# LOVE AND DEATH: A STUDY OF THE POETRY AND THE POETIC DEVELOPMENT OF D. H. LAWRENCE



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# LOVE AND DEATH: A Study of the Poetry and the Poetic Development of D. H. Lawrence.

By

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ABSTRACT

Lawrence's poetry is mainly a record of his developing concept and understanding of Love and Death. In his early poetry it is fair to say that his philosophy may be summarized by the equation Love = Sex = Death. And death represented a total loss of the self. After the period marked by the poetry of Look! We Have Come Through! the equation changes to Love = Sex = Death = Life. Death becomes a part of life and for Lawrence that part which is necessary in order to achieve real fulfilment. The ultimate of love and life is, for him, a full understanding and acceptance of death. Without this one could only achieve the 'greyness' of a 'death-in-life'. The writer hopes to illustrate in this thesis that Lawrence's definition of love and death, as positive forces in life, is the clearest modern statement in poetry of what Christ attempted to illustrate during his life time. His emphasis on sexual pleasure in marriage and his concern for a resurrection in the flesh recall two important early Christian doctrines which modern Christians have allowed to lapse. By re-emphasizing these, Lawrence, although not an orthodox Christian, revitalizes in his poetry the Christian concept of love and adds meaning to life by his acceptance of death.

CONTENTS

## ABBREVIATION NOTE

For the convenience of the reader I have placed citations of Lawrence's poems in parentheses immediately after the quotations. The abbreviation is as follows:

CP The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence, New York, Viking Press, 1964.

# PREFACE

To bring D. H. Lawrence into focus as a writer of 20th Century verse it is necessary not only to see him in comparison with his contemporaries but also to have him judged from a distance of forty years of history. As a pre-requisite to dealing with his verse in the context of modern poetry it is also necessary to confront the contemporary problem of whether or not his verse should be considered as poetry at all. Much of what is contained in his published selections of Pansies, More Pansies, and Nettles, would certainly be regarded by many as less than pure. But of prime importance in the consideration of Lawrence as poet, as is the case in any study of Lawrence's work, is the relationship between Lawrence the man, and Lawrence the writer of verse. The clarification of these problems is attempted in the Introduction. The facts about Lawrence's life presented in Section II of the Introduction have been gathered from a number of sources. Those of primary importance were: Lorenzo in Search of the Sun by Eliot Fay, D. H. Lawrence by Anthony Beal and the Introduction to D. H. Lawrence - Stories, Essays and Poems by Desmond Hawkins.

The body of this work, Chapters II to V inclusive is an attempt to allow Lawrence's 'real say' to be exposed. If this is done too uncritically and with elements of a eulogized apology for Lawrence, the writer suggests that this might be accepted on the grounds that Lawrence, especially in his early poems and certainly in Sons and Lovers was trying to digest Freud and that his philosophy was not at all clear. In each

of the main chapters, therefore, there is seldom any attempt to draw conclusions. It would be premature to do so without having discussed some of the material covered in Lawrence's Last Poems and to have linked these to the prose writings of his final years of life. I have relied for this approach to Lawrence on Eliseo Vivas who, in his Preface to D.H. Lawrence, the Failure and the Triumph of Art, says: "I could not be sure what I thought about him before I wrote it down, put it into some sort of order, and surveyed it from a few feet away". For this reason too the final Chapter deals entirely with summary and conclusion.

The loose classification of Lawrence's poems included in his Early, Middle, and Last, Periods used as the basis for studying the poetry throughout this thesis is adopted from Anthony Beal's outline of categories into which Lawrence's verse most aptly falls. The authority for all references to his verse is The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence collected and edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts. His Early Poems (1908-1917) containing all rhyming poems are studied in Chapter II. These illustrate the variety of his immature attempts at a definition of love and deal with mother-love, love of family and friends, love for nature, the confusing sister-sweetheart love for Miriam, and his early adolescent love for the women of the poems to Helen. Love in each case is close to death, for Lawrence, and the beginnings of his theme that love and sex are close to death is evident. In these early poems Lawrence constantly talks of male dependency and seems to suggest that love involves a yielding on the part of the man. The act of love becomes, therefore, a sacrifice in which the man loses his individuality

by yielding to or 'merging' with the female. This represented, for Lawrence, a type of death. Chapters III and IV discuss his Middle Poems (1917-1923) which include his 'poetry of the present' of Look! We Have Come Through! and the Birds, Beasts and Flowers selection - the latter containing some of his finest poetry. In Chapter III married-love is studied and shows Lawrence's temporary elimination of the theme of extreme male dependency on the woman. He achieves an equilibrium in love which is momentarily a fulfilment for him within the unity of the equal partnership of marriage. This period marks the beginning of his more complete understanding of love. He begins to feel that individual regeneration can only take place through the lasting communion of the bodies within the sacrament of marriage.

In Chapter IV Lawrence's search for love outside of human life shows his extreme empathy with a lower state of being which he first observes to be beyond the reaches of the mechanism and the robot-life existence of mankind. With the climax of the tortoise's 'crucifixion into sex', Lawrence returns to the equation of Love=Sex=Death. But his escapade in the world of lower animals and flowers teaches him that human love is no different from any other love. He begins to realize that love and sex are parts of our life design and if they represent a type of death we may be purified by accepting and fully experiencing this death.

The poems of this Middle Period illustrate a trasitional phase in his art which allows Lawrence to free himself entirely from the influence of the Georgians and to accept Walt Whitman as his main inspiration.

Near the end of this period there is evidence of his deepening introspective soul-searching for fulfilment in life. This was aided by travel through a number of modern societies and by visits to the relics of societies long dead.

His last period (1923-1930), covered in Chapter V, contained More Pansies and Nettles. Most of the poems in these volumes are not worthy of close study. They do, however, illustrate his return to feelings of despair and doubt that man can be saved within the present system. Also evident in these short poems is his desire for the regeneration of society rather than the salvation of the individual. His Nettles are caustic comments on the failures of human institutions and Lawrence's indication of disillustionment with them. Finally, in Last Poems Lawrence is alone and forsaken and death is looked to as a saviour in a desert of inhumanity to man. His Last Poems is an account of his preparation for and his journey into death.

As much as possible, extensive reference and cross-reference to his prose works have been avoided. His letters are constantly referred to, however, to show the parallels in his life for what he expresses in verse. The source used for all references to Lawrence's letters is The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited and with an introduction by Harry T. Moore. In Chapter V some reference is made to Etruscan Places, Saint Mawr, and The Man Who Died, as they are important for a full understanding of his mature concept of love and death. The latter two, although not written in verse, come close to being poetic. Saint Mawr, because its main characters have passed beyond a sense of real fulfilment in sexual love

and in the end seek the isolation and barrenness of a mountain ranch, illustrates Lawrence's sense of loss and despair with humanity around the mid-twenties. The Man Who Died is closely linked to the Love and Death theme because of its attempt to reinterpret the resurrection and its references to the failures of Christian love.

In the preparation of this thesis I have received help and encouragement from many people. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to everyone but especially to Dr. E. R. Seary, Henrietta Harvey Professor of English, and to Dr. D. G. Pitt, Head of the Department of English, for their gentle prodding and unfailing interest in my progress. To Mr. Stuart, my Supervisor, I owe a special 'thank you' for his promptness in reading each draft as it was completed and for his pointed and sometimes ego shattering criticism. Finally I wish to thank the Library staff for their constant co-operation and patience.

G.E.L.

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Chapter I

# INTRODUCTION

## SECTION I

> Lawrence belongs to that school of writers whose work is often more explorative, more interrogative, than affirmative. His function is to ask new questions, to confront us with new values and inescapable contradictions - or in his own words, to "lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and to lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead".[1]

D. H. Lawrence's work - poems, essays, literary criticism, travel commentaries, letters, plays and novels - should be read with some acceptance of this statement by Mark Spilka. More than any of his contemporaries, he demands the reader's attention by his poetic but often obtuse style and by the vehemence with which this style displays his instinctive feelings.

During his childhood in Eastwood he was surrounded by the growing mechanism of industry. And as he grew up amid the remnants of Sherwood Forest, he saw the smoke of the collieries blacken the landscape that had once been beautiful and fresh. Lawrence felt that the mechanization of life entered men's hearts and caused them to go dead in feeling and emotion and love. He was confined to England during most of the War years (1916-1919) by what he considered the suspicions of power-hungry soldier statesmen who believed that the might of industrial Britain was right. His socialist, pacifist and later his fascist sympathies led him to a desire to establish a community of loving and understanding human beings who could exist together without strife. The ideal location for 'Rananim'

was hard to find, however, and within his lifetime he had to be satisfied with those fragments of his dream which were achieved sporadically with friends at Taos, New Mexico; travelling throughout Europe and Italy with Frieda; and, close to his death, on the French Coast with the Aldous Huxleys and the Earl Brewsters.

It is not strange, therefore, that his poetry was a kind of "rage against the dying of the light".[2] His poetic 'light', however, seemed to be that of the Blake of "Songs of Experience" and the Wordsworth of "Resolution and Independence". These poets are:

> the prophets of this kind of poetry, which Lawrence has well described as "poetry of this immediate present, instant poetry . . . the unrestful, ungraspable poetry of the sheer present, poetry whose permanency lies in its windlike transit".[3]

Few of his contemporaries had any relevance for or influence on his poetry. The possible exception was the American poet, Walt Whitman. Whitman's verse, especially his free style, had a profound effect which becomes especially obvious to the reader in the Birds, Beasts, and Flowers volume. His earliest work was written in the traditional Georgian manner, but his desire to break out from its restrictions is evident in his letters to Edward Marsh around 1915 and 1916.

As a poet he had no pretensions to great innovation in verse form. He felt that in poetry he could say his 'real say' and he attempted to have poetry serve that purpose without any attempt on his part to adhere to any traditional verse forms. In his foreward to Pansies, 1929, he states:

> a real thought, a single thought, not an agrument, can only exist easily in verse, or in some poetic form. There is a didactic element about prose thoughts which makes them repellent, slightly bullying.[4]

Although it is the novel which gives Lawrence the greatest scope, his verse has often a deep significance; and where he has succeeded, his poems have made firm imprints on twentieth century literature. "The Snake", "Love on the Farm", "Bavarian Gentians", and "The Ship of Death" come most quickly to mind in any recollection of impressive modern poems. In an introductory note to Fire and Other Poems, Frieda Lawrence wrote:

> He just wrote down his verse as it came to him. But later, when he though of putting them into a book to be printed, he would work them over with great care and infinite patience.[5]

The existing drafts of "Bavarian Gentians" and "The Ship of Death" printed in Appendix III of The Complete Poems are examples of first attempts which were changed greatly before publication. To his critics, however, he lacked form and rhythm and wallowed wildly in 'tortured protestant sensibility and lacked the artistry and craftsmanship to help himself. R. P. Blackmur, in his article "D. H. Lawrence and Expressive Form", led the attack against Lawrence with such vigour as to warrent major consideration in any assessment of Lawrence's verse. Among Blackmur's supporters is James Reeves who, in an essay on D. H. Lawrence, attacks him as a poet mainly because of his lack of form. He says:

> What we have is not a body of formally memorable and satisfying poems, but the almost unshaped utterance of a keen and vital poetic sensibility, valuing the expression of feeling and mood, rebelling against discipline and control.[6]

Lawrence's defenders include A. Alvarez who, in his essay "D. H. Lawrence - The Single State of Man", admits readily that Lawrence was not enthusiastic about the rules of poetry:

> Lawrence's controlling standard was delicacy: a constant, fluid awareness, nearer the checks of intimate talk than those of regular prosody. His poetry is not the outcome of rules and formal craftsmanship, but of a purer, more native and immediate artistic sensibility.[7]

Vivian de Sola Pinto in his introduction to The Complete Poems argues strongly for Lawrence. For Pinto, it all depends on how one interprets Lawrence's statement about his art which prefaced the two-volume edition of his Collected Poems, 1928:

> A young man is afraid of his demon and puts his hand over the demon's mouth sometimes and speaks for him. And the things the young man says are very rarely poetry.[8]

Which side of the argument you choose rests entirely on whether you feel that Lawrence's 'young man' refers to the poet as craftsman. In this case you must then answer as Blackmur does, that "the demon was exactly that outburst of personal feeling which needed the discipline of craft to become a poem."[9]

The counter arguments by Pinto are quite convincing:

> By the "demon", Lawrence certainly did not mean mere "outburst of personal feeling." He meant what he calls in the Foreword to Fantasia of the Unconscious "pure passionate experience", or experience at a deeper level than the personal. In the original introduction to the Collected Poems (1928) he tells us that the "demon is timeless". The "demon" is what Blake calls the fourfold vision and what the Greeks called the Muse. The interpretation of the "young man" as the "poet as craftsman" is equally misleading. By the "young man", Lawrence means the immature writer who wants to make himself a mask to appear before the public by means of the imitation of fashionable verse-forms.[10]

This interpretation of what Lawrence intended fits more easily with what he said elsewhere in his prose writings and letters. One thing is clear: Lawrence had no pretensions about, or desire for, the production of 'fashionable verse-forms'. His letter to Edward Marsh attempts, although somewhat awkwardly, to dispel Marsh's objections to his lack of rhythm. He writes:

> I think, don't you know, that my rhythms fit my mood pretty well, in the verse. And if the mood is out of joint, the rhythm often is. I have always tried to get an emotion out in its own course, without altering it. It needs the finest instinct imaginable, much finer than the skill of the craftsmen.[11]

As Pinto points out, by 'skilled verse', Lawrence; "probably meant, skilled mechanical imitations of traditional verse-forms."[12] There is little doubt that Lawrence would refuse to produce verse of this kind. There is also little evidence among his poems that any was produced. "I do write", said Lawrence, "because I want folk - English folk - to alter, and have more sense."[13] Because of this there is always evidence in his poetry for what Horace Gregory calls: "the compulsion to make other people hear what he was saying."[14] It is this preaching element which Lawrence expected each poem to have, which tends to detract from his art. His idea of poetry did not fit any of the traditional concepts of what poetry should be. Rather than 'art for art's sake', Lawrence's outspoken desire was 'art for my sake'. His 'art for my sake' did not mean a concentration on a utilitarian value which would lead to didacticism. His art was useful more in the sense of embodying his passionate expressions of emotion and feeling. This paradox is present, especially in Lawrence's early poems. He obviously did not write for purely didactic reasons but inevitably his more successful poems have a 'preaching element'. When his 'demon' or passion or imagination are allowed to take over it seemed that the powerful feelings were mainly concerned about changing human habits. In his letter to Ernest Collings, December 24, 1912, he explains further:

> I always say, my motto is 'Art for my sake'. If I <u>want</u> to write, I write - and if I don't want to, I won't. <u>The</u> difficulty is to find exactly the form one's passion - work is produced by passion with me, like kisses - is it with you? - wants to take.[15]

There is evidence in his verse and letters that Lawrence was close to the Romantic conception of art and that he valued art, including his own, because it expressed the sensibility of the artist. In a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell in March, 1915, he commented on the life and philosophy of Van Gogh whose biography he was reading. Van Gogh, the 19th Century painter, had had great difficulty coping with the disorder and chaos in life and felt that men should work together more, in the pursuit of a unified philosophy of life. He was unable to recognize what Lawrence calls the 'animals of ourselves' and his inability to accept this dichotomy caused him to go insane. Van Gogh's problem, according to Lawrence, was that he could never reconcile the fact that "in the midst of an artistic life the yearning for the real life remains."[16] Lawrence continues:

> 'One offers no resistance, neither does one resign oneself'- he means to the yearning to procreate oneself 'with other horses, also free'. This is why he went mad. He should either have resigned himself and lived his animal 'other horses' - and have seen if his art would come out of that - or he should have resisted, like Fra Angelico. But best of all, if he could have known a great humanity, where to live one's animal would be to create oneself, in fact, be the artist creating a man in living fact (not like Christ, as he wrongly said) - and where the art was the final expression of the created animal or man - not the be-all and being of man - but the end, the climax. And some men would end in artistic utterance, and some wouldn't. But each one would create the work of art, the living man, achieve that piece of supreme art, a man's life.[17]

Within Lawrence's poetry there are examples of his vision and zest for life. He is always realistically aware of his 'animal' or 'physical' self. His aim for poetry, however, was much closer to Wordsworth's 'history of the growth of the poet's mind', than to the experimentations with traditional forms as exemplified by the poetry of T. S. Eliot. Lawrence's poetic development is a logical progression from birth to death.

> The shape and form of his work is that of a man's life, not perfected, not fixedly balanced, but organically growing, unfolding, changing, until it was over; ever renewed, even in the Last Poems.[18]

Lawrence continues the aesthetic and exemplifies in his poetry many qualities of the Romantics. But his revolution is in form and expression.

His "great care and infinite patience"[19] at publication time is evidence that Lawrence, although a casual maker of verse, took his poetic development seriously. His prefaces and explanatory notes published with each group of poems always represented an ardent defence by the poet, of any change in emphasis, philosophy, and style; and, taken together, they support the thesis that Lawrence's poetic development was not left to fate. Nor did contemporary publishing houses or, indeed, his reading public deter him from his poetic vision. His constant poverty forced him to be conscious of money until near the end of his life, but it is a fact that the publication of poetry was rarely used to support the family coffers. His novels often were. Indeed, James Reeves sees this situation as a real point of comparison between Lawrence and Thomas Hardy. Reeves concludes that although Hardy turned to poetry later in life and Lawrence wrote poetry throughout his short career with such casualness as to convince most people that he was totally unconcerned, they were both nevertheless serious poets:

> Neither, to my mind, wrote poems as a mere sideline. Current books of reference treat both principally - almost exclusively - as novelists. They are wrong. It would be much nearer the truth to say that both of them wrote the novels of poets. For Hardy, human life is a drama, a poetic drama in the spirit of Aeschylus. Lawrence is concerned very largely with something static, a state of mind rather than a progress of events. Moreover, his actual writing in the novels is often essentially

> poetic. Again and again he is concerned with fixing a state of mind by an image and an image by a word. If Hardy and Lawrence were, then, poets who wrote novels why, it might be asked, did they write so many novels? The simple answer to this is that people will pay for novels, they will not pay for poetry; and both writers had a living to make.[20]

The conclusion of this argument lends a great deal of strength and importance to Lawrence's final preface to Collected Poems, (1928). Both this preface and his foreword written in the same year, show the centrality and the importance which the poems had in Lawrence's existence. And to leave no doubt that the poetry should be related to his life; Lawrence states in this preface:

> It seems to me that no poetry, not even the best, should be judged as if it existed in the absolute, in the vacuum of the absolute. Even the best poetry, when it is at all personal, needs the penumbra of its own time and place and circumstance to make it full and whole.[21]

## SECTION II

David Herbert Lawrence was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, in 1885. His father was a rough and carefree coal miner. His mother, a former school teacher, was a woman of intelligence and imagination. There were four other children - two boys and two girls. The countryside around Eastwood was still beautiful during Lawrence's childhood but large collieries had been built among the fields. The family lived in one of the dull rows of brick dwellings built by the colliery companies. According to Lawrence, the villagers of Eastwood had little fear of unemployment and the manual workers took pride in their work. As they worked, half-naked, down in the pits, they developed a great sense of

intimacy and, like most men who work where there is a constant threat of bodily injury and death, they tended to drink heartily together when the work was finished for the day. And Lawrence's father loved to drink. Because of his drinking, Lawrence's father was often scolded by his wife, and family conflict and tension seemed always present in the Lawrence household. This had a profound and lasting effect on D. H. Lawrence. He was always deeply sensitive as a child - a characteristic which remained with him and is evident throughout his writings.

With the protection and encouragement of his mother, he was a good student, and at the age of thirteen won a scholarship which enabled him to enter Nottingham High School. After graduation he worked with a manufacturer of surgical supplies in Nottingham. Later, because of tuberculosis, he had to leave this job and returned to Eastwood as a pupil-teacher. He taught in Eastwood for two years and then began to study for his teaching certificate at Nottingham University College. He had already met and fallen in love with Jessie Chambers - the Miriam of Sons and Lovers. After graduation from College with his teaching certificate, he taught at the Davidson Road School in Croydon. His first poems were published in the English Review in 1909. In 1910 his mother died of cancer but not before she had seen an advance copy of Lawrence's first published novel, The White Peacock. Ford Madox Hueffer, Lawrence's first literary advisor, said of the novel:

> It's got every fault that the English novel can have. But, you've got GENIUS.[22]

With this as encouragement, Lawrence left the teaching profession and started to devote his full time to writing. In 1913 Sons and Lovers

appeared and is probably still the most popular of Lawrence's novels. Like most of his writing, it was about real people whom he had met and knew in his daily life. Sons and Lovers is the story of his own life. Paul Morel's father is strong and burly like Lawrence's, and his mother is dominating and possessive, yet loving, like Lydia Lawrence.

The unsure, yearning, and spiritual girl - Miriam - is obviously his own Jessie Chambers. The missing link in real life for him was the mature woman with capacities for fulfilment for which Lawrence yearned after his mother's death. This mature lady appeared in his life shortly thereafter in the person of Frieda von Richthofen, daughter of a German baron and cousin of a German ace who shot down eighty Allied planes in World War I. When Lawrence met her, 'the woman of his lifetime', she was the wife of Professor Ernest Weekley of Nottingham University, to whom Lawrence had gone for advice about his career. She had been married for twelve years and had a son and two daughters. She was six years older than Lawrence but was to outlive him by twenty-six years. After Mrs. Weekley's divorce, they were married in July, 1914. Most of the war years were spent on the Cornwall coast. Lawrence matured rapidly during this period, and in company with Middleton Murry, constantly planned to migrate and found a new civilization. His expulsion from Cornwall in 1916, under suspicion of being a spy, increased his bitterness at the war effort and caused him to see himself as an outlaw against 'this society whole as it exists.' After the war he left England and never returned except as a visitor. During the decade after the war his fame spread rapidly. He travelled widely and, with Frieda as a constant companion and supporter,

he questioned the old order in his poetry and prose. His works were vital, and always controversial as he attempted to "lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and to lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead."[23] He maintained a prolific output of poems, pamphlets and stories until his death from a recurrence of tuberculosis, at Vence, France, in 1930.

## SECTION III

In retrospect, history has not been unkind to Lawrence as a poet. Among the poets of the first quarter of the twentieth century, Lawrence today is by no means least. He is read as much as most of his contemporaries, except Yeats and Eliot, and good editions of his poetry have been on the increase since the late forties. The period immediately following his death was perhaps the most arid in publication except for those who knew him during his life and felt compelled by a desire to expound his life and philosophy of living. The latter is now only beginning to be understood. As an artist he had gained the respect of many contemporary critics. Just four years after his death, Herbert Davis, writing in the University of Toronto Quarterly said of Lawrence:

> Whether approached from the point of view of a traditional moralist like Mr. T. S. Eliot and condemned as a seeker after strange gods, or from the point of view of a metabiological Christian like Mr. Middleton Murry and condemned as a prophet who betrayed his vision, or from the point of view of a cultured man of the world like Mr. Norman Douglas and condemned as something of an outsider, Lawrence is still recognized by them all as a genuine artist, and as a man whose experience of life has a real validity for this generation. And Professor Cazamian, too, though finding in Lawrence's work an absence of the balance and perfection of the greatest art, speaks, in the last issue of the Quarterly, of the powerful fascination of his "tormented genius" which "seems to bear the very shape and show the pressure of our age."[24]

James Reeves, writing in 1969 agreed with Blackmur that Lawrence was not a good poet in the technical sense but claims that:

> Lawrence was an exciting and original poet . . . a poet of today - especially a young poet - can learn more from the imperfections of Lawrence than from the technical perfections of many better poets.[25]

T. S. Eliot, one of the technically better contemporary poets, said of Lawrence:

> He seems often to write very badly; but to be a writer who had to write often badly in order to write sometimes well.[26]

In his conclusion to the introduction to Complete Poems, Vivian de Sola Pinto says:

> Like Wordsworth he wrote a good deal of bad poetry, but, like Wordsworth's, even his bad poems are important, because they are the experiments of a major poet groping his way towards the discovery of a new kind of poetic art.[27]

Perhaps more time needs to elapse before we can say for certain that Lawrence is a major poet. No one will disagree, however, that he has written some poems of major importance. The comparison with Wordsworth and the hint that he may have found elements of 'a new kind of poetic art' are not too extreme as assessments of his quality as a poet. Lawrence's claim that form in poetry could be achieved by the expression of a feeling that was intense enough was certainly close to the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' advocated by Wordsworth in his preface to Lyrical Ballads. The poetic style which Lawrence adopted, although having few present-day imitators, has an abundance of defenders:

> The whole of Lawrence's power and originality as a poet depends on the way he keeps close to his feelings. This is why he had to rid himself of conventional forms. The poems take even their shape from the feelings. And so it

> is a long way off the mark to think of them as jotted-down talk. The span of the lines is not that of the talking voice. The tone is: that is, it is direct and without self-consciousness. But the poems, for instance, use more repetitions than talk. Yet this is a matter of fullness, not of rhetorical elaboration. It is part of the purposefulness with which the poems explore the emotions in their entirety.[28]

Alvarez, writing in the late fifties, is here attempting to defend Lawrence's style as having its own purpose and its own clear ring. Lawrence himself does a much more forceful and effective job in a letter to Edward Marsh in 1913. Lawrence lectures Marsh and insists on the value of his 'emotional pattern' which for him is more important than the 'obvious form':

> It all depends on the pause - the natural pause, the natural lingering of the voice according to the feeling - it is the hidden emotional pattern that makes poetry, not the obvious form. . . . It is the lapse of the feeling, something as indefinite as expression in the voice carrying emotion. It doesn't depend on the ear, particularly, but on the sensitive soul. And the ear gets a habit, and becomes master, when the ebbing and lifting emotion should be master, and the ear the transmitter. If your ear has got stiff and a bit mechanical, don't blame my poetry. That's why you like Golden Journey to Samarkand - it fits your habituated ear, and your feeling crouches subservient and a bit pathetic. 'It satisfies my ear', you say. Well, I don't write for your ear. This is the constant war, I reckon, between new expression and the habituated, mechanical transmitters and receivers of the human constitution.[29]

Throughout Lawrence's letters there are few statements of this kind, directly defending his verse. Lawrence never believed that poetry was his greatest strength. His hit-or -miss attitude caused him often to miss the mark but when poetry would serve and allow him to say his 'real say' his voice is often penetrating and profound. John Jones, in a review in the New Statesman, emphasizes the great power of Lawrence's poetic 'speaking voice':

> If you read the three major poets of the age at a moment when Lawrence has firm hold of you, Hopkins dwindles to a gadget-fiend, Mr. Eliot to an Anglo Young Catholic, and Yeats to an old booming bittern on a golden bough, miles away from life.[30]

Whether one agrees with this assessment or not, it seems to me the core of the argument is not difficult to accept - that in comparison to any of his contemporaries Lawrence is more immediate and physical in his consistent relevance to life.

## NOTES

1. Mark Spilka, "D. H. Lawrence," The University of Kansas City Review, XXI (Summer 1955), p. 291.
2. From a poem by Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night."
3. Complete Poems edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts, (1964), p. 5.
4. Ibid. p. 423.
5. A. Alvarez, The Shaping Spirit (1958), p. 142.
6. J. Reeves, Commitment to Poetry (1969), p. 227.
7. A. Alvarez, The Shaping Spirit (1958), pp. 142-3.
8. Complete Poems edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts, (1964), p. 28.
9. R. P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture (1954), p. 288.
10. Complete Poems edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts, (1964), pp. 1-2.
11. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore (1962), p. 221.
12. Complete Poems edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts, (1964), p. 3.
13. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 204.
14. Horace Gregory, D. H. Lawrence: Pilgrim of the Apocalypse - A Critical Study, (1957), p. 15.
15. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 171.
16. Ibid. p. 327.
17. Ibid.
18. Herbert Davis, "The Poetic Genius of D. H. Lawrence," University of Toronto Quarterly, July, III, p. 453.

19. See Note 5 above.

20. J. Reeves, Commitment to Poetry (1969), p. 262.

21. Complete Poems edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts, (1964), p. 28.

22. Anthony Beal, D. H. Lawrence, (1961), pp. 4-5.

23. Mark Spilka, "D. H. Lawrence," The University of Kansas City Review, XXI (Summer, 1955), p. 291.

24. Herbert Davis, "The Poetic Genius of D. H. Lawrence," University of Toronto Quarterly, July III, p. 439.

25. J. Reeves, Commitment to Poetry (1969), p. 222.

26. Martin Jarrett-Kerr, D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, (1951), p. 10.

27. Complete Poems edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts, (1964), p. 21.

28. A. Alvarez, The Shaping Spirit (1958), pp. 153-4.

29. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore (1962), pp. 243-4.

30. John Jones, "The Prose and the Poetry," New Statesman, July 5, (1957), p. 23.

Chapter II

## THE CHAOS AND THE FIRE

> And down his mouth comes to my mouth! and down
> His bright dark eyes come over me, like a hood
> Upon my mind! his lips meet mine, and a flood
> Of sweet fire sweeps across me, so I drown
> Against him, die and find death good.
>
> "Love On The Farm"

Lawrence's early poems are marked by their freedom of expression and their total informality. The poems, none the less, give evidence of the poet's early sense of longing after some fulfilment in life. This yearning was directly connected with love and death and his belief that only by freer and fuller relationships between man and woman could we arrive at a true realization of life. His verse rarely gives full expression to his deepest feelings but rather is a patchwork of his real thoughts. Nevertheless the presence of a sincere physical sensibility often reaches us through his better poems. This presence of physical vitality is evident in his poetry from the beginning, and in his early poems dealing with love and death, is conveyed to us by his attitude towards nature, his mother, and the objects of his early adolescent flirtations. Because the theme of death was present in his early poetry and is a constantly recurring theme in his work it is, perhaps, safe to conclude that Lawrence had an obsession with death as an always present phenomenon in his life. The death of his brother, William Ernest, in 1901 deeply saddened the whole family and Lawrence suffered his first serious attack of pheumonia the same year. In 1910, when his mother died of cancer, Lawrence felt that a part of himself had ceased to exist. During the bewildering months which followed his mother's death he seemed

to reject all women. His poetry, at this time, displays his feelings of sadness and his mood of longing for his own death. During November, 1911, he again became seriously ill and was forced to give up his teaching career.

Lawrence wrote to Helen Corke during 1911 that; "the one beautiful and generous adventure left seemed to be death."[1] And in the preface he wrote, but did not use, for the Collected Poems, (1928) Lawrence said: "In that year, for me, everything collapsed, save the mystery of death, and the haunting of death in life."[2] This closeness to death caused by the memory of the loss of his mother and his own recurring ill health is evident throughout Lawrence's work beginning with his earliest poems. His early poems, in many ways, contain the basis of his later mature beliefs. What Lawrence finally offers us is a spirituality which is brave and new. This spirituality is a recognition of the real substance of life - the flesh and blood. "To be or not to be" is the real question in his life. The elaboration of these ideas took him years to accomplish and they are best expressed in his most mature novels. Mr. A. Alvarez summarizes it in this way:

> the theme of both the novels and the poems is fulfilment, the spiritual maturity achieved between man and woman. But in the novels the fulfilment is acted out; the forces, like the morality, are "passionate, implicit." By contrast, the poems present nakedly the inner flow that runs below the actions, the forces before they are externalized in drama. It is as though they presented not the body that acts but the blood itself, the life line of expreience and feeling that feeds and supports the novels.[3]

The poems are the 'bones' or the skeleton-like outline of the 'body' of his work, the novels. They seem in some cases unfinished or 'spurts of

speech' waiting for completion. They seem in fact like Lawrence himself as he waits and yearns for fulfilment in his own life. And for Lawrence, as for many people, this fulfilment came in a variety of ways. For example, there was fulfilment close to nature, in close contact with his mother, and in the uncertain experiences of his early romances with Jessie Chambers and Helen Corke. Later he gloried in work and still later in travel and then in a mature relationship with one woman. It is this relationship which prepares him for the ultimate experience of life - death. Finally he longs for death. But inherent in all of these satisfactions and the burning desire of his life was 'to love'. "The great thing is to love," he says, "therein lies the excitement, the fundamental vibration of the life force. As to being loved, it is not so essential."[4] His early concept of love seemed to be a partially self-denying experience for him. This is seen in his poems to Miriam, to his mother and earliest of all in his first poem to nature. He desired to abandon himself to the manipulation of the lover. He craved for an immersion in the protective arms of the lover. He seems to desire this 'immersion' and 'abandon' to make his lover less passive and more desirous to love. His love required a type of delicate sensitiveness and was demanding neither of the lover nor the loved. In an early poem, "The Wild Common" in which the lover is nature, the poet is seen as observing nature and becoming overawed by the variety and beauty of the wild field. There is a lullaby effect and a dreamlike atmosphere created in lines like: "The quick sparks on the gorse-bushes are leaping" and "Above them exultant, the peewits are sweeping:"

or again in lines such as:

> There the lazy streamlet pushes
> His bent course mildly; here wakes again, leaps, laughs, and gushes
> (CP, 33)

The questions in stanza five seem to signify an uncertainty and there is an airiness in the previous stanza in:

> Dark, overgrown with willows, cool, with the brook ebbing through
> so slow;

But then the author comes suddenly into view 'Naked on the steep'. In keeping with the shifting mood, however, he fades into the landscape and we seem to apply the third question of stanza five to him as well - "What is this thing that I look down upon?"

He becomes, like Wordsworth's 'leech gatherer', blended with nature. But unlike the 'leech gatherer' the author is a participant in this scene. He acts but his actions seem to be negative. What he tries to do is to negate himself, to get outside himself, so that he can feel a real appreciation of nature. He wants to love nature by allowing nature to 'dally' through his senses. In the case of the 'leech gatherer' we are not sure that our fingers wouldn't go through him if we were to try to touch his body but in Lawrence's poem the author is jubilant in his 'substance'.

> "I am here! I am here!" screams the peewit; the may-blobs burst out
> in a laugh as they hear!

As soon as this physical presence is established, there is an abandonment to nature which is sudden but complete. What follows is real ecstasy:

> You are here! You are here! We have found you! Everywhere
> We sought you substantial, you touchstone of caresses, you naked
> lad!

There is no uncertainty in this description. There is no spiritual straining for fulfilment. This is substance on substance. The water and all the elements of nature caress him and he allows them to do so by a kind of abandonment of self:

> Where there is no 'abandon' in a love, it is dangerous, I conclude; mother declares the reverse. By the way, in love, or at least in love-making, do you think the woman is always passive, like the girl in the 'idyll' - enjoying the man's demonstration, a wee bit frit - not active? I prefer a little devil - a Carmen - I like nothing passive.[5]

From this statement, and from reading the poem "The Wild Common" both of which were written at the same time, we may discuss the beginning of his concept of love. In the poem there is activity on the part of nature, the lover; and on the part of the poet who is being loved. It seems that just before the final commitment both nature and the poet reached a type of equilibrium. Both realized themselves and they seemed at the same moment to abandon themselves. So there is a kind of death here as well. What happens is a negation of consciousness or as Lawrence would have said later, they shed 'the shell of the ego'.

Only by achieving this may we feel the unconscious. For "The 'unconscious' cannot be mentally known, but only experienced."[6] This mode of experiencing the unconscious in anything outside ourselves Lawrence calls, 'dynamic objective apprehension'. This may be compared to Keats' 'negative capability' and when Keats said:

> I lay awake last night listening to the rain with a sense of being drown'd and rotted like a grain of wheat.[7]

he was anticipating Lawrence's concept of love for Lawrence seemed to know instinctively what it was like to be a flower, a tree, or a pool of water.

Later in "Birds, Beasts and Flowers" he was to apply this extreme empathy to produce some of his greatest poetry. It is important to realize that he could negate himself to this extent. And this is where love comes close to death.

The early poem "Love on The Farm" is an example of love and death and sex in the idyllic setting of the farm. It is an account of a common every day occurrence on a farm, that of the death of an animal. The season is autumn, as indicated by the two short stanzas at the beginning of the poem. It is moreover an autumn evening. Everything is normal and death is present with love and life, as is often the case in nature. When the man who saunters through the farmyard makes his choice:

> The rabbit presses back her ears,
> Turns back her liquid, anguished eyes
> And crouches low; then with wild spring
> Spurts from the terror of his oncoming;
> To be choked back, ...
>
> (CP, 43)

but there is no escape. The man quite calmly and without anger makes his kill and the rabbit

> ...Swings all loose from the swing of his walk!

The act is complete, but not before we see through the eyes of the animals the fear of death as the man approaches. To the man it is so ordinary and inevitable that he doesn't give it a thought. His wife, however, the more sensitive of the two, reflects on his action as he approaches the door and feels snared like the rabbit. At this point we get just a slight hint of Lawrence's idea of love extended to the animal world. This empathy with the animal world is developed throughout his later poems until it reaches its highest peak in poems such as "The Snake" and his brilliant sequence

on "Tortoises". In these he likens both the snake and the tortoise to lords of the underworld and finds in them a means of communication with the 'Dark Gods' of the underside of life.

In "Love on the Farm" the dominating and brutal male kills the animal with the same unreasonable force with which he causes the woman to submit to his kisses. The woman in this poem, by comparing herself to the rabbit, brings death and sex close together and hints at a sense of unconscious joy in both.

> ...God, I am caught in a snare!
> I know not what fine wire is round my throat;
> I only know I let him finger there
> My pulse of life,...

The man moves as if in a trance, seemingly without concern or feelings but as if driven by some 'dark force', some great 'desire' which is divorced from intellect and reason but which moves robot-like towards its satisfaction:

> And down his mouth comes to my mouth! and down
> His bright dark eyes come over me, like a hood
> Upon my mind! his lips meet mine, and a flood
> Of sweet fire sweeps across me, so I drown
> Against him, die, and find death good.

Lawrence is speaking in the 'persona' of a woman, and her attitudes and feelings are captured very effectively. She sees in her man a contradiction in his 'bright dark eyes' but she, unlike the rabbit, accepts 'his oncoming' and the 'sweet fire' within her until she is completely insensitive to life and 'dies and finds death good'. There is a sense of forgiveness in this death. Both the rabbit and the woman seem helpless in the grip of circumstances and desire. For the woman sex is death but she finds death good and this seems to ennoble and enrich the sex act. But the

death which Lawrence refers to in these early poems is not the physical death of the end of life. It is more like a nihilistic despair which had gripped Lawrence. This intensified after his mother's death. It was his immature concept of death. What is confusing, however, is that he tries to create from it elements of destruction, especially the annihilation of the self, and at the same time to credit this death with powers of salvation and individual regeneration. In Phoenix he says: "Let me derive direct from life or direct from death, according to the impulse that is in me."[8] Later in his prose writing, especially The Man Who Died, Lawrence's fascination with death becomes overwhelming. In later poems such as: "Sadness of Death", "Oblivion", "The Ship of Death", and "The End, the Beginning", his statements about the ecstacy of death become most emphatic.

The confusion about love and death seemed to reach a peak, for Lawrence, immediately after the loss of his first love - his mother.

In his own life and in his early love affair with Jessie Chambers, Lawrence found it difficult to act. He was obsessed by the love of his mother and could never free himself to respond like the 'rest of men'. "Virgin Youth" presents this confusion and hesitation and the dilemma of his struggle for freedom in love, with Jessie Chambers and others of his own age, while he was still held by the umbilical cord of his mother's possessive and dominating spirit:

> Now and again
> The life that looks through my eyes
> And quivers in words through my mouth,
> And behaves like the rest of men,
> Slips away, so I gasp in surprise.
> (CP, 38)

This poem is one of the earliest indications that Lawrence was hesitant about physical contact with women. This is evident, however, only in Lawrence's early poems. The poems of Look! We Have Come Through! (1917) dispel any fear that this reluctance is permanent. Its presence in "Virgin Youth" does, however, further support the argument that Lawrence was still searching for personal satisfaction in love. Lawrence is confused over the fact that his manly desires come briefly and 'slip away'.

> And then
> My unknown breasts begin
> To wake, and down the thin
> Ripples below the breast an urgent
> Rhythm starts, and my silent and slumberous belly
> In one moment rouses insurgent.

He is finally totally overwhelmed by his lower self and: "He Stands, and I tremble before him."

The imperatives which follow indicate the further confusion of the poet. His final questioning cry :

> ...What hast
> Thou to do with me, thou lustrous one, iconoclast?-

is reminiscent of the bibical, "What Hast Thou to do with me Thou Jesus of Nazareth" and the next stanza seems to confirm the comparison between the author and Jesus. With his gentle exclamation:

> How beautiful he is! without sound,
> Without eyes, without hands;
> Yet, flame of the living ground
> He stands, the column of fire by night.

Lawrence may be comparing himself to a hesitant and unresponsive Jesus as he allows Mary Magdalene to touch and caress him in the feet-

washing scene but fails to respond to her 'like the rest of men'. He elaborates on this theme in a letter to Cecil Gray in 1917:

> You are only half right about the disciples and the alabaster box. If Jesus had paid more attention to Magdalene, and less to his disciples, it would have been better. It was not the ointment-pouring which was so devastating, but the discipleship of the twelve. As for me and my 'women', I know what they are and aren't, and though there is a certain messiness, there is a further reality. Take away the subservience and feet-washing, and the pure understanding between the Magdalene and Jesus went deeper than the understanding between the disciples and Jesus, or Jesus and the Bethany women. But Jesus himself was frightened of the knowledge which subsisted between the Magdalene and him, a knowledge deeper than the knowledge of Christianity and 'good', deeper than love, anyhow.[9]

In his early poem "A Man Who Died" Lawrence also looks forward to his novella "The Man Who Died" in which this theme recurs. In the poem he rebukes Jesus for his total coldness to womanhood.

> Ah, stern, cold man,
> How can you lie so relentless hard
> While I wash you with weeping water!
> (CP, 55)

Lawrence's consolation in "Virgin Youth" seems to be that 'the man who died' understands:

> Quite alone, he alone
> Understands and Knows.

Whether it was his strict Nonconformist upbringing or his devotion to his mother his confusion about love becomes clear to us:

> ...I
> Am helplessly bound
> To the rock of Virginity.

This statement seems to be a denial of physical contact with women - a denial which becomes very clear when we read the poems written to Miriam. The best example is "Last Words to Miriam". In this poem, important

because of its autobiographical elements, he gives to Miriam powers similar to his mother's:

> You had the power to explore me,
> Blossom me stalk by stalk;
> You woke my spirit, and bore me
> To consciousness, you gave me the dour
> Awareness--then I suffered a balk.
> (CP, 111)

This should be compared with stanza two of "The Virgin Mother":

> Twice you have issued me,
> Once from your womb, sweet mother,
> Once from your soul, to be
> Free of all hearts, my darling,
> Of each heart's entrance fee.
> (CP, 101)

In the first place Miriam has given him a new birth as an artist by her encouragement and appreciation of his talent at a time when few recognized it. Her role in recognizing his poetic value could meaningfully be compared to that of Dorothy Wordsworth's in the recognition and encouragement of Wordsworth's 'recollections in tranquility'. Miriam, however - in real life Jessie Chambers - did not anticipate only a sister-like relationship with Lawrence. His mother, in the stanza quoted from "Virgin Mother", helped him to understand his own life. Miriam and his mother are closely associated in Lawrence's mind and for that reason Miriam is denied. The poet finds it impossible to have physical and sexual contact with her:

> Body to body I could not
> Love you, although I would.
> We kissed, we kissed though we should not.
> You yielded, we threw the last cast,
> And it was no good.

This one stanza contains the dilemma so carefully explained in chapters seven, eight and nine of Sons and Lovers where Paul Morel is unable even to attempt a sexual relationship with Miriam because she corresponds too closely to the 'virgin mother'. Miriam's encouragement of Lawrence's early work was the warm womb from which Lawrence, the artist, was born. She is his artistic mother. But in the poem he feels a sense of guilt and his guilt-ridden soul is revealed when he admits that Miriam is 'shapely', 'a mute, nearly beautiful thing is your face' but he still fails to complete in her the 'fine torture you did deserve'. 'I should have been cruel enough to bring you through the flame'.

"Last Words to Miriam" technically and aesthetically is significant in Lawrence's writing. It is a good example, as Pinto forcefully points out, of Lawrence's concern for his craft. In his analysis of the textual changes which the poem underwent Pinto states:

> A draft of the famous and poignant poem called in the printed version Last Words to Miriam (Last Words to Muriel is the title of the draft, see Appendix no. 5) shows that Lawrence, even when writing a poem charged with the deepest and most intimate feeling, remained an extremely conscientious and careful craftsman. In the note Lawrence wrote, 'It took me many years to learn to play with the form of a poem: even if I can do it now. But it is only in the less immediate, the mere fictional poems that the form has to be played with. The demon, when he's really there, makes his own form willy-nilly, and is unchangeable'[16] Last Words to Miriam is certainly one of the most 'immediate' of Lawrence's early poems, but as the following analysis will show, the author 'played' with it a good deal before the demon was finally released.[10]

There are, in all, three versions of this poem: the original draft written around the same time as Sons and Lovers, (1912) the intermediate version printed in Amores (1916) and the final version from which I have quoted, first published in Collected Poems (1928). In the final version

the line in the second stanza, 'I was diligent to explore you' was changed to 'you had the power to explore me' thus reversing the roles of the lovers. This is an indication that Lawrence had not totally forgotten the woman who so influenced his early poetry. But because he indentifies Miriam with the love he has for his mother she too becomes 'bound to his rock of virginity'.

Jessie Chambers in her own 'Sons and Lovers' - a chapter in her book D. H. Lawrence a Personal Record describes a Sunday morning walk with Lawrence on the day before his mother's funeral. Her recorded conversation is as follows:

> ...'You know - I've always loved mother', he said in a strangled voice.
> 'I know you have,' I replied.
> 'I don't mean that,' he returned quickly. 'I've loved her, like a lover. That's why I could never love you'.
> ...
> With that he silently gave me a draft of the poems he had just written: 'The End', 'The Bride', 'The Virgin Mother'.[11]

The extent of Lawrence's love for his mother is explored by Middleton Murry in Son of Woman and the dangers of excessive mother-love are described by Lawrence in Fantasia of the Unconscious. Sons and Lovers remains, however, Lawrence's most accurate description of the influence of his mother and the demands of her love - 'the great asker'.

R. P. Draper accounts for the mother-Miriam struggle in Sons and Lovers with some accuracy:

> The extent of his mother's influence is testified in the almost overwhelming death-wish that overtakes Paul afterwards. She has lived so much through him, instead of allowing him to live for himself, that he now seems incapable of carrying on from an independent source. Eventually he struggles towards recovery, but it is significant that his recovery does not

> involve a renewal of the relationship with Miriam. The final episode with her seems to have been put in for a definingly negative purpose. His recovery is towards self-reliance; to turn to Miriam would be to turn to another mother-tyrant.[12]

Only through some other women can he be freed - the women of "Kisses in the Train" and of the other poems to Helen. Although in these poems he is sexually free and morally uninhibited, the transition to this period is achieved through the poems to his dead mother, some of which were handed to Jessie Chambers on the day before his mother's funeral.

The poems to his mother have hints of freedom as well. In these he begins to stride out into the freshness of a new relationship with women and with love. His letter to Rachel Taylor, written just before his mother's death states his firm desire for self-reliance and personal freedom:

> Muriel is the girl I have broken with. She loves me to madness, and demands the soul of me. I have been cruel to her, and wronged her, but I did not know. Nobody can have the soul of me. My mother has had it, and nobody can have it again. Nobody can come into my very self again, and breathe me like an atmosphere.[13]

The poems written to his mother are no boubt the products of a freer soul but total freedom from women was never to be achieved by Lawrence. His desire to love and his passion for intimate relationships would never allow it. As early as 1908 he said:

> The great thing is to love - therein lies the excitement, the fundamental vibration of the life force. As to being loved, it is not so essential.[14]

Lawrence, however, wanted also to be loved; and in his poems published under the title Look! We Have Come Through! he gives glimpses of love satisfied within the union of his marriage with Frieda Von Richthofen.

In the poems to his dead mother there are also hints of this desire for love, but the freedom and the desire for love are faint, indeed, in comparison with the sense of loss and the stark loneliness portrayed by the poet who by his mother's death has been ripped from the womb and is isolated in a cold, insensitive and emotionally barren world. "The End" written immediately after his mother's death captures some of the emotion and feeling of loss which he experienced. This is especially true in the last stanza:

> If I could have put you in my heart,
> If but I could have wrapped you in myself
> How glad I should have been!
> And now the chart
> Of memory unrolls again to me
> The course of our journey here, here where we part.
>
> And oh, that you had never, never been
> Some of your selves, my love; that some
> Of your several faces I had never seen!
> And still they come before me, and they go;
> And I cry aloud in the moments that intervene.
>
> And oh, my love, as I rock for you tonight
> And have not any longer any hope
> To heal the suffering, or to make requite
> For all your life of asking and despair,
> I own that some of me is dead tonight.
> (CP, 100)

The sense of loss and despair so evident in this poem is confirmed for us by the atmosphere, the mood and the diction of the poems "The Bride", "The Virgin Mother" and "Reminder". The last stanza of "The Virgin Mother" shows the emptiness and the incompleteness of his life now that she is dead. His questioning expresses a typical unbelief:

> Is the last word now uttered?
> Is the farewell said?
> Spare me the strength to leave you
> Now you are dead.
> I must go but my soul lies helpless
> Beside your bed.
> (CP, 102)

The same sentiment but with even deeper feelings of mother-love is expressed in "Reminder", where Lawrence allows himself to reminisce:

> Those were the days
> When it was awful autumn to me;
> When only there glowed on the dark of the sky
> The red reflection of her agony,
> My beloved, smelting down in the blaze
>
> Of death; my dearest
> Love who had borne, and now was leaving me.
> And I at the foot of her cross did suffer
> My own gethsemane"
>
> (CP, 103)

The reference to autumn as depicting the coming of death was to be a fixed symbol for Lawrence, and its use in his 'Last Poems' is a powerful reminder that man's life and death is as natural a phenomenon as the falling leaves 'at slow, sad Michaelmas' (CP, 697). The 'glow on the dark of the sky', 'the red reflection of her agony' and 'smelting down in the blaze of death' symbolically compare life to a burning candle - a symbol which is to recur and be strengthened in Lawrence's more mature verse. But the coming of death did not prepare him for the final act and at the end of stanza four he begins to realize what he has to suffer.

The 'gethsemane at the foot of his mother's cross' was to stay with him for the rest of his life, affecting his poetry, his life, and his love. When he arrived in America in 1923 and wrote "Spirits Summoned West" he yearns once more for his dead mother. He has now matured in life and love but still feels a tremendous isolation from society and calls to his mother's 'virgin soul' from the mountains of Taos.

In the poems to Helen, Lawrence is still confused and the emotion of young love often seems reticent and restrained. It is as though he

cannot believe his uncloistered state. The first stanza of "Release" is a good example of this:

> Helen, had I known yesterday
> That you could discharge the ache
> Out of the wound,
> Had I known yesterday you could take
> The turgid electric ache away,
> Drink it up in the ground
> Of your soft white body, as lightning
> Is drunk from an agonised sky by the earth,
> I should have hated you, Helen.
> (CP, 117)

Within the last two stanzas the chaos and the confusion are dispelled and and the burning young desire is released:

> But since my limbs gushed full of fire,
> Since from out of my blood and bone
> Poured a heavy flame
> To you, earth of my atmosphere, stone
> Of my steel, lovely white flint of desire,
> You have no name,
> Earth of my swaying atmosphere,
> Substance of my inconsistent breath,
> I cannot but cleave to you, Helen.
>
> Since you have drunken up the drear
> Death-darkened storm, and death
> I washed from the blue
> Of my eyes, I see you beautiful, and dear,
> Beautiful, passive and strong, as the breath
> Of my yearning blows over you.
> I see myself as the winds that hover
> Half substanceless, and without grave worth.
> But you
> Are the earth I hover over.
> (CP, 118)

This love is a freeing experience which helps him to 'see himself'. Her 'lovely white' washes his eyes clean of the 'death-darkened storm' and he begins on a new life of desire with his nameless one. The comparison of Helen with the earth may give Lawrence the attributes of

firmness and physical substance which he craves. Her characteristics of beauty, passiveness and strength allow him to be effortless "Half substanceless, and without grave worth." (CP, 118) His love, therefore, may 'hover over' without really getting involved in any intimacy with his lover. He gets the benefit of a love experience without committment and without loss of freedom.

Other poems to Helen such as "Return", "Kisses in the Train", "These Clever Women" and "Ballad of Another Ophelia" continue and intensify this mood of free flung sexual desire. In "These Clever Women" he is angry with the dominating intellect especially as displayed by women, and gives hints of his concept of 'blood-knowledge' as being superior to knowledge of the mind. His lines:

> The solution that ever is much too deep for the mind;
> Dissolved in the blood . . .
> That I am the hart, and you are the gentle hind.
> (CP, 118)

is an example of this, and in the image of the male as hart and the female as hind he looks forward to the poem 'A Doe at Evening', which appears in Look! We Have Come Through! In this later poem there is a gentler but yet a firm male assertiveness and the questioning comparison of the last stanza gives the male the final responsibility both to initiate and to protect his love:

> Ah yes, being male, is not my head hard-
> balanced, antlered?
> Are not my haunches light?
> Has she not fled on the same wind with me?
> Does not my fear cover her fear?
> (CP, 222)

In the earlier poem - "These Clever Women" - he is not so oblique. The same questioning technique is used in the last stanza but the language is much more insulting to the female. The questions are almost commands:

> Now stop carping at me! Do you want me to hate you?
> Am I a kaleidoscope
> For you to shake and shake, and it won't come right?
> Am I doomed in a long coition of words to mate you?
> Unsatisfied! Is there no hope
> Between your thighs, far, far from your peering sight?
> (CP, 119)

In this poem there is a desperation much more obvious than the gentle reference to male responsibility in "A Doe At Evening'. The male is here 'doomed' and 'unsatisfied' with 'no hope' unless he achieves a sense of completeness with the female. Although Lawrence is experimenting with a freer kind of love in the poems to Helen, he realizes fully that there must be dependency. The warm womb of his mother is exchanged for the womb of every woman. It is similar to the love of "Love on the Farm" and all the man can do is to 'die and find death good'.

The "Doe at Evening" is important for another reason - it is the first attempt by Lawrence to relate this theme to a world outside his human world. Later in 'Birds, Beasts & Flowers' he carries his theme to its inevitable end in that world as well. His sequence on tortoises reflects the same state of 'doom in a long coition of words', but at this point in Lawrence's life it has become a 'shout'.

Because the women of the poems to Helen remain nameless we may assume that by adopting Helen, Lawrence intended to create a symbol for all women.

Kenneth Rexroth claimed great symbolic significance for the Helen figure:

> Lawrence thought of her as dim, larger than life, a demi-goddess, moving through the smoke of a burning city. For certain gnostics Helen was the name of the incarnate "female principle", the power of the will, the sheath of the sword, the sacred whore who taught men love. Helen seems to have been the midwife of Lawrence's manhood. At the end something like her returns in the Persephone of Bavarian Gentians[15]

Whatever the reference to Helen meant for Lawrence his poems written within this group act as a transition between the confusing love poems to his mother and Miriam and the poems of Look! We Have Come Through! The latter group of poems are marked by the clear enjoyment and the reality of married life so evident in every line. Rexroth's reference to Helen as the midwife of Lawrence's manhood has a great deal of relevance as we read these poems of the 'immediate present'.

Lawrence achieves a real sense of substance and physical reality within the poems of Look! We Have Come Through! His early poems have merely set the background for the expression of a clear definition of love and death. There is no doubt, however, that the underlying theme of all his early poems is a desire to point the way to a meaningful relationship between man and woman. The death he is concerned with is not the actual physical death. "Physical death is not the great consummation", says Lawrence, "we have to die in life".[16] 'To die in life' meant negating the self to the point of 'merging' with the lover. To understand Lawrence's early concept of love it is also necessary as Kingsley Widmer says, to apply some negatives. Widmer concludes:

> By love Lawrence emphatically does not mean Christian mysticism, genial and salable personality, aesthetic sentiment, social benevolence, Platonic idealism, or any other form of generalized and neutered intercourse. Love is sexual love, though this is not to be taken in the narrowest sense, which Lawrence calls "sensation" or "mechanical sex". The passionate relation between individuals which Lawrence treats as the one valid love must remain distinct from generalized sentimentality and reductive biology, as well as from the aggregate pretenses called "normative behaviour." Lawrence repeatedly calls love a "mystery", and we may take it in a somewhat theological sense as a quality - rather than a thing, method, or act - but one that cannot be separated from the total, physical, person.[17]

Lawrence's concept of love as sexual and physical is illustrated by the poetry of his middle period. It took him until much later in his life to be able to explain more clearly what sex is. In the essay "Sex versus Loveliness" first published in 1928 he attempts to explain:

> What sex is, we don't know, but it must be some sort of fire. For it always communicates a sense of warmth, of glow. And when the glow becomes a pure shine, then we feel the sense of beauty. But the communicating of the warmth, the glow of sex, is true sex appeal. We all have the fire of sex slumbering or burning inside us. If we live to be ninety, it is still there. Or, if it dies, we become one of those ghostly living corpses which are unfortunately becoming more numerous in the world. Nothing is more ugly than a human being in whom the fire of sex has gone out.[18]

For Lawrence the self-destroying fire of sex and love, so evident in his Early Period, has a single purifying effect in the poems of Look! We Have Come Through! From the chaos and confusion of early love, he is fused into a unique gem-like being by the rapture of married love.

## NOTES

1. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 74.
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3. A D. H. Lawrence Miscellany edited by Harry T. Moore, (1963), p. 351.
4. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 19.
5. Ibid. p. 44.
6. J. M. Murry, Son of Woman, (1932), p. 179.
7. The Letters of Keats, edited by M. B. Forman, (1947), p. 228.
8. Phoenix, edited by Edward D. McDonald, (1961), p. 687.
9. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), pp. 531-2.
10. Vivian de Sola Pinto, "D. H. Lawrence, Letter-Writer and Craftsman in Verse," Renaissance and Modern Studies, 1, (1957), p. 23.
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12. R. P. Draper, "D. H. Lawrence on Mother-Love," Essays in Criticism, July, (1958), VIII, p. 288.
13. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 70.
14. Ibid. p. 19.
15. D. H. Lawrence Selected Poems, edited by Kenneth Rexroth, (1959), p. 6.
16. J. M. Murry, Son of Woman, (1932), p. 298.
17. Kingsley Widmer, The Art of Perversity, (1962), p. 116.
18. Sex, Literature, and Censorship, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1959) p. 51.

Chapter III

"A mad man in rapture"

These lovers fully were come
into their torture of equilibrium;
dreadfully had foresworn each other,
and yet
They were bound each to each, and they
did not forget.

"The Equilibrists"

The poem "Hymn to Priapus" although appearing in the unrhyming selection of Look! We Have Come Through!, first published in 1917, has more rhyme than many of the love poems of Lawrence's early period. The poem's short and concise statements which combine to make up each four line stanza allow for a freshness and an immediacy of understanding which are not evident in his earlier verse. In this poem the language is not slow moving and the autumnal symbolism is absent. The earlier poems conveyed the doubt and uncertainty of the poet's mind during his struggle out of the fire of maternal affection and his devouring soul-search for salvation through sex. The latter was particularly evident in the poems to Helen. In the "Hymn to Priapus" it is obvious that the poet has found himself, and the 'God of Procreation' has assured him that his masculinity has been proven.

He can talk of his mother without longing for her presence. He can enjoy 'the big soft country lass', without any feelings of guilt or without the remorse and agony of experiencing the defeat of his mother:

The warm, soft country lass,
Sweet as an armful of wheat
At threshing-time broken, was broken
For me, and ah, it was sweet!
(CP, 198)

There is a clarity of expression in this stanza which leaves no doubt about the 'sweetness' of bodily contact for Lawrence. The language is blunt almost to the point of crudeness. It is abrupt proof that love for Lawrence meant sexual love. His love is still not mature, however, and the lover, in this poem, takes more than he gives. The act blends with the words and both are short and sweet:

> Now I am going home
> Fulfilled and alone,
> I see the great Orion standing
> Looking down.
>
> He's the star of my first beloved
> Love-making.
> The witness of all that bitter-sweet
> Heart-aching.
>
> Now he sees this as well,
> This last commission.
> Nor do I get any look
> Of admonition.
>
> (CP, 198)

He is freed of all guilt and doubt. It is significant that Orion, the handsomest of all hunters after love, who has been through it all before, does not rebuke him. He too has remembered and forgotten. And it is time for Lawrence to remember:

> My love lies underground
> With her face upturned to mine,
> And her mouth unclosed in the last long kiss
> That ended her life and mine.
>
> She fares in the stark immortal
> Fields of death;
> I in these goodly, frozen
> Fields beneath.
>
> Something in me remembers
> And will not forget.
> The stream of my life in the darkness
> Deathward set!
>
> (CP, 199)

A typical recurring theme for Lawrence is an awareness of life streaming to death. This theme is fully explored by Lawrence during the twenties. His Last Poems are not only affirmations of the existence of this 'streaming to death' but strongly confirm Lawrence's acceptance of death itself. His study of and travel among ancient religions and cultures merely caused him to accept a cyclical rather than a horizontal direction for the stream. It is true, also, that when this theme recurs in Lawrence's work it is usually provoked by thoughts of his mother. Death is always dark and autumnal. And when Lawrence's awareness of death is strongest it seems more like a desire for a return to the womb of his mother - his first love.

There are examples in Look! We Have Come Through! of moments when Lawrence pauses to remember his mother. "All Souls" is one of these in which he mildly vacillates but in the end shows that his mother will never be totally forgotten. The image of the burning candle is again effectively used:

> I forget you, have forgotten you.
> I am busy only at my burning.
> I am busy only at my life.
> But my feet are on your grave, planted.
> And when I lift my face, it is a flame that goes up
> To the other world, where you are now.
> But I am not concerned with you.
> I have forgotten you.
>
> I am a naked candle burning on your grave.
> (CP, 233)

In "Hymn to Priapus" love and sex were "the great askers" because it meant losing the self by immersion into the being of the object loved. Even in this account of a casual and happy love relationship, however, he pauses

to remember that by it he has moved closer to the total devouring of the self in death. And he remembers his mother. If "Hymn to Priapus" were to end on this note it would have been misplaced in the Look! We Have Come Through! volume but because of the last three stanzas it doesn't simply belong but serves as a transition between the poems to Miriam, to his mother, and to Helen and 'the poetry of the immediate present', to be found in Look! We Have Come Through!:

> And something in me has forgotten,
> Has ceased to care.
> Desire comes up, and contentment
> Is debonair.
>
> I, who am worn and careful,
> How much do I care?
> How is it I grin then, and chuckle
> Over despair?
>
> Grief, grief, I suppose and sufficient
> Grief makes us free
> To be faithless and faithful together
> As we have to be.
>
> (CP, 199)

These stanzas create the atmosphere for and look forward to the mood of freedom and exuberance in sexual love evident in poems such as, "December Night","New Year's Night","Valentine's Night", "Birth Night", "Wedlock", "Song of A Man Who Is Loved", "The Song of A Man Who Has Come Through", and "One Woman To All Women".

The love poems in Look! We Have Come Through! do not demonstrate any enlargement of Lawrence's scope as a developing poet. They are interesting because of their simple and direct statements about his fulfilment in marriage. He said little in these poems which he could not have said better in prose, and his letters contain much writing on the same theme - love and happiness in marriage:

> One must learn to love, and go through a good deal of suffering to get to it, like any knight of the grail, and the journey is always towards the other soul, not away from it.
> Do you think love is an accomplished thing, the day it is recognized? It isn't. To love, you have to learn to understand the other, more than she understands herself, and to submit to her understanding of you. Is is damnably difficult and painful, but it is the only thing which endures. You mustn't think that your desire or your fundamental need is to make a good career, or to fill your life with activity, or even to provide for your family materially. It isn't. Your most vital necessity in this life is that you shall love your wife completely and implicitly and in entire nakedness of body and spirit. Then you will have peace and inner security, no matter how many things go wrong. And this peace and security will leave you free to act and to produce your own work, a real independent workman.[1]

Lawrence's view of enjoyment of the sexual act within marriage led Martin Jarrett-Kerr to praise him for re-emphasizing an element in the Christian doctrine of creation which has too often been neglected. In D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, he argues for the importance of sexual pleasure in marriage, agreeing with Lawrence's view as expressed in Look! We Have Come Through!:

> It remains true that Lawrence rightly suspected (with no knowledge of traditional Catholic theology) that something was wrong in the balance of Christian teaching, especially as so often expounded in his day. And we have to thank him for re-emphasizing an element in the doctrine of Creation which has too often been neglected.[2]

Lawrence's concept of love stresses the need for physical contact and pleasure, and begins to take on characteristics of sensual tenderness in the poems of this volume. It is this quality, which Lawrence elaborates on in his later poetry and especially in prose selections such as The Man Who Died, which allows his concept of love to be not an alternative to Christianity's, but a completion of it. It is significant that Lawrence first begins to add the quality of sensual tenderness to his ideas of love within the volume Look! We Have Come Through! It is much later in his career

that he begins to consciously link his ideas of sex, love, marriage and death with Christian thinking.

In A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover (1929), for example, Lawrence recognizes elements of his own concept of marriage in Christianity's:

> Perhaps the greatest contribution to the social life of man made by Christianity is - marriage.
> ...And the Church created marriage by making it a sacrament of man and woman united in the sex communion, and never to be separated, except by death ....Marriage, making one complete body out of two incomplete ones, and providing for the complex development of the man's soul and woman's soul in unison, throughout a life-time.[3]

Lawrence is striving for a oneness in marriage - one complete and happy state - from two beings. But he does not want total immersion - the one in the other - for he knows that in this situation the man will be the loser. As early as 1910 in a short note to Jessie Chambers he begins to believe this:

> ...I have always believed it was the woman who paid the price in life. But I've made a discovery. It's the man who pays, not the woman...[4]

At the time he was writing some of the poems of Look! We Have Come Through! he writes to Lady Cynthia Asquith about his continuing interest in this discovery and in the relationships between man and woman:

> The whole crux of life now lies in the relation between man and woman, between Adam and Eve. In this relation we live or die...
> A man who has a living connection with a woman is, ipso facto, not a soldier, not an essential destroyer, but an essential creator.[5]

His poems "Wedlock" and "Song of A Man Who Is Loved" illustrate this very forcefully. In "Wedlock" the simile 'like a flame around the wick'

recalls the 'burning love' of his early poems and aptly describes the burning into oneness which the communion of sex must achieve in the marriage sacrament. But in order to achieve oneness he must go through the paradox of the physical dissection of her body piece by piece. This gives the impression of matching:

> ...those breasts, those
> thighs and knees
>
> Those shoulders so warm and smooth:
> (CP, 245)

And when he has taken stock of the beauty of each item, he melts into a 'bonfire of oneness' with her. He is the flame and she is the 'core of the fire'.

In the second part of the poem "Wedlock" he assures her of his absolute dependence on her and repeats the simile of the flame depending on the wick. The response is still 'fierce at the quick' and the flame is full and robust. The repetition of 'my little one' becomes joined in the same line at the beginning of part three with a reference to 'my big one' indicating both the growth of his lover and his love. His enfolding action is still fierce but he realizes fully the degree of dependence:

> How suddenly I shall go down into nothing
> Like a flame that falls of a sudden.
>
> And you will be before me, tall and towering,
> And I shall be wavering uncertain
> Like a sunken flame that grasps for support.
> (CP, 246)

He begins to lose faith in his ability to remain equal with the woman. He fears the impending death which love must bring.

In section four his faith is suddenly restored and he sees her once more as a partner in the act and he appreciates her 'Firm at the core' of him. A faint equilibrium is reached which assures him that:

> ...everything that will be, will not be of me,
> Nor of either of us,
> But of both of us.
> (CP, 247)

Whatever fruits are borne forth as alluded to in part five will be from both and it will be a oneness even if it is only one 'newness'.

He still realizes their separateness of body even though they shall be together:

> And you will always be with me.
> I shall never cease to be filled with newness,
> Having you near me.
> (CP, 248)

The vacillation and indecision of this poem is typical of the caution with which Lawrence approached his own marriage. In the "Song of A Man Who is Loved", he is more agressive and definite. At least there is one joy in marriage; the physical ecstasy breast on breast:

> So I hope I shall spend eternity
> With my face down buried between her breasts;
> And my still heart full of security,
> And my still hands full of her breasts.
> (CP, 250)

In the "Song Of A Man Who Has Come Through" he demands more of himself and becomes more responsive and sensitive to the winds of desire. The atmosphere of this poem is reminiscent of the feeling of abandon experienced in one of his earliest poems, "The Wild Common". For example:

> Oh, for the wonder that bubbles into my soul
> I would be a good fountain, a good well-head,
> Would blur no whisper, spoil no expression.
> (CP, 250)

is a sincere expression of feelings of manhood and masculinity mingled with the gentle receptivity of an understanding lover.

This is a negation of self and a preparation of self to accommodate, without whisper, the soul and being of the one loved. When 'the three strange angels' knock, they are admitted without resistance and without fear.

"One Woman To All Women" is the climax of this short group of love poems about fulfilment in marriage, written in Kensington, 1917, and shows the poet in a final state of self-negation. He has again accepted the 'persona' of a woman. This is done to make valid the balancing, 'bone unto bone' and to achieve the 'glorious equilibrium'.

The equilibrium is comparable to what Donne attempts to describe in "The Canonization":

> Call us what you will, wee are made such by love;
> Call her one, mee another flye,
> We'are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
> And wee in us finde the 'Eagle and the Dove'.
> The Phoenix ridle hath more wit
> By us, we two being one, are it.
> So, to one neutrall thing both sexes fit,
> Wee dye and rise the same, and prove
> Mysterious by this love.[6]

In this stanza Donne makes reference to the simile of the taper burning, to the Phoenix riddle, and to the neutrality of both sexes because of a state of extreme love. Lawrence's diction is, of course, much more stark and penetrating, but the themes are surprisingly similar. Lawrence's language is extremely effective. The balancing of the bodies is believable. Even the cosmic bodies confirm the match in the second last stanza of Lawrence's poem:

You see he is different, he is dangerous,
Without pity or love,
And yet how his separate being liberates me
And gives me peace! You cannot see
How the stars are moving in surety.
Exquisite, high above.
(CP, 252)

Then the rapture of a new heaven and a new earth takes over and:

We move without knowing, we sleep, and we travel on,
You other women.
And this is beauty to me, to be lifted and gone
In a motion human inhuman, two and one
Encompassed, and many reduced to none,
You other women.
(CP, 252)

In an earlier poem "Nonentity" Lawrence repeats the death wish or at least longs for an annihilation of the self:

The stars that open and shut
Fall on my shallow breast
Like stars on a pool.

The soft wind, blowing cool,
Laps little crest after crest
Of ripples across my breast.

And dark grass under my feet
Seems to dabble in me
Like grass in a brook.

Oh, and it is sweet
To be all these things, not to be
Any more myself.

For look,
I am weary of myself!
(CP, 194)

Again, as in his early nature poems, the poet finds a sweetness in being fused with nature and in being a part of all these things but 'not to be any more myself'. The self-negation described in this poem is the poet's pre-requisite to full participation 'bone on bone' to be achieved within the sexual communion of marriage.

Immediately after the poem "One Woman to all Women" Lawrence included the poem "People". After the bliss of physical equilibrium described in the last stanza of "One Woman to all Women", "People" forces us to realize how few human beings achieve this state. The poem, too, is the beginning of Lawrence's theme of the greyness of death in life. In his anti-system poems of Pansies and Nettles to be studied in Chapter V of this thesis, the poet returns to and enlarges on this theme. In the later poems he sees most men as machine-like creatures with little hope for salvation because they have lost the 'fire of sex' and are devoid of love. In this poem they are referred to as a "Ghost-flux of faces" who pass "endlessly by" unaware of their own existence:

> The great gold apples of night
> Hang from the street's long bough
> Dripping their light
> On the faces that drift below,
> On the faces that drift and blow
> Down the night-time, out of sight
> In the wind's sad sough.
>
> The ripeness of these apples of night
> Distilling over me
> Makes sickening the white
> Ghost-flux of faces that hie
> Them endlessly, endlessly by
> Without meaning or reason why
> They ever should be
> (CP, 252)

The poem "New Heaven and Earth" serves as a sequel to most of these poems. Its opening sentence:

> And so I cross into another world
> shyly and in homage linger for an invition
> from this unknown that I would trespass on.
> (CP, 256)

is a clear statement of Lawrence's feeling of exhilaration and salvation. The poem is probably the most successful of the poems in Look! We Have Come Through! It is written in loose, free verse. The theme is philosophically profound and is fused with the language by the deep rhythmic undercurrents which reach climactic heights at the point where the 'unknown world' is entered and possessed. Part one is merely a statement of reticence and awe at the prospect of coming into the 'unknown world'. At the beginning of part two he explains his tiredness of the old:

> I was so weary of the world,
> I was so sick of it,
> everything was tainted with myself,
> skies, trees, flowers, birds, water,
> people, houses, streets, vehicles, machines,
> nations, armies, war, peace-talking,
> work, recreation, governing, anarchy,
> it was all tainted with myself, I knew it all to start with
> because it was all myself.
>
> (CP, 256)

The monotony of this list shuffles through the poet's mind like dead leaves in autumn being blown by a fresh wind. The fresh wind in this case is the hope of a new heaven and a new earth. The rotting leaves are the boring over-awareness of the mechanics of life. It is interesting to compare this stanza with the following from T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" written about the same time but certainly without connection:

> For I have known them all already, known them all -
> Have know the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
> I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
> I know the voices dying with a dying fall
> Beneath the music from a farther room.
> So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all -
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?[7]

The differences in language and rhythm are obvious. Eliot's language is smooth and flows gently whereas Lawrence's surges and bounces like hesitant waves of fact. Eliot is talking about the souls and minds of men. Lawrence is talking about bodies and the physical characteristics of a world gone dead for him. They are both, however, 'sprawling on a pin' and have reached a pinnacle of self knowledge. Lawrence's poem continues:

When I gathered flowers, I knew it was myself plucking my own flowering.
When I went in a train, I knew it was myself travelling by my own invention.
When I heard the cannon of the war, I listened with my own ears to my own destruction.
When I saw the torn dead, I knew it was my own torn dead body.
It was all me, I had done it all in my own flesh.
(CP, 257)

Eliot's self-awareness doesn't allow him to 'disturb the universe'. But Eliot was not so personally involved. When Lawrence's poem was written he was not only disturbed by the sexual and emotional numbness of society but was disillusioned with his own country because of its part in the horrible war. The awful sense of death was everywhere. And, for Lawrence, it was useless death. For him the war was destroying his country, and was turning his own people into murderers. His greatest anguish was the realization that people responded with so much enthusiasm and zest. This self-destruction of his nation was so hard to accept that, for Lawrence, England could never be the same. When the war broke out Lawrence wrote to Lady Cynthia Asquith:

> The War finished me: it was the spear through the side of all sorrows and hopes. I had been walking in Westmorland, rather happy, with waterlilies twisted round my hat - big, heavy, white and gold water-lilies that we found in a pool high up - and girls who had come out on a spree and who were having tea in the upper room of an inn, shrieked with laughter. And I remember also we crouched under the loose wall on the moors and the rain flew by in streams, and the wind came rushing through the chinks in the wall behind one's head, and we shouted songs, and I imitated music-hall turns, whilst the other men crouched under the wall and I pranked in the rain on the turf in the gorse, and Koteliansky groaned Hebrew music - Ranani Sadekim Badanoi.
>
> It seems like another life - we were happy - four men. Then we came down to Barrow-in-Furness, and saw that war was declared. And we all went mad. I can remember soldiers kissing on Barrow station, and a woman shouting defiantly to her sweetheart - 'When you get at'em, Clem, let'em have it,' as the train drew off - and in all the tramcars, 'War'. Messrs Vickers-Maxim call in their workmen - and the great notices on Vickers' gateways-and the thousands of men streaming over the bridge. Then I went down the coast a few miles. And I think of the amazing sunsets over flat sands and the smokey sea - then of sailing in a fisherman's boat, running in the wind against a heavy sea - and a French onion boat coming in with her sails set splendidly, in the morning sunshine - and the electric suspense everywhere - and the amazing, vivid, visionary beauty of everything, heightened by the immense pain everywhere. And since then, since I came back, things have not existed for me. I have spoken to no one, I have touched no one, I have seen no one. All the while, I swear, my soul lay in the tomb - not dead, but with a flat stone over it, a corpse, become corpse-cold. And nobody existed, because I did not exist myself. Yet I was not dead - only passed over - trespassed - and all the time I knew I should have to rise again.[8]

His horror of the war and of the futile death it produced provoked Lawrence to action. His letters to Bertrand Russell during this period indicate that they both opposed the war. At one point they planned to give a series of lectures in London, but as Harry T. Moore indicates; "the project fell through when they quarrelled over philosophic issues."[9]

Lawrence's disappointment with England caused him to renew and to seriously reconsider his idea of 'Rananim'. One of the earliest indications of this idea was given in a letter to W. E. Hopkin in January, 1915:

> I want to gather together about twenty souls and sail away from this world of war and squalor and found a little colony where there shall be no money but a sort of communism as far as necessaries of life go, and some real decency. It is to be a colony built up on the real decency which is in each member of the community. A community which is established upon the assumption of goodness in the members, instead of the assumption of badness.
>
> What do you think of it? I think it should be quite feasible. We keep brooding the idea - I and some friends.[10]

Lawrence never experienced any real revolution as did some of the Romantics, especially Byron in Greece, and, to a lesser extent, Wordsworth in France. His desire to change society is, nevertheless, reminiscent of the same quality in most of the Romantic poets. It is, at least, more direct than T. S. Eliot's hesitancy in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". The lines from "New Heaven and Earth":

> When I saw the torn dead, I knew it was my own torn dead body.
> It was all me, I had done it all in my own flesh.
> (CP, 257)

are also a good example of the great gulf between Lawrence and Eliot. Lawrence's resurrection, when it comes, will be resurrection in the flesh, whereas Eliot's will be spiritual. While Lawrence must say:

> ...I listened with my
> own ears to my own destruction.
> (CP, 257)

Eliot says:

> We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
> By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
> Till human voices wake us, and we drown.[11]

Lawrence's poem continues:

> ...I knew it all already, I antici-
> pated it all in my soul
> because I was the author and the result
> I was the God and the creation at once;
> creator, I looked at my creation;
> created, I looked at myself, the creator:
> (CP, 257)

Total self-realization must lead to total self-negation in Lawrence's philosophy of the cycle through which the soul must go, in order to reach true life. The self-negation of the supreme equilibrium in love as explained in "One Woman to all Women" is referred to in the lines:

> I was a lover, I kissed the woman I loved,
> and God of horror I was kissing also myself.
> (CP, 257)

And in part four the 'self' for Lawrence reaches the death he prays for:

> At last death, sufficiency of death,
> and that at last relieved me, I died.
> (CP, 258)

But from the ashes, in phoenix fashion, he is to rise again in glory:

> For when it is quite, quite nothing, then it is everything.
> (CP, 258)

This paradox of accomplishing a resurrection and of achieving great strength out of total darkness and total annihilation is central for Lawrence in his conception of love and death. This is also at the core of Lawrence's quarrel with Christianity. His quarrel with Jesus is that He was too impersonal and attempted to embrace multitudes when in reality He did not successfully

embrace one single individual. For Lawrence, individual salvation must be of prime importance, and a sensual, touching, love must be the first step in spiritual regeneration. This is why his resurrection must be a resurrection in the flesh. Later in The Man Who Died, rather than continuing this quarrel with Christianity, Lawrence seems to move closer to a reconciliation. Graham Hough explains:

> In other places sensual love is seen as the negation of 'white' love, agape, Christian love. Here referring to The Man Who Died we come near to seeing it as a transcendence, reached by death and rebirth. And this means that it represents, not the climax of his art, which it certainly is not, but a climactic point in the development of his thought.[12]

This view of love and death as being part of life gives credibility to Lawrence's 'resurrection in the flesh'. In The Man Who Died, Lawrence, by referring to the prophet's awakening to the new life of the body as a result of his realizing that the peasant woman desires him, really emphasizes the importance of sensual love. The prophet's new realization of himself is a re-birth of profound significance to Lawrence's reassessment of Christianity:

> Risen from the dead, he had realised at last that the body, too, has its little life; and beyond that, the greater life. He was virgin, in recoil from the little, greedy life of the body. But now he knew that virginity is a form of greed; and that the body rises again to give and to take, to take and to give, ungreedily.[13]

In A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover he constantly links the importance of phallic love with the Christian marriage sacrament:

> The great saints only live, even Jesus only lives to add a new fulfillment and a new beauty to the permanent sacrament of marriage.
> But - and this but crashes through our heart like a bullet - marriage is no marriage that is not basically and permanently phallic...[14]

By attempting to re-emphasize this theme in his later prose Lawrence seems to desire either a return to basic Christian doctrine or to predict a second-coming as Yeats did. What Lawrence demands is not too un-Christian according to Martin Jarrett-Kerr. In D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence he praises Lawrence for his sense of "the ISness rather than the OUGHTness of religion".[15] He reminds us that Lawrence's belief in the 'phallus' and in the 'resurrection of the flesh' is really associated with three central doctrines of the Christian faith. In supporting this argument Mark Spilka quotes freely from the first edition of Father Tiverton's book and sums up the discussion as follows:

> ...where Lawrence sees the body as a central point of man's connectedness with man, "the Christian doctrine of creation would imply the same" (p.136); where Lawrence emphasizes the religious and spontaneous nature of sexual love, "this surely coincides with the Christian view, according to which the physical is to be taken, wholly, gratefully, and offered to God in the very act (p.81) - and to support this argument he even cites the Christian existentialists, "who believe that communion is possible" (p.137); finally, where Lawrence argues that the Church must stress Christ Risen in the flesh, glad and whole, above and beyond Christ crucified, Tiverton cites the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body (p.115). Thus, on at least three counts - creation, the marriage sacrament, and Christ's resurrection--"Lawrence can teach Christians lessons they should have known but have forgotten" (p.x).
>
> If Tiverton is correct, then the pagan element in Christianity is much stronger than most of its adherents would admit. For there seems to be room in the Christian metaphysic for the "primitive indefinite" which Lawrence always tries to evoke.[16]

This belief in a "primitive indefinite" seemed to be connected with Lawrence's pantheism and his belief in a 'God of Life'. In Phoenix, written near the end of his life and published posthumously, he refers to the necessity for a faith in this 'God of Life' as he once again criticizes the Christian churches:

> But the Catholic Church needs to be born again, quite as badly as the Protestant. "I cannot feel there is much more belief in God in Naples or Barcelona, than there is in Liverpool or Leeds. Yet they are truly Catholic cities. No, the Catholic Church has fallen into the same disaster as the Protestant: of preaching a moral God, instead of Almighty God, the God of strength and glory and might and wisdom: a "good" God, instead of a vital and magnificent God. And we no longer any of us really believe in an exclusively "good" God. The Catholic Church in the cities is as dead as the Protestant Church. Only in the country, among peasants, where the old ritual of the seasons lives on in its beauty, is there still some living, instinctive "faith" in the God of Life.[17]

His reference to the 'ritual of the seasons' is an indication of the return to the theme of the cyclical motion of life -- a motion which included love and death as part of life. In his "Ship of Death" of the Last Poems this theme is finally brought to fruition; and Lawrence, with his own death pushing in upon him, accepts the same cyclical renewal from the burning ashes of the phoenix as his own fate. The difference in Last Poems is that the death is 'by water', not by fire. In his Last Poems there is a variety of philosophies, ancient religions, and cultures mingled with Christianity which makes the cycle seem all the more universal. This idea is not unlike Yeats' cyclical view of life. Parts five and six of Lawrence's "New Heaven and Earth" could profitably be compared to Yeats' "Second Coming":

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.[18]

The difference, like that between Lawrence and Eliot, is that Lawrence is personally involved and Yeats, at this point in his life, is more an observer of the world scene. 'The tiger bursting into sunlight' is Lawrence; "new risen, resurrected, starved from the tomb, starved from a life of devouring always myself" (CP, 259) but the 'rough beast that slouches towards Bethlehem to be born' is, for Yeats, 'the vast image' from the collective conscience of the world. In contrast, Lawrence, himself, in the substance, is experiencing and "touching the unknown, the real unknown, the unknown unknown".

Lawrence's comparison with the world discoverers in section six is reminiscent of Donne's cry in experiencing his undressed mistress:

> Oh my America! My new-found-land,
> My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd,[19]

And the new-found-land for Lawrence was Frieda:

> It was the flank of my wife
> whom I married years ago
> at whose side I have lain for over a
> thousand nights
> and all that previous while, she was I, she was I,
> I touched her, it was I who touched and
> I who was touched.

The mystery of the dream is retained throughout sections seven and eight and he remains a 'mad man in rapture' held by the 'current of life supreme'. The allegory is not wasted. "New Heaven And Earth" has 'widened the gyre' of Lawrence's experience and deepened his understanding of love and life and death.

The 'poetry of the present' has given Lawrence some fulfilment. Of the remaining poems "Elysium", which comes immediately after "New Heaven And Earth" should be read because it is a continuation of the descriptive

silence, beauty, and stillness with which the latter poem ends. "Elysium" is the calm after the storm of the bursting rapture of resurrection into a new life. "Manifesto" is interesting, too, for the staccato fashion in which it bares the bones of the philosophy of life that is firm and clear. When Lawrence states:

> Let them praise desire who will,
> but only fulfilment will do,
> real fulfilment, nothing short.
> It is our ratification,
> Our heaven, as a matter of fact.
> Immortality, the heaven, is only a projection of this strange
> but actual fulfilment,
> herein the flesh.
>
> (CP, 265)

he leaves little to the imagination and it is all because of Freida. If Helen was his 'mid-wife into manhood'; it was Freida who constantly gave him the strength and courage to remain there.

In a letter to Catherine Carswell, July 16, 1916, he states this same belief in fulfilment in his most forceful prose;

> What we want is the fulfilment of our desires, down to the deepest and most spiritual desire. The body is immediate, the spirit is beyond: first the leaves and then the flower: but the plant is an integral whole: therefore every desire, to the very deepest. And I shall find my deepest desire to be a wish for pure, unadulterated relationship with the universe, for truth in being. My pure relationship with one woman is marriage, physical and spiritual: with another, is another form of happiness, according to our nature. And so on for ever. It is this establishing of pure relationships which makes heaven, wherein we are immortal, like the angels, and mortal, like men, both. And the way to immortality is in the fulfilment of desire. I would never forbid any man to make war, or to go to war. Only I would say, 'Oh, if you don't spontaneously and perfectly want to go to war, then it is wrong to go - don't let any extraneous consideration influence you, nor any old tradition mechanically compel you. If you want to go to war, go, it is your righteousness.' Because, you see, what intimation of immortality have we, save our spontaneous wishes?[20]

To be, or not to be, is still the question.
This ache for being is the ultimate hunger.
And for myself, I can say "almost, almost, oh, very nearly".
Yet something remains.
Something shall not always remain.
For the main already is fulfilment.

(CP, 265)

'This ache for being' was always present and the something that remained was the mystery which he sought to solve because of the challenge that "now we see through the glass dimly."[21] Lawrence could not be satisfied:

We shall not look before and after.
We shall be, now
We shall know in full.
We, the mystic NOW.

(CP, 268)

The 'poetry of the present' has given Lawrence a rapture of fulfilment, but for him it is the beginning of new perceptions and deeper feelings.

In Lawrence's letter to Koteliansky he tries to explain:

> There has been a curious subtle mystic invisibleness in the days, a beauty that is not in the eyes. -Mystically, the world does not exist to me any more: nor wars nor publishings nor Gertlers nor Ottolines: I have lost it all, somehow. There is another world of reality, actual and mystical at once, not the world of the Whole, but the world of the essential now, here, immediate, a strange actual hereabouts, no before and after to strive with: not worth it.[22]

To capture the reality of this world, Lawrence transcends the world of human beings and seeks his answers to the mystery in the world of birds, and beasts and flowers.

NOTES

1. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 285.
2. Martin Jarrett-Kerr, D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, (1961), p. 104.
3. Ibid. pp. 105-6.
4. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 61.
5. Ibid. p. 484.
6. "The Cannonization", John Donne, The Penguin Poets series, edited by John Howard, (1958), p. 29.
7. T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", The Waste Land and Other Poems, (1956), p. 11.
8. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 309-10.
9. Harry T. Moore, D. H. Lawrence, His Life and Works, (1964), p. 113.
10. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 307.
11. T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", The Waste Land and Other Poems, (1956), p. 14.
12. Graham Hough, The Dark Sun, A Study of D. H. Lawrence, (1956), p. 246.
13. Ibid. p. 248.
14. Sex, Literature, and Censorship, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1959), p. 101.
15. Martin Jarrett-Kerr, D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, (1961), p. 144
16. Mark Spilka, The Love Ethic of D. H. Lawrence, (1966), p. 215.
17. Phoenix, edited by Edward D. McDonald, (1961), p. 396.
18. From "The Second Coming", a poem by W. B. Yeats.
19. From "To His Mistris Going to Bed," a poem by John Donne.

20. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 467.

21. The Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, Verse 12.

22. The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 526.

Chapter IV

## "The Tension of Opposites"

> Love is a coming together. But there can be no coming together without an equivalent going asunder.[1]

Lawrence did not write much poetry between 1917 and 1920. Much of his volume of New Poems which was published in 1918, had been written before that date. During this period he read a great deal, and, among other things produced his early versions of the essays, Studies in Classical American Literature, most of which were published in the English Review in 1918 and 1919. His essay on Walt Whitman, not published until the July 23, 1921 number of The Nation and the Athenaeum shows the great respect which Lawrence had for this American poet. The essay, written like the others in 1918, highlights the characteristics of Whitman which were to have a profound influence on Lawrence. Lawrence mentions Whitman's idea of 'merging', his concept of marriage, his 'manly love' of 'ultimate comradeship', and ends his essay with a vivid recognition of Whitman as an example to all in his free verse style - the style which Lawrence was to emulate closely and successfully in Birds, Beasts and Flowers.

Lawrence states:

> The greatest modern poet! Whitman, at his best, is purely himself. His verse springs sheer from the spontaneous sources of his being. Hence, its lovely, lovely form and rhythm: at the best. It is sheer, perfect human spontaneity, spontaneous as a nightingale throbbing, but still controlled, the highest loveliness of human spontaneity, undecorated, unclothed. The whole being is there, sensually throbbing, spiritually quivering, mentally, ideally speaking. It is not, like Swinburne, an exaggeration of the one part of being. It is perfect and whole. The whole soul speaks at once, and is

too pure for mechanical assistance of rhyme and measure.
The perfect utterance of a concentrated spontaneous soul.
The unforgettable loveliness of Whitman's lines!

"Out of the cradle endlessly rocking".[2]

Lawrence's debt to Whitman is recorded also in the preface to the American edition of New Poems (1919):

> This is the unrestful, ungraspable poetry of the sheer present, poetry whose very permanency lies in its wind-like transit. Whitman's is the best poetry of this kind. Without beginning and without end, without any base and pediment, it sweeps past forever, like a wind that is forever in passage, and unchainable. Whitman truly looked before and after. But he did not sigh for what is not. The clue to all his utterance lies in the sheer appreciation of the instant moment, life surging itself into utterance at its very well-head. Eternity is only an abstraction from the actual present. Infinity is only a great reservoir of recollection, or a reservoir of aspiration: man-made. The quivering nimble hour of the present, this is the quick of Time. This is the immanence. The quick of the universe is the pulsating, carnal self, mysterious and palpable. So it is always.
>
> Because Whitman put this into his poetry, we fear him and respect him so profoundly. We should not fear him if he sang only of the "old unhappy far-off things", or of the "wings of the morning". It is because his heart beats with the urgent, insurgent Now, which is even upon us all, that we dread him. He is so near the quick.[3]

Whitman, apart from being a greater influence on all of Lawrence's poetry from this date, influenced his thinking and his life as well. When Lawrence makes the accusation against Whitman that he is disliked because; "Too often he deliberately self-consciously affects himself" and because, "Whitman becomes in his own person the whole world, the whole universe, the whole eternity of time,"[4] it is obvious irony. By way of comparison, Lawrence in his own life and work becomes just as great a 'Merger' as Whitman. There is evidence of this in his early nature poetry, and Birds, Beasts and Flowers takes him almost totally out of the world of reality.

After the publication of Look! We Have Come Through! in December, 1917, Lawrence and Frieda lived quietly in England for two more years until they were finally granted passports in October, 1919. The period 1919 to 1923 was a period of uncertainly and travel - of uncertainty because he failed to find pure fulfilment - of travel because the war had ended and he was free to leave England. Frieda returned to the depressing scenes of war-torn Germany and Lawrence went to Italy. They later met at Capri and travelled to Sicily and while there, made excursions to Sardinia and Malta and took extended summer trips back to the continent. Taormina, where most of the poems of Birds, Beasts and Flowers were written, was one of the places where Lawrence settled for a significant time. But he moved on in 1922 to Ceylon, to Australia, and to the United States and Mexico. Before going to the United States, however, he had temporarily refused an invitation from the Brewsters to visit Ceylon by saying: "I do not want peace nor beauty nor even freedom from pain. I want to fight and to feel new gods in the flesh."[5]

After he arrived in America in September, 1922, he finished the Birds, Beasts and Flowers selection of poetry which was published in December, 1923, and is often referred to as containing some of his best poems. Kenneth Rexroth in his introduction to Selected Poems says: "Lawrence's free verse in Birds, Beasts and Flowers is amongst the small best ever written."[6] Lawrence, himself, considered this to be; "my best book of poems".[7] W. H. Auden sees these poems as a perfect example of one of the things which Lawrence could do well: "writing about non-human nature":

> In my opinion, the poems in Birds, Beasts, and Flowers are Lawrence's greatest achievement. To begin with, they are of great technical interest: so far as I know, Lawrence is the only poet on whom Whitman has had a fruitful influence; his free verse is quite new, but without Whitman it could not have been written. Then, whenever he writes about animals or plants, the anger and frustration which too often intrude in his descriptions of human beings vanish, agape takes their place, and the joy of vision is equal to the joy in writing. To Wordsworth the creatures are symbols of great mysterious powers; to the naturalist, examples of a beautiful or interesting species to be observed objectively; Lawrence, on the other hand, loves them neither as numinous symbols nor as aesthetic objects but as neighbors. To a fig tree or a tortoise he gives that passionate personal attention usually offered by lonely or shy people, or by children, invalids, prisoners, and the like; the others are too busy, too accustomed to having their own way. (the forerunner of these poems is Christopher Smart's description of his cat Jeffrey in Jubilate Agno, which he wrote in an asylum.)[8]

Although Lawrence was certainly not in a state which could have any resemblance to madness, it is obvious that during this period of his life he was beginning to feel the freedom and exhilarating sensations of an international traveller. It is also fair to say that during this period he was freer of his own recurring illness than at any other period during his adult life. Moreover he had been granted permission to leave England, which, by the end of the War, represented a prison filled with cries of the war-time dead for Lawrence. This, too, seemed to give him a new and fresh physical vigour. After he left England he embarked on his 'savage pilgrimage', and, like Byron and Shelley, he felt that his wanderings could assist him in discovering himself. This feeling of freedom is evident in his poetry. What he discovers, with Whitman as a model, is the deepest awareness and the fullest expression of 'new gods in the flesh'. His descriptions in Birds, Beasts and Flowers are penetrating, and show an

understanding of and an empathy with, life outside human life, which is difficult to match in English Literature. The poems are relevant to the theme of love and death because they illustrate the further withdrawl by Lawrence from the world of men into a state of aloneness and isolation experienced only by the lower animals and reptiles.

This world which he attempts to inhabit in Birds, Beasts and Flowers is really the world of nature. His worship becomes a worship of all Gods. It is Lawrence's consistent pantheism throughout this volume which renews his direct confrontation with Christian thinking. This was a phase through which Lawrence, like many of the Romantics, had to go in search for a clearer concept of the self in relation to the cosmos. In his later writings, the 'pantheist' elements are more subdued. What Lawrence achieves, however, is a full understanding of the relatedness of the self with other selves. It is this quality, first illustrated in Birds, Beasts and Flowers, which helps Lawrence to reach beyond death to see real life. It was because of this that Lawrence could say in 1923:

> The background of death is always there and the span of life is felt as fierce action. Life is life only when death is part of it. Not like the Christian conception that shuts death away from life and says death comes after: death is always there. I think the great gain of the war is a new reincorporation of death into our lives.[9]

Jarrett-Kerr takes issue with Lawrence's slur at Christiantiy's concept of death and accuses him of "a significant ignorance of Christian 'eschatology'".[10] Because Lawrence's main argument is not challenged, however, we must conclude, that Martin Jarrett-Kerr agrees with his concept of death. It seems also evident that Lawrence's idea of death was closer to Christian doctrine than

he imagined. His reference to the experience of war only serves to reiterate his change of heart at this period. Even the war-time death is seen as a positive force for life.

In Birds, Beasts and Flowers Lawrence has really created another world. The 'horror' of war and the 'greyness' of human life is left behind. By 'merging' with the lower animals and reptiles he passes through a 'death' to the underside of life. The 'elysium', he finds, is a wonderland of his own creation. There is an abundance of birth and love and life. In discussing Lawrence's 'pantheism' in these poems Martin Jarrett-Kerr says:

> Even hostile critics are agreed that Lawrence's supreme achievement was to find expression for states of being hitherto almost unexplored, or at any rate unexpressed. It is in the relatedness of the self with the other-self, and of the self with the sub-self--trees, horses, snakes, rocks, seed and flower-- that the human unconscious can meet the conscious mind and so the self become aware of the self. And when this happens, the gods are pricking nature into life. As one reads Lawrence's descriptions one is suddenly aware that he is not merely describing: he is pushing an electric current through the bit of the world that stands before him, and immediately that world falls apart into two--one half of it suddenly becomes erect, shudders and bristles with life; the other half burns in a flash and shrivels into dead grey ash.[11]

The poems of this period, besides being among Lawrence's best, display a self-dramatizing approach which is not evident in the earlier poetry. Lawrence tends to appear more as a fictional character in this poetry. As a poet he objectively and directly observes and describes his own inter-relationships with the scenes he helps us experience. His poem "Snake" and his sequence on "Tortoises" are the best examples of this. Lawrence does not respond to these subjects in the conventional way. He subdues

the 'voices of his education' and attempts to allow his spontaneous feelings of love and acceptance, the freedom which they require, to simultaneously liberate his 'gods of the underworld' and his artistry. The free verse in which all the poems of Birds, Beasts and Flowers are written allows for the free-ranging subject matter chosen. The tone, the cadence, and the almost prose-like rhythms change with each change in subject. Poems such as "Mosquito", "Elephant", and "Bat" achieve this very successfully. Each poem has its own clear ring; yet there is, in each a trance-like atmosphere created by both the diction and the rhythm which causes you to wonder if in fact the poem is real. We are led by this mood into a paradise of Lawrence's own creation. It is obviously a 'Paradise Re-entered'. And Lawrence's poem by that name, found in Look! We Have Come Through!, is a meaningful prelude both to the re-entry and to any study of Birds, Beasts and Flowers. For that reason it is quoted here in its entirety:

> Through the strait gate of passion,
> Between the bickering fire
> Where flames of fierce love tremble
> On the body of fierce desire:
>
> To the intoxication,
> The mind, fused down like a bead,
> Flees in its agitation
> The flames' stiff speed:
>
> At last to calm incandescence,
> Burned clean by remorseless hate,
> Now, at the day's renascence
> We approach the gate.
>
> Now, from the darkened spaces
> Of fear, and of frightened faces,
> Death, in our awed embraces
> Approached and passed by;

We near the flame-burnt porches
Where the brands of the angels, like torches,
Whirl,--in these perilous marches
Pausing to sigh;

We look back on the withering roses,
The stars, in their sun-dimmed closes,
Where 'twas given us to repose us
Sure on our sanctity;

Beautiful, candid lovers,
Burnt out of our earthly covers,
We might have nestled like plovers
In the fields of eternity.

There, sure in sinless being,
All-seen, and then all-seeing.
In us life unto death agreeing,
We might have lain.

But we storm the angel-guarded
Gates of the long-discarded
Garden, which God has hoarded
Against our pain.

The Lord of Hosts and the Devil
Are left on Eternity's level
Field, and as victors we travel
To Eden home.

Back beyond good and evil
Return we. Even dishevel
Your hair for the bliss-drenched revel
On our primal loam.

(CP, 242)

There are echoes of Lawrence's 'back to the womb' wish in this poem but certainly the regression to the 'primal loan' is an important qualification for reception into our new world - the world of Birds, Beasts and Flowers where we stand only as high as a tortoise or a snake.

Lawrence's perception and tenderness force us to respond with like feelings and to become like the animals he describes. We feel unsafe and uncomfortable if we don't. Of course he often inflates the reptiles and

beasts as well. In a moment he can change a snake from an "earth-brown" reptile to a 'guest in quiet' sitting at the table of his drinking trough. Near the end of the poem, the snake, for Lawrence, has become 'Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld'. But the casualness of the opening lines of "Snake" immediately make the snake's visit seem like a right which the poet knows the snake has; and, because the poet was the 'second comer', he must wait:

> A snake came to my water-trough
> On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
> To drink there.
>
> In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-
> tree
> I came down the steps with my pitcher
> And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at
> the trough before me.
>
> He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the
> gloom
> And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down.
>
> Over the edge of the stone trough
> And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
> And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small
> clearness,
> He sipped with his straight mouth,
> Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long
> body,
> Silently.
>
> Someone was before me at my water-trough,
> And I, like a second comer, waiting.
>
> (CP, 349)

The personal pronoun tends to add to the quality of the situation but the poet is unsure and slow moving in the presence of the stately snake. As he suddenly regains his composure he compares the snake to drinking cattle - still quite a bit bigger than a reptile and thus

confirming the inbalance in nature created for the poet by this morning guest. But there is still nothing unusual or disturbing in the rest of nature. The line "on the day of Sicilian July with Etna smoking" re-affirms the scene of tranquility and peace. Suddenly with a burst of reason and humaness:

> The voice of my education said to me
> He must be killed,
> For in Sicily the black black snakes are innocent, the gold
> are venomous.
>
> And voices in me said, if you were a man
> You would take a stick and break him now, and finish
> him off.
>
> (CP, 350)

This was straight-forward, direct, advice from the intellect advising the poet to do his duty as a man. The simple conversational language jolts us out of the trance and causes us to see the real danger in the golden and poisonous intruder into the morning quiet. Lawrence, however, hesitates:

> But must I confess how I liked him,
> How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink
> at my water-trough
> And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
> Into the burning bowels of this earth?
>
> Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
> Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
> Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
> I felt so honoured.
>
> (CP, 350)

The poet again elevates the snake to a human plane and desires to get better acquainted with his, "guest in quiet". The last three questions are reminders of doubts which Lawrence had about himself as a man and as an artist, illustrated by his tendency "to cover the mouth of his demon" on occasions when the spontaneous reaction seemed to overflow too powerfully.

The questions also cause a break in the mood of the poem which allows us to decide for ourselves what our next move would be:

> And yet those voices:
> If you were not afraid, you would kill him!
>
> And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
> But even so, honoured still more
> That he should seek my hospitality
> From out the dark door of the secret earth.
> (CP, 350)

The poet has mixed feelings but yet is dominated by the fear of human consequences if he doesn't act:

> He drank enough
> And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
> And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so
> black;
> Seeming to lick his lips,
> And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
> And slowly turned his head,
> And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
> Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
> And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.
> (CP, 350)

There is no sense of slinking or slithering as the snake makes its exit, cautiously and slowly. He is compared to a 'god' looking through the air and through his host, "unseeing" as though his presence were dominating the scene. Only as he begins to enter the rock fissure does the poet engage snake-like adjectives to describe his easing out of sight, and the poet feels the horror of his departure:

> ...a sort of protest against his withdrawing
> into that horrid black hole,
> Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing
> himself after,
> Overcame me now his back was turned.
> (CP, 351)

The 'dreadful', 'horrid black' hole convinces us that the 'voice of education' and the lack of face-to-face confrontation has eased the poet's fear. He now takes the initiative. He asserts his manliness and commands the scene;

> I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
> I picked up a clumsy log
> And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.
>
> I think it did not hit him,
> But suddenly the part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste,
> Writhed like lightning, and was gone
> Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
> At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.
> (CP, 351)

After the act the poet immediately promises a new start. He is forced to look at himself again. He is ashamed;

> And immediately I regretted it.
> I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
> I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.
>
> And I thought of the albatross,
> And I wished he would come back, my snake.
>
> For he seemed to me again like a king,
> Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
> Now due to be crowned again.
>
> And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
> Of life.
> And I have something to expiate;
> A pettiness. (CP, 351)

> The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or trivality.
> If he breaths into any thing that was before thought
> small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the
> universe. He is a seer ... he is individual ... he
> is complete in himself ... the others are as good as he,
> only he sees it and they do not.[12]

This advice given by Whitman in his Preface to the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass was demonstrated by Lawrence's free verse and his choice of subject. In "Snake", Lawrence, the poet, striving for completeness, has reached a confidence in poetic expression and form which was to continue throughout Birds, Beasts and Flowers, and was to influence his finest poetic achievements in Last Poems. He denounces in each poem the voice of 'my accursed human education', and relies more on the 'feeling intellect' and the knowledge of the heart. Each animal or flower or beast his mind remembers is given new life and emerges as a new being in his poems.

The sequence on tortoises provides a sensitive description of the little reptiles. There are glimpses of brilliant wit and carefree humour. Often man is the butt of both as Lawrence protects nature. His 'Baby Tortoise' born 'Alone, with no sense of being alone' is for Lawrence the ultimate of individuality, and, unlike the human; 'no one ever heard you complain'. At the end of the poem, the growing tortoise as 'traveller, with your tail tucked a little on one side' is compared with 'a gentleman in a long-skirted coat' with little loss of dignity for the tortoise. In "Tortoise Shell", the poet examines the structure of the reptile's anatomy under the microscope of mathematical precision. The cross which;

> Goes deeper in than we know,
> Deeper into life;
> Right into the marrow
> And through the bone.
>
> (CP, 345)

is a reference with a deeper significance than anatomy. Lawrence seems to be groping beyond the crosses which humans have to bear to find their origins. 'The living back of the baby tortoise' becomes his poetic

chalkboard to demonstrate the significance of the tortoise for our understanding of human life:

> The first little mathematical gentleman
> Stepping, wee mite, in his loose trousers
> Under all the eternal dome of mathematical law.
> (CP, 355)

was possible because

> The Lord wrote it all down on the little slate
> Of the baby tortoise.
> (CP, 356)

The growth of the tortoise 'unaware' of family connections makes the reptile quite different from humans, and again demonstrates its stark individuality. The almost casual but revealing "Tortoises always foresee obstacles", is a mocking reminder by the poet of all human complacency. The whole of "Tortoise Family Connections" may be a wish by Lawrence to fully participate in a tortoise-like existence. There is certainly deep irony for Lawrence in lines such as "Fatherless, motherless, brotherless, sisterless Little tortoise." (CP, 357) and "isolation is his birthright." (CP, 357)

Lawrence, who was tied to family connections and who craved the human warmth of love throughout his life, often found it difficult to either accept or give actual love. This was so because he sought by the tensions of opposites to explore human conflict more deeply than ordinary men. He wanted the total reality of it. The hesitancy expressed in Poems to Miriam, the failure to achieve complete fulfilment with the women of the poems to Helen, and even the equilibrium of married love found in

Look! We Have Come Through!, attest to this fact. The constant strife of his life with Frieda is also evidence of a man torn by struggles from within. In a letter to Catherine Carswell, July 16, 1916, he gives us some insight into his inner tensions:

> Frieda's letter is quite right, about the difference between us being the adventure, and the true relationship established between different things, different spirits, this is creative life. And the reacting of a thing against its different, is death in life. So that act of love, which is a pure thrill, is a kind of friction between opposites, interdestructive, an act of death. There is an extreme self-realization, self-sensation, in this friction against the really hostile, opposite. But there must be an act of love which is a passing of the self into a pure relationship with the other, something new and creative in the coming together of the lovers, in their creative spirit, before a new child can be born: a new flower in us before there can be a new seed of a child.[13]

Middleton Murry has said:

> Lawrence was absolutely divided between the love of life and the love of death; between the desire to escape utterly from life, and the longing to bring into being a more perfect life.[14]

This tension reaches another plateau in the poems of Birds, Beasts and Flowers; so Murry's assessment that Lawrence "was safe in loving a baby tortoise; the baby-tortoise could not love him back"[15] seems to be an accurate assessment of what Lawrence felt during this period of his life. Whatever his motive in the poems, there is evidence in his letters that Lawrence was seeking to get away from human contact and from confining definitions of love. He wrote to Earl Brewster, May 8, 1921:

> I here and now, finally and forever give up knowing anything about love, or wanting to know. I believe it doesn't exist, save as a word: a sort of wailing phoenix that is really the wind in the trees. - In fact I here and now, finally and forever leave off loving anything or everything or anybody.[16]

His cry in "Tortoise Family Connections":

> To be a tortoise!
> Think of it, in a garden of inert clods
> A brisk, brindled little tortoise, all to himself
> Adam!
>
> (CP, 353)

is not unlike Eliot's wish in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

> I should have been a pair of ragged claws
> Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.[17]

In both cases, the cry is for isolation from a world gone dead with too much mechanical human interaction; a world where man finds it difficult to be himself. But in the world of Birds, Beasts and Flowers, Lawrence has achieved an equilibrum with himself which is beyond sexual pleasure and is even beyond life. It can only be achieved by a negation of life itself. And this is an expression of death. Lawrence's wish for Adam in the Tortoise poems is not a death wish but a craving for feeling and substance like that which the tortoise seems to have captured. It is a craving for re-birth:

> In a garden of pebbles and insects
> To roam, and feel the slow heart beat
> Tortoise-wise, the first bell sounding
> From the warm blood, in the dark-creation morning.
>
> Moving, and being himself,
> Slow, and unquestioned,
> And inordinately there, O stoic!
> Wandering in the slow triumph of his own existence,
> Ringing the soundless bell of his presence in chaos,
> And biting the frail grass arrogantly,
> Decidedly arrogantly.
>
> (CP, 358)

It is necessary to see the closing stanzas together because the language and rhythm, as well as the meaning, provide a lofty climax for

a poem with a seemingly insignificant subject, that of the family connections of tortoises. What Lawrence achieves is a plea for 'tortoise wisdom' so that man can 'be himself' and 'triumph in his own existence'. By merging his being with the lonely and isolated reptile, Lawrence is refreshed and can approach the world with a decided arrogance.

Later in the novella St. Mawr, published in 1925, two years after Birds, Beasts and Flowers Lawrence expands on this theme but rather than 'tortoise wisdom' his cry is for 'horse sense' and the real sense of substance that seems to recur in Lawrence's animal metaphors. Kingsley Widmer says in discussing the shortnovel that:

> Lawrence presents not a return to animal existence (we must "still be ourselves") but the need for fuller immediate experience, which has been lost in modern sensibility.[18]

In "Lui Et Elle" Lawrence returns to his theme of the dominating female and the loss of manliness in the sex act.

> Alas, what a fool he looks in this scuffle.
> (CP, 360)

The one 'lonely rambler, the stoic, dignified stalker through chaos,' becomes like all men 'crucified into sex' during his adolescence.

> In the race of love--
> Two tortoises,
> She hugh, he small.
> (CP, 361)

The bigness of the woman and the importance of her role in love is emphasized. This is a recurring theme in Lawrence's approach to a definition of love and sex. But in this poem he seems to champion the male role, and, by so doing, he highlights the sharpness of his instinct for, and his desire for, the

woman. He never allows emotion to overflow, however, and controls the situation superbly by the casualness of conversation about the final act:

> I heard a woman pitying her, pitying the Mere Tortue.
> While I, I pity Monsieur.
> (CP, 361)

The poem which follows, "Tortoise Gallantry" describes the sexual moment to which the tortoise, like man, is doomed. The same racy, conversational language is used. This style allows the poet freedom to comment on the passing scene, and to question abruptly the messages for human life. By a return to this theme in the world of innocence and love which Lawrence has created, the poet is obviously restating his 'primitive indefinite'. He is relating human love to animal love and applying to each the cyclical motion of 'the old ritual of the seasons'. What Lawrence has found in his world-beyond-death is that animal love is no different than human love.

In "Tortoise Shout" the reptile is lifted to an almost human status with his cry, which is also Lawrence's,

> Why were we crucified into sex?
> (CP, 364)

For Lawrence it is comparable to the final words of Jesus from the cross:

> My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

or

> Eloi, Eloi, Lame Sabachthani?
> (CP, 741)

which he later uses as the title of a poem.

We are also reminded of the Calvary scene by the question:

> Why was the veil torn?
> (CP, 364)

and his reference to

Giving up the ghost.
(CP, 365)

Lawrence's description of the sex act is powerful and real. After it is over, he allows himself to reminisce through his childhood experiences of animal cries and of mating animals, probably witnessed at the Hagge farm, the home of Jessie Chambers. He recalls, too, a catalogue of remembered birth cries, and he recalls his mother 'singing to herself'. Then suddenly he returns to:

This last,
Strange, faint coition yell
Of the male tortoise at extremity,
Tiny from under the very edge of the farthest far-off
horizon of life.
(CP, 366)

It is impressed that even at this extreme of life and existence the desire and instinct for sex and male-female unity is so strong. The 'tension of opposites' is present and in this state 'all things have their being'. The closing stanzas are restatements of the main theme of the whole sequence of tortoise poems.

The cross,
The wheel on which our silence first is broken,
Sex, which breaks up our integrity, our single inviolability,
our deep silence,
Tearing a cry from us.

Sex, which breaks us into voice, sets us calling across the
deeps, calling, calling for the complement,
Singing, and calling, and singing again, being answered,
having found.

Torn, to become whole again, after long seeking for what
is lost,
The same cry from the tortoise as from Christ, the Osiris-
cry of abandonment,
That which is whole, torn asunder,
That which is in part, finding its whole again throughout
the universe.
(CP, 366)

The comparison of the tortoise cry with Christ's confirms Lawrence's intention to show the incompleteness of Christ, because his 'crucifixion into sex' did not precede his physical crucifixion. This theme referred to in Chapter III is treated more fully in The Man Who Died - a novella, written and published a year before Lawrence's death. In this prose treatment, the Osiris-cry of abandonment is answered for Christ in Lawrence's own terms.

## NOTES

1. Sex, Literature, and Censorship, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1959), p. 33.
2. D. H. Lawrence, The Symbolic Meaning, edited by Armis Arnold, (1961), p. 240.
3. Complete Poems, edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts, (1964), pp. 183-4.
4. D. H. Lawrence, The Symbolic Meaning, edited by Armis Arnold, (1961), pp. 232-4.
5. Collected Letters, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 681.
6. D. H. Lawrence Selected Poems, edited by Kenneth Rexroth, (1959), p. 16.
7. Collected Letters, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 737.
8. W. H. Auden, "Some Notes on D. H. Lawrence," The Nation, April 26, (1947), p. 482.
9. Frieda Lawrence, Not I, But the Wind, (1935), p. 140.
10. Martin Jarrett-Kerr, D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, (1961), p. 122.
11. Ibid. pp. 146-7.
12. Walt Whitman, Preface to 1855 edition of "Leaves of Grass", The Literature of the United States, edited by Blair, Hornberger, and Stewart, (1957), p. 681.
13. Collected Letters, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 468.
14. J. M. Murry, Son of Woman, (1932), pp. 227-8.
15. Ibid. p. 229.
16. Collected Letters, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 651.
17. T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", The Waste Land and Other Poems, (1956), p. 12.
18. Kingsley Widmer, The Art of Perversity, (1962), p. 72.

Chapter V

"The Leavings of a Life"

and still, among it all, snatches of lovely oblivion, and snatches of renewal
odd, wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new, strange flowers
such as my life has not brought forth before, new blossoms of me--
" Shadows"

In Birds, Beasts and Flowers, Lawrence achieved a temporary relief from the world of humans and machines. During the twenties he continually expressed the need for isolation from the world. The society in which he lived seemed to be closing in upon him with its numbness, its greyness, and everywhere he saw signs of the mechanical tenor of life. His striving for isolation comes to a climax in the novella, St. Mawr, published in 1925. Written just one year after Eliot's "Waste Land", its characters embody many of the qualities of a 'dead land'. A comparison of the two works would, by no means, be unprofitable. Throughout St. Mawr, for example, we can easily detect many references to 'the dry land', the 'loss of virility', the 'cactus growth', the 'aimless search for satisfaction', and the 'empty longing after truth'.

Lawrence, in this novella, succeeds in making us realize the barrenness of the world of death-in-life. Getting on, being a success, keeping up appearances, being happy in our marriage, become our daily obsessions; and without stopping, we get deeper and deeper into a state of affectation, which so drains us of our humanity that we become 'old women crocheting words together'. In many ways this is similar to the theme of "The Waste Land". But Lawrence goes further and advocates a reliance on the blood or

'blood knowledge' as he calls it. Through this we may attain a sense of overpowering innocence which he depicts in the natural man such as Lewis, the Welsh groom, or Phoenix, the Indian servant; or we may find it in the animal world which is represented by St. Mawr. Lawrence's description of St. Mawr is as real as some of his more successful attempts in Birds, Beasts and Flowers. His craving for the animal world indicates that human life has not supplied him with any sense of fulfilment. Lawrence's 'Waste Land' is expressed by the term 'death-in-life'. This was the type of death which was caused by the lack of human interaction; and it was a death diametrically opposed to Lawrence's concept of love.

Death-in-life is caused by passiveness, indifference, and the robot-like existence of modern man. Lawrence's idea of death was much more positive. It was a part of rather than the end of life. It could best be understood and accepted if man achieved in his life-time a balanced relationship with all the elements of his existence. Most important for Lawrence was the achievement of balance and fulfilment in love. This theme is really at the core of all of Lawrence's work and seems to have been the main aim of his life. The poetry of his Last Period attempts to demonstrate a final expression of this concept of Love and Death.

For the purpose of this thesis Lawrence's Last Period represents all the verse written during the last ten years of his life except those poems written during the early twenties and included in Birds, Beasts and Flowers (1923). The poems of the Last Period, therefore, include Pansies, More Pansies, Nettles and all the poems of Last Poems. It must be

remembered, however, that Lawrence wrote very little poetry after he left Europe. It seemed that Germany and Italy were favorable to his writing mood, but that the East and especially America were not. The period 1922 to 1925 when Lawrence lived in the American South-west was particularly arid as far as the production of verse was concerned. During this period, his life was not overly exciting either. He had arrived in America in 1922 from Ceylon and Australia and, although obviously travel weary, was more desirous of isolation from the world than anything else. His longing for America had been so enthusiastic, especially during the last years of the war, that when he finally arrived his disappointment could not easily be hidden. In a letter to Catherine Carswell, from Taos, September 1922, he describes the Mexican scene with great accuracy and detail, but in a moment of typical Lawrencian truthfulness expresses his real feelings:

> Perhaps it is necessary for me to try these places, perhaps it is my destiny to know the world. It only excites the outside of me. The inside it leaves more isolated and stoic than ever. That's how it is. It is all a form of running away from oneself and the great problems: all this wild west and the strange Australia. But I try to keep quite clear. One forms not the faintest inward attachment, especially here in America. America lives by a sort of egoistic <u>will</u>, shove and be shoved. Well, one can stand up to that too; but one is quite, quite cold inside. No illusion. I will not shove, and I will <u>not</u> be shoved.[1]

All Lawrence's searching seemed, at this point, to be fruitless. His travels could not lead him to a society to which he could belong. He was still homesick for England but England had, in his opinion, grievously wronged him. In the same letter to Catherine Carswell he continues:

> In the spring I think I want to come to England. But I feel England has insulted me, and I stomach that feeling badly...Only the desert has a fascination - to ride alone - in the sun in the for ever unpossessed country - away from man. This is a great temptation, because one rather hates mankind nowadays.[2]

His desire to get away from people is further explained in his pansie, "People":

> I like people quite well
> at a little distance.
> I like to see them passing and passing
> and going their own way,
> especially if I see their aloneness alive in them.
>
> Yet I don't want them to come near.
> If they will only leave me alone
> I can still have the illusion that there is room enough
> in the world.
>
> (CP, 602)

During the same period he wrote the poem "Mountain Lion" in which he explains the trapping and death of a beautiful wild creature in a lonely canyon. He is moved by the scene to contemplate the deeper significance of it:

> And I think in this empty world there was room
> for me and a mountain lion,
> And I think in the world beyond, how easily we
> might spare a million or two of humans
> And never miss them.
> Yet what a gap in the world, the missing white
> frost face of that slim yellow mountain lion!
>
> (CP, 402)

This feeling of regret at the death of a mountain lion is similar to the disgust experienced after throwing a piece of log at the receeding snake. Humanity has something 'to expiate; a pettiness'. For Lawrence, though, humanity, especially his own people, had a greater pettiness to overcome; the rejection of his novel The Rainbow. The controversy caused

in England by the appearance of this book was later enlarged and copies of the book were seized at the printers and destroyed by order of the court. Later an exhibition of his sketches was raided by the police and the show was discontinued. His book Lady Chatterley's Lover caused an international court case which was finally resolved in the U. S. in 1959 and in England in 1960. This rejection of his work which heightened during the mid-twenties, was a cause of great concern to Lawrence:

> The increasing attacks against Lawrence may have helped crush the life out of him. The trouble over the pictures left him bitter and ill, and one day in the South of France not long before his death in 1930, Lawrence tapped his chest while talking to Earl Brewster, and said, "The hatred which my books have aroused comes back at me and gets me here."[3]

It was because of this that Lawrence never returned to England to live. He did visit, however, and on one such brief visit in 1923 he made another attempt to attract a small group of disciples to return with him to Taos. This last attempt to set up a communal type of idealistic civilization also failed. At the famous meeting at the Café Royal in London all the guests, except one, agreed to go but because Lawrence had treated them too liberally with wine they did not take the committment seriously. Lawrence, himself, had to be taken home just after his speech because he was sick and confessed the next day that he had made a fool of himself. When he and Frieda sailed for New York on March 5, 1924, their only companion was the artist, Dorothy Brett.

They lived, for the remainder of the spring with Mabel Luhan but early in the summer Lawrence, Frieda and Brett moved to Kiowa Ranch, a rugged mountain ranch which the Lawrences grew to love and which Lawrence

describes so vividly in his short novel St. Mawr. This novel, apart from epitomizing his feeling of isolation and despair during this period of his life, seems to introduce a whole series of short stories and novels in which Lawrence attempts to restate many of his basic beliefs. It was not until the last year of his life that he turned again to poetry in what is probably his finest work, Last Poems. It is obvious though that near the end of his life, Lawrence seems to turn more to prose for restatements of his philosophy. In "Apocalypse", he says:

> What man most passionately wants is his living wholeness and his living unison, not his own isolate salvation of his "soul". Man wants his physical fulfillment first and foremost, since now, once and once only, he is in the flesh and potent. For man, the vast marvel is to be alive. For man, as for flower and beast and bird, the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most perfectly alive. Whatever the unborn and the dead may know, they cannot know the beauty, the marvel of being alive in the flesh. The dead may look after the afterwards. But the magnificent here and now of life in the flesh is ours, and ours alone, and ours only for a time. We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and in the flesh, and part of the living, incarnate cosmos. I am part of the sun as my eye is part of me. That I am part of the earth my feet know perfectly, and my blood is part of the sea. My soul knows that I am part of the human race, my soul is an organic part of the great human soul, as my spirit is part of my nation. In my own very self, I am part of my family. There is nothing of me that is alone and absolute except my mind, and we shall find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter of the sun on the surface of the waters.[4]

In "Being Alive" he confirms his desire for full expression in life:

> The only reason for living is being fully alive;
> and you can't be fully alive if you are crushed by secret
> fear,
> and bullied with the threat: Get money, or eat dirt! --
> and forced to do a thousand mean things meaner than
> your nature,
> and forced to clutch on to possessions in the hope they'll
> make you feel safe,
> and forced to watch everyone that comes near you, lest
> they've come to do you down.

> Without a bit of common trust in one another, we can't live.
> In the end, we go insane.
>
> (CP, 522)

In an essay entitled "The State of Funk", first published in 1928, Lawrence expressed a similar hope for man in a more personal and intimate way:

> And it is this that I want to restore into life: just the natural warm flow of common sympathy between man and man, man and woman.[5]

Lawrence, during this period, 1923-1930, repeatedly makes statements such as these. Even a cursory glance at his work indicates a sense of urgency in summarizing his thinking. It is as though he was aware of his approaching death. Eliseo Vivas in D. H. Lawrence - The Failure and the Triumph of Art states:

> When one looks at his "love ethic" carefully, or at any other identifiable body of ideas put forth by him, it becomes clear that it is a mixture of sense and nonsense, when it is not a mixture of wisdom and corruption.[6]

This, it seems to me, is an accurate assessment, and this element in his work makes absolute definition of Lawrence's philosophy almost impossible. In the prose produced in the late twenties, however, Lawrence seems to be aware of the vagueness in his early works, and he desires a clear definition of life as his prophetic legacy. Poetry, however, does not seem to be his main medium during this period. Geoffrey Grigson explains:

> The poet Lawrence is inside the novelist, who is inside the prophet; and his potentiality was to have been a more considerable poet (though he never thought enough about the nature of poems) than his fiction - or his prophetic activity - allowed him to be. Yet, like Hardy, I rather think it is by his better poems that Lawrence in the end may keep hold of his readers.[7]

Lawrence's preference for prose may indicate his acceptance of some truth in the assessment of the value of his early poems as being, "a patchwork of his real thoughts rather than the expression of his deepest feelings."[8] Pansies, More Pansies, and Nettles supply the 'patchwork' during his Last Period even though these poems can rarely be referred to as poetry. They are, as Lawrence admits:

> Merely the breath of the moment, and one eternal moment easily contradicting the next eternal moment. Only don't nail the pansy down. You won't keep it any better if you do.[9]

Pansies and Nettles illustrate the 'savage cry' against death-in-life which Lawrence detested in twentieth century man. Most of the poems in these volumes were acid expressions of criticism against the authorities and the system of government which they perpetuated. His 'better poems' are to be found in Last Poems, a volume of poetry written in the last year of his life, and published posthumously in 1932. The prose works, St. Mawr, The Man Who Died, Apocalypse, and Phoenix, are of prime importance, however, in any study of his 'deeper feelings' near the end of life. And for his assessment of ancient lands, cultures, and religions, Etruscan Places is invaluable as a source. The controversial, Lady Chatterley's Lover, is a profound summary of much of Lawrence's thinking. A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover attempts to further explain, as though Lawrence, in desperation, fears that he will never be understood. In A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, Lawrence gives us our best insight into his views on sex, love, marriage, and society. Any study of Lawrence's work, whether of the poetry or the prose, must recognize the importance of all these elements in his life. In Last Poems, for example, it is difficult to understand his concept of death without

being acquainted with his idea of evil, of God, and of the Resurrection. It is important, too, to appreciate his ideas about the individual and society.

In Last Poems, Lawrence soars above any of his previous achievements in poetry. His language, rhythm, and form are always equal to the demands of a serious and well-developed theme - that of approaching death. The poems in this volume best illustrate his final view of death. Because the poems were written during the last year of his life, he could write with more directness and urgency and the 'smell of death' increases in intensity with each line. The mood of the poetry is tranquil. The movement is slow. The atmosphere is quiet and autumnal, dark and darkening 'where blue is darkened on blueness' and where the 'screen' of 'holy silence' can bring you from one world to another.

Last Poems should not be fragmented but should be studied as one movement, in the order in which Richard Aldington has allowed them to stand. The series of poems is predominately about death but taken together they do not represent a service for the dead but rather a service of communion between life as it should be lived and death as it should be experienced. The 'bruised body' given in remembrance is the tubercular and frail flesh of Lawrence seeking an exit from itself, but having the patience to experience the holy unction of a gentle departure and to resist the 'quietus' which 'man can make'. The idea of preparing for death was confirmed, for Lawrence during his visits to the Etruscan tombs. This symbolism is restated by the poet in Last Poems as the pain of death is clouded by the joy of preparing his craft:

A little ship, with oars and food
and little dishes, and all accoutrements
fitting and ready for the departing soul
(CP, 718)

to take 'the longest journey' - a journey which does not take him out of life but which is part of life. Death for Lawrence is not an end but a peaceful acceptance of forgetfulness by a total release of the self into the hands of God - 'the life force'.

But dipped, once dipped in dark oblivion
the soul has peace, inward and lovely peace.
(CP, 724)

In addition to recalling elements of Lawrence's philosophy, Last Poems re-echoes many of his poetic themes. His desire for 'a return to the womb,' his 'cyclical view of life,' and the 'resurrection of the flesh,' are thoughts which continually reappear. His concept of 'the tension of opposites, ' also recurs, but in addition to the tension between 'dark' and 'light' we get a clearer distinction between good and evil and God and the devil.

Last Poems begins with two poems of mythological significance; "The Greeks Are Coming!" and "The Argonauts". To fully understand these and other references to mythology in Last Poems, one needs to recall Lawrence's constant interest in the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome. It should be noted, too, that during his last days Lawrence was reading Gilbert Murray's Five Stages in Greek Religion. Lawrence's search for fulfilment during the late twenties led him to explore ancient religions and civilizations. In 1927, in company with Earl Brewster, he visited the tombs of the ancient Etruscans. His travel book, Etruscan Places, although not profound in the sense of adding to the field of knowledge of the

archaeological researcher, gives a good insight into the symbols and traditions which were poetically significant for Lawrence. He was impressed by what this ancient civilization had to teach civilizations of his day. Many symbols and objects are described in Last Poems. The Ark, the little bronze ship of death, and the Mediterranean as the womb of all civilizations, are all used in Last Poems to help in his final attempt at understanding life and death. He was particularly moved by the fact that the Etruscans were not interested in inflicting their beliefs on other people:

> There seems to have been in the Etruscan instinct a real desire to preserve the natural humor of life. And that is a task surely more worthy, and even much more difficult in the long run, than conquering the world or sacrificing the self or saving the immortal soul.
> Why has mankind had such a craving to be imposed upon? Why this lust after imposing creeds, imposing deeds, imposing buildings, imposing language, imposing works of art? The thing becomes an imposition and a weariness at last. Give us things that are alive and flexible, which won't last too long and become an obstruction and a weariness. Even Michelangelo becomes at last a lump and a burden and a bore. It is so hard to see past him.[10]

This Etruscan instinct is very close to Lawrence's own belief in changing conditions and in the constant rebirth of the phoenix. Philip Rieff in The Listener, May 5, 1960, describes Lawrence's philosophy as follows:

> Lawrence himself found in the fixity of ideals the main cause of our difficulties as a civilization. He sensed the inevitable defeat of all genuine moral revolutionaries unless they are educated to accept their own criterion: obsolescence. But this is nothing more than an ethic of action. To keep moving is the main Lawrentian principle. We have yet to understand the restlessness of those who accept that principle.[11]

This principle constantly recurs throughout Lawrence's poetry as one of his major themes. It is never more evident than in Last Poems. Support for this belief was further confirmed by Lawrence in his study of Etruscan cities. The fact that the houses were all constructed of wood had a fascination for him:

> I like to think of the little wooden temples of the early Greeks and of the Etruscans: small, dainty, fragile, and evanescent as flowers. We have reached the stage when we are weary of hugh stone erections, and we begin to realize that it is better to keep life fluid and changing than to try to hold it fast down in heavy monuments. Burdens on the face of the earth are man's ponderous erections.[12]

Etruscan Places, written after the second visit to the tombs of the ancient Etruscans, displays the depth of feeling and the emotional value which an acquaintance with this civilization had for Lawrence. The influence which this experience had on Lawrence's Last Poems is also obvious. In "Bavarian Gentians", for example, his descent into the 'dark and darkening' world reminds us of his recent descents into the ancient tombs. His 'ship of death' of the most successful of the Last Poems is a replica of the Etruscan ship of Bronze.

In his last hours, Lawrence, as Kenneth Rexroth has commented:

> Seems to have lived in a state of suspended animation, removed from the earth, floating, transfigured by the onset of death.[13]

More than that, like a drowning man, his whole life seems to stream before him. And for someone with Lawrence's perception and insight, it is not too far to stretch the comparison that different civilizations with their merits and failings were included in Lawrence's still very conscious stream of thought as he contemplated death. For this reason, too, his Last Poems

need to be taken together. For Lawrence gives us not only his gods of ancient Etruria, Greece and Rome, but a mixture of philosophies of life from Plato to his own. The latter is supplied in the straight from the shoulder talk of "Walk Warily" and "Kissing and Horrid Strife". The philosophies of Jesus, the man of Tyre, Stoicism, and Anaxagoras are all included.

Lawrence's harsh rejection of absolutes is obvious. "What then is Evil?" has as its concluding stanza a list of absolutes which demonstrates 'pure evil' for Lawrence, and in disgust he says:

> We see it only in man and in his machines. (CP, 712)

His rejection of science is allied to this. In "Anaxagoras" he is quite emphatic:

> That they call science, and reality.
> I call it mental conceit and mystification
> and nonsense. (CP, 708)

Lawrence seemed to be opposed to science because of the technology and mechanism which it produced. It was a force opposite to his desired force of love. Part of his argument against science was demonstrated in "In the Cities":

> In the cities
> there is even no more any weather
> the weather in town is always benzine, or else petrol
> fumes
> lubricating oil, exhaust gas.
>
> As over some dense marsh, the fumes
> thicken, miasma, the fumes of the automobile
> densely thicken in the cities.
>
> In ancient Rome, down the thronged streets
> no wheels might run, no insolent chariots.
> Only the footsteps, footsteps
> of people
> and the gentle trotting of the litter-bearers.

In Minos, in Mycenae
in all the cities with lion gates
the dead threaded the air, lingering
lingering in the earth's shadow
and leaning towards the old hearth.

In London, New York, Paris
in the bursten cities
the dead tread heavily through the muddy air
through the mire of fumes
heavily, stepping weary on our hearts.
(CP, 703)

Lawrence's desire was for a definition of life which could include the best of both worlds. What he opposed 'in the bursten modern cities' was the pollution of insincerity found in the feelings of people.

There are also in Last Poems his attempts at defining God, creation, evil, and the reasons for Lucifer's fall from light. His maturest statements on death are given in "Bavarian Gentians" and "The Ship of Death". Taken together, the poems in this volume make up Lawrence's own 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained'. Although the language is not Miltonic, it is consistently serious. The evidence of revisions and corrections attests to the fact that Lawrence desired to display the finest craft of a mature poet.

The first two poems "The Greeks are Coming!" and "The Argonauts" remind us that within the total knowledge of man, the ancients cannot be forgotten. The anachronism of 'wait, wait, don't bring the coffee yet,' brings the argosy of Odysseus' ships and men into the focus of modern times. In the poem "Middle of the World", we are reminded of the place where it all started - the cradle of civilization - the Mediterranean. This is the womb to which we must return in humility, and, in phoenix fashion be reborn.

The Mediterranean will not 'cease to be blue', regardless of the traffic of modern ships 'of the P. & O. and the Orient Line'. Nor, for Lawrence, will the womb cease to be warm and revitalizing. "Spirits Summoned West" written in 1923 in which he calls for his mother is an example of his desire for the past. His final letter to Jessie Chambers' brother, David, after a break of more than fifteen years, is also a type of 'back to the womb' wish. This letter, not shown to Jessie Chambers until after Lawrence's death, vividly recalls the love and affection which Lawrence had for all the family at the Haggs farm. Lawrence's conclusion in stanza two of "Middle of the World" - 'the distance never changes' indicates much more than nautical miles. It indicates Lawrence's closeness to the ancient Gods and the value they have for him. The 'Minoan Gods, and the Gods of Tiryns':

> are heard softly laughing and chatting, as ever;
> and Dionysos, young, and a stranger
> leans listening on the gate, in all respect.
> (CP, 688)

The ancient gods and his thoughts of his mother and Miriam are still fresh and alive within his penetrating final view of life. But the inclusion of the ancient gods makes Lawrence's a final view of the whole of civilization.

The two poems "For the Heroes are Dipped in Scarlet" and "Demiurge" discuss the effects of Plato's philosophy of ideals. The creator of the world, in Platonic philosophy, states that 'pure being is bodiless' and that 'corporal existence is a kind of death'. Lawrence is quick to discard this as 'nonsense' and turns to religion:

> Religion knows better than philosophy
> Religion knows that Jesus never was Jesus
> till he was born from a womb, and ate soup
> and bread
> and grew up, and became, in the wonder of creation,
> Jesus
> with a body and with needs, and a lovely spirit.
> (CP, 689)

In this stanza, Lawrence attributes to Christianity the power to create in man many of the elements which he describes at the end of Apocalypse as being necessary for his 'living wholeness'.[14]

In 1930, in conversation with the Brewsters, Lawrence gives further evidence of his change in attitude toward God and Christianity. Lawrence says:

> I do not any longer object to the word God.
> My attitude regarding this has changed. I must
> establish a conscious relation with God.[15]

Martin Jarrett-Kerr concludes that because of this statement we are ready for his statements on the Resurrection:

> The Churches, instead of preaching the Risen Lord, go on
> preaching the Christ-child and Christ Crucified...
> I doubt whether the Protestant Churches will ever have the
> faith and the power of life to take the great step onwards,
> and preach Christ Risen. The Catholic Church might. In the
> countries of the Mediterranean, Easter has always been the
> greatest of holy days....The Roman Catholic Church may still
> unfold this part of the Passion fully, and make men happy again....[16]

In the poem, "Demiurge" the God of Christianity is compared with the gods of ancient religions and philosophies with little loss of dignity or power to the former. The group of poems which follows attempts to further define creation and God. God becomes a 'divine urge', 'a great urge', 'wonderful, mysterious, magnificent', and His powers are likened to the creative powers of an artist who cannot conceptualize the details of his creation in advance, but 'looks himself on it in wonder, for the first time.'

"Red Geranium and Godly Mignonette" is a beautiful poem illustrating the ludicrous situation of a God attempting to conceptualize 'the redness of a red geranium' or with his nose anticipating the smell of a mignonette. There are other examples given in the poem but the poem itself is an example of beauty in form and rhythm and language the effect of which is difficult to fully imagine. The two poems "Bodiless God" and "The body of God": attempt to define God by relating Him to a Body. Lawrence concludes that; "God is the great urge that has not yet found a body"; but God is also in all form that is beautiful:

> The lovely things are god that has come to pass, like Jesus came.
>
> (CP, 691)

The poem "The Rainbow" is also about a phenomenon which is beautiful but with a body and form which cannot be touched. This, too, is God. In "Maximus" God is described as being beyond comprehension or description. In the poem "The Man of Tyre" the poet questions the fact that there is only one God. When; 'Godly and lovely comes Aphrodite out of the sea towards me!' The 'Man of Tyre's dilemma is similar to Lawrence's and throughout his Last Poems Lawrence's dilemma is unresolved. He fails to distinguish between the one God of Christianity and the gods of ancient religions.

The two poems "They Say the Sea is Loveless" and "Whales Weep Not!" are about love in the sea. His "Invocation to the Moon" - 'The lady of the last great gift' is part of the poet's desire to be touched by all the important heavenly bodies and elements of nature. In "Butterfly" we get the first accurate indication of the time of year and the beginning

of his poems specifically about death:

> Already it is October, and the wind blows strong to the sea
>
> (CP, 696)

is an indication that it is time for the butterfly to make its journey sea-ward with the wind. This autumn symbolism is retained throughout the remaining poems, and the poem "Butterfly" is well placed immediately before one of the two strong poems about death; "Bavarian Gentians", which is, itself, a good prelude to Lawrence's journey in his 'Ship of Death'.

In "Bavarian Gentians" the season is again alluded to. 'Soft September, at slow, sad Michaelmas', marks the end of September. The poem is about darkness and the 'Glory of Darkness'; which was its original title. Lawrence's expression is detached from any religion or traditionally philosophical belief. It moves to its own firm conclusion through statements which, although slightly repetitive, are really intensified and intensifying within the situation of the poem:

> Bavarian gentians, big and dark, only dark
> darkening the day-time, torch-like with the smoking
> blueness of Pluto's gloom.
> become
> black lamps from the halls of Dis, burning dark blue,
> giving off darkness, blue darkness, as Demeter's
> pale lamps give off light,
>
> (CP, 697)

Lawrence's statement in this poem is a positive desire for darkness and the fading autumn gentian is, a poetic object, as strong for him as the Grecian Urn was for Keats. He wants to experience pure darkness, 'in the deeper dark of the arms Plutonic', and to see for himself the lost daughter of Zeus and Demeter 'pierced with the passion of dense gloom'.

The poem achieves its effect without stark statements of fact or pretentious intellectualizing. The predominance of b's and d's of blueness and darkness creates a mysterious atmosphere which seems to need only dampness to make the words smell. The language is the language of the mythology which Lawrence recalls. The poem is a statement about death from the depths and darkness of Lawrence's passionate soul. For Lawrence death was a 'continuing part' - a journey from a confusing life into the unknown of complete oblivion. This theme, started in "Bavarian Gentians", was to be sustained throughout the remainder of his death poems. This poem also introduces the beginning of Lawrence's polarization of God and the devil and sets the scene for his definition of evil.

In "Lucifer" it is quite clear that the fallen angel has not lost his brightness but 'under layers and layers of darkness' he shines 'like the ruby in the invisible dark'. His is the home of 'souls lost in darkness' just 'as heaven is the home of souls lost in light'. In "Evil is Homeless", Lawrence states that 'evil has no dwelling-place', and describes its state as one of greyness which lacks movement. This is the most detested state of all because there is no tension, it is robot-like and mechanical. It is Lawrence's death-in-life. It is the opposite of life. In "Wandering Cosmos" he refers to life as being in a state of'becoming':

> For life is a wandering, we know not whither, but going.
> (CP, 713)

Life for Lawrence is in a state of becoming and so is death. In "Death is not Evil, Evil is Mechanical", Lawrence catalogues a list of opposites and tensions, all of which make man what he is:

Know theyself, and that thou art mortal.
But know thyself, denying that thou art mortal:
a thing of kisses and strife
a lit-up shaft of rain
a calling column of blood
a rose tree bronzey with thorns
a mixture of yea and nay
a rainbow of love and hate
a wind that blows back and forth
a creature of beautiful peace, like a river
and a creature of conflict, like a cataract:
know thyself, in denial of all these things--
(CP, 714)

Man as a 'Creature of Conflict' must accept death as a normal occurrence. But the acceptance doesn't have to be totally passive. Even if you are well prepared, the tension will be present; as is the case in Lawrence's great poem about death - "The Ship of Death". The tension of life and death, although present, is beautifully restrained in this poem. This is never more evident than in the opening lines:

Now it is autumn and the falling fruit
and the long journey towards oblivion.

The apples falling like great drops of dew
to bruise themselves an exit from themselves.

And it is time to go, to bid farewell
to one's own self, and find an exit
from the fallen self.
(CP, 716)

In "Abysmal Immortality" Lawrence describes the bottomless abyss of extreme self-knowledge and states in "Only Man" that man alone can 'fall from God' by 'the knowledge of the self-apart-from-God'. In "The Ship of Death", however, Lawrence desires 'an exit from the fallen self' and wants to trust to a state of total 'unknowing' or oblivion. It is not simply a death wish but what Lawrence calls, 'an oblivion of uttermost living' or 'more than dead.' In "Know-All" he crystalizes this thought:

Man knows nothing
till he knows how not-to-know.

And the greatest of teachers will tell you:
The end of all knowledge is oblivion
sweet, dark oblivion, when I cease
even from myself, and am consummated.
(CP, 726)

The extreme of self-knowledge is to be outside the self, and the extreme of life is to be outside life; but to achieve the latter, you must be well prepared for the journey:

Have you built your ship of death, O have you?
O build your ship of death, for you will need it.

The grim frost is at hand, when the apples will fall
thick, almost thundrous, on the hardened earth.

And death is on the air like a smell of ashes!
Ah! can't you smell it?

And in the bruised body, the frightened soul
finds itself shrinking, wincing from the cold
that blows upon it through the orifices.
(CP, 717)

To have built your ship of death for Lawrence meant to have lived so passionately in the flesh that you will want this final adventure - this final tension between light and darkness - to be real and not mystical, to be complete, either total dark or total light, but not grey. On the death side is the smell of burning ashes and within the 'bruised body' the frightened soul still lingers 'wincing from the cold'. For a moment in section three Lawrence hesitates, Hamlet-like, and contemplates 'self-murder' as a means of speeding up the process. During his last days Lawrence may have thought about this; but not seriously. Earl Brewster's

reference to Lawrence's attitude when informed of the death by suicide in 1929 of his friend, the American poet and publisher, Harry Crosby, shows Lawrence's disagreement with suicide. Lawrence says: "That's all he could do with life, throw it away. How could he betray the great privilege of life?"[17] And his letter to his sister, Mrs. Emily King, written as late as January 15, 1930, shows the patience and hope for life which he had to the end. In this letter, Lawrence, although suffering, took time to comment in some detail about preparations for a birthday party:

> I asked Ada to tell me whether I should send Peg plain money for her 21st--or whether send the money to Ada to buy something for her. You might talk it over. What day is her birthday--February 20th? I hope she'll have a nice party--and you won't have much fuss, if it isn't in the house.[18]

In section three of "The Ship of Death" he also discounts the possibility of suicide:

> And can a man his own quietus make
> with a bare bodkin?
>
> With daggers, bodkins, bullets, man can make
> a bruise or break of exit for his life;
> but is that a quietus, O tell me, is it quietus?
>
> Surely not so! for how could murder, even self-murder
> ever a quietus make?
>
> (CP, 717)

It would have been too mechanical. He could not bear anything but the real thing, and that could not be self-created. In part five he continues:

> Build then the ship of death, for you must take
> the longest journey, to oblivion.

> And die the death, the long and painful death
> that lies between the old self and the new.
>
> Already our bodies are fallen, bruised, badly bruised,
> already our souls are oozing through the exit
> of the cruel bruise.
>
> Already the dark and endless ocean of the end
> is washing in through the breaches of our wounds,
> already the flood is upon us.
>
> Oh build your ship of death, your little ark
> and furnish it with food, with little cakes, and wine
> for the dark flight down oblivion.
> (CP, 718)

To 'die the long and painful death' was always Lawrence's wish. In "Mystic" Lawrence illustrates this desire for full participation:

> But if I eat an apple, I like to eat it
> with all my senses awake.
> Hogging it down like a pig I call the feeding of corpses.
> (CP, 708)

So in section five the life oozes slowly from 'the old self to the new'. The reference to the ark furnished 'with food, with little cakes, and wine' reminds us of Noah's well-prepared craft. The line 'already the flood is upon us' may, therefore, be a Lawrentian cry of universal significance. There is, to the end a mingling of pagan and Christian elements in Lawrence's philosophy. His reference to the 'flood upon us' could mean the end of Christianity as well as the awareness of death for the individual. An acceptance of Lawrence's concept of death as a positive force which is part of life would certainly mean the end of the Christian interpretation of death which twentieth century man has accepted:

> His intellectural starting point, a widespread
> one in the past century, assumed the collapse of
> Christianity: "The adventure is gone out of Christianity.
> We must start on a new adventure towards God." I know [19]
> the greatness of Christianity: it is a past greatness.

Lawrence had earlier predicted a second coming. In the poem "Astronomical Changes" he says:

> ...Jesus of the watery way,
> your two thousand years are up.
>
> And the foot of the Cross no longer is planted in the place of the birth of the Sun.
> The whole great heavens have shifted over, and slowly pushed aside the Cross, the Virgin, Pisces, the Sacred Fish
> that casts its sperm upon the waters, and knows no intercourse;
> pushed them all aside, discarded them, make way now for something else.
>
> (CP, 616)

Lawrence's expectation is not unlike Yeats's in "The Second Coming". The beast in Yeats's poem is not unlike Blake's tiger nor are they both dissimilar to Lawrence's 'Escaped Cock.' The short story initially having this title was later published as The Man Who Died, and should be read with other prose written in Lawrence's last years so that, as a whole, his final statements about love and death may be clearer. In The Man Who Died the fable of the game cock and his destiny is unmistakeably linked to Christ's resurrection from the bondage of the tomb. The 'Escaped Cock' kills the rooster of the inn and gains command of the yard. He fought his battle and won his kingdom. For Christ the victory is not so simple; but when he mates with the Priestess of Isis in her holy temple, his act is a sacrament which completes his manhood and supplies the phallic clue which completes her search.

In the prose of his last years, most notably The Man Who Died, The Virgin and The Gypsy and Lady Chatterly's Lover, Lawrence's concept of love seems to be that it is a sacrament and that it can take place only away from ordinary life. Jan Deutsch comments on this in "Humanism and Love":

> The image at the end of The Man Who Died is literally that of drifting with the tide. Love, which has unquestioningly had a transforming effect upon the risen Osiris is, nevertheless, something "apart". It transforms the world, and yet is not really a part of it. The world remains, somehow, the domain of Romans and of slaves. There is an obvious significance in Lawrence's choice of a gipsy, a man who has been separated from the world by death, and a gamekeeper who voluntarily leads an isolated existence. Love, it seems, is not in any real sense of the word "of this world". It is not something which happens to Romans or to slaves.[20]

Lawrence's love can only take place apart from reality and the physical starkness of society. It requires almost 'a return to Eden' to be fully achieved. It is, however, similar to Lawrence's conception of death in that it is outside the world of reality, yet it has a transforming effect on real life. Both love and death are sacraments. Death is the sacrament of communion between life as it should be lived, and death as it should be experienced. Love is the sacrament of sexual union between man and woman.

In Section six of "The Ship of Death", death moves through the body, and there are moments of fear and an indication that the old self does not want to let go. The 'timid soul has her footing washed away' is indicative, not so much of free abandon, as of empty panic. In the last stanza, when 'our soul cowers naked in the dark rain over the flood', we still feel the resistance; but 'cowering in the last brances of the tree of our life' is proof of the finger-tip hold that is left. Lawrence's resurrection involves more of a literal rebirth than Christianity's:

> Death is as much a critical reality for Lawrence as it is for the orthodox Chirstian, but it is not for him the threshold of eternity and is not, therefore, a subject for apocalyptic fervor. Death is a part of natural life, a purifier that destroys the old

> and makes way for the new. But this does not make it
> easier to accept than the Christian view. It is still
> "the voyage of oblivion," the leap into the unknown which
> tests the faith of the religious man.[21]

Section seven, however, restores the peace and the feeling of acceptance of death:

> We are dying, we are dying, so all we can do
> is now to be willing to die, and to build the ship
> of death to carry the soul on the longest journey.
> (CP, 718)

The ship is well equipped with 'all accoutrements' and the launch is made; the soul departs from the body and the death journey begins:

> upon the flood's black waste
> upon the waters of the end
> upon the sea of death, where still we sail
> darkly, for we cannot steer, and have no port.
> (CP, 719)

The journey into Hades is confusing and each step is uncertain. The 'blueness of Pluto's gloom' is made blue by the 'forked torch of this flower' - the Bavarian gentian; but on 'the sea of death' there are no directions, 'only the deepening blackness':

> and the little ship is there; yet she is gone.
> She is not seen, for there is nothing to see her by.
> She is gone! gone! and yet
> somewhere she is there.
> Nowhere!
> (CP, 719)

Almost driven to desperation, Lawrence tries to describe his feeling of death. Only a return to the complete darkness of "Bavarian Gentians" and the paradoxical 'Somewhere' 'Nowhere' seems to make sense. His failure to conceptualize about a state which he has not experienced helps to fortify his argument in "Red Geranium and Godly Mignonette" that 'even God could not imagine the redness of a red geranium'. So Lawrence cannot imagine or describe the deathness in death. With Lawrence, 'We know it couldn't be done.'

His struggling attempt with words is successful, however, in that it points out the infiniteness of death and the completeness of the anniliation of the self:

> And everything is gone, the body is gone
> completely under, gone, entirely gone.
> The upper darkness is heavy as the lower,
> between them the little ship
> is gone
> she is gone.
>
> It is the end, it is oblivion.
> (CP, 719)

The last two sections, nine and ten, express a hope, which is not unlike that of Lawrence, who was consistently religious in his vision of life and in his search for a definition of love and death. And so the 'horizontal' thread that fumes a little with pallor upon the dark', is comparable to the dawning of a new day, 'the cruel dawn of coming back to life out of oblivion.' Death is like sleep. In his short poem "Sleep" he explains further:

> Sleep is the shadow of death, but not only that.
> Sleep is a hint of lovely oblivion.
> When I am gone, completely lapsed and gone
> and healed from all this ache of being.
> (CP, 724)

The poem, "Shadows", continues the religious vision of 'the heart renewed with peace', and further explains the sleep as a shadow of death. Because death is compared to sleep, Lawrence re-inforces his belief that death is a natural, every day occurrence. The poem, "Shadows", emphasizes not only the casualness of sleep and death but the joy in waking to each new day, 'new-created'.

And if tonight my soul may find her peace
in sleep, and sink in good oblivion,
and in the morning wake like a new-opened flower
then I have been dipped again in God, and new-created.
(CP, 726)

From this opening stanza where life and death are condensed to an evening sleep and the birth of a new day, Lawrence expands the concept to include the vicissitudes of all life and the joy of belief in a God even though it may be an 'unknown God':

And if, in the changing phases of man's life
I fall in sickness and in misery
my wrists seem broken and my heart seems dead
and strength is gone, and my life
is only the leavings of a life:

and still, among it all, snatches of lovely oblivion, and snatches of renewal
odd, wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new, strange flowers
such as my life has not brought forth before, new blossoms of me--

then I must know that still
I am in the hands of the unknown God,
he is breaking me down to his own oblivion
to send me forth on a new morning, a new man.
(CP, 727)

The final section of "The Ship of Death", captures some of the joy of 'new blossoms' and of re-birth as "the little ship wings home, faltering and lapsing on the pink flood":

and the frail soul steps out, into her house again
filling the heart with peace.

Swings the heart renewed with peace
even of oblivion.

Oh build your ship of death, Oh build it!
for you will need it.
For the voyage of oblivion awaits you.
(CP, 720)

The voyage of oblivion is ended for Lawrence, and life and death are defined in language which is simple and direct. His poetry is not the 'leavings of a life' or 'ruins of something greater planned' as Blackmur predicted. His 'better poems' provide the proof of this. His own great poem of death is a ship, in form and structure, which carries the poet to touch the 'lands of the mature muse'. In Last Poems we see more clearly than ever, the skill of the craftsman mingled with the spontaneity of feeling which has overflown.

## NOTES

1. Collected Letters, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 723.
2. Ibid.
3. Sex, Literature, and Censorship, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1959), p. 23.
4. Apocalypse, (1966), p. 199.
5. Sex, Literature, and Censorship, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1959), p. 62.
6. Eliseo Vivas, D. H. Lawrence, the Failure and the Triumph of Art, (1964), p. IX
7. Geoffrey Grigson, "The Poet in D. H. Lawrence," London Magazine, (1958), p. 69.
8. Chapter II, page 1 of this thesis.
9. Complete Poems edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts, (1964), p. 424.
10. Mornings in Mexico and Etruscan Places, introduction by Richard Aldington, (1959), p. 26.
11. Philip Rieff, "Two Honest Men," The Listener, May 5, (1960), p. 796.
12. Mornings in Mexico and Etruscan Places, introduction by Richard Aldington, (1959), p. 25.
13. D. H. Lawrence Selected Poems, edited by Kenneth Rexroth, (1959), p. 22.
14. N. B. Note 4 above.
15. Martin Jarrett-Kerr, D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, (1961), p. 138.
16. Ibid.
17. George A. Panichas, "Voyage of Oblivion", English Miscellany, XIII, p. 159.
18. Collected Letters, edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 1234.

19. Kingsley Widmer, The Art of Perversity, (1962), p. 168.

20. Jan Deutsch, "Humanism and Love," The Cambridge Review, March 2, (1957), p. 448.

21. R. P. Draper, D. H. Lawrence, (1964), p. 160.

## Chapter VI

### 'A CLEARING IN THE FOREST'

Any new thing must find a new shape, then afterwards
one can call it 'art.'
(Frieda Lawrence)

His poems are the inner flow of a man in the act of
becoming aware - aware not only of his feelings and their
cause, but of their full implications.
(A. Alvarez)

That I am I.
That my soul is a dark forest.
That my known self will never be more
than a little clearing in the forest.
That gods, strange gods, come forth from
the forest into the clearing of my known self,
and then go back.
That I must have the courage to let
them come and go.
That I will never let mankind put
anything over me, but that I will always try to recognize and submit
to the gods in me and the gods in
other men and women.
(Studies in Classic American Literature)

### SECTION I

Robert Bridges once remarked that "there are abundant signs that English syllabic verse has long been in the stage of artistic exhaustion of form which follows great artistic achievement."[1] The artistic achievement he referred to was the achievement of the Romantic poets and the statement he made, probably prompted by the experiments of Hopkins, was later proven to be true by the experiments of Eliot and Pound, all of whom were unsatisfied with traditional English verse form. Even a casual reading of the verse of D. H. Lawrence will illustrate a similar disgust with traditional verse forms but Lawrence's anti-traditionalism took him beyond the goals of

his immediate contemporaries. His contemporaries, led by Pound, formed the modernist movement in poetry and criticism and immediately devised a succession of formulas and catch words aimed primarily at diverting the attention from the artist's sensibility. The modernists favored a depersonalized art whereas Lawrence valued art only as an expression of the artist's sensibility. "My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect", Lawrence explained in an early letter that states his beliefs as a newly matured writer:

> We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and a bridle. What do I care about knowledge. All I want is to answer to my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind, or moral, or what-not. I conceive a man's body as a kind of flame, like a candle flame, forever upright and yet flowing: and the intellect is just the light that is shed on to the things around. And I am not so much concerned with the things around--which is really mind--but with the mystery of the flame forever flowing, coming God knows how from out of practically nowhere, and being itself, whatever there is around it, that it lights up. We have got so ridiculously mindful, that we never know that we ourselves are anything--we think there are only the objects we shine upon. And there the poor flame goes on burning ignored, to produce this light. And instead of chasing the mystery in the fugitive, half-lighted things outside us, we ought to look at ourselves, and say 'My God, I am myself!' That is why I like to live in Italy. The people are so unconscious. They only feel and want: they don't know. We know too much. No, we only <u>think</u> we know such a lot. A flame isn't a flame because it lights up two, or twenty objects on a table. It's a flame because it is itself. And we have forgotten ourselves. We are Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. We cannot <u>be</u>. 'To be or not to be'--it is the question with us now, by Jove. And nearly every Englishman says 'Not to be'. So he goes in for Humanitarianism and suchlike forms of not-being. The real way of living is to answer to one's wants. Not 'I want to light up with my intelligence as many things as possible' but 'For the living of my full flame--I want that liberty, I want that woman, I want that pound of peaches, I want to go to sleep, I want to go to the pub and have a good time, I want to look a beastly swell today, I want to kiss that girl, I want to insult that man.' Instead of

> that, all these wants, which are there whether-or-not, are utterly ignored, and we talk about some sort of ideas. I'm like Carlyle, who, they say, wrote 50 volumes on the value of silence.[2]

It was this 'spontaneous feeling' which Lawrence believed to be the main ingredient of good poetry and he despaired throughout his lifetime because modern man was more and more afraid to give vent to it. His aim in writing was to allow new feelings to find expression in their own natural form. He, therefore, rejected traditional verse forms and believed that if the emotion was strongly enough felt it would produce its own form and its own coherence. Because of this deeply personal sentiment his verse was attacked by powerful critics such as T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, and R. P. Blackmur who condemed not only the personal element in the verse but attacked Lawrence for favoring inspiration at the expense of craft in poetry. The verse has only recently, as part of a general Lawrence revival spear-headed by F. R. Leavis, gained a wide reading public:

> Many recent critics of Lawrence have shifted their attention to his poetry. Taking Blackmur's attack as their point of departure, these critics either defend "expressive form" as a poetic mode or show that Lawrence goes beyond it. Expressive form,says Blackmur, is directly communicated feelings, unmediated by form; it springs from the belief "that if a thing is only intensely enough felt its mere expression in words will give it satisfactory form." For English critics like A. Alvarez and V. de S. Pinto, however, expressive form in Lawrence transcends the level of personal outburst and requires "instinctive" craftsmanship. Pinto places it in the romantic tradition of "organic form", by which poems are shaped from within so as to capture living moments of experience rather than perfected bygone moments or static moments in futurity.[3]

The body of Lawrence's verse, when viewed as a whole, has many examples to prove that Lawrence's experimentation with form was often well rewarded. The evidence of several versions remaining for most of his better poems documents the fact that he did not take his craft lightly and the growing acceptance of his verse offers some proof that the modern reader regards his poetic form as adaquate. But Mark Spilka points to other possibilities by giving us a preview of what some modern critics say about Lawrence's new forms:

> Three American critics, Karl Shapiro, Bernice Slote, and James E. Miller, Jr., have proposed an extreme version of this "heretic" tradition, one which begins with Whitman and includes Lawrence, Dylan Thomas, and Hart Crane as its modern exponents, and which rivals the dominant modern school of Eliot and Pound. Yet Crane and Thomas are tainted by the cerebral tactics and formal restraints of the dominant school; and, as other critics have shown, Lawrence himself uses wit, irony, intelligence, and rational imagination in his poetry. The game of new traditions apparently has its hazards, but also its rewards, if we can accept the break with Blackmur's views as final. Adopting a middle ground, Graham Hough retains those views but holds that "something impressive remains" in Lawrence's poetry which eludes them. That something can be found, he says, by reading Lawrence's poetry as a whole, as "work poetically felt and conceived, whose individual units rarely reach perfection or self-subsistence," but whose honest, poignant, and powerfully expressive fragments can be salvaged. Reading the poems in this way, he recovers wholes as well as parts, affirms their value as creative insights, and grants them final justification "as successive stages in the building of (the poet's) ship of death."[4]

These claims for Lawrence's "heretic" tradition may be extreme but it is generally accepted by modern critics that his art was mainly a 'rage against modern dehumanization' illustrated by his continued search for self awareness and self fulfilment.

His life was a life of travel; and his 'savage pilgrimage' was a search for fulfilment and completion, ranging through societies and

states from Europe, to Ceylon, to Australia and to America. His rebellion against the rules of prosody acceptable in his day caused him to turn to the Romantics for theoretical support. From the American, Walt Whitman, he sought practical assistance in intensifying his effects in free verse. His directness, his passionate sense of individuality, his deep inner feeling for human relationships, his constant renewal of the search for fulfilment, are all part of Lawrence's poetry. His language is the language of common talk, but closer to the diction of Whitman's free verse than Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads. His individuality is strikingly Byronic. His deep inner feelings are powerful and spontaneous like Wordsworth's. His search for fulfilment is the equivalent of Keats' 'vale of soul making'. Lawrence's affinity with the Romantic tradition is profound and real. His poetry is the poetry of an important poet of the 20th century. If it is intensely disliked by some intelligent and powerful people it is also similar, in this one respect, to the poetry of Byron and Wordsworth, a great deal of which was seriously criticised as inferior verse. Lawrence, too, produced much inferior verse, but the quality of his good poems more than compensates for the jarring effects of an indiscriminate reading of the poetry as a whole. But to read the poetry as a whole as Graham Hough suggests, is possibly the most rewarding experience and will certainly confirm the comparison with the Romantics as well as demonstrate the logical development of the successive stages in the building of (the poet's) 'ship of death.' To read the verse as a whole will also demonstrate the

closeness of the artist to his work. His poetry is a presentation of life with all its changing moods and interests. It is a presentation of Lawrence's own life and a revelation of his inner self.

## SECTION II

Lawrence was not an orthodox Christian. His early life, however, was steeped in the teaching of the Bible and of the banner classes of the strict midlands Non-Conformist church. On his mother's side of the family, his grandfather was, with Booth, one of the founders of the Salvation Army - leaving an influence of evangelism which may explain the moments of preaching tone so evident in his poetry. But Christian teachings had many more effects. The recurrence of Christ's agony on the cross and Lawrence's attraction to the figure of Jesus may support the belief that Lawrence had a kinship with Christianity and was attempting throughout his work to define Christ in new terms. The definition of the theme of love and death best serves to illustrate Lawrence's closeness to early Christian thinking.

His early poems begin, although somewhat awkwardly, to define his concept of love and throughout his verse the better poems either directly or indirectly deal with this theme, which is central to his verse as it is to his life. But throughout his Early Period, he is struggling to be free from the demands of love--'the great asker'. His mother and Miriam both demand his soul and the dilemma is so overpowering as to cause him to conclude that all love means death because of its demanding quality. His desire for love becomes,

therefore, a death wish and with the association of love with the young adolescent sexual desires which he experiences, the sex act too becomes an act of death. The demands of love and sex, in Lawrence's Early Period are such that the experience is confining and restrictive and totally unpleasurable. There is also evidence in his early poems that Lawrence is not only aware of his own dilemma in love but, in the poem "A Man Who Died", hints at a comparison between Jesus' refusal to have physical contact with Mary Magdelene and his own refusal of Miriam. If we accept this comparison, we must also accept the presence of the Chirst figure in Lawrence's verse from the very beginning. Lawrence's idea of love and sex as representing an annihilation of the self, and therefore a kind of death, is also close to the conventional Christian view which Lawrence would have been taught in the Sunday School sessions at the Non-Conformist Parish to which his family belonged.

After the transitional "Poems to Helen", Lawrence is freed to experience the full physical joy of married love as illustrated in the poems of Look! We Have Come Through!. The importance of sexual pleasure in marriage which Lawrence argues for in this volume recalls doctrines of early Christianity which are more fundamental than Lawrence's childhood protestantism. His poetry, during this period, begins to emphasize certain elements of paganism which were evident in early Christianity. His ideas of phallic marriage and his resurrection in the flesh introduced here for the first time were fully elaborated on in the prose of his last years of life, especially The Man Who Died, Apocalypse and Lady Chatterley's Lover. His return to the early

doctrines of Christianity was an attempt at total self-realization and near the end of Look! We Have Come Through! he concludes that total self-realization leads to total self-negation. This, it seems to me is similar to C. S. Lewis's belief that:

> "...in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing. I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do."[5]

Lawrence's search for fulfilment in the early 1920's, best illustrated by the poems of Birds, Beasts and Flowers, became a self-negation which allowed him to be a commentator outside his own poetry in which he is himself a participant. And because of this, his poetry is finer in quality and form. At the end of Birds, Beasts and Flowers, Lawrence concludes that animal love is no different than any other love. With the tortoise's 'crucifixion into sex', he concludes that love and sex and death should be accepted as elements of life. He begins to see them more positively and to accept death not as the end but as a part of life which is positive because it can lead to new beginnings. Lawrence begins to see life as in a state of becoming and love and death as parts of life and thus parts of the same continuum. Love and sex are also characteristics of life which cannot be escaped by any living creature. Our 'crucifixion into sex' is at the root of our search for fulfilment and completion. The male-female attraction is basic, yet deeper, than life. Sex can achieve temporary release from the conscious self-but for this state to be permanent, the individual must transcend this world and accomplish 'a return to Eden'; or achieve a state similar to the 'forest of Arden' atmosphere of Birds, Beasts and Flowers, Lady Chatterly's Lover or The Man Who Died. In the real world, however, sex, for

Lawrence, must always be in conflict and tension. The relationship which he sought was a type of equilibrium and balance so delicate and so fine that each personality would be retained. It was a oneness with a distinct duality:

> We are balanced like a flame between the two darknesses, the darkness of the beginning and the darkness of the end. We derive from the unknown, and we result into the unknown. But for us the beginning is not the end, for us the two are not one.
>
> It is our business to burn, pure flame, between the two unknowns. We are to be fulfilled in the world of perfection, which is the world of pure creation. We must come into being in the transcendent other world of perfection, consummated in life and death both, two in one.[6]

Each death, for Lawrence, achieves a new birth, and the adventure continues because there is no time sequence - there is no beginning, no middle, and no end. Man is essentially an adventurer and his movement is cyclical. His statement in Apocalypse, published posthumously, but written as he was dying, explains Lawrence's acceptance of this philosophy and the acceptance of death in his own life:

> Our idea of time as a continuity in an eternal straight line has crippled our consciousness cruelly. The pagan conception of time as moving in cycles is much freer, it allows movement upwards and downwards, and allows for a complete change of the state of mind, at any moment. One cycle finished, we can drop or rise to another level, and be in a new world at once. But by our time-continuum method, we have to trail wearily on over another ridge.[7]

## SECTION III

Lawrence's Last Period produced strong re-statements in prose of many of his earlier poetic themes. Apocalypse and The Man Who Died are

forceful examples of this. But regardless of his re-emphasis in prose, the poetry itself makes firm statements about Lawrence's mature philosophy and clarifies his final definition of love and death. Last Poems, written during the final year of his life, includes some of his most mature verse, and although it too re-echoes many of his earlier themes, it is perhaps most valuable because it summarizes the vision and philosophy of Lawrence. It is his final attempt at understanding life and death.

> The great theme of Last Poems is Lawrence's inner struggle to understand and accept death. As stated in the title of one of the poems, "Death is Not Evil, Evil is Mechanical." Death is the equipoise of Life, making renewal possible by destroying whatever is decayed and exhausted. Not only men but ideas and the civilizations based on them grow old and need to be destroyed in order to make way for new life. A moribund idea is a tyrannical inhibitor of life, as Lawrence believed Christianity to be in the twentieth century. With the destruction of the outworn civilization, the time comes for the birth of a new one; or, in accordance with a cycle not unlike that of Spenser's Garden of Adonis, for the rebirth of an old one that has been refreshed by its absence from earth.
>
> This rebirth is hailed in such poems as "The Greeks are Coming," "The Argonauts," "Middle of the World," and "For the Heroes are dipped in Scarlet." In these poems the present and the past (which, however, with Lawrence is also the implicit future) are ironically juxtaposed. In "The Greeks are Coming" the ancient ships of Knossos are contrasted with the ocean liner "leaving a long thread of dark smoke/like a bad smell...." In "Middle of the World" the mythical "slim black ship of Dionysos" comes "sailing in/with grape-vines up the mast, and dolphins leaping...." These ships contrast with "the smoking ships/of the P. & O. and the Orient Line and all the other stinkers."
>
> The myth-making in these poems is an expanded symbolism expressing the life-assertive civilization that is due to take the place of the present Christian-Platonic one. The opening lines of "For the Heroes are dipped in Scarlet" have direct reference to this idea: "Before Plato told the great lie of ideals/men slimly went like fishes, and didn't care." These

> are the men of the past who are now to become the heroes of the future. The explanation of their scarlet color is to be found in Etruscan Places; "Man all scarlet was his bodily godly self,"[10] and in Apocalypse "The heroes and the hero-kings glowed in the face red as poppies that the sun shines through. It was the colour of glory: it was the colour of the wild bright blood, which was life itself."[11] Scarlet symbolizes their renewed vitality.[8]

What Draper fails to realize is that Lawrence's symbolism re-echoes his 'back to the womb' wish but in his final view the wish has universal significance and the womb is the mediterranean - the cradle of all mankind. Draper also overlooks the fact that when Lawrence points to a rebirth by ironically juxtaposing the present with the past he does not exclude Christianity. In "Demiurge", for example, he is quick to turn to Jesus who has made religion relevant because; "he was born from the womb, and ate soup and bread." It is true, however, that when Lawrence turns to Christianity in Last Poems it is to highlight elements that are pagan in origin and by recalling them he points to the need for Christianity to return to basic doctrines as much as he advocates a re-birth of the worship of ancient Greek gods. Mark Spilka summarizes this argument:

> "the later D. H. Lawrence" turns from paganism per se to the pagan element in Christianity itself. Thus Father Tiverton feels that "Lawrence can teach Christians lessons they should have known but have forgotten"; and in my own opinion, he can teach us all, Christian or not, a vital lesson in social regeneration.[9]

Lawrence recognized and demonstrated in his verse a connection between love and death. The equation Love = Sex = Death was only replaced by Love = Sex = Death = Life after the poetry of Look! We Have Come Through! and only from the early 1920's did Lawrence accept death as a part of life.

The acceptance of death immediately became a pre-requisite, necessary in order to fully live. For Lawrence the ultimate of love and life was death because death represented an opportunity for rebirth and regeneration. His understanding and his acceptance of love and death as positive forces in life were also close to early Christian thinking and may have been influenced by his fundamentalist background which would have helped him to conclude that beyond death there is a great 'peace' and a land of 'rewards' and 'purifying of sins' for those who accept death by not denying love while alive. There is evidence of this reassuring peace beyond death in 'The Ship of Death' and other poems in his final sequence where death is quietly compared to and accepted as 'a gentle sleep'. But Lawrence makes it clear even in his final verse, that death is like sleep only if you do not deny love while you live. To deny love becomes the death-in-life which Lawrence cannot forgive because it produces a 'greyness' in people which causes them to be somehow beyond salvation. Thus the tension and the paradox remain to the end as characteristics both of his poetry and his life.

It is not strange, therefore, that the Phoenix was his symbol - a symbol which marked his first grave in Vence, France, nor that this poem marked the end of his Last Poems:

PHOENIX

Are you willing to be sponged out, erased, cancelled,
made nothing?
Are you willing to be made nothing?
dipped into oblivion?

If not, you will never really change.

> The phoenix renews her youth
> only when she is burnt, burnt alive, burnt down
> to hot and flocculent ash.
> Then the small stirring of a new small bub in the nest
> with strands of down life floating ash
> Shows that she is renewing her youth like the eagle,
> immortal bird.
>
> (CP, 728)

Lawrence, 'Traveller, column of fire', would expect no other memory. His Last Poems shows no evidence of his own re-birth as an orthodox Christian but throughout his verse his definition of love and death revitalizes these concepts in the lives of all Christians.

## NOTES

1. Times Literary Supplement, 29 Feb., 1912.
2. Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence edited by Harry T. Moore, (1962), p. 180.
3. D. H. Lawrence - A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Mark Spilka, (1963), p. 11.
4. Ibid.
5. C. S. Lewis, A Experiment in Criticism (1961), p. 141.
6. Phoenix, p. 696.
7. Apocalypse, p. 87.
8. R. P. Draper, D. H. Lawrence, (1964), p. 157.
9. Mark Spilka, The Love Ethic of D. H. Lawrence, (1966), p. 205.

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