the purpose of “None of That!” however to illustrate how mistaken Ethel is on this issue. Moreover, this is demonstrated through a physical violence that is not without severe moral connotations. Indeed, Cuesta possesses, paradoxically, both an animal and a supernatural being – a dual identity which

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<sup>246</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, p. 220.

enables him to be a moral force of retribution as well as an instinctual creature. For although Ethel is not attracted to Cuesta as an intellectual being, she wants to master her body which is desperately in thrall to him, and it is this servitude which is the means by which Cuesta can both physically and morally punish her: “‘he’s got something I haven’t got, and he’s stronger than I am, and he’s more an angel or a devil than a man, and I’m too merely human to get him’”.<sup>247</sup> Ironically, then, Cuesta becomes an idealised super-human figure, suggesting that the unconscious which is purified of culture does not lead us to a more authentically human and instinctual life but to the God-like role of moral arbiter over human affairs.

Ethel – and the narrative’s – idealisation of Cuesta, furthermore, recalls Klein’s notion of idealisation; a phantasy of authority as omnipotent and omniscient which should be measured against reality by the ego, leading to an increased knowledge about authority through the process of challenging it. In Klein, this authority is, of course, the internal culture of the violent super-ego. However, in contrast to the positive outcome of Klein’s notion of the successful infantile response to its own idealisation of moral authority, Cuesta represents a form of unquestionable morality inside Ethel’s psychic reality – “‘more an angel or a devil than a man’”. Cuesta is an inhibitory force in Ethel’s internal world. She is mentally destabilised by the power which he exercises over her – a power which is as much his repression as it is her desire. Once again, Lawrence’s female protagonist is reduced to “‘hysterics’” – that is, as in “The Princess”, moral punishment and psychological illness are united.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, p. 225.

<sup>248</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, p. 226.

The morality of "None of That!" is made yet clearer through Colmenares' injunction to Ethel that she should follow her impulse towards Cuesta, if she has one, since the body and the imagination are the same – her imagination "has nothing to do but to accept the fact".<sup>249</sup> That the story effectively punishes Ethel for failing to perform Colmenares' request seems to align Lawrence's narrative, once again, with the kind of repressive morality which so much of his work appears to oppose. For if Ethel were to do as Colmenares suggests, she would be repressing the part of herself that recoils from Cuesta and that attempts to relinquish her from the process of her own self-destruction. There is, we might say, a link between Lawrence's idealised pleasure principle here, which cuts out the reality principle, and Freud's domineering death drive. For Ethel, absolute pleasure would be absolute death of the self – to surrender herself to Cuesta's power would be, owing to the latter's own megalomania, to surrender her identity. Here, the complicity between pleasure and death, total liberation and total repression, becomes clear; suggesting once again that the repressed and the repressing must co-exist in a conflict which does not allow for the transcendence of a superior authority (a conflict which reminds us of both Klein's notion of the fruitfulness of infantile conflict and Phillips' notion of conflict as necessary for an authentic democracy to function). By contrast, Ethel and Cuesta's conflict is a sado-masochistic one which must end in absolute victory for one of the protagonists since both desire mastery of the other. However, that this conflict is resolved by Cuesta's arrangement of the gang-rape of Ethel, and her capitulation to Cuesta in the form of suicide and a will leaving him half a million dollars, suggests that

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<sup>249</sup> Lawrence, "None of That!", p. 226.

Lawrence's narrative enacts, rather than challenges, cultural violence, and does so in its most immunised form – through the morality of fiction.

For the choice which the narrative sets up between the violence of modern Western culture and the violence of a primitive Mexican unconscious masquerades as a choice between inauthentic and authentic forms of violence – since Cuesta acknowledges his own brutality rather than sublimating it like Ethel. However, Cuesta's violence is in fact, as I hope to have shown, a thoroughly cultural violence, not so much in spite of its idealisation as *because* of it, since the narrative idealises what results in an act of extreme barbarism. Moreover, the story itself offers an aesthetics of moral punishment and repression through its employment of the technique of aesthetic “magical destruction” which not only represses the historical challenges to American colonialist capitalism and patriarchy through its re-writing of them in terms of a battle between an unconscious male primitivism and an idealist female culture; but also aesthetically realises the former's physical violation and moral punishment of the latter. The title of the story itself exposes this moral violence since “*none of that*” was, we are told, Ethel's way of rejecting, “‘like hitting a mirror with a hammer’”, the sexual advances of a man.<sup>250</sup> In this light, the story appears as a brutally moralistic joke against female rejection of sex – the narrative itself gives Ethel “some of that”, whether she desires it or not.

Aesthetic “magical destruction” in the late fiction, then, allows Lawrence a safe space through which to repress the real historical conflicts of culture and symbolically enact violently authoritarian, social and psycho-political change. A female culture is attacked, as a surrogate scapegoat for the

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<sup>250</sup> Lawrence, “None of That!”, p. 216.

historical violence of Western liberal capitalism, and destroyed symbolically (with an accompanying, moral violence) without the risk even of the intellectual opposition which argument or non-fiction (such as *Fantasia*) would entail. This abstract violence ironically is the very culture which Lawrence imagines he is against – the kind of “magical control” and prostheticised violence embodied by the war (which he despised for the mechanical abstraction of its warfare) which is comfortably immune from any retributive attack. The women’s movement, social conflict and, paradoxically, culture itself, are suppressed violently at the level of ideas which, in their fictional form, seem safely secured from intellectual attack. In short, the Cambridge Biography’s reading of Lawrence and his fictional treatment of violence in terms of his *opposition* to repression and sublimation appears misguided:

In both versions of [*The Plumed Serpent*] he is able to express through Kate his own dismay at a violence and cruelty in Mexico that he felt obliged to acknowledge as part of the reality of human nature, not least because he could identify both in himself. To repress these impulses entirely would go against Lawrence’s belief in the evils of repression (and he was never much interested in the convenient Freudian escape-route of ‘sublimation’)<sup>251</sup>

That this argument is placed in the service of both theoretically supporting *The Plumed Serpent*’s “lottery” of capital punishment and attacking political reform only underscores the political and cultural significance of ignoring Lawrence’s evident predilection for the *sublimated* violence of literary “magical control” and “magical destruction”.

To conclude, Lawrence’s late fiction (like his non-fiction) shows a male instinctual self which, through the attempted concealment of its inevitable

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<sup>251</sup> Ellis, p. 111.

relationship (however complex) with modernity, represents a kind of super-moral violence of retribution against culture for its ideal “bullying” and prostheticised brutality. The repression of conflict and the use of aesthetic forms of “magical destruction”, however, offer only alternative forms of cultural violence rather than what are commonly assumed to be eruptions from a rarefied unconscious. The inter-war concern with human destructiveness in the field of psychoanalysis sheds an illuminating light upon Lawrence’s fiction in its claims for the always-already guiltiness of violence and the insidious all-pervasiveness of culture. By tracing the trajectory of these very concerns from *Women in Love* to the late short stories, I hope to have shown how Lawrence’s fiction does not successfully expunge guilt and morality from its various critical (and violent) spaces through those spaces’ idealisation in the terminology of the unconscious. In fact, Lawrence’s work is testimony to the very brutality of such attempts of the intellect to extinguish the reality of its cultural determination – that is, the internal nature of its seemingly external relationships. However, the origin of Lawrence’s search for such an abstract, internal, and violently counter-cultural space within the alienated psychological landscape of *Women in Love*, where all forms of cultural power are pernicious, seems to imply that guilt alone is either too much or not enough. In other words, perhaps the late Klein’s emphasis on the reparative virtues of guilt should be reassessed in the light of Lawrence’s work. Similarly, Lawrence’s attempt to find a source of opposition to the repressive violence of modernity possesses an awareness of the necessity of conflict which Freud’s totalitarian death drive does not.<sup>252</sup> That

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<sup>252</sup> Certainly, Lawrence’s sense of the pernicious nature of cultural violence and its repression of the instincts do not square well with the Freud’s emphasis on repression. For example, in Freud’s essay, “*The Future of an Illusion*” (1927), *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 685-722, Freud argues that “every civilization must be built up on coercion

is to say, Lawrence's work suggests that the worst thing we can do is pretend that we can renounce our own inescapable involvement in the violence of culture: firstly, since this is a process of abstraction (of the aesthetic from the political) which often forms its own vicious culture (such as the historical example of fascism); and secondly, lest, in a society which has yet to purge itself of oppressive power relations, we leave the violence of those who assume authority in our culture unchallenged. This might be what Phillips means by his suggestion that conflict is a condition of democracy.

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and renunciation of instinct" (p. 687). What is interesting here is that both writers share a belief in the need for political leadership by an elite, yet deny one another's central psychological claims; Lawrence generally dismissing repression, and Freud here neglecting instinctual fulfilment. This suggests that, in dismissing one another's psychological views, both writers' emphases neglect the necessary conflict of instinct and repression which might make for the democracy that both reject.

## Conclusion

In the course of this thesis I hope to have provided some new perspectives on Lawrence's *oeuvre*. By combining formal analyses with a cultural materialist approach, my aim has been to historicise Lawrence's texts while attending to the specificity of the texts' form. The result, I believe, is a Lawrence which, while incapable of evading the historical and material determinations of his work, cannot be unified into a simple and coherent whole – into the “radicalized” Lawrence of post-structuralism or the right-wing caricature of orthodox Marxism and feminism: Lawrence's work is politically as well as generically hybrid. The readings provided here, of largely neglected texts in Lawrence's *oeuvre*, reveal a Lawrence who struggled with the central problems of modernity in a variety of ways which cannot be reduced to a single, general ideological position. At the same time, however, this thesis has shown how Lawrence's work is not capable of transcending those historical problems, as liberal humanist critics have maintained. Thus, while each chapter shows a different writer capable of responding anew to his society through new forms and techniques, each chapter also demonstrates how those responses are constituted by the specific set of historical conflicts in which they intervene.

Consequently, this thesis should occupy what I perceive as a vacuum in the field of Lawrence studies. While Lawrencian critics have largely abandoned the realm of critical debate by channelling their efforts into the scholarly conduits of editorial work and biography, Lawrence criticism has been relinquished to an overly theoretical post-structuralism. In short, an under-theorised Lawrence has been replaced by an over-theorised one; an



abstract, ahistorical approach by an abstract, anti-formalist reading. For the recent growth in post-structuralist readings of Lawrence has resulted in the emergence of a version of Lawrence which deconstructs his texts to such a degree that they appear to get lost beneath their own critical deconstruction and begin to resemble the post-structuralist technique itself.

Robert Burden's reading of Lawrence provides a recent example of this kind of post-structuralist interpretation, in which he transforms Lawrence's *Aaron's Rod* and *Kangaroo* into their own radical deconstruction:

[...] even while seeking to express a doctrinaire masculine supremacy in reaction to the perceived wilfulness of modern women and the general post-war cultural disintegration, Lawrence's writing is much more radical in its modernist experiments than the critical consensus has noticed. Thus, it is that textual instabilities undermine the assertions of ideology.<sup>1</sup>

Here, a tension asserts itself between a highly reactionary Lawrence whose "textual instabilities" subvert his own polemics, and a "radical" and experimental modernist who actively "undermine[s]" the dogmas represented in his texts. This tension is the result of Burden's confusion of Lawrence's texts with his own critical deconstruction of them: since the novels can be shown by Burden to contain "their own critique", Lawrence has therefore "already saved the tale from himself" because of his "radical Modernism".<sup>2</sup> In a typically post-structuralist "radicalization" of Lawrence, the complexity of the texts' relationship to history is completely lost amidst their theorisation as agents of deconstruction rather than objects of it. Rather than reading the text's absences or "instabilities" *against* the text's "presences", the text's absences

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Burden, *Radicalizing Lawrence: Critical Interventions in the Reading and Reception of D. H. Lawrence's Narrative Fiction* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Burden, pp. 354-6.

are mistaken *for* the text itself, as if it had no “presences”.

This tendency to substitute one’s critical deconstruction of the text for the text under analysis can also be seen in the critical trajectory which one of the best-known post-structuralist critics, Anne Fernihough, has taken over the last decade. In 1993, the jacket of Fernihough’s *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* hailed Lawrence’s art criticism as “pluralistic and anti-authoritarian” and as a “necessary antidote to his sometimes brutally authoritarian politics and to the dogma and rigidity that pervades so many other areas of Lawrence’s thought”.<sup>3</sup> However, the book itself is less sure of this “notorious” “didacticism”. For though Fernihough’s study does not address Lawrence’s actual aesthetic practice, the issue of whether or not the pluralism of his art criticism is matched by a corresponding pluralism of practice has become an “interesting question”.<sup>4</sup> In a recent book review, however, the “dogma” which “pervades so many other areas of Lawrence’s thought” has quite disappeared – Fernihough celebrates “a Lawrence who consistently challenged logocentrism rather than embodying it”. Moreover, Fernihough argues that this pluralism, which the book under discussion views as typical of Lawrence’s poetry, is “relevant to large parts of Lawrence’s oeuvre”.<sup>5</sup> The post-structuralist desire for pluralism has become the very totalising procedure it wished to critique, while the object of analysis, Lawrence’s texts, are indistinguishable from the theoretical approach used to analyse them.

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<sup>3</sup> Anne Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), jacket.

<sup>4</sup> Fernihough, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Fernihough, “Blood and dirt”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 August 2003, p. 8.

By contrast, the approach of my thesis aims to offer that rare thing in Lawrence studies: an historicised Lawrence. Yet it does so without, I hope, reducing the formal peculiarity of Lawrence's texts to a congealed set of historical forces, as past feminist and Marxist criticism has tended to do. It is in these senses, then, that I perceive this thesis to inhabit a critical space which badly requires occupation in Lawrence studies – a field which has been largely abandoned by materialist criticism.

During the course of this project, I discovered that a wider range of critical tools would be required in order to produce a cultural materialist analysis which attended fully to the particularity of the text – that is, a mere attendance to form would not suffice if I were to historicise texts whose relation to the historical was highly mediated. The result has been a hybrid theoretical approach, involving the use of critical tools from structuralism and semiotics, and the use of comparative approaches (setting Lawrence's texts in dialogue with those of other writers), theories of national identity, and psychoanalysis. Thus, while setting out with the notion that such theoretical approaches would not be necessary to a cultural materialist approach to Lawrence, I came to realise that each text, in its specificity, demands specific tools of analysis (often developed outside the Marxist tradition) before a historical analysis can begin. For example, to examine Lawrence's treatment of violence, one would need to examine his notion of the unconscious; and to understand and assess the particularity of Lawrence's view of the unconscious, one would do well to compare it to the views of the inter-war period's psychoanalysis. Only by assessing such particularity, through comparative analysis with a similar mode of thought preoccupied by similar historical

problems, could one hope to illuminate the historical character of Lawrence's exploration of the violence of modernity.

Moreover, in extending the traditional critical terrain of cultural materialism beyond the limited sphere of class and "politics" into issues such as national identity, violence and the unconscious, I hope to have shown the potential within cultural materialism for a valuable contribution to debates normally conceived as extra-historical. In this attempt, I have aimed to illustrate not only the diversity of Lawrence's *oeuvre* but, centrally, the breadth of its socio-historical engagements and the inescapable politics of those engagements whatever their formal and linguistic manifestation. Consequently, Lawrence emerges here as a substantially different cultural figure from the one with which we have become familiar: one utterly engrossed in the historical conflicts of his society, and writing society, in a manner thoroughly unusual to what is typically viewed as either Lawrencian or modernist; and, moreover, one whose use of a diverse range of forms and languages did not allow him, as is so often assumed, to avoid the politics of writing.

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