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ASHES OF THE PHOENIX: A STUDY OF PRIMITIVISM AND MYTH-MAKING IN D.H.LAWRENCE'S THE PLUMED SERPENT

by Jascha Kessler

This essay is an analysis of ideas in D.H. Lawrence's The Plumed Serpent. Almost thirty years of criticism have failed to establish its nature and worth as an embodiment of ideas about man and society integral to his last decade of writing. Recent evaluation tends to exalt literary, or formal aspects of his work, relegating his radical denunciations of modern civilization to obscurity because they challenge fundamental Western values. This essay shows that Lawrence cannot be properly understood unless there is comprehension of his principles and their essential relationship to the drama in his novels.

Chapter I reviews criticism of The Plumed Serpent and books preceding and succeeding it. Next, the method of examination is presented; this is based on Professor Karl Mannheim's suggestions for a 'sociology of knowledge,' especially his analysis of 'objective,' 'expressive,' and 'documentary' contents in any work of art.

Chapter II reveals the 'objective' content of The Plumed Serpent as a true myth conforming to the pattern of great world-myths. This level of Lawrence's narrative is sui generis, and quite disjunctive from

what he considered his myth-making style and from his didactic purposes.

Chapter III considers problems Lawrence dealt with in his last ten years, showing how they entered into his writings on the level of 'expressive' and 'documentary' meaning. Section i analyses basic tenets of primitivist thought, and proposes that the 20th Century variety of primitivism is a new phenomenon. Section ii discusses other works by Lawrence which, when compared with one another, disclose that the "cosmology" and "physics" he propounded led ineluctably to a primitivist philosophy. Remaining divisions of this chapter discuss the four aspects of The Plumed Serpent's primitivism. On the 'expressive' level, sources of his conflict with society and within himself, and its outcome in his books, are dealt with; on the 'objective' level, the intrinsic self-contradiction of his philosophical ideas is disclosed. These sections contain: (a) his conception of a tribal politics for modern nations; (b) his revolt from history; (c) his rejection of all aspects of machine technology; and (d) his mistaken idea of the nature of myth, and its consequent misuse as a literary device. These features of Lawrence's primitivism stem from the extreme nihilism of modern times, and through his dualistic and mechanistic world-theory become transformed into a most formidable anti-rationalism.

Two main conclusions result from this study. The first states that, despite Lawrence's prepossessions, he created a great mythical story in The Plumed Serpent, which places his artistic genius close to the first rank of novelists. The second is more complex and equivocal, for it maintains that Lawrence's nihilistic anti-rationalism, while deplorable from a detached or universal position, is yet an outstanding characteristic of modern creative thought; furthermore, that in our time nihilism represents a most advanced intellectual stand. Though his ideas have, in other hands, brought the world twice to the brink of self-destruction and chaos, he nevertheless maintained them as an honest response to contemporary social problems. From this study's historicist and rationalist view it may thus be said that Lawrence's contribution to literature is important precisely because it explores the dangerous regions towards which his fearless thought carried him, and that, though criticism must demur from what he seems to have believed a correct direction and goal, his negative value as thinker and artist is quite as high as it may have been were his ideas acceptable. "The errors of genius are the portals of discovery," wrote James Joyce; given the inversion of all values in modern times, perhaps Lawrence's inversion may ultimately be valued as truly precious.

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by
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CONTENTS

I. ASHES OF THE PHOENIX: THE CRITICAL REPUTATION OF THE PLUMED SERPENT.....1

II. DESCENT IN DARKNESS: THE PLUMED SERPENT'S MYTHIC FORM.....27

III. THE PRIMITIVISM OF D.H. LAWRENCE

i. Aspects of the Modern Form of Primitivism....59

ii. The Principles of D.H. Lawrence's Primitivism.....71

iii. The Politics of the Tribe.....111

iv. The Revolt from History.....133

v. Against the Machine.....156

vi. Mythomania: The Use, and Misuse, of Myth in Modern Primitivism.....185

IV. CONCLUSIONS.....223

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....243

CHAPTER I

ASHES OF THE PHOENIX: THE CRITICAL REPUTATION OF THE PLUMED SERPENT

> "The phoenix has nevertheless risen from his own ashes, which for a time had become the ashes of legend...and...the ashes of oblivion."
> Harry T. Moore, The Intelligent Heart.

This essay is devoted to an analysis and discussion of the ideas in D. H. Lawrence's The Plumed Serpent, the major novel of his later phase. It was written between May of 1923 and February of 1925; Lawrence began it while living on the shore of Lake Chapala in Mexico and finished it in Mexico City.[1] The book was published early in 1926 in England and the United States simultaneously. Since that time it has remained under a pall, both in relation to Lawrence's other novels and as a work in its own right; whenever infrequent acclamations of its merit have been voiced these have been founded on serious reservations and misgivings, as will be indicated through a review below of criticisms of the book and questions raised about the author's purposes by inquirers.

Although since the end of the Second World War there has been a renewed effort to elucidate the bearing of Lawrence's genius, no one has shown what his Mexican fantasy means, whether taken in itself or as part of the record of a

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[1]Harry T. Moore, The Intelligent Heart: The Story of D. H. Lawrence (New York, Ferrar, Straus, and Co., 1954). This is a complete critical biography; the history of the novel's writing is traced on pp. 314-345.

writer and his period. As his latest biographer, Mr. Harry T. Moore, points out, Lawrence was forgotten during the depression and quite obscured during the years of the war, except for a few unflagging supporters like Aldous Huxley, F. R. Leavis, and Horace Gregory.[2] Professor Leavis, while making intensive studies of such works as Women In Love and St. Mawr in order to reveal them as dramatic poems, has not yet published on The Plumed Serpent; and even Mr. Moore's exhaustive biography passes over the novel without stopping to do more than remark, as have many other critics, the fine descriptive passages.

It is the aim of this study to establish the importance of the novel among the later works, to show how The Plumed Serpent derives from the thought of the last decade of Lawrence's life, how it is central to that period, and why he will remain incompletely known, even rather misunderstood, as long as this book is a mystery. One reason this study has been undertaken is because Lawrence is coming into favor again as one of the great writers of this century; whereas in the cases of men like Henry James, or William Faulkner who is still actively at work, the process of revival meant discovery of values hitherto overlooked by contemporaries, in Lawrence's case it seems to mean that the controversial facets of his books which made him notorious at their appearance - his views on politics, or sex, or social

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[2]Moore, The Intelligent Heart, pp. 444-445.

relations, for instance - are being glossed over as inessential, parochial and outmoded in comparison to the beauties of description, the unique vision of his poetry, and the pure, timeless drama which his characters enact. Nevertheless, if Lawrence is going to be held up as a great figure it is at least essential that the beliefs which informed his work from Sons and Lovers on be clearly seen and known by the critic; that is, it is as important to comprehend the "prophetic" side of Lawrence's utterance as it is for such a writer as Blake, and it will be remembered that Blake's almost total obscurity has not been a final deterrent to critical effort. Thus, one fundamental concern of this study will be to establish the basis on which D. H. Lawrence wrote his later works, if only to deter recent judgments such as this: "...perhaps some highly imaginative modern poets need a border-world of mysticism and nonsense...to excite their poetic talent."[3] In this respect, The Plumed Serpent is the obvious focal point for investigation not only because it is a novel and we are interested in Lawrence as a novelist, or because it is a turning in his creative technique halfway between Women In Love and such strange books as The Man Who Died and Apocalypse, but also because it gave rise to serious charges about his social and political morality, and puzzling, contradictory criticism about his purposes and accomplishments. Looking ahead for a moment, I will mention as illustrations

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[3]Moore, The Intelligent Heart, p. 445.

of this critical problem that Professor William York Tindall, the scholar who dug out the sources of various doctrines in the novel, changed his opinion of the book radically from disapproval to mild enthusiasm between 1937 and 1952, and that Father William Tiverton, the first to write a full-length study of Lawrence since the Thirties, dismissed the book as a failure.[4]

In short, I have approached The Plumed Serpent as a proper object for a study of Lawrence for the following reasons: interest in Lawrence is reviving, the biography of his life has finally been provided accurately, and close reading of his principal writings is under way;[5] primarily, however, I have selected this novel because the trend of recent criticism has shown itself one which, though tempered by the years since his death, seems also one disposed to separate Lawrence from his "message"; accordingly it is a trend which does not or cannot deal either with The Plumed Serpent or those other of his compositions akin to it. In this essay, I shall demonstrate that the key to this book is a modern brand of primitivism, and that only in the unique perspectives of this primitivism can the subject, method,

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[4]Father William Tiverton, D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence (London: Rockliff, 1951). In connection with this matter of veering opinions, the strange thing about this book is that it has a foreword by one of Lawrence's inveterate opponents, T. S. Eliot, written as endorsement of a study critically favorable to Lawrence.

[5]Moore, The Intelligent Heart, p. 445.

the source of its failings as a novel, and its artistic achievement, indeed, its strange and paradoxical triumph, be explained.

The book has the usual curious history of Lawrence's later works. Mr. Moore remarks, for instance, that "in spite of a bad press, the novel sold well."[6] A sample of reviewers' comments gives a clear picture of the way readers in 1926 were able to distinguish most of the aspects of the book which have remained problematic. The Bookman thought it "picturesque," but overlong and peopled with unreal figures speaking "the Lawrence idiom."[7] Katherine Anne Porter felt its image-language had triumphed "by sheer poetic power" over its author's confused mind, attaining a "mystical truth" out of "debased...dogma."[8] The International Book Review said that though the novel was "over-detailed," repetitive and anticlimactic, it was "extraordinarily interesting - not so much through its story or its characters, as through its ideas and its philosophy."[9] It was conceded by Living Age that no one else could have rivalled Lawrence for "a fierce

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[6] Ibid., pp. 355-356.

[7] Isabel Patterson, The Bookman (March, 1926) p.99.

[8] Katherine Anne Porter, The New York Herald Tribune Magazine, March 7, 1926, p.1. Miss Porter explained what she disliked about The Plumed Serpent at greater length in an essay on Lawrence, "Quetzalcoatl," The Days Before (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1952), pp. 262-267.

[9] L. Moore, The International Book Review (March, 1926) p. 247.

intuitional understanding," yet it complained that he was plunging "through the darkness of chaos."[10] Edwin Muir said flatly that it was "surely the most garrulous book Mr. Lawrence [had] ever written."[11] Like many other commentators, the reviewer in The New Statesman had been enchanted, but could not give his assent, saying that he had not found the "last touch...of something vital and permanent," and that its author was "marching down a cul-de-sac."[12] On the other hand, a writer for The New York World found The Plumed Serpent "a darkly glowing splendor of archaic mystery," which was "illimitably suggestive," and touched "all but submerged responses."[13] The Saturday Review was quite disgusted, and saw that Lawrence was "no longer interested in the ordinary workaday relations between people"; so annoyed was its reviewer by the style and the characters, that he termed the book "a game of blind man's buff played by confirmed solipsists."[14] This was put in a more subtle fashion by The Saturday Review of Literature when it saw all the natural landscape of Mexico, the land and human figures alike, caught

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[10] Living Age (April 3, 1926), p. 75.

[11] Edwin Muir, The Nation and Athenaeum (February 20, 1926), p. 719.

[12] P. C. Kennedy, The New Statesman (January 30, 1926), p. 481.

[13] J. W. Crawford, The New York World Magazine, February 7, 1926, p. 6.

[14] L. P. Hartley, The Saturday Review, CXLI (January 30, 1926), 129.

not only in the "arid Mexican light and atmosphere," but also in an "inevitable growth relation," and decided that despite this "most original contribution to literature" "the objective truth of the picture...does not convince."[15] The Spectator denounced him roundly: "If this writing up of a new faith is intended for a message, then it is only a paltry one," of "feathers," "bowls of human blood," and "rhetoric."[16] And, finally, The Times Literary Supplement said, in politest English, that the novel, even if it did "embody vividly certain ideas," offered "no solution clearly intelligible to the reason."[17]

Since the year of its publication, 1926, there have been only two writers out of hundreds who considered The Plumed Serpent as a basis for a wider analysis of Lawrence than as a story-teller: Eric Bentley and William York Tindall, the former to place him on the political line of descent of Romantic hero-worshippers,[18] and the latter to explore the sources of occult doctrines in his later writings.[19] Most criticism has concerned itself with the form of his other novels and his technique of characterization,

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[15]E. S. Sergeant, The Saturday Review of Literature, II (April 24, 1926), 735.

[16]The Spectator, CXXXVI (January 30, 1926), 182.

[17]The Times Literary Supplement, January 21, 1926, p. 41.

[18]Eric Bentley, "Heroic Vitalists of the Twentieth Century," A Century of Hero Worship (Philadelphia) J. B. Lippincott, 1944) pp. 205-253.

[19]William York Tindall, D. H. Lawrence and Susan His Cow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939).

or his singularity as a kind of preacher of sex. For instance, a year before The Plumed Serpent came out, Edwin Muir wrote an article in which he revealed with perfect clarity what Lawrence had been doing in every book that succeeded Sons and Lovers, and what he said applies to the Mexican novel as adequately as to its predecessors. For Muir, the characters "are not men and women; they are male and female" living "the life of the instincts," and "the tragedy in his novels is a tragedy not of outward misfortune, nor of personality, but of subterranean defeat."[20] He says also that because of this method Lawrence was "unfair to everything conscious," but he does not say why, though Lawrence himself gave his reason repeatedly in the novels and essays. Unfortunately, that criticism which has accepted such reasons leaves us no wiser than if we read Lawrence only.[21]

Paul Rosenfeld perceived another aspect of Lawrence's characterizations when he said that his novels did not wholly define the lineaments of their personages, and that, insofar as they did, one could recognize the same ones in all of them, that, "indeed...his work was the picture of the relationship

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[20]Edwin Muir, "D. H. Lawrence," The Nation, CXX (February 11, 1925), 150.

[21]Mr. Moore is a case in point. One reviewer observed about The Intelligent Heart that "it is admirable as a collection of facts...but [it] does not succeed in making sense out of Lawrence's muddled philosophy of life and letters." Orville Prescott, The New York Times, January 11, 1955, p. 40.

of a pair of people, serially continued."[22]

The analyses by Muir and Rosenfeld represent the short distance criticism went into the subject during Lawrence's lifetime and the years immediately following his death in 1930. Though it is a first step in understanding a writer to know exactly how he handles character and plot, this knowledge will be stultified if there is no explanation as to why he has done things in a certain way; later criticism falters at this second question. For example, in 1930, John Middleton Murry, one of Lawrence's closest friends, confessed that he could not understand the meaning of the treatment of character in the books: "Lawrence's ideas are rather difficult for me to get hold of, because he uses all kinds of words in a curious symbolic sense to which I have no clue."[23] Aldous Huxley, very close to Lawrence in the last years of his life, shed some light on this related matter of Lawrence's use of words by explaining that his dislike of abstract knowledge and pure spirituality made him

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[22]Cf. Paul Rosenfeld, "D. H. Lawrence," The New Republic, LXII (March 26, 1930), 155. "It is actually a trifle difficult to distinguish Will Brangwen and Anton Skrebensky in The Rainbow, divergent as their fates are; or Birkin and Gerald in Women in Love; or Ramon and Cipriano in The Plumed Serpent; and any and all of them, including the mysterious gamekeeper in Lady Chatterley's Lover from the little novelist in Kangaroo. And while the women characters are somewhat more definite and individualized, they, too, have a strange family likeness."

[23]John Middleton Murry, "Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence," The New Adelphi, III (1930), 270.

a kind of mystical materialist."[24] Though such a philosophical attitude towards the universe must have profound influence upon what a novelist composes, Huxley did not attempt to trace its effects in Lawrence's books, although he insisted that whatever "the world found strange in his beliefs and his behavior" was due fundamentally to the fact that "he remained through thick and thin unshakably loyal to his own genius," "the daimon which possessed him," "his gift...the strange and powerful numen which...used him as its tabernacle."[25] This statement was undoubtedly meant as a reply to all those critics who regarded Lawrence in the terms which were expressed by the writer of the obituary notice in Commonweal who said that "Lawrence consciously made of himself a kind of delicate stringed instrument upon which all the forces of the earth could play" in order to "incorporate...philosophies...which aimed to abolish every vestige of restraint" by chronicling "the stealthy wanderings of sex through the unconscious...or...what he thought was the unconscious"; and concluded by designating him "a victim of

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[24]Aldous Huxley, "D. H. Lawrence," The Olive Tree (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936), pp. 216-217. This passage continues, "He was a subjectivist as well as a materialist; in other words, he believed in the possibility of magic.... Matter must be intrinsically as lively as the mind which perceives it and is moved by the perception. Vivid and violent spiritual effects must have correspondingly vivid and violent material causes. And, conversely, any violent feeling or desire in the mind must be capable of producing violent effects upon external matter."

[25]Ibid., pp. 208-209.

....the fundamental aberration of our time."[26]

However, there was one critic who wrote in the month after Lawrence died in another vein, and who raised the problem which neither Huxley nor any other critic has answered yet. After a most sympathetic description of Lawrence's quest, Joseph Wood Krutch surmised that "perhaps... it was not sex which led him to question the universe but the universe which led him to question sex, for the simple reason that sex presents in a concrete and complicated form much of the problem of the relation of sentient man to the blind forces of nature," and that what was needed was "a clear or wholly comprehensible description of the exact nature of (Lawrence's) grievance," or even "some clue" which he "never supplied."[27]

In 1937, Professor Tindall published an essay on The Plumed Serpent,[28] part of which he later incorporated into his work on the philosophy of the later writings, D. H. Lawrence and Susan His Cow. The complete study depends on an examination of Lawrence's letters, essays and novels; its information comes from the works themselves, and from questions put to Mrs. Lawrence and various acquaintances of the

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[26]"Erotic Genius," Commonweal, XI (March 19, 1930) 546.

[27]Joseph Wood Krutch, "D. H. Lawrence: The Man and His Work," The Nation, CXXX (March 19, 1930) 326.

[28]William York Tindall, "D. H. Lawrence and the Primitive," The Sewanee Review, XLV (April-June, 1937), 198-211.

Lawrences about his readings. There is much to be learned from Tindall about what went into such a book as The Plumed Serpent, but rather little about what came out. The earlier article claimed that the novel's "object...was to show the recovery of the theosophical and animistic primitive Utopia in the present," and that even if the book was based on "Mme. Blavatsky's ideal,"[29] its "primitive wisdom" was not hers, but "rather...the old animistic closeness to nature"; the result was, therefore, "theosophy brought up to date by anthropology seen in the light of theosophy."[30] Tindall's judgment was negative:

> He became better as a prophet than artist and as prophet he is not very good. Lawrence's later work is of most value, perhaps, to those who do not understand it.[31]

Despite this deprecatory assessment, the article establishes one fact about the later works: they are serious attempts to embody a kind of philosophy which is derived from a tra-

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[29]Tindall, "D. H. Lawrence and the Primitive," op. cit., p. 209. "Mme. Blavatsky's ideal...was the wisdom of Atlantis, once universal, but now chiefly preserved in the myths and symbols of archaic people like the Egyptians and Aztecs. Lawrence's belief in Atlantis, corroborated by Frobenius, Nuttal, and Belt, came from Blavatsky, whose view of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and American Indians he shared."

[30]Ibid., p. 210. "From Blavatsky he learned of the splendid past and of its key in myth and symbol; from Jung [Psychology of the Unconscious] he learned that myths were resident in the modern unconscious, and from the Indians, Tylor [Edward Tylor's Primitive Culture] and Harrison [Jane Harrison's Ancient Art and Ritual] he learned the nature of the ancient wisdom which myths recall."

[31]Ibid., p. 211.

dition leavened with occultism. Its purpose, Tindall says, was "to solve our social political and personal problems and to end materialism by the aid of the living past" through a "religion compounded of animism and the occult."[32]

Though Professor Tindall is the one scholar who has delved into the doctrinal springs of The Plumed Serpent with any thoroughness, his findings are somewhat contradictory: in 1937 he says that Lawrence grew "better as prophet than artist and as prophet he is not very good," but in 1939 asserts that "The Plumed Serpent [is] by far his best novel as well as the outstanding work of primitivism in our time."[33] Yet despite these contradictions, his investigation brings to the fore the topic which the major portion of this essay intends to pursue: Lawrence's primitivism.[34] His conclusions are not convincing, in any case - and this is aside from his presentation of Lawrence's "religion" - because they are essentially no more than an echo of what Stephen Spender had written in 1936;[35] moreover, they were taken up

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[32] Ibid., p. 211.

[33] Tindall, D. H. Lawrence and Susan His Cow, p. 113.

[34] Ibid., p. 91. Tindall's assertion is that "Literature possesses in D. H. Lawrence the most conspicuous primitivist of our times, a man whose nostalgic savagery exceeds that of his rivals not only in letters but in music and painting as well and one whose ideal unites the qualities of the eighteenth-century savage with those of a more recent model."

[35] Stephen Spender, "Notes on D. H. Lawrence," The Destructive Element (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936), pp.176-186.

and repeated with an air of finality a decade later by V. S. Pritchett;[36] they go to the effect that it was really Lawrence's "tone" which made him great, even for those who "found his ideas attractive"; and that if Lawrence really "was so much the man of his time as to have expressed the preoccupations of the postwar world," it was not his ideas which counted but "his enthusiasm, depth, and solemnity," which gave "many people of our times the emotional relief they need in such times" and "by his vague yearning" expressed theirs.[37]

The inadequacy of Tindall's researches originates in his failure to account for any possible rationale in Lawrence's use of occult dogmas, and his failure to describe the precise nature of Lawrence's anti-intellectualistic primitivism. Furthermore, it is not known how The Plumed Serpent stands in relation to those social preoccupations to which Lawrence so strongly appealed; certainly the private opaque cult symbolisms were not qualities easily recognized by the average uninitiated reader.[38]

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[36]V. S. Pritchett, "Sons and Lovers," The Living Novel (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936) pp. 136-142.

[37]Tindall, D. H. Lawrence and Susan His Cow, p. 211.

[38]In connection with the earlier argument against the unfortunate trend recent studies are taking, I may cite Tindall's support: "His religion may have been as useful for its believer as any....It is important, however, because his books came to have the purpose of illustrative tracts. Lawrence's denial of this fact is of less weight than the fact." Tindall, "D. H. Lawrence and the Primitive," op. cit., p. 211.

That this question concerning Lawrence's appeal has been unravelled is indicated by such an article as Eliseo Vivas' "Lawrence's Problems,"[39] which reiterated in another way, though it did not solve it, the query posed by Krutch in 1930. Professor Vivas singled out what Krutch had termed Lawrence's quarrel with the universe when he said:

> The most important of Lawrence's ideas...show that they refer to one central concern: the need to find a means of living intensely in a world which makes the realization of this aim impossible.... Lawrence was fundamentally concerned with one of the central problems of our day, the meaning of life for modern man.[40]

Vivas also castigates that criticism, and it has been the bulk, which thinks that "Lawrence's appeal is really to the heart, and not to the head."[41] He revives a truly neglected Lawrence when he asks, "Why...has criticism concerned itself almost exclusively with the problem of Lawrence rather than with Lawrence's problems?" There is a sound reason for his complaint that "our neglect is unintelligible since we cannot very well deny that there must be some connection between the place we accord a man in literature and his ideas, or... his attitudes."[42] Whereas Tindall has claimed that Lawrence's

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[39]Eliseo Vivas, "Lawrence's Problems," The Kenyon Review, III (Winter, 1941), 83-94.

[40]Ibid., pp. 83-84.

[41]Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Scene: A Literary Panorama (New York: Farrar, 1934) p. 413.

[42]Vivas, "Lawrence's Problems," op. cit., p. 83.

art suffered from his concentration on prophecy, Vivas, from the same attention to the later Lawrence, arrives at another point and views him not as a "hopelessly inconsistent and befuddled genius," but as "fairly consistent," and "gradually coming to a clearer and deeper statement of his problem," so that "his significance for his contemporaries is not only paradoxical but of great intrinsic interest"; in addition, Vivas thinks that an objective estimate of his work is... possible."[43] He also suggests that when this estimate is made it will be seen that "the final axis of reference," in which "his demands must be met in full and at whatever cost," is that "the end of life should be the ecstasy of intense living."[44] "This is the central burden of Lawrence's message .... If this be granted, the important question for us is the measure of assent or refection with which we must greet it."[45]

Yet once again, there is lacking in Vivas' serious article any attempt to state what the view of the world and man might have been from which Lawrence's message sprang. Vivas recognizes the extremity of this artist's position, but he rejects it summarily, saying "that if Lawrence is right the orientation of Western Culture is one grand error,

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[43] Ibid., p. 84.

[44] Ibid., p. 86.

[45] Ibid., p. 94. "The problem of increasing the intensity of life is a real problem for modern man, and the neglect is another reason for despair in a world discouragingly replete with them. But it is a problem.... Lawrence saw the problem. His value is diagnostic."

and most of the energy spent by men in the last three thousand years in their effort to give meaning to their lives is a sad waste."[46] In effect, Vivas is choosing to look upon Lawrence from a conservative position which might be called the Western heritage; but Lawrence openly advocated, as will be shown later, a most radical nihilism, in which he claimed the only hope of salvation lay. It is clearly necessary, therefore, prior to debating such a dilemma, for us to understand the character of Lawrence's creed.

Eric Bentley places this creed in the line of descent of the "Heroic Vitalists." His judgment of The Plumed Serpent is that it is Lawrence's worst novel, a grotesque mixture... of Rider Haggard's She and Also Sprach Zarathustra."[47] He states that the clue to the writings lies in a "dichotomy of religion and politics, the eternal and the temporal, the metaphysical and the historical," which was in Lawrence "clarified into that of Love and Power."[48] He feels that Lawrence oscillated between a philosophy of love and a philosophy of

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[46] Ibid., p. 94.

[47] Bentley, A Century of Hero Worship, p. 240.

[48] Ibid., p. 234. "All his endeavors, personal and literary, are attempts to know more fully the meaning of these two words....The focus is chiefly on love in Sons and Lovers, Women in Love and Lady Chatterley's Lover, which are of all Lawrence's works the most widely read. But in Kangaroo, The Plumed Serpent, Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, and Fantasia of the Unconscious, Apocalypse, in many letters and in many of the essays in Phoenix, it is the relation between Love and Power that Lawrence examines."

power, especially during the last ten years of his life, and describes the goal in the later books as an effort to picture the destruction of an outworn world and the establishment of new terms of love,[49] somewhat akin to what Vivas calls "intensity of living." He also assigns an historical background to this quest in which Lawrence is assimilated to a hundred years of artistic fellowship.[50] Finally, in discussing the hero of The Plumed Serpent, Bentley is careful to discriminate between what he has pointed out as the fascism of Lawrence's books and the fascism of the age;[51] speaking of the fascism he has found in Lawrence, he says that "Huxley was right when he asserted that Lawrence could only be understood

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[49] Ibid., p. 251. "Everything old is to be destroyed, and a whole world of new sensations is to be created. A new love will be created - this is the hope of many proto-fascists - in which all of the pleasures of Christian caritas, tribal solidarity, homo- and heterosexual passion, will be combined."

[50] Ibid., p. 252. "Lawrence started with all the great artists of the past one hundred years from a sense of disvalue in a mechanized world. Nihilism is always close to diabolism, and Lawrence overstepped the boundary." It is the extremity of Lawrence's position which brings Bentley to his adverse opinion of many of the later books.

[51] Ibid., p. 251. "It is easy to end with the vague conclusion that Lawrence preached regeneration, and not much harder to comb his life and works for activities and remarks which prove him a fascist. But...Lawrence belongs not with the Nazis - even if he unwittingly strengthened the Nazi cause - but with the artists who in longing for perfection attacked democracy for its record of venality and vulgarity." "An inconsistent author can be cited in support of anything. If Lawrence's portrait of Don Ramon (hero of The Plumed Serpent) convinces the fascist, his repudiation of Don Ramon... convinces the democrat. Yet the serious critic of Lawrence must recognize both sides of him. Don Ramon is the symbol of a great deal in Lawrentian thought that cannot be canceled by a contemptuous remark in a letter. On the other hand, the recantation reveals Lawrence's uneasiness."

as an artist,"[52] yet he goes on to venture that "the artist's function in recent times has been a peculiar one" for, it must be noted, "the brilliant, undisciplined self-indulgent, anarchistic authoritarian, with all his sophisticated primitivism, emotional naiveté, and utter impracticality, precedes the practical fanatic who makes not dreams but nightmares come true."[53]

It can be seen from the foregoing review that there is some mystery surrounding the period from 1920 to 1930, during the first five years of which time events in Lawrence's career were leading towards the creation of such a novel as The Plumed Serpent. In part, this obscurity results from the lack of critical recognition of what Bentley calls Lawrence's "peculiar function" as an artist; but, leaving to one side for a moment the whole matter of a writer's time and his place in it, it suffices to observe merely that while most criticism has agreed that Lawrence's fiction conveys intrinsically a certain philosophy of life, criticism has also and at the same time rejected as much of that philosophy as it has understood. The confused pattern of comment on this novel during the last thirty-four years - some calling it great, some denying artistic merit in it altogether, others denouncing it as fascist though never expounding precisely wherein its fascism lies,

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[52]Huxley's argument will be found elaborated in the essay cited earlier, "D. H. Lawrence," op. cit., p. 220ff.

[53]Bentley, A Century of Hero Worship, p. 252

or even defining their charges clearly, while still others claim it apocalyptic - this confused perception makes it necessary to read the book closely in relation to its author's convictions and avowals of belief before one may call it unequivocally successful and beautiful, or dismiss it as a failure and of little worth. Bentley, for example, has tried to do both; he thinks that Lawrence must be placed as a major writer, despite The Plumed Serpent and despite the fact that he rejects the ideas which dominate this and other novels.[54] Because of the great uncertainty of critical regard, it will be the purpose of this study to present the beliefs which are determining factors in the content of The Plumed Serpent; to this end, extensive use of various other writings by Lawrence during the years preceding its composition will be helpful, and thus much the greater part of the following work is devoted to their discussion.

There has, for example, been comment on the presence of fascistic doctrines in The Plumed Serpent. Yet, Lawrence was dead before some of its programme had materialized in the various forms of propaganda, manifestoes, or organizational procedures of the Nazi State. True, he did see Italian fascism in action during the Twenties; particularly, he was in Italy in 1920 and 1922, where he saw enough to reject in toto any possibility of participation in the Communist-Fascist-Socialist struggle portrayed by his Australian version

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[54] Ibid., pp. 252-253.

of it, Kangaroo. The vexing question arises, why then, when he sailed from Melbourne to California in 1922, did he carry along the Führerprinzip for his next novel, which was The Plumed Serpent,"the third and last of his leadership novels"?[55] I will try to answer such questions as these in the section devoted to politics in Chapter III, where my analysis will relate this phase of Lawrence to a general integration of his ideas. But for the present, it is imperative to indicate what the scheme of my approach to this examination of the novel will be.

I have availed myself of Karl Mannheim's sociological theory which is an attempt to grasp the insights of psychology and history and to formulate from their implications a science of human organization and a sociology of knowledge.[56] In some measure my assumptions and conclusions about the material to be brought forward devolve from Mannheim's postulates for comprehending a method of knowledge about society. To illustrate, in accounting for the form and content of The Man Who Died, Lawrence's last major prose work, it cannot be very enlightening to hear that this was a sample of the Golden Bough fad, that the fabulous character of Jesus-Osiris-

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[55]Moore's attribution, The Intelligent Heart, p.335.

[56]Karl Mannheim, Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1952); Ideology and Utopia (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1952); Man and Society (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1940); Diagnosis of Our Time (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, 1943).

Lawrence was based on a current rage for myth, that it is a precursor of what was to become the Kafka style when Kafka should be discovered and translated in the near future. A graver approach is sanctioned by an essay in which Professor Mannheim is propounding an interpretative theory which places cultural products more surely in focus than has been possible heretofore, when the subjective biases of succeeding periods which appraised an object were not recognized clearly as subjective.[57]

Mannheim discriminates three levels of meaning that any work possesses: its objective meaning, its expressive meaning, and its documentary meaning. By objective meaning we are to understand that quality of an artistic work which resides "in the structural laws of the object itself," in the "elements and phases of sensible reality" which are the necessary primary "stages in the progressive realization of meaning."[58] Mannheim uses painting as his example, but one might approximate his terms in literature by calling attention to what is usually referred to as genre, form, and the elements of texture which include all the various semantic descriptions of the uses of language at different times and in different works. Expressive meaning is to be differentiated, even though it is always "embedded in [the] stratum of objective meaning," from the first kind of meaning by the

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[57]Karl Mannheim, "On the Interpretation of Weltanschauung," Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge, pp. 33-83.

[58]Ibid., p.51.

fact that it is "usually referred to as the 'emotional' element"; it is "characterized by the fact that some psychic element is captured within a sensually formed medium, endowing it with a second dimension of meaning"; but it is to be noted that "this capturing of the psychic content is possible only if the sensual medium is not treated as something secondary and exchangeable but is given its individual form valuable in its own right."[59] Documentary meaning, however, is something that the artist is not directly concerned with; it is an object for the spectator, the critic, historian and scholar. Since this is the major contribution of Mannheim's thesis, I will quote his definition at some length.

> The incorporation and projection of both 'objective' and 'expressive' meaning is a matter of conscious effort for the artist. By contrast, the third dimension of meaning - documentary meaning - is not an intentional object for him. It can become an intentional object only for the...spectator. From the point of view of the artist's activity, it is a wholly unintentional, unconscious by-product.
>
> ...Expressive meaning...points beyond the work and requires an analysis of the artist's stream of psychic experience. Now documentary meaning is akin to expressive meaning in that it requires us constantly to look beyond the work; here, too, we are concerned with the man behind the work - but in an entirely different sense. ...Documentary meaning...is a matter, not of a temporal process in which certain experiences become actualized, but of the character, the essential nature, the 'ethos' of the subject which manifests itself in artistic creation.[60]

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[59] Ibid., p.52. For a full-scale elaboration of this topic of the interpretation of visual signs and symbols, cf. Suzanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (New York: Pelican Books, 1948). Though Mannheim speaks of graphic art in this essay, he is but using it as the simplest example for his thesis.

[60] Mannheim, Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge, p.55.

> ...What is characteristic in the documentary sense may be ascertained from the way in which the subject-matter is selected and represented, and from the way in which the medium is shaped.
>
> ...Whereas expressive meaning is founded upon the objective meaning as an integral whole, documentary meaning can be ascertained without considering the work in its entirety.[61]
>
> The peculiar thing is, in fact, that in a certain sense one single item of documentary evidence gives a complete characterization of the subject; if we are looking further, it is in order to have corroborating instances conveying the same documentary meaning in 'homologous' fashion, rather than in order to supplement one fragment by others. Further, whatever documentary meaning we have discovered by analyzing a partial aspect of a work can be corroborated only by other items of documentary evidence; neither expressive nor objective analysis can corroborate documentary interpretation as such. We must perform a new kind of intentional act, corresponding to this new kind of intentional object that documentary meaning is, in order to separate it from the objective and expressive meanings with which it is associated.[62]

I shall be following out these three levels of meaning in my analysis of The Plumed Serpent. In the next chapter, there will be an exposition of the objective meanings of the novel in an attempt to see it as in itself it is: the world, characters, action, themes, and the strange form of the book, which can be termed "mythic." Professor Tindall, as I have said, discovered where much of the paraphernalia - the symbols, decorations, and allusions - was borrowed from, but he did not present exactly the peculiar purpose they serve in the dramatic structure of the novel. Thus, Chapter II will describe the book in terms of its form.

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[61] Ibid., p.56.

[62] Ibid., p.57.

I propose to go beyond an explication of the novel's form by taking up the levels of expressive and documentary meaning; these have been combined and treated together in Chapter III, the bulk of the analysis of The Plumed Serpent. This procedure has been necessitated by the fact that a description of expressive meaning (which "points beyond the work and requires an analysis of the artist's stream of consciousness") can be best based on other writings of Lawrence's later period. In this approach, when talking about many of the psychic conflicts and fantasies, etc., of the artist, I turn to the manner in which they cropped up in the novel and in other works bearing the same ideas. I shall move through the relevant works chronologically to show the development of his problem over most of the ten-year period in the middle of which The Plumed Serpent was created.

The documentary meanings of the novel will be presented in the third chapter by means of a comparison of Lawrence's beliefs to the statements of authorities writing contemporaneously on the same subjects. It is my purpose to show that primitivism in Lawrence reveals four facets, a pseudo-psychologism, anti-historicism, "blood politics," and a machine phobia, and that these are mixed with a distorted conception of the meaning and use of myth in literature and in life. From this analysis it will be possible to learn more precisely what the 'ethos' of Lawrence is; through this apprehension I hope The Plumed Serpent's great

documentary value as an epitome of Twentieth Century irrationalism will be exposed.

The concluding remarks in Chapter IV will summarize the three levels of meaning that have been explored, and ponder the value of the novel's message. Before considering the text of the book, however, it would be well to mention that the importance of this pursuit of its documentary meanings lies in the fact that the singular component of primitivism in Lawrence can eventually be tied up with similar aspects of other writings of the time, as well as works in other art forms, all of which can be in their turn reviewed as "items of documentary evidence." Though the artists did not, do not, perhaps never can agree among themselves, the fact that much of the outstanding art of this period can be linked in ethos through the common strain of primitivism marks it the product of a social group with a common ideology,[63] a common outlook. Even at a minimum, say, this social group is constituted by the artists alone. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the ultimate purpose of the present study is to offer a basis, by explaining Lawrence's outlook on life as it is formulated in The Plumed Serpent, upon which criticism can begin to reconstruct that 'system of thought' (or ideology) which stands as the artists' testimony of their time.

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[63] I am using the word 'ideology' in accordance with Mannheim's extensive definition in Ideology and Utopia, pp.49-96.

CHAPTER II

DESCENT IN DARKNESS: THE PLUMED SERPENT'S MYTHIC FORM

> Kate woke up one morning, aged forty....to be forty! One had to cross a dividing line. On this side there was youth and spontaneity and 'happiness.'[1]
>
> No, she no longer wanted love, excitement, and something to fill her life. She was forty, and in the rare, lingering dawn of maturity, the flower of her soul was opening. Above all things, she must preserve herself from worldly contact. Only she wanted the silence of other unfolded souls around her, like a perfume.[2]

This description of Kate Leslie, the heroine of The Plumed Serpent, is from "Fortieth Birthday," the third chapter of the novel. Kate's 'waking up' at forty is the moment from which the book begins its tale of her descent into the heart of herself, into the dark where human aspirations burst forth from their inchoate origins. She has a strong motive for embarking: having reached the limits of what society offers her womanhood, she has lost all interest in going on in the dull round of daily repetitions. The opening part of the chapter also reveals that she has been married twice, and has seen her two children, a boy and a girl, grow up; that she divorced her first husband, the father of these children, to marry James Joachim Leslie, idealist, social philosopher, agitator in behalf of the new democracy of the masses; and that Leslie died consumed, Lawrence intimates,

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[1]D. H. Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951) p.44.

[2]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.55.

by his idealistic fervor for the people's welfare. Although Kate desired children from Leslie passionately, he was sterile. Now, because she has already lived one life, she is free to start anew, prepared for any challenge.

And so, she finds herself in Mexico, oppressed by its "spirit of place":

> Superficially, Mexico might be all right: with its suburbs of villas, its central fine streets, its thousands of motor-cars, its tennis and its bridge parties. The sun shone brilliantly every day, and big bright flowers stood out from the trees. It was a holiday.
>
> Until you were alone with it. And then the undertone was like the low, angry, snarling purring of some jaguar spotted with night. There was a ponderous, down-pressing weight upon the spirit: the great folds of the dragon of the Aztecs, the dragon of the Toltecs winding around one and weighing down the soul. And on the bright sunshine was a dark stream of an angry, impotent blood, and the flowers seemed to have their roots in spilt blood. The spirit of place was cruel, down-dragging, destructive.
>
> Why had she come to this high plateau of death? As a woman, she suffered even more than men suffer: and in the end, practically all men go under. Once, Mexico had had an elaborate ritual of death. Now it has death ragged, squalid, vulgar, without even the passion of its own mystery.[3]

Why was she there? She had come to the land which, as Lawrence conceived Mexico, had once worshipped death, or sustained life

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[3] Ibid., pp.44-45. Concerning the "ritual of death," if one supposes that to Lawrence the hecatombs of bleached skulls in Tenochtitlan were similar to other hideous monuments of barbarity, such as the middens left in Cairo and Alexandria by Timur the Lame and his Turks, it must also be understood that there is an important cultural difference between them which is marked on the one hand by the ritualization of mass sacrifice by a proud and victorious people, and on the other by the cheapness of life for nomadic warriors. Lawrence's impressionistic projection of Aztec culture will be taken up in Chapter III.

by killing, which amounts to the same thing. Kate had come to die; in a sense she was already dead because what her society called life had lost any meaning for her, but now on the morning of her fortieth birthday, she realizes consciously that to escape barren ennui she must die to her old self which cannot hold her anymore, since "she was no longer in love with love."[4] "The thing called 'Life' is just a mistake we have made in our minds. Why persist in the mistake any further?"[5] When Kate has reached this pitch of despair the reader already knows that the stage has been set for her removal from the modern capital of Mexico City which teems with degenerate life.

In the first chapter, Kate had gone to a bull-fight with two American men friends who are against this killing "on principle," but who must have all the "thrills" life can offer; they are, in Lawrence's language, two American carrion birds.[6] Kate leaves nauseated after seeing the disembowelment of two old hacks ridden by the picadors. It is starting to rain; she finds herself assisted to a car by General Don Cipriano Viedma, her future god-man-mate, who appears out of

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[4] Ibid., p.54.

[5] Ibid., p.55.

[6] Ibid. The chapter is called "Beginnings of a Bull-fight." Moore gives the identity of these two men in real life as Witter Bynner and Willard Johnson; The Intelligent Heart, pp.312ff.

the crowd at the gates.[7] Even if the tone of the writing in this chapter causes one to see that Lawrence is asserting, through Kate, his own felt disgust with bull-fighting, the chapter nevertheless stands as an efficient symbol of wanton brutal death, of the kind of public ritual suitable to the modern debased Mexico, with which to open the novel. Moreover, Kate's loathing of such murderous bestiality is very like the spontaneous reactions she suffers through the book as the otherness of Mexico is pressed upon her with gradually intensified force; and, though she flees the carnage of the first chapter, she will find herself yielding unaccountably as she remains in the country.

Yet, what choice is there, other than death? Chapter Two, "Tea-Party in Tlacolula," presents the extreme hebetude of the alternative. At the home of a lady archaeologist,[8] she meets with the idle chatter of European and American time-killers for which Kate, at forty, has no more patience. There are among the guests the rude arrogant Mid-Western gringos, Judge Burlap and his prying wife with her "silly

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[7]Though Don Cipriano is an Indian, Lawrence is recognizable in him; when Cipriano says that he had known Kate's dead husband's brother at Oxford, we may be allowed to suspect that this brother (non-existent in the novel) is a shadowy alias for the dying Richard Lovat Somers of Kangaroo. This matter of 'hagiography' in the later novels is to be discussed in Chapter III.

[8]Tindall makes much of this character, identified as Mrs. Zelia Nuttal, who was supposed to have supplied Lawrence with the gods' names used in the book. Moore, however, states that Frieda Lawrence told him they had been to Mrs. Nuttal's for luncheon only three times at most. The Intelligent Heart, p.312.

social baby-face"[9] to bore her. But there, however, she also meets Cipriano again, who has brought along his mentor, Don Ramón Carrasco. They are two guests who become supporters in her revulsion from her own kind. Indeed, there is no time lost by Lawrence in setting up the final outcome of her incipient relationship with Cipriano:

> She could feel in him a sort of yearning towards her. As if a sort of appeal came to her from him, from his physical heart in his breast. As if the very heart gave out dark rays of seeking and yearning. She glimpsed this now for the first time, quite apart from the talking, and it made her shy.[10]

These are two strange men; they come to tea, and they talk of the questions facing revolutionary Mexico. Through their conversation one learns what the political theme of the book is to be: Mexico will advance only by means of some kind of psychical predominance.[11]

The gist of this discussion is made plain in the following chapter, the third. As Kate is pondering her plight in the land of death, she happens on a strange article in the

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[9] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.41.

[10] Ibid., p.35.

[11] They are driving at Lawrence's programme for spiritual rebirth (cf. Chapter III). In Kangaroo, the political problems of Western mass democracy were weighed seriously because Australia is European settled; but in Mexico, where there is an indigenous 'primitive' population, Lawrence makes social issues somewhat ridiculous by much the same sort of joking as there was in the Twenties about the Russian peasant's blunders with the machinery of industrial organization. It is simply asserted in their conversation that Red Indians and autos are immiscible, that technology is forever alien to Mexican souls.

newspaper entitled "The Gods of Antiquity Return to Mexico." The piece relates how at the little village of Sayula a golden-bodied, dark-bearded figure stalked out of the lake and took some clothing from peasant women washing on the shore. He called himself a messenger of the newly reborn God, Quetzalcoatl. Furthermore, it turns out that Don Ramón's hacienda is near this village. So, Kate simply decides to go there. Her interest is irresistible because "she [feels] that Don Ramón and Don Cipriano both had heard the soundless call, across all the hideous choking" of the death-rattle in modern Mexico.[12]

At this point, it will be well to pause in order to see the direction in which the opening events of the novel are moving so surely. These conform to the pattern of the great myths of mankind, the "monomyth," as Joseph Campbell describes it.[13] For the natural crises (biological-psychological) in the life of every individual, most past societies have devised certain ceremonies which are termed "the rites of passage"; the ceremonies are based on this formula: separation - initiation - return. The hero of the mythological adventures goes through the three phases:

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious

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[12]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.55.

[13]Joseph Campbell, The Hero With the Thousand Faces, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949), pp.3-96.

adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.[14]

Kate's story, as it will unfold in the following dissussion, comprises the first two parts of this myth formula: separation and initiation. The symbolic 'return' of the hero is to be found in a later book of Lawrence's, The Man Who Died, where the awakened Jesus, called "the man," escapes his disciples, only to be discovered by a virgin votaress of Isis. This virgin recognizes in him the dismembered Osiris; she gives herself to him in a sacred union so that through him she may renew the dying pagan civilization represented by her mother, who is interested only in managing the vast slave-worked estates which are her daughter's inheritance. In this fable of Lawrence's, the 'boon' that "the man" is enabled to give the world by virtue of his having returned from death is his recognition of the meaning of life, symbolized by sacred orgasm. However, for Kate Leslie there is but the going down to the depths where she comes to rest finally at the source of all power. In what follows below, the events of The Plumed Serpent are to be subsumed under the stages of the hero's journey according to Campbell's itinerary.

The first stage is the "Call to Adventure," figured in the coincidences of the first three chapters of the novel. The call "signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and

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[14] Ibid., p.30. The first part of Campbell's book illustrates this formula with a collection from world-wide sources on the various levels of dream, fairy tale, and epic myth.

transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown." This zone is a "fateful region...always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight."[15] And so alien is Mexico to whatever Kate has known that she feels anything can happen there. The inhabitants whom she discovers on her journey are uncreated beings, in Lawrence's term, uncreated in the sense of what the industrial West imagines to be humanity. Therefore, at forty years of age, she hears the call and goes to rent a little house at Sayula.

After the Call to Adventure, the hero crosses "The First Threshold," where he finds himself in a peculiar region. Crossing the threshold is usually denoted by a trip across water, Styx perhaps, or the waters of death which Gilgamesh was ferried over in the Babylonian epic;[16] sometimes this threshold is depicted by womb and rebirth imagery, as in the Biblical tale of Jonah's stay in the whale's belly, but, no matter what the particular imagery may be, the crossing marks a dying to the old self and figures the promise of rebirth. Lawrence, in one subtly evocative scene, combines the ferrying which separates the old ego from its familiar home with symbols of rebirth. Kate arrives at Ixtlahuacan, from whence

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[15] Ibid., p.58.

[16] Cf. F. L. Lucas' translation: Gilgamesh, King of Erech (London: The Golden Cockerel Press, 1948).

she is to debark over the Lake of Sayula in the last stage of her trip to Sayula village. Significantly, she chooses a crippled boatman from among the clamoring Indians: this infirmity is the sign which reveals him as her Charon. The landscape is strange, uncanny:

> Earth, air, water were all silent with new light, the last blue of night dissolving like a breath. No sound, even no life. The great light was stronger than life itself.[17]

No sooner have they set sail upon the waters than they are stopped by a swimming Indian who demands a gift, perhaps some money, declaring that the lake belongs to "the old gods of Mexico," and that he is "Quetzalcoatl's man."[18] This challenge by the god's messenger confirms the fact that she is now in the special region of her mission. Kate says to her boatman, "And you? are you one too?" "'Who knows!' said the man, putting his head on one side. Then he added: 'I think so, We are many!'"[19]

Throughout this chapter the waters of the lake are given curious adjectives; it is "frail-rippling, sperm-like";[20] the natives near it are unearthly, they convey

a strange and mysterious gentleness between a Scylla

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[17]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.86. Incidentally, these three sentences from Chapter V, "The Lake," are a poetic paraphrase of the entire metaphysic of Fantasia of the Unconscious. Cf. the discussion in Chapter III, part 2, below.

[18]Ibid., p.87.

[19]Ibid., p.88.

[20]Ibid., p.89.

> and Charybdis of violence; the small poised, perfect body of the bird that waves wings of thunder and wings of fire and night, in its flight.... The mystery of the evening-star brilliant in silence and distance between the downward surging plunge of the sun and the vast, hollow seething of inpouring night. The magnificence of the watchful morning-star, that watches between the night and the day, the gleaming clue to two opposites.[21]

All this Kate senses in the Indians and in the landscape "flashing its quiet between the energies of the cosmos."[22] When she disembarks, the boatman reaches into the shallow water and brings up a little earthenware pot which was once an Aztec offering, "ollita," to their gods, and gives it to her as a token of mutual understanding.

Once arrived, she is disturbed at feeling herself on such strange ground; she looks from her hotel window out at "the eternal tremble of pale-earth, unreal waters," "filmy water that was hardly like water at all," "the great lymphatic expanse of water, like a sea, trembling, trembling, trembling to a far distance, to the mountains of substantial nothingness."[23] At this hotel she hears frightful stories of lawless massacre and robbery in the vicinity. About to throw the trip up and return, perhaps even back to Europe, she suddenly determines, on an impulse, to go all the way down the lake to Sayula and rent her house. On this next little trip, she realizes that all the human beings she has ever known, including

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[21] Ibid., p.90.

[22] Ibid., p.92.

[23] Ibid., p.93.

this pair of Mexicans with her in the hotel's motorboat, were never truly alive.

> She...realized, for the first time, with finality and fatality, what was the illusion she laboured under. She had thought that each individual has a complete self, a complete soul, an accomplished I. And now, she realized as plainly as if she had turned into a new being, that this was not so. Men and women had incomplete selves, made up of bits assembled together loosely and somewhat haphazard. Man was not created ready-made. Men, today, were half-made, women were half-made. Creatures that existed and functioned with certain regularity, but which ran off into a hopeless jumble of inconsequence.[24]

Now the object of her quest is clear: wholeness of being.[25] Kate's first self-conscious commitment to the search for wholeness takes place upon this strange Mexican lake which is also, as events reveal, the center whence Mexico's spiritual regeneration is beginning to emanate.

> So in her soul she cried aloud to the greater mystery, the higher power that hovered in the interstices of the hot air, rich and potent. It was as if she could lift her hands and clutch the silent stormless potency that roved everywhere, waiting. "Come then!" she said, drawing a long slow breath, and addressing the silent life-breath which hung

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[24] Ibid., p.103.

[25] Campbell summarizes this goal of myth: "The effect of the successful adventure of the hero is the unlocking and release again of the flow of life into the body of the world .... The torrent pours from an invisible source, the point of entry being the center of the symbolic circle of the universe.... Beneath this spot is the earth-supporting head of the cosmic serpent, the dragon, symbolical of the waters of the abyss, which are the divine life-creative energy and substance of the demi-urge, the world generative aspect of immortal being.... The hero as the incarnation of God is himself the navel of the world, the umbilical point through which the energies of eternity break into time." The Hero With the Thousand Faces, pp.40-41.

unrevealed in the atmosphere, waiting.

> And as the boat ran on, and her fingers rustled in the warm water of the lake, she felt the fulness descend into her once more, the peace, and the power. The fulfilment filling her soul like the fulness of ripe grapes. And she thought to herself: "Ah, how wrong I have been, not to turn sooner to the other presence, not to take the life-breath sooner...."[26]

She shares her lunch with the two "semi-barbarous" boatmen, thinking, "They can receive the gift of grace, and we can share it like a communion, they and I. I am very glad to be here. It is so much better than love: the love I knew with Joachim."[27] That she should make such a comment about her dead husband, and so casually as it were, by comparing him with the two unfamiliar peons eating her oranges and sandwiches in a motorboat, underlines the quality of her action as being that of a myth's; this notion of hers is especially strange when the reader recalls that Lawrence had remarked previously about Joachim Leslie that "she had loved [him] as much as woman can love a man; that is, to the bounds of human love."[28]

Once settled in her house at Sayula with an Indian woman as her cook, maid, and scourge of her patience, the second great phase of Kate's descent opens: the initiation. This is her "Road of Trials," "a favorite phase of the myth-

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[26]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.104.

[27]Ibid., pp.104-105.

[28]Ibid., p.54.

adventure" which "has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals."[29] On this road Kate will suffer constant annoyance from her servant, Juana, a malicious tricksy witch who is, moreover, exactly her own age.

> Juana was a woman of about forty, rather short, with a full dark face, centreless dark eyes, untidy hair, and a limping way of walking.
>
> Juana was going to be a bit of a trial [italics mine] . She was a widow of doubtful antecedents, a creature with passion, but not much control, strong with a certain indifference and looseness.
>
> There was a bit of a battle to be fought between the two women.[30]

In this connection, myths usually provide a ubiquitous helper for the hero's quest when he is on the road, and he is by this person "covertly aided" with "advice, amulets, and secret agents."[31] And in fact, Juana, as Kate's servant and intimate, becomes her source of news and gossip in this alien country; Juana, being a prototype of the inhabitants, shields her from them and acts as a guide through their midst. Juana also arouses her curiosity by her reluctance to talk of the doings of the Quetzalcoatl men in Sayula, the seat of religious revival.

One Saturday, Kate goes shopping with Juana and hears a long sermon accompanied by flute and drum in the Plaza; the matter contains an exequy on the death of Jesus

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[29]Campbell, op. cit., p.97.

[30]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.107. The reader will not fail to notice, as a matter of fact, that Juana, except for racial coloring, is Kate herself.

[31]Campbell, op. cit., p.97.

and his retinue of godling saints, and an annunciation of the rebirth of the Aztec gods. Then a dance begins, women taking their partners from the silent crowd of Indian men, and Juana draws Kate herself into the circle.

> "Come, Nina, come!" said Juana, looking up at Kate with black, gleaming eyes.
> "I am afraid!" said Kate. And she spoke the truth.
>
> The voice of the criada [Juana] had sunk to the low crooning, almost magical appeal of the women of the people, and her black eyes glistened strangely, watching Kate's face. Kate, almost mesmerized, took slow, reluctant steps forward, towards the man who was standing with averted face.
>
> His hand, warm and dark and savagely suave, loosely, almost with indifference, and yet with the soft barbaric nearness, held her fingers, and he led her to the circle. She dropped her head, and longed to be able to veil her face. In her white dress and green straw hat, she felt a virgin again, a young virgin. This was the quality these men had been able to give back to her.[32]

These men renew her virginity, literally, because she is in a mythic realm: they are the shades of the mysteriously potent underworld of the unconscious; they are the insubstantial figures gliding out of the primitive heart, abstract in their instinctual quality. She has joined the circling dancers, and, had she been a Puritan instead of the "Celtic Catholic Irishwoman" she was, she might have seen herself, as Goodman Brown in Hawthorne's tale saw them, not as dancing the dance of life-renewal in the Bacchic chorus, but as a witch among

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[32]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 127.

heathen witches.[33] Lawrence describes quite powerfully her first meeting with these demons of the soul's underground:

> The outer wheel was all men. She seemed to feel the strange dark glow of them upon her back. Men, dark, collective men, non-individual. And herself, woman, wheeling upon the great wheel of womanhood.
>
> Men and women alike danced with faces lowered and expressionless, abstract, gone in the deep absorption of men into the greater manhood, women into the greater womanhood. It was sex, but the greater, not the lesser sex. The waters over the earth wheeling upon the waters under the earth, like an eagle silently wheeling above its own shadow.
>
> She felt her sex and her womanhood caught up and identified in the slowly revolving ocean of nascent life, the dark sky of the men lowering and wheeling above. She was not herself, she was gone, and her own desires were gone in the ocean of the great desire. As the man whose finger touched hers was gone in the ocean that is male, stooping over the face of the waters.[34]
>
> And as she sank into sleep, she could hear the drum again, like a pulse inside a stone beating.[35]

Kate, in joining the dance, has suddenly come into communion with the cosmic forces beating even in stones. In this line of poetry, Lawrence has captured a religious idea of great significance, for, taking a Buddhist view of the immanence of soul in all things, he has united it with the Western

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[33]This matter of ritual choric dancing, of pagan cult and its transformations in Western Christianity, is dealt with at great length by Jules Michelet, Satanism and Witchcraft: A Study in Medieval Superstition (New York: The Citadel Press, 1939). It still has potent survival in European custom, especially in Brittany, where it is called "The Jabadaou," and danced at the nuptials of virgins; cf. Anne de Tourville, Wedding Dance (Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953).

[34]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 128.

[35]Ibid., p.129

idea which strives to realize itself in our transient life and being; at the same time he has sought to negate the Eastern conclusion that peace comes only with escape (from the fractured multiplicity of material phenomena which spell death) into the eternal unity of Atman.[36]

Now that she is on the way towards her initiation, Kate meets Don Ramón's wife, Carlota. Highly bred, cultured in the Western way of life, Carlota is an excellent foil for Kate. Furthermore, whereas Kate has answered The Call, Carlota refuses it.[37] The irony of her portrayal as Kate's foil comes from the fact that Carlota is a fanatically religious Roman Catholic. Instead of entering into harmony with the mystical goals of her husband, she strives bitterly against him and turns his sons against him too; by opposing his vision that man and woman form a Tao by uniting in their sexual rapport (in the greater sense) the masculine and feminine principles of the universe, the Yang and the Yin, she destroys the only basis for her being. Consequently, she dies in the middle of the book after some galling scenes of connubial struggles for mastery. Though she tries to have

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[36]This is an interpretation which gives Lawrence some benefit of the doubt. In Chapter III, Part 2, quite another interpretation is forthcoming, one more in line with Lawrence's full statement of his own philosophy.

[37]Campbell, op. cit., pp.59-60: "The myths and folk tales of the whole world make clear that the refusal is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interest. The future is regarded not in terms of an unremitting series of deaths and births, but as though one's present system of ideals, virtues, goals, and advantages were to be fixed and made secure."

things her way, Don Ramón, who has attained 'detachment', eludes her Torquemada-like severity and goes forward to his destiny.

Lawrence leaves no possible doubt as to the reason why she must die. On a Sunday morning, during the ceremony of the reconsecration of the Church of Sayula to Quetzalcoatl, Carlota rises from the crowd of kneeling women to scream in protestation:

> "No! No! It is not permitted!" shrieked the voice. "Lord! Lord! Lord Jesus! Holy Virgin! Prevent him! Prevent him!"[38]

Moaning prayers, Carlota crawls towards the altar where Ramón stands anointed, crowned and gowned in godhood's full panoply:

> Carlota crouched black at the altar steps and flung up the white hands and her white face in the frenzy of the old way.
>
> "Lord! Lord!" she cried, in a strange ecstatic voice that froze Kate's bowels with horror: "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!"
>
> Carlota strangled in her ecstasy. And all the while Ramón, the living Quetzalcoatl, stood before the flickering altar with naked arm upraised, looking with dark, inalterable eyes down upon the woman.
>
> Throes and convulsions tortured the body of Carlota. She gazed sightless upwards. Then came her voice, in the mysterious rhapsody of prayer:
>
> "Lord! Lord! Forgive!
>
> "God of love, forgive! He knows not what he does.
>
> "Lord! Lord Jesus! Make an end. Make an end, Lord of the world, Christ of the cross, make an end. Have mercy on him, Father. Have pity on him!
>
> "Oh, take his life from him now, now, that his soul may not die."
>
> Her voice had gathered strength till it rang out metallic and terrible.
>
> "Almighty God, take his life from him, and save his soul."
>
> And in the silence after that cry her hands seemed

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[38]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.341.

> to flicker in the air like flames of death.
> "The Omnipotent," came the voice of Ramón, speaking quietly, as if to her, "is with me, and I serve Omnipotence!"[39]

And when she is carried out of the temple, unconscious after a third convulsion on the altar steps, Kate lingers on the porch to hear the hymn of the "Living Quetzalcoatl." Later she sits equably by in the death-room as her husband-to-be, Cipriano, curses the raving comatose Carlota, who dies

> at dawn, before her boys could arrive from Mexico; as a canoa was putting off from shore with a little breeze, and the passengers were singing the Song of Welcome to Quetzalcoatl, unexpectedly, upon the pale water.[40]

Ramón is unmoved by her death, so estranged had they grown: "'It is life,' he said, 'which is the mystery. Death is hardly mysterious in comparison.'"[41]

Some hours before the woman's death, Kate had felt love in the dark candlelit room where Carlota's stertorous breathing sounded and her "ghost's" voice mumbled; Kate sat there after Cipriano's fury had spent itself upon the dying woman, and while they waited for her to pass away, "she felt for his hand."

> All was so dark. But oh, so deep, so deep and beyond her, the vast, soft, living heat! So beyond her!
> Put sleep so black as beauty in the secret of my belly. Put star-oil over me.

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[39] Ibid., pp.341-342.

[40] Ibid., p.351.

[41] Ibid., p.350.

[42] Ibid., pp.349-350.

> She could almost feel her soul appealing to Cipriano for this sacrament.[42]

Thus, in witnessing Carlota's death, Kate has entered the last threshold beyond which the secret mystery will be disclosed to her.

Previously, her greatest trial in this journey of initiation into the Plutonic realm had come when bandits (demons) attacked Jamiltepec, Don Ramón's hacienda. Father Tiverton, who calls The Plumed Serpent Lawrence's "greatest failure,"[43] thinks of Chapter XIX, "The Attack on Jamiltepec," as a sensational, Western-type piece of action-writing. As a matter of fact, it is thrillingly written out in savage detail, every thrust of knives into throats, every drop of streaming blood in the hand-to-hand combat is shocking.[44]

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[43]Tiverton, D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence, p.71.

[44]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.294. Here is a portion:

"And even as he leaped, Ramón shot the knife, that was all bright red as a cardinal bird. It flew red like a bird, and the drops of Ramón's handful of blood flew with it, splashing even Kate, who kept her revolver ready [only a moment before, she had shot this man in the head, grazing him, as he leapt upon her to kill her], watching near the stairway.

"The bandit dropped on his knees again, and remained for a moment kneeling as if in prayer, and the red pommel of the knife sticking out of his abdomen, from his white trousers. Then he slowly bowed over, doubled up, and went on his face again, once more with his buttocks in the air.

"Ramón still crouched at attention, almost supernatural, his dark eyes glittering with watchfulness, in pure, savage attentiveness. Then he rose, very smooth and quiet, crossed the blood-stained concrete to the fallen man, picked up the clean, fallen knife that belonged to the fellow, lifted the red-dripping chin, and with one stroke drove the knife into the man's throat. The man subsided with the blow, not even twitching."

Since Father Tiverton is concerned in his study to interpret Lawrence as a kind of Existential Christian, he does not dwell upon the importance of this episode at the citadel of Quetzalcoatl, which, in the present analysis, comes from the fact that Kate, who ran out of the bull-fighting stadium at the beginning of the novel, has by this time been drawn to stand and fight side by side with her mentors against the weird demons of this land. All through The Plumed Serpent conflict is maintained in her mind because of her reluctance to surrender utterly to the primordial powers she has elected to meet. In Lawrence's terms, the Western, nay Christian, effeteness which warped her away from the duality of life and death is dissolving slowly. But it is not an easy thing which she is doing; the habit and social belief of a lifetime, indeed, the European culture personified in her characterization, is not to be discarded in a moment by mere wishing or willing, for it is one thing to apprehend the worthlessness of one's way of life, quite another to relinquish it. The mythological voyage represents the hardships encountered once this effort to change has begun, and it gains its drama by presenting episodes which emphasize the hazards of losing the path through the maze. These episodes are the ordeals.[45]

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[45]"The ordeal is a deepening of the problem of the first threshold and the question is still in balance: Can the ego put itself to death? For manyheaded is this surrounding Hydra; one head cut off, two more appear - unless the right caustic is applied to the mutilated stump. The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination. Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed - again, again, and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land." Campbell, op. cit. p.109.

Most of Kate's ordeals are represented by the troubles of removing to a country foreign in its ways. (Today, such a writer as Paul Bowles makes this theme the staple of his horrific tales and novels.) Also, she is pursued by a demon lover, Cipriano, who has leaped at her by some fatality of sexual magnetism; through him she will find her ecstasies and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land, "the Pan-world," to use Lawrence's phrase.[46] Perhaps the strongest substantiation of the mythical quality of Kate's acclimatization to the Mexican hell is the nature of her thought when she begins to know that she can see the land through the eyes of its people. Though one may not believe that they themselves look at their world in the manner described below, one does accept the fact that she has grasped this vision for herself. One day she is watching a lad pelt a bird which is tied by a string near the shore of the lake.

> And sitting rocking...on her verandah, hearing the clap-clap of tortillas from the far end of the patio, the odd, metallic noises of birds, and feeling the clouds already assembling in the west, with a weight of unborn thunder upon them, she felt she could bear it no more: the vacuity, and the pressure: the horrible uncreate elementality, so uncouth, even sun and rain uncouth, uncouth.

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[46]Lawrence's treatment of the lovers, their passion at first sight, might tend to hover on the edge of bathos, were it not saved, for him at least, by his belief in immortal, vital electric currents, dormant but never dead. If one thinks, in this regard, about the psychoanalytic theory of libidinal cathexes, his description can be given just enough credence to sustain a willing suspension of disbelief in his unusual statement of the undying powers of Eros and Ananke. Chapter III will go into his theory at some length.

> And she wondered over the black vision in the eyes of that urchin. The curious void.
>
> He could not see that the bird was a real living creature with a life of its own. This, his race had never seen. With black eyes they stared out on an elemental world, where the elements were monstrous and cruel, as the sun was monstrous, and the cold, crushing black water of the rain was monstrous, and the dry, dry, cruel earth.
>
> And among the monstrosity of the elements flickered and towered other presences: terrible uncouth monsters of rich people, with powers like gods, but uncouth demonish gods. And uncouth things like birds that could fly and snakes that could crawl and fish that could swim and bite. An uncouth, monstrous universe of monsters big and little, in which man held his own by sheer resistance and guardedness, never, never going forth from his own darkness.
>
> Walking forever through a menace of monsters, blind to the sympathy in things, holding one's own, and not giving in, nor going forth. Hence the lifted chests and the prancing walk. Hence the stiff, insentient spines, the rich physique, and the heavy, dreary natures, heavy like the dark-grey mud-bricks, with a terrible, obstinate ponderosity and a dry sort of gloom.[47]

Having been vouchsafed such a vision of the world she is really seeking, it comes about quite naturally that she stays on to have Cipriano the Indian general woo her, to witness Carlota strangled by the proliferation of Ramón's hymns[48] and given her death blow by the founding of the "Church of Quetzalcoatl"; she stays on through the assas-

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[47] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.218.

[48] Moore's discussion of the poems, or 'hymns,' which compares them to Nonconformist hymns, is of value. Cf. The Intelligent Heart, pp. 315-316. Moore mentions the fact that one of Lawrence's ancestors was a famous hymn-writer; this was his great-grandfather, John Newton. Cf. pp.5-6.

sins' ambush of the villa, through the assumption of incarnate godhead by Ramón, and Cipriano's investiture as the "Living Huitzilopochtli." She permits herself to be plighted in marriage with him by Ramón in an informal 'religious ceremony' in the name of Quetzalcoatl (Chapter XX, "Marriage by Quetzalcoatl"), and finally enters the last threshold of her quest. Though uneasy with Cipriano, she is quelled by "the black fume of power which he emitted, the dark, heavy vibration of his blood."[49] In the realm of reality, Lawrence's narrative would seem sheer melodrama, but in this Mexican world Kate is responding really to powers, not persons.[50]

Just before the initiatory ceremony of her ritual troth, which signalizes her induction to the final mystery, there is an astounding description of the physical and spiritual region she has reached at last. This is worth reproducing at length because it is one of the key passages in the story of the novel which is being traced here.

> As they sat side by side in the motor-car, silent, swaying to the broken road, she could feel the curious tingling heat of his blood, and heavy power of the will that lay unemerged in his blood. She could see again the skies go dark, and the phallic mystery rearing itself like a whirling dark cloud, to the zenith, till it pierced the sombre, twilit zenith; the old, supreme phallic

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[49] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.308.

[50] People disgust Kate Leslie to the limits of her very physical being: "Till she flung herself down the last dark oubliette of death, she would never escape from her deep, her bottomless disgust with human beings. Brief contacts were all right, thrilling even. But close contacts, or long contacts, were short and long revulsions of violent disgust." Ibid., p.250.

mystery. And herself in the everlasting twilight, a sky above where the sun ran smokily, an earth below where the trees and creatures rose up in blackness, and man strode along naked, dark, half-visible, and suddenly whirled in supreme power, towering like a dark whirlwind column, whirling to pierce the very zenith.

The mystery of the primeval world! She could feel it now in all its shadowy, furious magnificence. She knew now what was the black, glinting look in Cipriano's eyes. She could understand marrying him, now.... Once you entered his mystery the scale of all things changed, and he became a living male power, undefined, and unconfined.[51]

As he sat in silence, casting the old, twilit Pan-power over her, she felt herself submitting, succumbing. He was once more the old dominant male, shadowy, intangible, looming suddenly tall, and covering the sky, making a darkness that was himself and nothing but himself, the Pan male. And she was swooned prone beneath, perfect in her proneness.

He would never woo; she saw this. When the power of his blood rose in him, the dark aura streamed from him like a cloud pregnant with power, like thunder, and rose like a whirlwind that rises suddenly in the twilight and raises a great pliant column, swaying and leaning with power, clear between heaven and earth.

Ah! and what a mystery of prone submission, on her part this huge erection would imply! Submission absolute, like the earth under the sky. Beneath an over-arching absolute.

Ah! what a marriage! How terrible and how complete! With the finality of death, and yet more than death. The arms of the twilit Pan. And the awful, half-intelligible voice from the cloud.

She could conceive now her marriage with Cipriano; the supreme passivity, like the earth

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[51] Ibid., p.308.

> below the twilight, consummate in living lifelessness, the sheer solid mystery of passivity. Ah, what an abandon, what an abandon, what an abandon! - of so many things she wanted to abandon.[52]

Knowing where she is now, Kate does not rebel when Cipriano, "the living Huitzilopochtli," takes it upon himself, after preliminary dressing up and chanting of hymns, to pass judgment in front of the temple upon the peons who were part of the plot to assassinate Don Ramón. Drums are throbbing in the little square thronged by peasants, and torches give the darkness a macabre illumination:

> The eyes of the three men were blindfolded with black cloths, their blouses and pantaloons were taken away. Cipriano took a bright, thin dagger.

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[52] Ibid., p.309. The phallic imagery of this passage will be interpreted in Chapter III in two connections: For one thing, it reproduces exactly the stance assumed by Don Ramón when he is in tranced ecstasy; for another, the cloud-thunder-lightning imagery is part of Lawrence's 'physics,' which will be discussed as it was written up in Fantasia of the Unconscious and Studies in Classic American Literature, also dealt with in Chapter III. There is another paragraph in this passage worth noting:

"It was the ancient phallic mystery, the ancient god-devil of the male Pan. Cipriano unyielding forever, in the ancient twilight, keeping the ancient twilight around him. She understood now his power with his soldiers. He had the old gift of demon-power." Ibid., p.309. Here, Lawrence is finally putting into action the ideas Lilly tried to implant in Aaron in Aaron's Rod. In that earlier novel, his doctrines of complete male mastery and supine female submission are enunciated in a final chapter then called, merely, "Words"; there, it is also significant that it is a man enforcing spiritual submission from another man, as Cipriano from his soldiers. This is politics, and in The Plumed Serpent it finds a religious justification, as it were. On the level of political action, anything is possible (in the horrified words of Ivan Karamazov) when men act from the whirlwind power of the phallus, for the authority of the supreme male leads directly towards the arrogation of godhood by the totalitarians. This will be taken up in the pages devoted to politics in Chapter III, Part 3, below.

"The Lords of Life are Masters of Death," he said in a loud clear voice.

And swift as lightning he stabbed the blindfolded men to the heart, with three swift, heavy stabs. Then he lifted the red dagger and threw it down.

"The Lords of Life are Masters of Death," he repeated.[53]

Though Kate continually resists the deathly ways of Mexico's Sheol, we remember that profound quiet succeeding the carnage of the battle at Jamiltepec when Don Ramón, lying wounded, asserted that she was indubitably one of them:

"Good that he is dead. Good that he is dead. Good that we killed them both."

He looked at her with that glint of savage recognition from afar.

"Ugh! No! It's terrible!" she said shuddering.

"Good for me that you were there! Good that we killed them both between us! Good they are dead!"[54]

Kate's last flurry of revulsion before abandoning herself body and soul to Cipriano occurs after his executions, which "shocked and depressed her."[55] Yet, even during this last struggle with herself, "she knew that Ramón and Cipriano did deliberately what they did: they believed in their deeds, they acted with all their conscience. And as men, probably they were right."[56] Though she continues

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[53] Ibid., p.379. Quoted from Chapter XXIII, "Huitzilopochtli's Night."

[54] Ibid., p.295.

[55] Ibid., p.385.

[56] Ibid., p.385.

arguing with herself, questioning their "wills," she finally comes to the conclusion that men and women do not exist in their own right as individuals with selves, but that each lives only in the duality of male-female, life and death, "the morning-star," and that the idolatrized self, "even in the relation to the utmost God," is "still fragmentary and unblest."[57]

With this realization of Kate's, the book has reached the final adventure preceding the hero's return. In Chapter XXIV, "Malintzi," she is interrupted in her theological musings and taken away to the temple by Cipriano, there to become his goddess-mate, abandoning her life to his pleading hands.

> "Malintzi," he said to her in Spanish. "Oh, come! Come and put on the green dress. I cannot be the living Huitzilopochtli, without a bride. I cannot be it, Malintzi!"[58]

In the temple Kate changes her dress.

> When she stepped out she found Cipriano naked and in his paint, before the statue of Huitzilopochtli, on a rug of jaguar skins.[59]

They light oil lamps together and seat themselves, holding

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[57] Ibid., p.388. "Now, must she admit that the individual was an illusion and a falsification? There was no such animal. Except in the mechanical world. In the world of machines, the individual machine is effectual. The individual, like the perfect being, does not and cannot exist, in the vivid world. We are all fragments. And at the best, halves. The only thing is the Morning Star. Which can only rise between two; or between many."

[58] Ibid., p.389

[59] Ibid., p.390.

hands, side by side on their respective thrones. She has reached the climax of her adventure, "when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome."[60] As Campbell explains it, this climax is

> represented as a mystical marriage...of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World. This is the crisis at the nadir, the zenith, or at the uttermost edge of the earth, at the central point of the cosmos, in the tabernacle of the temple, or within the darkness of the deepest chamber of the heart."[61]

Malintzi-Kate is at the center which is all of these places at once. And, at the center of her cosmos, Kate finds the fountain of youth, the secret of renewed life which is the boon the hero must bring back to the world:

> As she sat in that darkened church in the intense perfume of flowers, in the seat of Malintzi, watching the bud of her life united with his, between the feet of the idol, and feeling his dark hand softly holding her own with the soft, deep Indian heat, she felt her own childhood coming back on her. The years seemed to be reeling away in great circles, falling away from her.
>
> Leaving her sitting there like a girl in her first adolescence. The Living Huitzilopochtli!

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[60] Campbell, op.cit., p.109.

[61] Ibid., p.109. In support of this interpretation, Cipriano has said this to Kate: "'Ramón says he will make the lake the centre of a new world.... We will be the gods of the lake.'" Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.324. One might add, in reference to Campbell's statement, that there is no need to reverse the term 'hero-soul' to 'heroine-soul'; for, after all, Lawrence is projecting his myth from his life: he is at the same time both Cipriano and Kate, and Kate, the Goddess of the World, is his creation whom he is marrying as Cipriano. Tindall remarks that in Lawrence's later work all the heroines, the "questing girls," become "the artist's deepest self in search of a subject and a place." Cf. Introduction, The Plumed Serpent, p.vii.

> Ah, easily he was the living Huitzilopochtli. More than anything. More than Cipriano, more than a male man, he was the living Huitzilopochtli. And she was the goddess bride, Malintzi of the green dress.
>
> Ah, yes, it was childish. But it was actually so. She was perhaps fourteen years old, and he was fifteen. And he was the young Huitzilopochtli, and she was the bride Malintzi, the bride-girl. She had seen it. When the flame came up in him and licked him all over, he was young and vulnerable as a boy of fifteen, and he would always be so, even when he was seventy.
>
> And she pressed him to her breast, convulsively. His innermost flame was always virginal, it was always the first time. And it made her again always a virgin girl. She could feel their two flames flowing together.
>
> How else, she said to herself, is one to begin again, save by refinding one's virginity? And when one finds one's virginity, one realizes one is among the gods. He is one of the gods, and so am I. Why should I judge him?[62]

After this point, Lawrence winds up his novel rather quickly. "A kind of war" breaks out,[63] but the combination of Ramón's religious inspiration with Cipriano's shock-troops sweeps away all the feeble resistance:

> The Archbishop was deported, no more priests were seen in the streets. Only the white and blue and earth-coloured serapes of Quetzalcoatl, and the scarlet and black of Huitzilopochtli, were seen among the crowds. There was a great sense of release, almost exuberance.[64]

The life-giving waters have been released from the World Navel because the heroine has found her way to the beating core of existence where age and death are conquered in her-

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[62] Ibid., pp.391-392.

[63] Ibid., p.420.

[64] Ibid., p.421.

self: she has been taken up to the abode of the gods, as Psyche was taken to Olympus to be united with her Cupid forever. In short, Kate marries Cipriano "legally."[65]

> The mystical marriage with the queen goddess of the world represents the hero's total mastery of life; for the woman is life, the hero its knower and master. And the testings of the hero, which were preliminary to his ultimate experience and deed, were symbolical of those crises of realization by means of which his consciousness came to be amplified and made capable of enduring the full possession of the mother-destroyer, his inevitable bride.[66]

After her marriage, Kate decides to go back to Europe for a short while because her transformation is making her sick:

> For it was not her spirit alone which was changing, it was her body, and the constitution of her very blood. She could feel it, the terrible katabolism and metabolism in her blood, changing her even as a creature, changing her to another creature.
>
> And if it went too fast, she would die.[67]

But at last, in her debate with the two man-gods, not god-men now, for they are tired and unsure as they ride the crest of the new Mexican state, she wavers and renounces the last touch of proud, independent European womanhood's self-assertiveness.[68]

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[65] Ibid., p.421.

[66] Campbell, op.cit., pp.120-121.

[67] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.421.

[68] Cambell, op.cit., pp.193-196. These pages discuss the mythic instances of the "Refusal of the Return," which is what has happened at the end of The Plumed Serpent: "Even the Buddha, after his triumph, doubted whether the message of realization could be communicated, and saints are reported to have passed away while in the supernal ecstasy. Numerous indeed are the heroes fabled to have taken up residence forever in the blessed isle of the unaging Goddess of Immortal Being." Ibid., p.193.

"You don't want me to go, do you?" she pleaded.

"Yo! Yo!" - his eyebrows lifted with queer mock surprise, and a little convulsion went through his body again. "Te Quiero mucho! Mucho te quiero! Mucho! Mucho! I like you very much! Very much!"

It sounded so soft, so soft-tongued, of the soft, wet, hot blood, that she shivered a little.

"You won't let me go!" she said to him.[69]

The triumph of Kate's quest for life, that is, her quest for perpetual virginity, helps to explain the inconclusive nature of the novel on its realistic level, the last words of which have been quoted just above. According to the analysis that has been given in this chapter, everything in The Plumed Serpent, all the politics and religious demagoguery, amount to nothing when compared with the drama of the hidden primal myth they subserve. It is for this reason that the criticism reviewed in Chapter I has been generally unfair to the book. It has seized upon the superficial content of the novel and confused that with the story it has to tell. On the other hand, the critics have not misled themselves; they have, in fact, followed Lawrence's own indications. For he tended to believe that the stories he had to tell in his later works were scaffoldings for the social-religious truths he had to teach. In this chapter I have tried to salvage his profoundly moving and beautiful tale from the rest of the novel's superstructure. Kate's quest, when reviewed as an adventure following the classic pattern

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[69]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, pp.444-445.

of the world's great myths, is self-explanatory. There is, in a deep sense, nothing more in the novel than this story. Yet, my purpose, to alter the figure of speech, in examining it is to sift the wheat from the chaff; the myth is the kernel of wheat, but the chaff constitutes the phenomenon of primitivism in our time. Hence, the discussion is now prepared to move forward to an analysis of the controversial ideas Lawrence is expounding in The Plumed Serpent, ideas which have, perhaps, been largely responsible for making the book unpalatable to a generation of critics.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIMITIVISM OF D.H.LAWRENCE

1

Aspects of the Modern Form of Primitivism

In approaching the problem of definition, it will be useful to glance at the record of the earliest expressions of the primitivist tendencies in Western thought which has been provided for the student by Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity.[1] Under the headings, "Cultural Primitivism" and "Chronological Primitivism," two main catalogues of writings are collected, together with some sixty-six uses of the term "Nature" in Classical books, from which most current usages descend.[2] A study of this volume reveals that while it was chiefly the moral philosophers and religious teachers who espoused and inculcated some one strain, or a mixture of the several strains, of primitivistic belief, the two great metaphysicians of an-

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[1] Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, A Documentary History of Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1935).

[2] It will be helpful later, in describing Lawrence's 'physics,' to remember that Nature is "the most equivocal word in the vocabulary of the European peoples"; that it comprehends "conceptions not only distinct but often absolutely antithetic to one another in their implications"; and that "knowledge of the range of its meaning, and of the processes of thought - logical, pseudo-logical, or merely associative...is an indispensable prerequisite for any discriminating reading of a large part of classical, medieval and modern literature and philosophy." Ibid., p.12.

tiquity, Plato and Aristotle, did not make it an integral part of their systems.

> Aristotle is in the main to be placed in the succession of philosophers hostile both to chronological and cultural primitivism.[3]

> Aristotle's anti-primitivistic attitude...was more definitely and deeply rooted in his general scheme of ideas than that of any other ancient representative of that attitude.[4]

And, though Plato was set in revolt against his own society, and his moral and social ideal was "in great part compounded of the same ingredients as that of the many hard primitivists of all periods - simplicity and austerity of life, limitation of desires, freedom from luxury, economic and even marital communism," it is clear that he does not advocate those standards as absolutely the only way, which is the fundamental assertion of the primitivist teachers of the Cynic schools; furthermore, his 'hard' primitivism is an "ideal...fully exemplified in the mode of life of only one select class in the community, and...not assumed to be possible for all men."[5] In terms of his broad metaphysics, as against his project for a republic where justice shall prevail, it should be noticed that "three anti-primitivist motives were potent in Plato's thought.":

(a) With the belief in the superiority of the in-

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[3] Ibid., p.169.

[4] Ibid., p.189.

[5] Ibid., pp.167-168.

> stinctive, unreflective elements in man's constitution he was wholly without sympathy [Socrates said that the unexamined life was not worth living] . (b) Akin to this was Plato's usual rejection of the eulogistic use of 'nature'...and of the dyslogistic use of 'art'. (c) His appraisal of human nature was such that his influence told heavily against equalitarianism and against any glorification of the juristic [i.e., society without organized political government] state of nature.[6]

The conclusion to be drawn from the opposition of Plato and Aristotle to primitivistic speculations on nature and man's place in it is that any serious commitment to primitivist ideas current in Classical times was advocated by moralists and religious teachers, not by those philosophers who sought to construct a self-conscious description of the universe.[7] The significance of this observation will be returned to later.

In the course of defining cultural primitivism, the editors comment:

> Cultural primitivism has...had enduring roots in human nature ever since the civilizing process began. It is a not improbable conjecture that the feeling that humanity was becoming over-civilized, that life was getting too complicated and over-refined, dates from the time when the caveman first became such.[8]

This passage provides the hint which it is the task of this chapter to exploit; the analysis of the contemporary forms

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[6] Ibid., p.168.

[7] The fragments of Democritus' system are also anti-primitivist. Ibid., pp.207-208.

[8] Ibid., p.7.

of primitivism, as exhibited in Lawrence's writings, will attempt to show that they do not have their precise counterparts in Classical times. However, the editors of Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity suggest that there are unmistakable parallels:

> In spite of the more complex and sophisticated general ideology of the contemporary exponents of moods [of primitivism], there are striking parallels to be observed between certain of the texts that follow and some passages in, e.g., such writings as Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents....[9]

The body of Freud's work, it will be argued through this chapter, leads towards a diametrically opposite position wherein it is understood that the animadversions upon society in Civilization and Its Discontents come from a man who may be ranked as one of the revolutionary minds of history; for between the times of Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, Archimedes, and Darwin, Marx, Newton, Einstein, there occurred something as momentous in human destiny as the discovery of fire: "the discovery of a method of discovery."[10] The argument hopes to show that no good parallel stands between the "more complex and sophisticated...ideology of the contemporary exponents of these moods" and any classical texts whatever, because the scientific revolution has made them essentially different, thus incommensurably different.

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[9] Ibid., p.xi.

[10] Lancelot Law Whyte, The Next Development in Man (New York: The New American Library, 1950), p.98.

Primitivisms before the advent of the era of science were invariably attitudes adopted by moral philosophers who used them to criticize their society; such attitudes were usually based adventitiously upon the traditional cosmologies (when they were based on a physical theory) which had no proofs of their veracity, no means of ascertaining the probable truth, and no rigorous standards with which to correct those means. On the other hand, the scientific method offers moralists a view of the Creation which contains a technique of self-criticism; it provides for progressive validations, contingent though they may happen to be on technological advances, and thus offers the possibility of building an ethical system upon reason.[11]

Returning to the hint mentioned above, if, as Boas and Lovejoy surmise, the first men in the caves were scorned by their wilder, hairier, unregenerate brethren, then it is possible to comprehend the situation which causes the profound anxiety voiced by Freud in The Future of an Illusion and Civilization and Its Discontents.[12] Freud's conclusions stem from his belief that the primitive is ineluctably alive

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[11]Cf. Morris Raphael Cohen, Reason and Nature: An Essay on the Meaning of Scientific Method (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1953). This is a full-scale evaluation of the place of science in modern philosophy, which contains a discussion of the possibility and purpose of constructing a logical system of ethics.

[12]Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion (London: The Hogarth Press, 1928); Civilization and Its Discontents (London: The Hogarth Press, 1930).

in each of us; the primitive is, in fact, the irrational unconscious, the discovery of which is one of the achievements of modern thought.[13] According to Freud, the discontented are those who are unable to bear the burdens of civilization. Our civilization makes supreme demands on the individual; the burden is so much the more terrible when a machine technology requiring an extremely high degree of rational order is in the turbulence of a transitional state of disequilibrium.[14] The modern primitivist damns this society which is organized to satisfy the demands of the machine. But, in contradiction to the primitivist's protest, Freud finds it rather likely that the order of our society (or, for that matter, of any society) may not be to blame, but that it is the "natural man" the primitivist seeks to re-establish who is responsible for social maladies.

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[13]For a detailed, scientific description of the unconscious mind, cf. Otto Fenichel, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1945), pp.11-113.

[14]Whyte's book is an attempt to explain this situation; he writes: "Many of the special features of our time arise from the fact that the dissociation of European man has exhausted its efficacy, and that the earlier unity of primitive and ancient man is in process of restoration in a form which can, in principle, retain and organize all the differentiated development of Europe and the West. The last three and a half centuries display all the complementary processes which must play a part in any such radical reorganization of the tradition. The trend of these centuries has been obscure because contemporary events could not be interpreted as evidence of a progressive reintegration until the European dissociation had broken down sufficiently to permit it to be identified." Whyte, op.cit., p.104.

> We prefer not to regard [the social source of our distresses] as one at all; we cannot see why the systems we have ourselves created should not rather ensure protection and well-being for us all. To be sure, when we consider how unsuccessful our efforts to safeguard against suffering in this particular have proved, the suspicion dawns upon us that a bit of unconquerable nature lurks concealed behind this difficulty as well - in the shape of our own mental constitution.
>
> When we start to consider this possibility, we come across a point of view which is so amazing that we will pause over it. According to it, our so-called civilization itself is to blame for a great part of our misery, and we should be much happier if we were to give it up and go back to primitive conditions. I call this amazing, because - however one may define culture - it is undeniable that every means by which we try to guard ourselves against menaces from the several sources of human distress [e.g., the superior force of nature, and the disposition to decay of our bodies, as well as the failure to regulate human relations] is a part of this same culture.[15]

Enlarging on this point, it may be said that culture begins with man himself, as Lovejoy and Boas imply with their remark upon the first cave-man's awareness; there is no resting-place intermediate with man and not-man, no alternative to choose between the pre-mental timeless vacuity of the not-man and the history-making actions of man. Yet, it seems that when a very high level of self-consciousness which enables men to view themselves as separate from society is attained, there is an accompanying tendency to lose cognizance of the primary reasons for the original foundation of society; at this stage of thought, sincere, valid objections to this or the other kind of social structure tend to alloy

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[15]Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, pp.91-92.

themselves with the prepotent unconscious forces all societies survive only by conquering, taming and harnessing. In this regard, the hallmark of contemporary disaffections between society and the highly conscious individuals it produces is a profound anti-intellectualism utterly unsupported, as it was, for instance, in the 18th century, by a uniformitarianism which respects the traditional monotheistic theology. Contemporary anti-intellectualism is pervaded, as will be shown later, by nihilism, not hope, because it will accept nothing; worse still, it rejects in its despair any prospect of dealing with the irrational, unique organism of <u>society and man</u> through the eminently rational means held out to it by psychology and social science. Obviously, though there may be good reasons for rejecting the miseries of our present society, it is dangerous to construe those miseries as the direct result of rational technics, since then the ideal of rationality must also be rejected. Nevertheless, it is a melancholy fact that sophisticated people are usually the drummers for primitivism.

Another aspect of modern primitivism which is outside the categories of Lovejoy and Boas appears from the fact that its aim is not simply to go back in time to an earlier form of the present society ("Chronological Primitivism"), or away to the Fiji Islands to another stage of human development ("Cultural Primitivism"); instead, it attempts to destroy the absolute sense of 'givenness' represented by the concepts of other times, and other places

and ways. The discoveries which have led to the problems of cultural relativity, symbolized in the pantheon of cultural heroes such as Marx, Darwin, Einstein, Freud, are deliberately turned by the primitivists against culture itself. They do this by using up-to-date bits of valid knowledge, as will be shown below in the case of Lawrence; though they are civilized people, their attitude is one which clings to the only 'real' things: the primary and everlasting forces in each individual which must be sublimated in social life because they remained undestroyed when "the first cave man became such." Lawrence, for example, took the discovery of the 'unconscious mind' and made it the cornerstone of his general artistic credo, though at the same time he denounced science by defining the social crisis he saw looming as an issue wherein humanity and science were the antagonists.

This is the crucial aspect of the contemporary phenomenon of primitivism. A general definition of its origin, which will be quite conformable to the categories of the cultural and chronological varieties set up by Lovejoy and Boas, is that primitivism is a philosophical derivative of the strife in man's mental constitution between what Freud called the forces of Eros and Ananke.[16] Perhaps the best way to differ-

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[16] That is, the 'libido' and the 'death wish.' Freud writes: "The fateful question of the human species seems to be whether and to what extent the cultural process developed in it will succeed in mastering the derangements of communal life caused by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. In this connection, perhaps the phase through which we are at this moment passing deserves special interest. Men have brought their powers of subduing the forces of nature to such a pitch that by using them they could now very easily exterminate one another to the last man. They know this - hence arises a great part of their current unrest, their dejection, their mood of apprehension. And now it may be expected that the other of the two 'heavenly forces,' eternal Eros, will put forth his strength so as to maintain himself alongside of his equally immortal adversary." Ibid., pp.143-144.

entiate the modern from the various historical forms of primitivism is to note that while masquerading as social criticism it is actually speaking for those impulses in humans which seek to compass only self-destruction. For this reason, as will be shown later in detail, it attacks historical truth and manifests a tendency to psychological retrogression, to cite but two chief features. It is true that the Cynic primitivists sought a return to the prehistorical mode of social organization, or what has been termed a 'hard primitivism,' but it is not so clear that the Cynics were attacking consciousness or intellectuality itself as that they were castigating sophisticated mores. Another distinction worth making at the outset is that the analysis of primitivism in this essay is confined to negative aspects; for example, several ideas which will be called primitivistic seem to coincide with nihilistic tenets held in the last hundred years, yet a careful consideration will show that primitivism is almost always supported by irrational thinking, and while nihilism reaches a stage where it recognizes and accepts human limitations, the irrational by its very nature cannot do either. On the other hand, though it will be observed that the primitivistic ideas taken up in the following pages are irrational, it should not be assumed that the irrational is always primitive, for the present stage of philosophic thought is still quite ignorant of most of the nature and realm of the irrational; indeed, though the irrational may eventually be understood in some manner it is likely that it may remain

forever unamenable and irreducible to either consciousness or reason. One has only to think of the problems of the nature of man's imagination or his creative faculty, as they were initiated by Coleridge's suggestions, to realize that the imagination, too, appears largely an irrational activity, and certainly the irrational aspects of creative thought cannot be denigrated. Thus, so far as the primitivism of our time will be discussed and exemplified, the following study intends to speak merely of certain theories and practices which are negative, irrational, and destructive, and whose destructive qualities are all marked by a philosophical gratuitousness; that is to say: though a primitivist theory of politics may develop as a genuine response to immediate social conditions, it is not rationally genuine because it is not the sole possible response. The fact that a theorist or writer or active man chooses such a solution also reveals that some other and stronger influence than rationality is making itself predominant in that man's thoughts; and when that force can be recognized as leading logically towards destruction alone it will be called primitivistic. It should become clear at the end of the study that this definition of modern primitivism excludes the experiment with 'hard primitivism' practiced by such a writer as, for instance, Thoreau during his sojourn at Walden Pond. Finally, the importance of this contemporary manifestation lies in the fact that at no prior time in human history could the forces struggling for liberation from cultural bonds destroy man himself.

This is the possibility of the hour; we have already witnessed a Hitler almost immolating a great nation with himself. It might be asserted then that primitivism, armed in its modern outfit, is a servant of Ananke.

If this is so, the question immediately arises, how is it that a creative artist such as D.H.Lawrence can be called an outstanding exemplar of modern primitivism? The analysis which follows may help to answer this question.

ii

The Principles of D.H.Lawrence's Primitivism

The primitivist is a bad metaphysician although he is a tolerable satirist and useful moralizer. However, on the grand concerns one must turn to the abiding faith of the scientist and the philosopher that the world is all of a piece, and that true knowledge seeks power that it may control everything that is not man, including that within man which is dark and unknowable, because it is in the service of Eros alone. Lawrence sought the release of what he called 'the dark gods', not their sublimation;[17] he did not agree that everything in culture is the product of an accommodation between the dark gods and the exigencies of mere existence. That is to say, he fought on the side of his own interpretation of the unconscious against the ego, and would not have accepted the theory that the knowing ego is itself developed from the undifferentiated psyche of the infant through the constant pressure and flux of the irrational forces, or stimuli, which impinge on it from within and without the organism.[18] As the analysis of his two psychological treatises will show in the next pages of this sec-

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[17]I use this word, sublimation, in the sense denoted by Freud. Cf. "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," Collected Papers (London: The Hogarth Press, 1932), IV, pp.60-83. Also, an essay speculating on the cave-man's first sublimation is of interest; cf. "The Acquisition of Power over Fire," Collected Papers, V, pp.288-294.

[18]Fenichel, op.cit., pp.34-53.

tion, he was a bad metaphysician because he used his own version of scientific theory to attack that knowledge of the world which is got by science, a strategy which leads inevitably to self-contradiction.

One of the errors which his primitivistic philosophy makes is the converse of the pathetic fallacy: it takes, for example, the discovery of the subatomic microcosm which subsists in everything, which in one real sense is everything, and projects that discovery into the foreground of existence, denying, in effect, the macrocosm which consists visibly for us in the forms perceived in ordinary existence.[19] Doctor Johnson may have kicked a stone to show that it was there; Lawrence will kick the stone not only to show that it is there, but will then proceed to show that his foot goes through it to communicate with its very pulse.[20] His conception of the physical world consistently neglects the fact that though cellulose may have the physical and chemical, and even 'spiritual' properties of long-chain carbohydrate molecule agglomerations, it has also the properties of an oak tree, or a desk. He intends, in other words, to tell the story of a man's life by dramatizing his instinctual imperatives; this, it will be recalled, was the cause of Edwin Muir's criticism of him (quoted on page 8 above). This was

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[19]The discussion in Wolfgang Köhler's Gestalt Psychology (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1951) will be helpful in elucidating this point; Cf. pp.3-33.

[20]Cf. p.41, above; also Aldous Huxley's statement, quoted on pp. 9-10 above.

Lawrence's theory even when he wrote The Rainbow and Women in Love, two major novels which fall before the time this study proposes to examine.[21]

It will be best to begin, then, with the period which marks him a full-blown primitivist, and this coincides with his flight from Europe, thinking of 'Europe' under the connotation Henry James puts on the word. Leaving the Continent, Lawrence cut himself away from Cambridge, Bertrand Russell, and active participation in socialist schemes of amelioration; he was convinced that only rebirth of the spirit could accomplish the resurrection of society.[22] During this year he traveled steadily eastward; almost all of Kangaroo[23] was written in the brief weeks Lawrence was in Australia, between May and August of 1922.

The story of Kangaroo begins with the arrival of Richard Lovat Somers and his wife in Australia; the events relate his swift involvement in, and equally swift rejection of attempts by the various factions to get him mixed up with Australian politics. On the surface, it is a novel of political ideas in action on the Australian continent's thinly

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[21]Moore takes up this theory, as Lawrence wrote about it in letters to Edward Garnett, his publisher; The Intelligent Heart, pp.161-163. Huxley discusses it, too; cf., The Letters of D.H.Lawrence, ed., and with an introduction by Aldous Huxley (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1932), pp.xxi-xxvi.

[22]Moore carefully traces these years of Lawrence's life in The Intelligent Heart, pp.155-256.

[23]D.H.Lawrence, Kangaroo (London: Penguin Books, 1950)

settled European fringes which reflects an abstracted image of Europe. Lawrence's pictures of the seacoast and bush near Sydney, where he stayed for a while, give a sensation as of virtual images. But the book is also the story of Somers' agony of soul: should he stay, or should he destroy in himself the remaining vestiges of European civilization apparent even in this remote land? The dominant feeling of the passages quoted below is of an utter withdrawal from everything that had formerly constituted meaning in his life; it is perhaps safe to guess that Somers' horror and nausea are foisted on Australia by a displacement of his hatred for Europe.

> People mattered so little. People hardly mattered at all. They were there, they were friendly. But they never entered inside one. It is said that man is the chief environment of man. That, for Richard, was not true in Australia. Man was there, but unnoticeable....It was natural to the country. The people left you alone. They didn't follow you with their curiosity and their inquisitiveness and their human fellowship. You passed, and they forgot you. You came again, and they hardly saw you. You spoke, and they were friendly. But they didn't care. The profound Australian indifference, which still is not really apathy. The disintegration of the social mankind back to its elements. Rudimentary individuals with no desire of communication. Speeches, just noises. A herding together like dumb cattle, a promiscuity like slovenly animals. Yet the basic indifference under everything.
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> And with all, toiling on with civilization. But it felt like a clock that was running down, running right down, here in Australia. Men were mining, farming, making roads, shouting politics. But all with that basic indifference which dare not acknowledge <u>how</u> indifferent it is, lest it should drop everything and lapse into a blank.[24]

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[24] <u>Ibid</u>., p.379.

> There it is, laid over all the world, the heavy established European way of life. Like their huge ponderous cathedrals and factories and cities, enormous encumbrances of stone and steel and brick, weighing on the surface of the earth.
>
> But...the mass of it made him sick, and the beauty was nauseous to him.[25]

> He had now a horror of vast superincumbent buildings. They were a nightmare. Even the cathedrals. Huge, huge bulks that are called beauty. Beauty seemed to him like some turgid tumour. Never again, he felt, did he want to look at London, the horrible weight of it: or at Rome with all the pressure on the hills. Horrible, inert, man-moulded weight. Heavy as death.
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> No, no, the flimsy hills of Australia were like a new world, and the frail inconspicuousness of the landscape, that was so clear and clean, clean of all fogginess or confusion: but the frail, aloof, inconspicuous clarity of the landscape was like a sort of heaven-bungalow, shacks, corrugated iron and all. It is a land that as yet has made no great mistake, humanly. The horrible human mistakes of Europe. And, probably, the even worse mistakes of America.[26]

> "The enemy of civilization? Well, I'm the enemy of this machine civilization and this ideal civilization. But I'm not the enemy of the deep, self-responsible consciousness in man, which is what I mean by civilization. In that sense of civilization I'd fight forever for the flag, and try to carry it on into deeper, darker places."[27]

> "What I want to do is to go a bit further back into the bush - near some little township - have a horse and a cow of my own - and - damn everything."[28]

In the end, Somers does "damn everything," and takes ship

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[25] Ibid., p.380.

[26] Ibid., p.381.

[27] Ibid., p.383.

[28] Ibid., p.381.

for America because he wants to be alone with his "self-responsible consciousness." But, it is necessary to inquire what meaning this term will have for Lawrence; investigation shows, and the passages above indicate the direction to be taken, that, like Descartes, he retires within himself by breaking every link with the past and with the outside world. Also like Descartes, he emerges with a book of philosophy developed from excogitation which reveals the nature of things; however, the world reconstituted by this tract is quite dissimilar to the world seen by the too-clear Cartesian consciousness.

In Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious,[29] Lawrence takes the conception of the unconscious mind put forth by Freud and welds it into a new system. Freud himself disliked metaphysics,[30] and though Lawrence never claimed to be a scientist or a philosopher he essayed both in this work.

> For though the unconscious is the creative element, and though, like the soul, it is beyond all law of cause and effect in its totality, yet in its processes of self-realization it follows the laws of cause and effect. The processes of cause and effect are indeed part of the working out of the incomprehensible self-realization of the individual unconscious. The great laws of the universe are no more than the fixed habits of the living unconscious [Italics mine].
>
> What we are suffering from now is the restriction of the unconscious within certain ideal limits.

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[29]Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious (London: Martin Secker, 1923).

[30]Cf. Sigmund Freud, The Problem of Anxiety (New York: The Psychoanalytic Quarterly Press and W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1936), p.23.

> The more we force the ideal the more we rupture the true movement. Once we can admit the known, but incomprehensible, presence of the integral unconscious; once we can trace it home in ourselves and follow its first revealed movements; once we can know how it habitually unfolds itself; once we can scientifically determine its laws and processes in ourselves; then at last we can begin to live from the spontaneous initial prompting, instead of from the dead machine principles of ideas and ideals. There is a whole science of the creative unconscious, the unconscious in its law-abiding activities. And of this science we do not even know the first term. Yes, when we know that the unconscious appears by creation, as a new individual reality in every newly-fertilized germ-cell, then we know the first item of the new science. But it needs a super-scientific grace before we can admit this first new item of knowledge. It means that science abandons its intellectualist position and embraces the old religious faculty. But it does not thereby become less scientific, it only becomes at last complete in knowledge.[31]

It is an indisputable fact that when Lawrence was writing this book he was no stranger to Freudian doctrine, for at least eight years earlier he had become "instructed in it."[32] He not only knew the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious mind to some extent, but was quite aware that he was elaborating on it for his own purposes. Freud frequently remarked that there were many who would make whatever they pleased out of his books, no matter how patiently he tried to formulate his clinical findings along strictly scientific lines. That Freud himself would not abandon his intellectualist position to embrace the "old religious faculty" was never

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[31]Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, pp. 45-46.

[32]Moore, The Intelligent Heart, p.165. What Lawrence made out of Freud's doctrines is ably presented by Frederick J. Hoffman, "Lawrence's Quarrel with Freud," Freudianism and the Literary Mind (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1945), pp.149-180.

more clear than when he wrote one of his last works, The Future of an Illusion; but this faculty is perhaps chiefly responsible for Lawrence's primitivism. Yet, even with this faculty, he chooses for himself none of the old religions still flourishing, nor do his writings serve traditional Christian doctrines.[33]

The question arises then, on what is Lawrence's attraction to psychology based? In part, the answer lies in the nature of his talent and the problems of his personality, which will be considered later on; in part, the answer lies with the philosophy of the rebel, also to be taken up later; finally, however, there is the recognition by Freud and Lawrence in common that the horrors of the First World War were not due to causes simply political and economic in nature. The psychoanalyst was warning the contemporary world that it was bringing about its own destruction by fostering social conditions that favored the eruption of the dammed aggressive powers of the unconscious; and Lawrence realized that the discovery of the unconscious with its Pandora's box of horrors and evils, and of its hitherto unacknowledged efficacy as the legislator of a good portion of the world's

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[33]Father Tiverton claims Lawrence a Christian; cf. D.H.Lawrence and Human Existence. But F. R. Leavis rebuts this claim; cf. F.R.Leavis, "Mr. Eliot and Lawrence, D.H. Lawrence and Human Existence, by Father Wm. Tiverton, and Portrait of a Genius, But..., by Richard Aldington," Scrutiny, XVIII, No. 1, pp.66ff. Eliot, though he favors Tiverton's interpretation, had once made an attack on Lawrence's religious beliefs; cf. After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934), pp. 55-68.

historical events, made what men had always deemed self-evident social truths nothing more than a parcel of rationalizations. Freud was gloomy in 1915, when he wrote "Thoughts on War and Death"; he predicted that the uncontrolled release of elemental forces could only bring worse events in its train, and that the worship of them could not possibly be afforded by society, no matter what reasons would be brought forward, because there might well be no return once men descended:

> ...One can describe the state of affairs, which is a quite peculiar one, only by saying that [in the] case [of the developmental stages of the mind's growth] every earlier stage of development persists alongside the later stage which has developed from it... The earlier mental state may not have manifested itself for years, but nonetheless it is so far present that it may at any time again become the mode of expression of the forces in the mind, and that exclusively, as though all later developments had been annulled, undone. This extraordinary plasticity of the evolution that takes place in the mind is not unlimited in scope; it might be described as a special capacity for retroversion - for regression - since it may well happen that a later and higher stage of evolution, once abandoned, cannot be reached again. But the primitive stages can always be re-established; the primitive mind, is, in the fullest meaning of the word, imperishable.[34]

But, in elaborating Freudian theory, Lawrence made a fundamental mistake which might best be described as an inverted dualism, indeed a Manichean dualism:

> Man is made up of a dual consciousness, of which the two halves are most of the time in opposition

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[34]Freud, "Thoughts on War and Death," Collected Papers, IV, pp.300-301.

to one another.[35]

Quite arbitrarily, he elects to distinguish civilization as the product of conscious thought; and the idealistic goals of civilization, which Somers declares Ben Cooley represents in Kangaroo, he asserts to be the ruination of man. Therefore, he says that the instinctual drives must be released from bondage, because the unconscious is the source of love and good, not evil. The approach Lawrence makes is reminiscent of the Romantic inversion of values, of the Blakean and Byronic Satanism which C. S. Lewis so aptly criticizes in his Preface to Paradise Lost.[36] Freud, however, wants to hold the line so that each new generation may achieve "a farther-reaching transmutation of instinct," and become "the pioneer

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[35]Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1953) p.115.

[36]C.S.Lewis, Preface to Paradise Lost (London: Oxford University Press, 1942). It is curious, however, that Lawrence, so set against machine technology, should have this in common with the Romantic Movement. Yvor Winters asseverates that the covert mainspring of Romanticism was its commitment to automatism; yet, it can be said that in its time there was some justification for this aspect of Romantic idology: there was a revolution against God in progress, a God whom no one had heretofore conceived as being of such an order as to have made life out of clockwork. The 'clockwork' of the universe had been recently discovered, and since it seemed to be the prime fact in nature, it was flung contemptuously in the face of what conservatism maintained to be a living God who displayed changing moods of justice, mercy, wrath. Shelley's "Zeus," and Blake's "Nobodaddy," for example, are hateful characterizations of the God worshipped by three and a half millenia of monotheistic traditions, now being openly sapped. The Romantic rebels realized that a world was being born which was destined to overthrow the petrified social organism dependent on a system of obsolescent philosophical and theological beliefs handed down by Classical, and Christian Europe. Cf.Yvor Winters, In Defense of Reason (The Swallow Press and W. Morrow Company, 1947),pp.1-19.

of a higher form of civilization,"[37] though he is dissatisfied, he would not, like Lawrence, "damn everything" and go into the bush.

> Civilized society, which exacts good conduct and does not trouble itself about the impulses underlying it, has...won over to obedience a great many people who are not thereby following the dictates of their own natures. Encouraged by this success, society has suffered itself to be led into straining the moral standard to the highest possible point, and thus it has forced its members into a yet greater estrangement from their instinctual dispositions. They are consequently subjected to an unceasing suppression of instinct, the resulting strain of which betrays itself in the most remarkable phenomena of reaction and compensation formations. In the domain of sexuality, where such suppression is most difficult to enforce, the result is seen in the reaction phenomena of neurotic disorders. Elsewhere the pressure of civilization brings in its train no pathological results, but is shown in malformations of character, and in the perpetual readiness of the inhibited instincts to break through to gratification at any suitable opportunity. Anyone thus compelled to act continually in the sense of precepts which are not the expression of instinctual inclinations, is living, psychologically speaking, beyond his means, and might objectively be designated a hypocrite, whether this difference be known to him or not. It is undeniable that our contemporary civilization is extraordinarily favorable to the production of this form of hypocrisy, and that it would have to submit to far-reaching modifications if people were to undertake to live in accordance with the psychological truth. Thus there are very many more hypocrites than truly civilized persons - indeed, it is a debatable point whether a certain degree of civilized hypocrisy be not indispensable for the maintenance of civilization, because the cultural adaptability so far attained by those living today would perhaps not prove adequate to this task. On the other hand, the maintenance of civilization even on so questionable a basis offers the prospect of each new generation achieving a farther-reaching transmutation of instinct....[38]

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[37]Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p.299.

[38]Ibid., p.299.

But Lawrence tends to put the emphasis of Western goals upon what he identifies as 'idealization,' and he identifies 'idealization' with the mind itself, claiming that the mind exists in opposition to the "creative unconscious." This dichotomization of 'intellect' and 'instinct' is part of the inheritance of European dualism, whose history is far older than the philosophy of Descartes, for example.[39] Lawrence is one of the latest in a long succession of geniuses springing from what L.L.Whyte terms the 'dissociation' of European man.[40] Here is Lawrence's exposition of the problem:

> The brain is, if we may use the word, the terminal instrument of the dynamic consciousness. It transmutes what is a creative flux into a certain fixed cypher. It prints off, <u>like a telegraph instrument</u> [italics mine; this harks back to Locke's psychological theory], the glyphs and graphic representations which we call percepts, concepts, ideals. It produces a new reality - the ideal. The idea is another static entity, another unit of the mechanical-active and materio-static universe. It is thrown off from

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[39]Alfred North Whitehead reviews this question, as it crops up in connection with Descartes: "Incoherence is the arbitrary disconnection of first principles. In modern philosophy Descartes' two kinds of substance, corporeal and mental, illustrate incoherence. There is, in Descartes' philosophy, no reason why there should not be a one-substance world, only corporeal, or one substance world, only mental. According to Descartes, a substantial individual 'requires nothing but itself in order to exist.' Thus this system makes a virtue of its incoherence. But on the other hand, the facts seem connected, while Descartes' system does not; for example, in the treatment of the body-mind problem. The Cartesian system obviously says something that is true, but its notions are too abstract to penetrate into the nature of things." <u>Process and Reality</u> (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929) pp.8-9.

[40]Whyte, <u>op.cit.</u>,pp.31-149. Alfred Koryzbski founds his system of semantics on the closely related problem of ideation and language; cf. <u>Science and Sanity</u> (3rd ed.; Lakeville, Connecticut: The International Non-Aristotelian Publishing Company, 1948).

> life, as leaves are shed from a tree, or as feathers fall from a bird. Ideas are the dry, unliving, insentient plumage which intervenes between us and the circumambient universe, forming at once an insulator and an instrument for the subduing of the universe. The mind is the instrument of instruments; it is not a creative reality.41

The thing to be noted in this passage is that Lawrence is combating what is usually taken as the living activity of the brain, or mind - its "percepts, concepts, ideals." He claims that nothing known in ordinary experience, from sensation to the levels of ordered abstraction, is organic or alive, that anything we "know" is the useless product of machinery, and that we are robots deluded in the belief that we live if we believe the mind to be much more than a mere "instrument." The consequences of this hypothesis in Lawrence's philosophy will be taken up fully later; here, it is necessary to discuss two points of Lawrence's theory.

First, the Twentieth Century has come to consider that language itself is in some way the source of all 'ideas' and intelligence, because all "creative reality," to use Lawrence's term, is shaped by the faculty in the brain which, when impaired, results in the living death of the human organism; if this faculty is not functioning the organism will then be governed solely through the conditioned reflexes of the autonomous nervous system, below the threshold of "creation." For instance, Ernst Cassirer, who has investigated this function of the brain, will not in any respect agree

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41 Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, pp.120-121.

that the "glyphs" of the brain are dead "telegraphic messages." According to his analysis of the function of language, "the illusion of an original division between the intelligible and the sensuous, between 'idea' and 'phenomenon,' vanishes."

> True, we still remain in a world of "images" but these are not images which reproduce a self-subsistent world of "things"; they are image-worlds whose principle and origin are to be sought in an autonomous creation of the spirit. Through them alone we see what we call "reality," and in them alone we possess it: for the highest objective truth that is accessible to the spirit is ultimately the form of its own activity. In the totality of its own achievements, in the knowledge of the specific rule by which each of them is determined and in the consciousness of the context which reunites all these special rules into <u>one</u> problem and one solution: in all this, the human spirit now perceives itself and reality.[42]

> Hence [philosophy] has no other solution than to reverse the <u>direction</u> of inquiry. Instead of taking the road back, it must attempt to continue forward. If all culture is manifested in the creation of specific image-worlds, of specific symbolic forms, the aim of philosophy is not to go behind all these creations [which is Lawrence's purpose in calling all thought "dead," and in seeking an absolute living reality in the unconscious common to mankind], but rather to understand and elucidate their basic formative principle. It is solely through awareness of this principle that the content of life acquires its true form. Then life is removed from the sphere of mere given natural existence; it ceases to be a part of this natural existence or a mere biological process, but is transformed and fulfilled as a form of the "spirit." In truth the negation of the symbolic forms would not help us to apprehend the essence of life; it would rather destroy the spiritual form with which for us this essence proves to be bound up.[43]

On the other hand, although Lawrence wishes to reveal a crea-

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[42] Ernst Cassirer, <u>The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms</u> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), I, pp.110-111.

[43] <u>Ibid</u>., pp.113-114.

tive essence which is not the mind, let it be called "sex," he is in effect finding but a tropism. This is primitivism in the most literal meaning of the term; but it is also, when it is considered as a metaphysical notion, not a first principle but an hypostatization of a very high order of abstraction, for he is reintroducing as a concrete postulate an idea which is derived from a long chain of reasoning on man's nature and functions.

Second, the psychoanalytic theory of the mind's dual nature should be compared to Lawrence's dualistic theory of mind and the unconscious.

> ...Careful students have perceived that Freud's revolutionary contribution to psychology was not so much his demonstrating the existence of an unconscious, and perhaps not even his exploration of its content, as his proposition that there are two fundamentally different kinds of mental processes, which he termed primary and secondary respectively, together with his description of them. The laws applicable to the two groups are so widely different that any description of the earlier one must call up a picture of the more bizarre types of insanity. There reigns in it a quite uninhibited flow towards the imaginary fulfillment of the wish that stirs it - the only thing that can. It is unchecked by any logical contradiction, any causal associations; it has no sense of either time or of external reality. Its goal is either to discharge the excitation through any motor exit, or, if that fails, to establish a perceptual - if necessary, an hallucinatory - identity with the remembered perception of a previous satisfaction.
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> In the secondary process there occur extensive inhibitions of that freely flowing energy; it is attached, "bound," and allowed to flow only after processes of thought have found a direction in which it is possible to find a "real" satisfaction of the wish through taking into account facts of the outer world. "It is from the contrast between Reality and Wish-Fulfillment that our psychical life grows."[44]

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[44]Ernest Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud (New York: Basic Books, 1954), I, pp.397-398.

One of the chief purposes that Lawrence had in taking the basis of his psychological theory from the Freudians was to bolster his attack on a corrupt and decadent Western society; but he used the scientific theory of the irrational for an attack on rationality itself, and his mystification of science in Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious led him to misinterpret the nature and source of the deepest human impulses by projecting them nakedly into the world, by substituting fantasy for fact, and thereby confusing what is with what ought to be, or what is still worse, obfuscating whatever truth there was in his vision of what ought to be. His next book reveals this misinterpretation clearly.

In Fantasia of the Unconscious,[45] Lawrence undertakes to present a description of the physical universe by which the sources of symbol and myth may be explained. Here, only the cosmological theory will be relevant; later some of the consequences of its sociological theory will be taken up.

> When time began, the first individual died, the poles of the sun and moon were flung into space, and between the two, in a strange chaos and battle, the dead body was torn and melted and smelted and rolled beneath the feet of the living.
>
> And so we have a clue to gravitation. We, mankind, are all one family. In our individual bodies burns the positive quick of all things. But beneath our feet, in our own earth, lies the intense center of our human, individual death, our grave. The earth has one centre, to which we are all polarized. The circuit of our life is balanced on the living soul within us, as the positive centre, and on the earth's dark centre, the centre of our abiding and eternal and substantial death, our great negative

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[45] Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious (London: Martin Secker, 1923).

centre, away below. This is the circuit of our immediate individual existence. We stand upon our own grave, with our death-fire - the sun, on our right hand, and our death-damp - the moon, on our left.[46]

We fall into the earth. But our rising was not from the earth. We rose from the earthless quick, the unfading life. And earth, sun, and moon are born only of our death. But it is only their polarized dynamic connection with us who live which sustains them all in their place and maintains them all in their own activities. The inanimate universe rests absolutely on the life circuit of living creatures, is built upon the arch which spans the duality of living beings.[47]

But it is not even the dead which <u>really</u> sustains the sun. It is the dynamic relation between the solar plexus of individuals and the sun's core, a perfect circuit. The sun is materially composed of all the effluence of the dead. But the <u>quick</u> of the sun is polarized with the living, the sun's quick is polarized in dynamic relation with the quick of life in all things, that is, with the solar plexus in mankind. A direct dynamic connection between my solar plexus and the sun.[48]

Likewise, as the sun is the great fiery, vivifying pole of the inanimate universe, the moon is the other pole, cold and keen and vivifying, corresponding in some way to a <u>voluntary</u> pole. We live between the polarized circuit of sun and moon. And the moon is polarized with the lumbar ganglion, primarily, in man. Sun and moon are dynamically polarized to our actual tissue, they affect this tissue all the time. The moon is, as it were, the pole of our particular terrestrial <u>volition</u>, in the universe. What holds the earth swinging in space is first, the great dynamic attraction to the sun, and then counterposing assertion of independence, singleness, which is polarized in the moon. The moon is the clue to our

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[46] <u>Ibid</u>., pp.143-144.

[47] <u>Ibid</u>., p.144.

[48] <u>Ibid</u>.,p.139. There is a very interesting parallel between this sun theory and that developed by a highly cultivated and intelligent man, though he was insane. Cf. Freud's analysis of the celebrated Shreber case, "Psychoanalytic Notes upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia," <u>Collected Papers</u>, III, pp.390-467.

earth's individual identity, in the wide universe.

The moon is an immense magnetic centre. It is quite wrong to say she is a dead snowy world with craters and so on. I should say she is composed of some very intense element, like phosphorous or radium, some element or elements which have a very powerful chemical and kinetic activity, and magnetic activity affecting us through space.

It is not the sun which we see in heaven. It is the rushing thither and the rushing thence of the vibrations expelled by death from the body of life, and returned back again to the body of life. Possibly even a dead soul makes its journey to the sun and back, before we receive it again in our breast. Just as the breath we breathe out flies to the sun and back, before we breathe it in again. And as the water that evaporates rises right to the sun, and returns here. What we see is the great golden rushing thither, from the death exhalation, towards the sun, as a great cloud of bees flying to swarm upon the invisible queen, circling round and loosing again. This is what we see of the sun.[49]

And the moon is some strange coagulation of substance such as salt, phosphorus, soda. It certainly isn't a snowy cold world, like a world of our own gone cold. Nonsense. It is a globe of dynamic substance like radium or phosphorus, coagulated upon a certain vivid pole of energy, which pole of energy is directly polarized with our earth, in opposition with the sun.

The moon is born from the death of individuals. All things in their oneing, their unification into the pure universal oneness, evaporate and fly like an imitation breath towards the sun. Even the crumbling rocks breathe themselves off in this rocky death, to the sun of heaven during the day.

But at the same time, during the night they breathe themselves off to the moon. If we come to think of it, light and dark are a question both of the third body, the intervening body.[50]

To the sun belong the great forces of heat and radiant energy, to the moon belong the great

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[49]Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, pp.139-140.

[50]Ibid., p.140.

forces of magnetism and electricity, radium-energy and so on. The sun is not in any sense, a material body. It is an invariable intense pole of cosmic energy, and what we see are the particles of our terrestrial decomposition flying thither and returning, as fine grains of iron would fly to an intense magnet....[51]

Life itself is dual. And the duality of life is life and death. It is what we call matter and force, among other things.[52]

I do not believe one-fifth of what science can tell me about the sun. I do not believe for one second that the moon is a dead world spelched off from our globe. I do not believe that the stars [sic, planets?] came flying off from the sun like drops of water when you spin your hanky.... I have tried, and even brought myself to believe in a clue to the outer universe. And in the process I have swallowed such a lot of jargon that I would rather listen now to a negro witch-doctor than to Science. There is nothing in the world that is true except empiric discoveries which work in actual appliances. I know that the sun is hot. But I won't be told that the sun is a ball of blazing gas which spins round and fizzes. No, thank you.[53]

The cosmos is nothing but the aggregate of the dead bodies and dead energies of bygone individuals. The dead bodies decompose as we know into earth, air, water, heat and radiant energy and free electricity and innumerable other scientific facts....[54]

There are two main points to be made about this passage. One is that Lawrence is not, like Blake or William Butler Yeats, basing his doctrine upon the tradition of cab-

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[51] Ibid., p.146.

[52] Ibid., p.136.

[53] Ibid., pp.136-137.

[54] Ibid., p.137.

balism.[55] Along with Paracelsus, for instance, Blake was using other writings from a religious mysticism of the pre-scientific cosmogony, such as Robert Fludd's Mosaical Philosophy, Thomas Vaughn's Lumen de Lumine, and Vaughn's translation of Reuchlin's de Arte Cabbalistica - primarily, it appears, for poetical purposes,[56] though there is no assurance that he was as sophisticated as Yeats, who took the automatic writings of his wife as "metaphors for poetry." In any case, Blake was a Gnostic capable of making a self-conscious point about poetry versus science when he wrote:

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[55]Cf. Frederick Carter, D.H.Lawrence and the Body Mystical (London: Denis Archer, 1932). "When discussion moved around the hidden things wrapped up in the works of the Alchemists, Hermetists and other practitioners of magical methods, he urged for some work that would give the significance of the entire scheme. All the time he was exasperated to find the theory depended on the exposition in a canonical work, a book accepted. He wanted something outside-heterodox at least or heretic or pagan, a challenger, an outlaw...." Ibid., p.60. "And even to the end he was embarrassed by an insufficient knowledge of the motions of the various parts of the heavens. It shows itself in some of the articles he wrote on philosophy and the cosmos, when he ventured on that side of the subject. He could not catch at the fundamental simplicity of the older theory of heaven's movements. Eluding him by reason of this misapprehension of motions, the scheme appeared complex and distracted his thought and vision into contradiction. I do not think he ever found it quite clearly. A simple map of the stars could not give the complications of pattern in time that they run through." Ibid., pp.60-61. "Yet, to Lawrence, always the great swing of the polar centre with the dragon stars circling about it was an amazing and stirring image. It seemed always new to him and significant of meaning - such a lot to his purpose if it could be brought into his way of feeling. But it never quite gave up its secret and always the interplay of the stars of pole and dragon with the rest of the sky baffled him." Ibid., p.61.

[56]Cf. Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (Princeton; University Press, 1947); cf. also, Kathleen Raine, "Who made the Tyger?", Encounter, II (June, 1954), pp.43-50.

> "What," it will be Questioned, "When the Sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea?" O no, no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty."[57]

However, Lawrence is not praising God's work in his description of the sun, the moon, and the earth, which are for him but "poles" of "dynamic energy" in an adust universe where there is nothing more than the two elements of life and death; in addition, he is not subscribing to the four primordial substances of the alchemists, "earth, air, water, heat," but amplifies their theory by importing the newfound worlds of "radiant energy, free electricity and innumerable other scientific facts." This brings up the second point about the long passage quoted just above, which is that Lawrence thought that his cosmology could explain the persistent symbols he believed were residual in the unconscious mind.

> I honestly think that the great pagan world of which Egypt and Greece were the last living term, the great pagan world which preceded our own era, had a vast and perhaps perfect science in terms of life. In our era this science crumbled into magic and charlatanry...; in the great world previous to ours a great science and cosmology were taught esoterically in all countries of the globe, Asia, Polynesia, America, Atlantis and Europe.... In the period which geologists call the glacial period, the waters of the earth must have been gathered up in a vast body on the higher places of the globe, vast worlds of ice. And the sea-beds of today must have been comparatively dry.
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> In that world men lived and taught and knew, and were in one complete correspondence over all

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[57] William Blake, "A Vision of the Last Judgment," The Poetry and Prose of William Blake (London: Nonesuch Press, 1940, p.652.

> the earth. Men wandered back and forth from Atlantis to the Polynesian continent as men now sail from Europe to America. The interchange was complete, and knowledge, science was universal over the earth, cosmopolitan as it is today.[58]

Lawrence concludes from this hypothesis that all known civilizations, as well as the paleolithic and neolithic creatures of the anthropologist, are descendants from this world culture; that the old wisdom, half-forgotten, lingers still, remembered as ritual, gesture, myth-story, and that even symbols are partially mnemonic. This also explains the community of myths and symbols over the earth: "the same mathematic figures, cosmic graphs, mystic figures and signs whose true cosmic significance is lost."[59] He has not gathered his ideas from Paracelsus' Philosophia Atheniensis, but from the Atlantis theory scrambled together from a discordance of undeciphered texts and languages unknown to occultists like Madame Blavatsky.[60] He is mixing occult lore and scientific findings for his own philosophic purposes;[61] whether he makes a

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[58]Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, pp.8-9.

[59]Ibid., p.9.

[60]Cf. Tindall, "D.H.Lawrence and the Primitive," op. cit., pp.210-211.

[61]Lawrence admits this: "I am not a proper archaeologist nor an anthropologist nor an ethnologist. I am no 'scholar' of any sort. But I am very grateful to scholars for their sound work. I have found hints, suggestions for what I have to say...in all kinds of books, from the Yoga and Plato and St. John the Evangel and the early Greek philosophers like Herakleitos down to Fraser and his Golden Bough, and even Freud and Frobenius. Even then I only remember hints - and I proceed by intuition. This leaves you quite free to dismiss the whole wordy mass of revolting nonsense, without a qualm." Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, pp.7-8.

viable philosophy or not is relatively unimportant compared to the fact that his cosmology is enshrined in the heart of his later fiction, especially the work under consideration here, The Plumed Serpent.[62]

He says, moreover, in explanation of his philosophical aims and fiction that both are inherent in one another:

> ...It seems to me that even art is utterly dependent on philosophy; or, if you prefer it, on a metaphysic. The metaphysic or philosophy may not be anywhere very accurately stated and it may be quite unconscious, in the artist, yet it is a metaphysic that governs men at the time, and is by all men more or less comprehended, and lived. Men live and see according to some gradually developing and gradually withering vision. This vision exists also as a dynamic idea or metaphysics - exists first as such. Then it is unfolded into life and art. Our vision, our belief, our metaphysic is wearing absolutely threadbare. We have no future; neither for our hopes nor our aims nor our art. It has all gone gray and opaque.
>
> We've got to rip the old veil of a vision across, and find what the heart really believes in, after all: and what the heart really wants for the next future. And we've got to put it down in terms of belief and of knowledge. And then go forward again, to the fulfillment in life

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[62]Cf. Hoffman, Freudianism and the Literary Mind. "The Plumed Serpent is Lawrence's answer, in fiction, to his cry for the resurrection of the old gods." Ibid., p.72. Also, "The novels illustrate [Lawrence's] theories - they are...the exempla of the preacher and the prophet. In the earlier novels the illustration is passionately revealed in moments of high drama; in the later novels the preaching intrudes, and The Plumed Serpent especially lacks the fine subtle blending of text with context. Thus the first are his most effective works of art; the last, the most vigorous announcements of his principles and attitudes." Ibid., pp.179-180.

and art.[63]

Though this may be a true perception of the contemporary crisis, it is necessary to weigh it in terms of the metaphysics he develops to answer the need he sees for a new beginning, because The Plumed Serpent relies so heavily upon it. It is an inescapable conclusion that through his vision of a godless 'physics' Lawrence came to rest on the single force which is the link between the human and the non-human, that is, the creative unconscious which he identified with

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[63] Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.11. M.R. Cohen issued a caveat on the use of the word 'life' which occurs so often in Lawrence's writing. He says: "Few habits are so characteristically modern as the vague use of the term life as an honorific rather than descriptive. That the nature of life (like that of other realities) has not yet been completely grasped by human intelligence is an old and tragic truth. But that by merely living we have a source of knowledge different from and higher than that attained by rational science, is a rather new doctrine. It seems to be intimately connected with the current use of the word life as a glorification of our impulses no matter how pathologic or pathogenic. But the very difficulties of the latter cause every vigorous people to develop rational restraints. Otherwise life is degraded and brutally impoverished if not utterly destroyed. So in theoretic matters the first deliverances of the experience we call living are so full of illusion and contradiction that vigorous mentality seeks rational science as a deliverance (in part, at least) from mortal error." Op.cit., pp.51-52. One inference that may be drawn from this statement is that Lawrence's reliance on intuition marks decadent thought, not vigorous thought. Cohen also says, concerning intuition: "The assertion that by intelligence we know only phenomena while in mere living we know the absolute reality of things receives a certain plausibility from the widespread popular faith in introspection as the supreme and even primary form of knowledge. I take it, however, that the development of modern empirical psychology has brought ample evidence for the view that introspection is at least as full of difficulty and subject to error as any other form of observation. It certainly requires scientific training and much reflection to make its results reliable." Op.cit., p.52.

'sex'; furthermore, it is clear that as he develops this concept it finally resembles nothing else but what he also called the death-like powers of "force and matter."

> In sex we have our basic, most elemental being. here we have our most elemental contact. It is from the hypogastric plexus and the sacral ganglion that the dark forces of manhood and womanhood sparkle. From the dark plexus of sympathy run out the acute sympathetic vibrations direct to the corresponding pole.
>
> Without sight or scent or hearing the powerful magnetic current vibrates from the hypogastric plexus in the female, vibrating onto the air like some intense wireless message. And there is immediate response from the sacral ganglion in the male.... From the powerful dynamic centre the female sends out her dark summons, the intense vibration of sex. And according to her nature, she receives her responses from the males. The male enters the magnetic field of the female. He vibrates helplessly in response. There is established at once a dynamic circuit....It would seem as if, while ever life remains free and wild and independent, the sex-circuit, while it lasts, is omnipotent. There is one electric flow which emcompasses one male and one female, or one male and one particular group of females all polarized in the same key of vibration.[64]

As Joseph Wood Krutch pointed out (cf. page 11, above),

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[64] Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.168. Lawrence would probably have been startled to hear that the basis for this theory is quite mechanistic in its logic; thus, it is at the opposite extreme from "creative." Cf. Cohen, op.cit., p.248: "Surveying the three arguments for mechanism we can see that they assert three distinguishable doctrines: (a) that the subject matter of biology offers no inherent discontinuity with the subject matter of the physical sciences, (b) that the laws of biology must ultimately be deducible from laws of inorganic physics (including chemistry), and (c) that the method of biology must be the same as that of physics or continuous with it to the extent of postulating determinate causal laws that are verifiable in perceptible bodily phenomena in time and space. Those who call themselves mechanists do not take the trouble to distinguish these doctrines, because they usually hold the three together."

Lawrence's theory of cosmic sexual dynamism may be taken as a trope, or convenient symbol for what he perceived as the problem of sentient man facing the non-human universe; but it must also be noted that Lawrence means what he says in this passage to be taken quite literally. If this is so, the critic will be forced to call his theory obscurantism, not mysticism.[65] On the literal level, the theory is not peculiar to Lawrence alone; indeed, he may have found confirmation for it in Otto Weininger's Sex and Character which advances a theory of sex based on hormonal secretions.[66]

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[65]Cf. Cohen, op.cit., pp.64-65: "If [the] doctrine that our universe...contains something fundamental to which we may point but which we cannot fully describe be called mysticism, then mysticism is essential to all intellectual sanity. Language ceases to be significant if it cannot indicate something beyond language. But if we use the word mysticism to denote this faith in a universe that has inerrable and alogical elements, we cannot too sharply distinguish it from obscurantism. For the former denies our power to know the whole of reality, while the latter holds reality to be definitely revealed to us by non-rational processes. Rationalism does not deny that clear thoughts may begin as vague or obscure premonitions. But the essential difference between rationalism and obscurantism depends upon whether our guesses or obscure visions do or do not submit to the processes of critical examination and logical clarification."

[66]Redacting the theory of Weininger's book, Dr. David Abrahamsen writes: "In all forms of sexually differentiated life there is an attraction between males and females, between man and woman, the object of which is procreation. Feminine men love masculine women and vice versa. The fact that maleness and femaleness are distributed in the living world in every possible proportion leads...to the formulation of what [Weininger] believed to be an almost unknown law, 'the law of sexual attraction.... Sexual attraction may be compared with gravitation.'" "Weininger refers to the experiments of Wilhelm Pfeffer, which showed that the male cells of many cryptograms are naturally attracted not merely by the female cells but also by substances with which they come in contact .... Pfeffer called these movements chemotactic and used the word chemotropism to describe the attraction.... In certain animals the male with his sense organs perceives the female at a distance, and Weininger thinks this attraction exercised by females analogous in certain respects to chemotropism." David Abrahamsen, The Mind and Death of a Genius (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), pp.106-107. Weininger committed suicide, and Abrahamsen's analysis of his book attempts to show how his theory of sex was closely involved with the form of his insanity. Discussion of The Plumed Serpent will make certain similar parallels in Lawrence's case between his life and writings.

Still, no matter what balances may ultimately be discovered to obtain between male and female hormones, and the character of the individual person as it comes from the wheel of life, there is no coherent case to be made for Lawrence's thesis which defines the unconscious as "the pristine consciousness" present in "the first fused nucleus of the ovule," and which "throughout the long and incalculable history of the individual ...still remains central and prime, the source and clue of the living unconscious, the origin."[67] Lawrence's assertion that the original cell from which the organism develops somehow remains always physically present and dominant is reminiscent in its theory of Descartes' suggested location of the soul in the pineal gland. This is primitivistic mechanism.

I have termed Lawrence's theory of sex primitivistic because it takes its imagery or vocabulary from the sciences and reduces it to an obscurantism which is quite devoid of the pretentions of the traditional religious speculations. The style may sound like Futurism,[68] but its logic is that of an inverted Futurism since it resurrects an "old religious faculty" as the intuitive key to the ultimate formulation of the nature of the cosmos.

It is also to be inferred from the passage on the automatism of sexual attraction, that Lawrence was at a calam-

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[67]Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, p.44.

[68]Lawrence was interested in the Futurist Movement. Cf. the complete text of letter quoted from below, in note 69.

itous junction of his development when he wrote the Fantasia of the Unconscious. Obviously, his metaphysical position as an artist in revolt from science and machine technology seems contradicted when the relation between man and woman, Lawrence's great and sole theme, is utterly reduced to a "circuit" of "magnetic polarized fields" sustained between electrified fantoccini. Yet, the strangest thing about this self-contradiction is not that Lawrence qua artist is opposed to machinery because of the nature of art, but that he seems for a very long time to have been an artist expressing "machine," or "ideal," principles in his writings. Years before he wrote as a psychologist of sex, the very quality of his vision had committed him to certain conceptions which, as rationalized in his philosophical tracts, turn out to be similar to the thing he believed himself to be combating. In a letter dated 5 June, 1914, he explained his goal to Edward Garnett in this manner:

> ...Somehow - that which is physic - non-human, in humanity, is more interesting to me than the old fashioned human element - which causes one to conceive a character in a certain moral scheme and make him consistent.... You mustn't look in my novel [i.e., The Rainbow] for the old stable ego of the character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognizable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the single radically-unchanged element.[69]

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[69]Lawrence, "Letter to Edward Garnett, 5 June, 1914," The Letters of D.H.Lawrence (New York: The Viking Press, 1932), pp.197-198. In this letter Lawrence calls The Rainbow "a bit futuristic," and mentions his interest in Marinetti's ideal of an "intuitive physiology of matter."

By 1920, when Lawrence's crucial period begins, he is calling "the single radically-unchanged element" not 'soul,' or as in Vedanta, 'Atman,' but "the Holy Ghost," or "blood." He uses these two terms interchangeably; and, now that he has finally isolated it, nothing matters but this materio-spiritual essence.

> Because the real human soul, the Holy Ghost, has its own deep prescience, which will not be put into figures, but flows on dark, a stream of prescience.[70]

The whole of the Studies in Classic American Literature, published in 1923, three years before The Plumed Serpent, is shot through with a litany of prose invocations of the Holy Ghost and the blood, the essence of which is an eternally unalterable opposition to intelligence, or mentality.

> There is a basic hostility in all of us between the physical and the mental, the blood and the spirit. The mind is "ashamed" of the blood. And the blood is destroyed by the mind, actually. Hence, pale-faces.[71]

> Because the first part of reverence is the acceptance of the fact that the Holy Ghost will never materialize: will never be anything but a ghost.
>
> And the second part of reverence is the watchful observance of the motions, the comings and goings within us, of the Holy Ghost, and of the many gods that make up the Holy Ghost.[72]

This non-materializing, yet darkly-flowing essence, could be

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[70]Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, p.120.

[71]Ibid., p.96.

[72]Ibid., p.120.

considered as the bundle of instinctual drives postulated by the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious, but like a mechanist following one of the traditions of 19th Century science, Lawrence looks for something concrete in which the Holy Ghost may be soluble; or, to put it another way, in accordance with his dualistic position, he finds a vehicle in the blood in much the same way that medical psychiatrists insisted before Freud that diseases like the hebephrenias and paranoias have solely organic causes of the nature of lesions, submicroscopic chemical alterations in the tissue of nervous fiber.

> For the blood is the substance of the soul, and of the deepest consciousness. It is by the blood that we are: and it is by the heart and liver that we live and move and have our being. In the blood, knowing and being, or feeling are one and undivided ....[73]

It thus follows that when, as in The Plumed Serpent, there is a change in psychological orientation, or in the soul's outlook, it is concurrent with a physical alteration in the blood:

> For it was not her spirit alone which was changing, it was her body, and the constitution of her very blood. She could feel it, the terrible katabolism and metabolism in her blood, changing her even as a creature, changing her to another creature.[74]

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[73]Lawrence, Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover (London: The Mandrake Press, Ltd., 1930), p.42.

[74]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.421. In the Schreber case, mentioned in note 48 on page 87 above, there is a curious parallel to Kate's experience of change: Schreber asserted that he was first changed into God by the rays of the sun upon his body, and then that his body itself was changed by God's will into that of a woman, changed in every cell, both physically and spiritually. Huxley (cf. page 10 above, note 24) mentions Lawrence's beliefs about the possibility of such effects, but he gives no explanation of the 'science' supporting such beliefs.

This "blood theory" of Lawrence's will need investigation at greater length, for it has bearing of some importance on the utterances of Don Ramón in The Plumed Serpent, as well as being a corollary to the Nazi Rassenlehrung. In Studies in Classic American Literature there is a statement about the natural hierarchies of the gods in the blood which is pertinent here:

> When I meet another man, and he is just himself - even if he is an ignorant Mexican pitted with smallpox - then there is no question between us of superiority or inferiority. He is a man and I am a man. We are ourselves. There is no question between us.
>
> But let a question arise, let there be a challenge, and then I feel he should do reverence to the gods in me, because they are more than the gods in him. And he should give reverence to the very me, because it is more at one with the gods than is his very self.[75]

Before explaining what Lawrence's definition of blood led him to in terms of racism, it is necessary to understand what are the connotations lying buried in the word which may have misled him on the semantic level. M.F.Ashley Montagu has shown that the word has always been used without any knowledge of the physiological properties of this body fluid.

> The term 'blood relationship' and its Anglicized Latin equivalent 'consanguinity,' meaning the condition of being of the same 'blood' or relationship, by descent from a common ancestor, enshrine the belief that all biological relationships are reflected in, and are to a large extent determined by, the character of the blood. This

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[75]Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, p.54.

> venerable error...requires correction.... The variety of ways in which 'blood' is used and understood in the English language and in Western civilization in general renders it sufficiently clear that most people believe that blood is equivalent to heredity, and that blood, therefore, is that part of the organism which determines the quality of the person.[76]

Montagu explodes all the various theories in careful detail, and we learn from his exposition not only that Lawrence's theory is utterly false, but also that there is no possible alternative reading of him which might justify his beliefs:

> ...Blood is in no way connected with the transmission of hereditary characters. The transmitters of hereditary characteristics are the genes which mostly lie in the chromosomes and cell substance of a single spermatozoon and a single ovum.... These are the only parts of the organism which transmit and determine the hereditary characters. Blood has nothing whatever to do with heredity, either biologically, sociologically, or in any other manner [italics mine].[77]

> ...Any claims of kinship based on the tie of blood can have no scientific foundation of any kind. Nor can claims of group consciousness based on blood be anything but fictitious, since the character of the blood of all human beings is determined not by their membership in any group or nation but by the fact that they are human beings.
>
> In short, it cannot be too emphatically or too often repeated that in every respect the blood of all human groups is the same, varying only in the frequency with which certain of its chemical components are encountered in different populations. This similarity cuts across all lines of caste, class, group, nation, and ethnic group. Obviously, then, since all people are of one blood, such differences as may exist between them can have abso-

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[76]M.F.Ashley Montague, Man's Most Dangerous Myth (3rd ed.; New York: Harper's, 1952), p.214.

[77]Ibid., p.215.

lutely no connection with blood.[78]

The important point about the obscurantist theory of blood which Lawrence held is that it led fatally to the racism that is the prime feature of the doctrine in The Plumed Serpent, the novel which deals with the Indians of Mexico. When Don Cipriano lectures his soldiers on their mission, it is by means of racial chauvinism that he encourages them to rebel against European culture:

> "But we have not lost Mexico yet. We have not lost each other.
> "We are the blood of America. We are the blood of Montezuma."[79]

Racism is a unique development of recent times, and played

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[78]Ibid., p.216. In singling out Lawrence's blood obsession as a factor in his primitivistic scientism, it appears, ironically, that prehistoric men, those of archaic mental development, were at one with him in his belief. Montagu writes, "By extension, it is also generally believed that the social as well as the biological status of the person is determined by the kind of blood he has inherited. These beliefs concerning blood are probably among the oldest surviving from the earliest days of mankind. Certainly they are found to be almost universally distributed among the peoples of the earth in much the same forms, and their antiquity is sufficiently attested by the fact that in the graves of prehistoric men red pigments are frequently found in association with the remains. These pigments were, probably, used to represent the blood as the symbol of life and humanity, a belief enshrined in the expression 'He is flesh and blood' to signify humanity as opposed to deity or disembodied spirit." Ibid., p.214.

[79]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.361.

no part in the miseries of mankind's civilized past;[80] it is also a distinctive characteristic of modern European primitivism. Lawrence is stonily serious about race, for without differences of race there are no differences of blood, and without blood differences there are no distinctions possible between the "gods" of the blood, no innate superiority, no absolutes by which to gauge inferiority, and so no means for establishing servile races among perpetually primitive peoples such as the Mexicans. Lawrence states that the Indians of Mexico are one of

> the dark races [which] belong to a bygone cycle of humanity. They are left behind in a gulf out of which they have never been able to climb. And on to the particular white man's levels they never will be able to climb. They can only follow

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[80]"In Europe in the Middle Ages and also during the Renaissance the Jews, for example, were singled out for discrimination and persecution, but this was always done on social, cultural, or religious grounds. The Jews, it was urged, had killed Christ; they were accused of murdering Christian children and using their blood for ritual purposes; they were infidels, anti-Christian, usurers; they were almost everything under the sun; but whatever was held against them was never attributed to clearly defined biological reasons. The 'Racial' interpretation is a modern 'Discovery.' That is the important point to grasp. The objection to any people on 'racial' or biological grounds is virtually a purely modern innovation. That is the basic sense in which modern group antagonism differs from that which prevailed in earlier periods." Montagu, op.cit., p.12.

as servants.[81]

This proposition leads him into a dilemma in The Plumed Serpent: If the different races are utterly foreign to one another because of immiscible biological qualities, how will the world ever be united? Not through technology, for example, since that is anathema to Lawrence. The only way of return to the primordial unity of the mythical days before the Babelic confusion, before the Flood, is, paradoxically, through the blood itself!

> She knew what it was that made Cipriano more significant to her than all her past, her husbands and her children. It was the leap of the old, antediluvian blood-male into unison with her. And for this, without her knowing, her innermost blood had been thudding all the time.[82]

> They [the Indians] would defer to her spirit, her knowledge, her understanding. They would give her deference, and a sort of grudging reverence for this. She belonged to the ruling races, the clever

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[81]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.145. The false premises on which race prejudice always rests must be rationalized, as Lawrence is doing here, because they are emotional in origin. "The rationalization is a moral defense. And the rationalizer is a moralist. The rationalization, in the nature of the case, secures the believer in his illusion of moral integrity. The morality of the rationalization is perhaps intensified by the fact that it represents an effort to make that which is frequently vicious, sordid, and inhumane, rational, idealistic, and humane. The semi-awareness of the real nature of the attitude being rationalized intensifies the solemnity with which the rationalization is formulated. Securing moral values the rationalization naturally partakes of a moral quality. The fact explains, in part, perhaps, the deadly seriousness of the devotee of the rationalization. Its value lies in the fact that it removes the moral stigma attached to race prejudice, elevating this prejudice into a justified reaction." W.O.Brown, "Rationalization of Race Prejudice," International Journal of Ethics, LXIII (1933), p.305.

[82]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.415.

> ones. But back again they demanded her acquiescence to the primeval assertion: The blood is one blood. We are one blood. It was the assertion that swept away all individualism, and left her immersed, drowned in the grand sea of the living blood, in immediate contact with all these men and all these women.[83]

In keeping with the tendency of primitivists to be moralistic, as was noted in the opening part of this chapter, Lawrence turns his prejudice against the white 'race' too:

> The power of the world was dying in the blond man, their bravery and their supremacy was leaving them, going into the eyes of the dark men, who were rousing at last.[84]

Perhaps Lawrence meant to symbolize the fusion of the two kinds of mankind through Kate's marriage to Cipriano in The Plumed Serpent, thereby making a unity out of two false halves; perhaps, also, his realization that something was wrong in his statement of the problem led him to renounce

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[83]Ibid., pp.416-417. In Studies in Classic American Literature Lawrence compared races in this way: "There is something curious about real blue-eyed people. They are never quite human in the good classic sense, human as brown-eyed people are human: the human of the living humus. About a real blue-eyed person there is usually something abstract, elemental. Brown-eyed people are, as it were, like the earth, which is tissue of bygone life, organic, compound. In blue eyes there is sun and rain and abstract, uncreate elements, water, ice, air, space, but not humanity. Brown-eyed people are people of the old, old world: Allzu menschlich. Blue-eyed people tend to be too keen and abstract." pp.142-143. Lawrence thinks "a great death" is coming. "And after that, the living result will be a new germ, a new conception of human life, that will arise from the fusion of the old blood-and-vertebrate consciousness with the white man's present mental-spiritual consciousness. The sinking of both beings, into a new being." The Plumed Serpent, p.415.

[84]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.415.

his solution a year or two after the book was out.[85] In any case, as the analysis of the novel's story given in Chapter II shows, its events hold a far more important significance than can be derived from an interpretation which follows his race allegory, since ultimately the allegory has no basis whatsoever in fact.

This section has been concerned with a discussion of the physical principles which led Lawrence to the formulation of his race theory, the consequences of which will be taken up in the succeeding portions of this chapter. A short summary of his position can be helpful before continuing. Lawrence's singular description of life makes the claim that man's elemental being is blood consciousness in sex, sex the mystery. But this description, which is couched in physicist's terminology, is based on an inhuman analogy because it assimilates the ultimate mode of man's nature to a scientific theory that is unimaginatively mechanistic, and worse, uncritically, unverifiably mechanistic. Furthermore, the quality of his philosophical thought, which is dependent from a series of unverifiable and self-contradictory intuitions and assumptions, is primitive in the sense that it constitutes a lapse from a higher mental culture; that is to say, it is a kind of regression. It should be emphasized that the use of this psychological word is relevant because

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[85]Cf. Lawrence, "Letter to Witter Bynner, 13 March, 1928," The Letters of D.H.Lawrence, p.711.

some of the strange characteristics of The Plumed Serpent (to be examined in Part 5 of this chapter) are best revealed as neurotic phenomena; for the moment, however, it is necessary to remark only that there is an important difference between the symbolic communications of the psychotic and the mentality of archaic man - the former are understood, clinically, as a retroversion to archaic forms of thought,[86] the latter is inherent in a state before the advent of civilization and developed languages; and presumably paleolithic man could function as an adult, while the psychotic cannot. To return to Lawrence: obviously, when the only possibility of contact between individuals lies in the establishment of magnetic currents of a pervasive electric or sexual anonymity, the only valuable link in society, or between past and present, lies in the blood. In his conception, blood becomes the sole reality in which "we move and have our being." Since such an idea has parallels with certain philosophical constructions based on scientific physics, it is not straining a point to remark that the same criticisms which Whitehead levels in his review of the history of this science are pertinent to Lawrence's notions. The substance and quality of Lawrence's gravitational field of sex "afford[s] another instance of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness." When Lawrence presents his simplified editions of immediate matters of fact, "the

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[86] In any case, the term 'archaic' has a special clinical denotation referring to the earliest stages of the individual's mental development. Cf. Fenichel, op.cit., pp.33-53.

primary elements of these simplified editions...are in truth only to be justified as being elaborate logical constructions of a high degree of abstraction."[87] But, while not even the most Cartesian physicist of the 19th Century could look at a table and see the flux of atoms in what is largely a void, Lawrence is looking at a human being in just these very terms. To be sure, there were similar tendencies shown in the other arts of Lawrence's time, but their effects are amenable to interpretations other than as the simple response to a dehumanized science.[88] Unlike painting, for instance, literature is discursive: the articulated ego of a character moves in time and space in a familiar world of ordinary experience, and the movement of the pattern of character articulates and defines his ego itself; in short, the life of an individual is history. But in Lawrence, the location of the primal being in the "innermost blood" is like the attainment of Nirvana; it constitutes a plunge into the still ocean of the blood, out of time and out of space. For, no matter what

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[87]Alfred North Whitehead, Science in the Modern World (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1925), p.74. Lawrence's system may also be termed a monist philosophy of the kind denounced by Cohen as a "vicious organicism": "Vicious organicism, the denial of all relative independence or externality of relation between the constituent elements of a system, may be seen in the various forms of social fanaticism, of which indiscriminate worship of the social or group 'mind' is a characteristic example." Also, "mysticism is vicious or obscurantist if it denies the definite or determinate character of things in the interest of beliefs which cannot stand the light of reason." Op.cit., p.154.

[88]For a discussion of 'absolute painting,' cf. André Malraux, "Twilight of the Absolute," The Psychology of Art (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949-1950).

space-time may be for the mathematical physicist, Lawrence's treatise on the unconscious is not pretending to approximate Einstein's theories. Therefore, it might be said that Lawrence's theory of the world is a blind leap into a misplaced concreteness, into the very opposite of the thick warmth of hot fluid existence: it is a leap into a high order of abstraction.

Primitivisms spring fully armed out of this 'metaphysics' which has been illicitly dragooned from a mélange of scientific hypotheses (themselves undergoing constant scrutiny and revision). Lawrence's doctrine of the dark gods of the soul, or of the Holy Ghost resident in the blood, may be divided into four main aspects; these will be taken up in the following parts of the chapter: they are, (a) a kind of tribal political theory; (b) a perversion of history, or rather, a revulsion from history altogether; (c) a hatred for machine technics; and, (d) a certain belief about the use of myth as a way of knowing the world which amounts to its outright misuse.

111

The Politics of the Tribe

In Kangaroo, the independent writer and bohemian critic of society, Richard Lovat Somers, is forced to admit to the Socialist leader, Willie Struthers, that he is sprung from the working classes.[89] In the next novel, The Plumed Serpent, Lawrence no longer shows any sympathy with the aspirations of the toilers. By this time, only a year or so later in his life, he has been driven by his doctrine of the Holy Ghost to an unremitting disapproval of the patent eruption, via technology, of the masses of mankind onto the political and social stage of history. He was well aware that "the main changes we are witnessing today can ultimately be traced to the fact that we are living in a Mass society,"[90] and he displays an almost lunatic degree of hatred for the demos:

> They all were mangy, they all were full of envy and malice, many had the rabies. Ah no, let us defend ourselves from the bottom dog, with its mean growl and its yellow teeth.[91]

Since the new form of mass democracy is based on the vulnerable ideal of equality, Lawrence, a miner's son, was in no

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[89]"Now Mr. Somers, you are a working man's son. You know what I'm talking about. Isn't it right, what I say? And isn't it feasible?"... It touched Richard on one of his quivering strings - the latent power that is in man today, to love his near mate with a passionate, absolutely trusting love." Lawrence, Kangaroo, p.219.

[90]Mannheim, Diagnosis of Our Time, p.1.

[91]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.77.

position to dislike equality; what merited his scorn was the fact that equality has "undeniably...worked to dignify mediocrity and lower standards of excellence," and has also brought with it "the new tyranny of the masses, the chief enemy of true individuality."[92] Lawrence was neither a conservative nor a reactionary in the usual sense of those words. He had been a Socialist of sorts during his friendship with Bertrand Russell,[93] but when the First World War finally ended he was through, as Kangaroo shows vividly, with all ameliorative programs.[94] Thus there was only one way out, speaking in terms of political thought, and that was an extreme radicalism; some critics call it apocalyptic,[95] but this review of his theory, as will be shown later, leans towards the word nihilism as the most descriptive term.

Lawrence's solution was a natural consequence of the idea of race. As presented in The Plumed Serpent it states that each 'tribe' of men makes its own natural response to

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[92]Herbert J. Muller, The Uses of the Past (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p.364.

[93]Cf. Moore, The Intelligent Heart, pp.182-217, p.263.

[94]Ibid., pp.292-293.

[95]E.g., Horace Gregory, Pilgrim of the Apocalypse (New York: The Viking Press, 1933); Helen Corke, Lawrence and Apocalypse (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1933); Frederick J. Hoffman, "From Surrealism to the Apocalypse: A Development in 20th Century Irrationalism," ELH, XV (June, 1948), pp.147-165; Henry Miller, "Creative Death," and "Into the Future," The Wisdom of the Heart (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1941), pp.1-12, pp.159-172; Henry Miller, "The Apocalyptic Lawrence," The Southwest Review, XXXI (1946), pp.254-256.

the pricks of the Holy Ghost by sketching its likeness in the gods of its choice. Since this novel is set in Mexico whose gods are, so to say, racially indigenous to Central America, its political physiognomy is a resurrection from the Aztec heyday. For the time being, it will suffice to notice the principle alone.

First, each of the races of man must be re-baptized in the deep fount of their unique blood-spirits. This entails the renewal of nothing less than the spiritual situation of the ancient world, facilitated, perhaps, by exquisite scholarly reconstructions:

> "So if I want the Mexicans to learn the name of Quetzalcoatl, it is because I want them to speak with the tongues of their own blood. I wish the Teutonic world would once more think in terms of Thor and Wotan, and the tree Igdrasil. And I wish the Druidic world would see, honestly, that in the mistletoe is <u>their</u> mystery, and that they themselves are the Tuatha de Danaan, alive, but submerged. And a new Hermes should come back to the Mediterranean, and a new Ashtaroth to Tunis; and Mithras again to Persia, and Brahma unbroken to India, and the oldest of dragons to China."[96]

Second, if the races of man may be considered as trees, then aristocrats will blossom from them as flowers:

> "I would like" [Don Ramón] said smiling, "to be one of the Initiates of the Earth. One of the Initiators. Every country is its own Saviour, Cipriano: or every People its own Saviour. And the First men of every people, forming a Natural Aristocracy of the World. One must have Aristocrats, that we know. But natural ones, not artificial. And in some way the world must be organically united: the world of man. But in the concrete, not in the abstract. Leagues and Covenants and International Programmes.

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[96]Lawrence, <u>The Plumed Serpent</u>, p.246. Don Ramón is speaking.

> Ah! Cipriano! it's like an international pestilence. The leaves of one great tree can't hang on the boughs of another great tree. The races of the earth are like trees, in the end they neither mix nor mingle. They stand out of each other's way, like trees. Or else they crowd on one another, and their roots grapple, and it is the fight to the death. - Only from the flowers there is commingling. And the flowers of every race are the natural aristocrats of that race. And the spirit of the world can fly from flower to flower, like a humming bird, and slowly fertilize the great trees in their blossoms. Only the Natural Aristocrats can rise above their nation; and even then they do not rise above their race. Only the Natural Aristocrats of the World can be international, or cosmopolitan, or cosmic. It has always been so. The peoples are no more capable of it, than the leaves of the mango tree are capable of attaching themselves to the elm."97

This social theory is not the same one that underlies the archaic aristocratic genealogies by which leaders claimed descent from a god, or from the mixed marriage of a god with a mortal; rather, it is a logical deduction from Lawrence's cosmic blood theory, wherein the electric life force immanent in everything is felt only by special individuals. The result, as will be shown later, is daemonism, not divinity. Don Ramón indeed refers to himself as the incarnate Quetzalcoatl:

> "I <u>am</u> the First Man of Quetzalcoatl. I am Quetzalcoatl himself, if you like. A manifestation, as well as a man. I accept myself entire, and proceed to make

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97 <u>Ibid</u>., p.246.

destiny. Why, what else can I do?"[98]

One might perhaps make the quibble that significant analogy requires some conformity with fact, and so point out that the ecology of forests does not show that trees mingle; but what is more important in Lawrence's statement is that he is waiving the whole question of politics, of power, its apportionment, its maintenance, its dependence on technology and economy and so forth, to insist merely on the supernatural quality of leadership.[99]

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[98] Ibid., p.314. Perhaps this is the only way Lawrence saw to break the impasse and to found a new aristocracy, for he certainly disliked the old alternatives, represented in their utter decadence by his portrait of Hermione Roddice in Women in Love. In weighing the alternatives, Herbert J. Muller writes: "In the past almost all political and religious orders were based on the aristocratic principle of the natural inequalities of man. The ideal argument for this principle is rule by the superior. In practice, however, the ruling classes have seldom been disposed to permit a natural test of their claims to superiority - they simply clung to inherited privileges. We have seen that mediocrity thrives in such societies too; even imbecility has sat on thrones and worn haloes. And the logic of the aristocratic principle is no less vulnerable to analysis. There is no universal standard of superiority, no scale for weighing the diverse claims of strength, skill, valor, intelligence, shrewdness, learning, breeding, virtue, piety, and what have you. For men are not unequal in every respect. And a little man may rightly say that he is a better artisan, a better soldier, a better friend, a better husband, or a better Christian than the genius.... At the same time, all men are in fact equal in respect of their common structure and their common destiny.... Historically, there is no clear correlation between harmony and health, much less growth - no great society has realized the degree of spiritual unity common in primitive societies." Op.cit., p.364.

[99] One may be reminded of Tamburlaine's vaunt:

"Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles,
Usumcasane and Theridimas,
Is it not passing brave to be a king,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?"

(Cf. Tamburlaine, The Great, Part I, I, 5, ll.51-54.) But the quondam Scythian shepherd is glorying in his own human power, new guessed-at by Renaissance expansiveness, while Ramón's self-incarnation would have been termed hubris by the old religious tradition.

> Now she understood why Ramón and Cipriano wore the white clothes and the sandals, and were naked, or half-naked, as living gods. It was the acquiescence in the primitive assertion. It was the renewal of the old, terrible bond of the blood-unison of man, which made blood-sacrifice so potent a factor of life. The blood of the individual is given back to the great blood-being, the god, the nation, the tribe.[100]

This statement contains one of the recurrent blunders of The Plumed Serpent's ideology, for it does not recognize the historical fact that the "blood of Montezuma" had acculturated itself comparatively recently (c. 1429-1500) from the more advanced civilization of Teotihuacan Toltecs of Central Mexico which the Aztecs had infiltrated and finally overthrown.[101] Since Lawrence is recalling only the pageant of Aztec culture at its zenith, he assumes that their supremacy was all the working of their own blood rather than a result of complex historical incidents. As a matter of fact, some years prior to the composition of The Plumed Serpent he had used an image not so benignly sylvan as trees and flowers to describe the unification of men that might be achieved by race-politics, an image which puts his doctrine in a form immediately recognizable in modern events:

> Well, first and foremost, that every individual creature shall come to its own particular and indiv-

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[100] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p.417.

[101] Cf. G.C.Vaillant, The Aztecs of Mexico (London: Penguin Books, 1951), pp.65-114; and Wilson D. Wallis, Messiahs: Their Role in Civilization (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1943), pp.156-158, p.189. The historical aspects of The Plumed Serpent will be taken up in Part 4 below.

> idual fullness of being...through a living dynamic relation to other creatures.... But what sort of a living dynamic relation? - Well, not the relation of love...nor of brotherhood, nor equality. The next relation has got to be a relationship of men towards men in a spirit of unfathomable trust and responsibility, service and leadership, obedience and pure authority. Men have got to choose their leaders, and obey them to the death. And it must be a system of culminating aristocracy, society tapering like a pyramid to the supreme leader.[102]

The image of this passage is crucial because it infallibly recalls the structure of Egyptian society, a civilization rigidly built upon a broad foundation of slaves, tapering through artisans, merchants, aristocrats, to the dynast; as Spengler characterized it, it was a priest-ridden hierarchical society expressing in its later phases of pyramid building a cosmic obsession with death, not with life or spontaneous joy.[103] Though Lawrence was interested in reviving the primitive unity of ancient societies he was actually forecasting in his image of "service and leadership" a polity about to be revealed in the new dictatorship of Germany and the sealed

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[102]Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.165.

[103]Cf. Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, trans. Charles Henry Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), I, 188-191. For a discussion of the theological foundations of the Egyptian State in a theory of a 'consubstantial universe' resembling in many ways Lawrence's philosophy of substance, cf., Henri Frankfort, Mrs. Henri Frankfort, John A. Wilson and Thorkild Jacobsen, Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man (London: Pelican Books, 1949), pp.39-103. In 1927 Lawrence toured the sites of Etruria because he wanted to discover its philosophy of life; this was not a new interest, but it came after The Plumed Serpent had been published, and so may represent his dissatisfaction with that book's statement. Cf. Etruscan Places (London: Penguin Books, 1950).

Russia of Stalin.[104] This is his prediction in Fantasia of the Unconscious:

> There are wars in the future, great wars, which not machines will finally decide, but the free, indomitable life spirit. No more wars under the banners of the ideal, and in the spirit of sacrifice, but wars in the strength of individual men. And the pure individualistic training to fight, and preparation for a whole new way of life, a new society. The leaders must stand for life, and they must not ask the simple followers to point out the direction. When the leaders assume responsibility they relieve the followers forever of the burden of finding a way. Relieved of this hateful incubus of responsibility for general affairs, the populace can again become free and happy and spontaneous, leaving matters to their superiors. No newspapers - the mass of people never learning to read. The evolving once more of the great spontaneous gestures of life.[105]
>
> We can't go on as we are. Poor, nerve-worn creatures, fretting our lives away and hating to die because we have never lived. The secret is, to commit into the hands of the sacred few the responsibility which now lies like torture on the mass. Let the few, the leaders, be increasingly responsible for the whole. And let the mass be free: free save for the choice of leaders.

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[104]Absolute loyalty to the autarch is the exact aim of modern 'leaders,' and they strive to impose it from above, since there is no precedent in public thought, rather no conscious religion or mythology, from which to derive their authority. As Hannah Arendt points out: "Totalitarian movements have proved time and again that they can command the same total loyalty in life and death which had been the prerogative of secret and conspiratorial societies." Cf. The Origins of Totalitarianism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), p.373. Her sub-chapter, "Totalitarian Organization," is most enlightening on the nature of the pyramidal structure of totalitarian society. Op.cit., pp.353-375.

[105]Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.77.

> Leaders - this is what mankind is craving for.
> But men must be prepared to obey, body and soul, once they have chosen the leader. And let them choose the leader for life's sake only.
> Begin then - there is a beginning.[106]

Lawrence did not live to see history refute this "beginning" by demonstrating that under the "chosen" leaders men were no longer free or spontaneous since they were then forced to obey these leaders to the death. He denied the fact that the goals of the mass democracies are ultimately to permit the electorate to learn to choose leaders and dispose of poor ones because the "egalitarian principle does more justice to both the diversity and the unity of our common humanity."[107] He was seeking a return to a "lost innocence,"[108] but did not recognize that the chosen leaders of primitive society are constantly under the scrutiny of the members of their commune, clan, or village, while the impersonalized leaders of nations seem to find it necessary to work through

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[106] Ibid., pp.78-79.

[107] Muller, op.cit., p.364.

[108] Paul Kecskemeti, "Introduction," Mannheim's Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge, p.22. Here is the full statement: "Our age is...that of lost innocence. Naive, non-self-conscious thinking is no longer possible; everyone has to render account for himself and analyse his own thinking in terms of its practical, political group implication."

an abstract bureaucracy.[109] Even Don Ramón Carrasco, the leader of Mexico in The Plumed Serpent, standardizes his mission by printing off the hymns, sermons, tracts, which are to be carried the length of the land by train and car, and read, sung or danced to in every plaza and marketplace. One suspects that the new state religion will require a portfolio of religious propaganda. Lawrence's "concrete" programme aims to produce an irresponsible mass; such a society will indeed require strong leaders, but only because it has been created for their own purposes by the leaders themselves through a deliberately plotted regression into a spartan prim-

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[109]Mannheim points out that "only very simple societies like those of primitive peoples can work on the basis of homogeneity and conformity. The more complex the social division of labor becomes, the more it demands the differentiation of types...and the mutual complementing of functions." Diagnosis of Our Time, p.5. Primitive organization is to be compared with the modern situation: "Government of the masses cannot be carried on without a series of inventions and improvements in the field of economic, political and social techniques. By 'social techniques' I understand the sum of those methods which aim at influencing human behavior and which, when in the hands of the Government, act as an especially powerful means of social control....Now the main point about these improved social techniques is not only that they are highly efficient, but that this very same efficiency fosters minority rule" [especially, "concentration of military power, communications, centralization of control of schools"]. Op. cit. p.1. "The development of the social services, especially of social work, allows the exertion of an influence which penetrates into our private lives. Thus, there is a possibility of subjecting to public control psychological processes which formerly were considered as purely personal....The reason I lay such emphasis on these social techniques is that they limit the direction in which modern society can develop at all. The nature of these social techniques is even more fundamental to society than the economic structure or the social stratification of a given order. By their aid, one can hamper or remould the working of the economic system, destroy social classes and set others in their place." Op.Cit., p.2. Cf., also, Mannheim, Man and Society, pp.252-264; these pages are a survey of the various phases in the development of social techniques.

itivism. In order to facilitate this end, he proposes an education of the following type:

> For a time, there should be no compulsory teaching to read and write at all. The great mass of humanity should never learn to read and write - never...we must substitute genuine action. The war was not really a bad beginning.
>
> The mass of people will never mentally understand. But they will soon instinctively fall into line.
>
> Let us substitute action, all kinds of action, for the mass of people, in place of mental activity. Even 12 hours work a day is better than a newspaper at four...and a grievance for the rest of the evening. But particularly, let us take care of the children. At all cost, try to prevent a girl's mind from dwelling on herself. Make her act, work, play....Let her learn the domestic arts in their perfection. Let us even artificially set her to spin and weave....
>
> The same with the boys. First and foremost establish a rule over them, a proud, harsh, manly rule. Make them know that at every moment they are in the shadow of a proud, strong, adult authority. Let them be soldiers, but as individuals, not machine units.[110]

Perhaps one reason why Lawrence sought to embody this prospectus in Mexico was because the Indians, as he had defined their racial character, could never "mentally understand," no matter what education they were given.

Such a scheme is an inevitable result of Lawrence's formation of race-nations in order to breed leaders that merge into gods -- leaders, as The Plumed Serpent intends to show, that are the very incarnations of a people's gods. It is a short step from this political theory to its

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[110]Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, pp. 77-78.

practice, exemplified best in the remarkable psychological phenomenon of Adolf Hitler's 'charisma.' Lawrence sensed the charismatic properties of certain personalities before Hitler even came to the foreground of this age:

> And then he felt his limbs and his whole body immense with power, he felt the black mystery of power go out of him over all his soldiers. And he sat there imperturbable, in silence, holding all these black-eyed men in splendour of his own, silent self. His own dark consciousness seemed to radiate through their flesh and their bones, they were conscious, not through themselves, but through him. And as a man's instinct is to shield his own head, so that instinct was to shield Cipriano, for he was the most precious part of themselves to them. It was in him they were supreme. They got their splendour from his power and their greatest consciousness was his consciousness diffusing them.[111]

From such personalities Lawrence proposes to rebuild society, for they alone possess the secret:

> And this was Ramón, and this was his great effort: to bring the great opposites into contact and into unison again. And this is the god-power in man. By this power you shall know the god in man. By none other.
>
> Ramón was a man as the least of his peons was a man, with the beating heart and the secret loins and the lips closed on the same secret of manhood. And he was human as Kate was human, with the same yearning of the spirit, for pure knowledge and communion, the soul in the greatness of its comprehending.
>
> But only he had that starry power for bringing together the two great human impulses to a point of fusion, for being the bird between the vast wings of the dual-created power to which man has access and in which man has his being. The Morning Star, between the breath of dawn and the deeps of the dark.[112]

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[111] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 364.

[112] Ibid., p. 418.

There is a strong resemblance between Lawrence's belief in a spiritually endowed aristeia and a trend of political thought in modern European history known as 'historical conservatism.' Historical conservatism bases its political judgments on an intuitional awareness of the will of the nation, or the Volksgeist.[113] This theory of Volksgeist explains one of the most puzzling features of the political organization propounded in The Plumed Serpent. Don Ramón, leader of the vivified Aztec cultus, never tells Kate Leslie what is going to happen next in his campaign for Mexico. All he does is retire to his rooms where he enters trance in order to draw refreshment from the sky and earth forces 'circuited,' to use Lawrence's term, through his spine and solar plexus. After his ecstasies, a new hymn will suddenly appear in the hamlets of the land, or a flying squad of soldiers will seize a church and deconsecrate it from Christ. Slowly the Quetzalcoatl movement gains momentum; the weavers are working harder to provide serapes blazoned with the uniform designs and colors

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[113] Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, pp. 106-108, 245-246. "Historical conservatism is characterized by the fact that it is aware of that irrational realm in the life of the state which cannot be managed by administration. It recognises that there is an unorganized and incalculable realm which is the proper sphere of politics. Indeed it focuses its attention almost exclusively on the impulsive, irrational factors which furnish the real basis for the further development of state and society. It regards these forces as entirely beyond comprehension and infers that, as such, human reason is impotent to understand or control them. Here only a traditionally inherited instinct, 'silently working' spiritual forces, the 'folk spirit,' Volksgeist, drawing their strength out of the depths of the unconscious, can be of aid in moulding the future." Op. cit., pp. 106-107.

of the various paramilitary formations and orders; yet all the while there seems to be no ostensible timetable in Don Ramón's scheme. Presumably a timetable is unnecessary because he is in superrational contact with the awakening spirit of Mexico, with the world snake coiled in the center of the earth, and the racial serpent or dragon of Mexico which is coiled in his own bowels.

Besides availing himself of the cryptographic communications of the Volkgeist, Lawrence incorporates another item of the Fascist conception of politics when he insists upon mere action for the masses.[114]

> "They must move!" [Don Cipriano] said to his officers. "They must learn again to move swiftly and untiringly, with the old power. They must not lie about. In the sleep hours, let them sleep. In the waking, let them work, or march, or drill, or dance."
>
> He encouraged them to dance naked, with the breech-cloth, to rub themselves with the red earth-powder, over the oil.
>
> He encouraged them to dance the silent, concentrated dances to the drum, to dance for hours, gathering power and strength.
>
> He made long, rapid marches across the wild Mexican country, and through the mountains, moving light and swift. He liked to have his men camping in the open, with no tents; but the watch set, and the stars overhead.[115]

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[114] "At the very heart of the [Fascist] theory and ...practice lies the apotheosis of direct action, the belief in the decisive deed, and in the significance attributed to the initiative of a leading élite. The essence of politics is to recognize and to grapple with the demands of the hour. Not programmes are important, but the unconditional subordination to a leader." Ibid., p. 119.

[115] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 365.

Lawrence's call for constant activity to occupy the masses has already been answered in the 20th Century in the deliberate encouragement by the dictators of mass sports, calisthenics, etc., though mass gatherings were already at hand as a spontaneous feature of industrial culture. The extra long day of work which he suggests was also adopted by them, in direct contravention of the Utopian promises of technology to cut work back to the barest minimum; of course it was also understood by the totalitarian leaders that workers were to be allowed no recourse to unions strong enough to demand worker's rights.

I have already mentioned his belief in the Fascist ideology of active élites who call themselves Initiators, and Saviors. The point to remark in the comparison of his notions with those of the dictators is that Lawrence, because of the primitivist basis he establishes, has a slightly different end in view. Perhaps, because of the seriousness of what seems his dedication to Theosophy, or, influenced by his working-class heritage of English Non-Conformity, he desires to erect a kind of religious politics from his race-philosophy, that is, a primitivist politics distinguished by the élite's belief in the absolute truth of its myth. On the other hand, the Fascist sophisticates were not interested in thought, religious or historical; they were not interested in Agrarian

ideals either;[116] and, unlike Don Ramón who seems to be thoughtful, very well read, and certainly somewhat coherent -- granting his irrational dogmas -- Fascist leaders had no use for thought at all. For them, in their "activistic intuitionism,"

> thought only clears the way for the pure deed free from illusions. The superior person, the leader, knows that all political and historical ideas are myths. He himself is entirely emancipated from them, but he values them...because they...stimulate enthusiastic feelings and set in motion irrational forces that lead to political activity.[117]

Don Ramón is not quite so cynical. Although he thinks that there is a plurality of religious motives, he finds them all valid; each nation must choose its own. Ramón happens to believe his: he 'knows' because he contacts the one source of all the varied gods in his trances and in his salute -- arms both thrown taut to the sky, fists balled, feet bearing heavily down into the earth, the body acting as the switch for the cosmic force to leap through. If this were all, Lawrence's preview of Fascism and Nazi totalitarianism would be slightly naive; but he was a fearless writer, so he found himself driven to the true im-

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[116] There is a counterpart to Lawrence in the group of American fascist sympathizers who proselytized for an anti-industrial "Agrarianism" in The American Review, during its editorship by Seward Collins in the late Twenties and the Thirties.

[117] Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, pp. 122-123.

plication of his theory. He realized for a moment of hesitation in the course of The Plumed Serpent's narrative that a tribal politics, if it sincerely hopes to remain true to its religious vision, can allow itself to know no more than the first step. Suppose Don Ramón is a godling, what will happen if he succeeds, where will he go if he is victorious?

> "Ramón!" said Cipriano. "If you can turn Mexico entirely into a Quetzalcoatl country, what then?"
>
> "I shall be First Man of Quetzalcoatl -- I know no more."
>
> "You won't trouble about the rest of the world?" Ramón smiled. Already he saw in Cipriano's eye the gleam of a Holy War.[118]

Lawrence glimpsed something logical in Cipriano's query, something evil in store, so he has Ramón promptly change the subject.

It can be said in Lawrence's favor that his reliance upon a more or less articulated religious cult for the foundations of his state is an attempt to make dictatorship creative by ensuring an unselfish élite. I have called this a naive idea for he must have known that the selfless religious leaders in history have been fanatics of one sort or another who in asserting their will to holiness neglected the Imitation of Christ: Savonarola was not St. Francis. Lawrence seems to have sensed that any mere dictatorship would not have been to his purposes, which aimed, after all,

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[118]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 246.

at a great spiritual regeneration.[119] Thus it was necessary for him to avoid a dictatorship reeking of any of the aspects of modern Europe, and he thought he had found the true religious spirit nascent only among the Indians, the "dark-eyed...hot-blooded, soft-footed humanity" which is a "shadow of that old pre-Flood world."[120] Lawrence saw in the Indians a primitive race with a land system largely peasant and based on the tribal forms of the pueblo; they lived in a country where the machine had not yet taken command of the rhythms of life; their pre-European history was fairly obscure, and their mythic gods were personifications of natural forces and human instincts, not universalized products of what he thought was the (disgusting), albeit superior, abstractive thought of the whites. Contrary to his scheme, however, the European dictators intended to give up nothing but the disintegrating juridical forms of bourgeois culture. As Salvemini makes clear in Under the Axe of Fascism, Mussolini did not desire a return to Homo Simplicissimus, neither had he intentions to remain with the dying 'Homo Oeconomicus';

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[119]Mannheim explains what Lawrence must have perceived about the new movements in Europe: "...a dictatorship is by no means a form of social organization necessarily opposed to the excrescences and negative trends of ...the liberal-democratic order....Dictatorship itself grows out of the negative working of the forces of mass democracy and is nothing more than a violent attempt to stabilize a stage in the development of liberal society, which was by nature transitory, to reinforce and to extend that stage with all its defects, in favour of the...interests of a certain group." Man and Society, p. 107.

[120]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 415.

rather, he believed himself to be advancing towards a new type, 'Homo Corporativus,' that is, men more highly integrated with the technology of the future.[121]

Nevertheless, Lawrence was a European. Therefore, even while The Plumed Serpent proclaims the tribal state, the atheism, racism, and nihilism inherent in its doctrine's European source insinuate themselves into the novel willy-nilly. It is a rather shocking coincidence that as Der Führer who appeared after Lawrence's death was not ideally "Aryan" or Teutonic in his heritage and personal appearance, so in 1924 Don Ramón Carrasco, who is Quetzalcoatl, chief god of the new pantheon, is almost purely Spanish in descent: there is barely a drop of Indian admixture to the sacred blood flowing in his veins; and Cipriano, the full-blooded Indian, worships this Castilian, and serves his military needs as faithfully as the Junker served Hitler's. This strange contradiction of historical conservatism's Volksgeist theory can best be explained, not by reference to Lawrence's political doctrines at all, though these in themselves are not very coherent, but by a discussion of the psychological structure of the chief characters in the book. This will be considered in Part 6 below; there, I hope to show that the reasons for contradiction on the psycho-

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[121]Gaetano Salvemini, Under the Axe of Fascism (New York: The Viking Press, 1936).

logical level have no bearing on some of the imperatives that shape the novel; that is to say, Lawrence's personal psychological needs are asserting themselves equally in the thought of The Plumed Serpent, if indeed they are not dominant factors.

Here it remains to show that Lawrence's tribal polity is the corollary of a feeble, retrogressive theology. When the problematic essence of religious experience is contemplated, as it must always be, one can see why the message of The Plumed Serpent failed to be convincing, even to such a sympathetic reader as Aldous Huxley.[122] Whitehead describes the fault usually present in theology rationalized from intuitions traditionally imposed as a lack of logical coherence.

> The question of the ultimate nature of direct religious experience is very fundamental to the religious situation of the modern world. In the first place, if you make religious experience to be the direct intuition of a personal being substrate to the universe [e.g., Mithras, Hermes, Ashtaroth, Osiris, et al.], there is no widespread basis of agreement to appeal to. The main streams of religious thought start out with direct contradictions to each other. [In the context of Whitehead's discussion this is a reference to the theology of Buddhism, one of immanent divinity, as contrasted to Semitic transcendental monotheism.] For those who proceed in this way, and it is a usual form of modern appeal, there is only one hope -- to supersede reason by emotion. Then you can prove anything, except to reasonable people. But reason is the safeguard of the objectivity of religion; it secures for it the general coherence denied to hysteria.[123]

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[122] Cf. Moore, The Intelligent Heart, pp. 336-337. Huxley ascribes part of his dubiety to the fact that he thought Lawrence had lost conviction in the novel.

[123] Whitehead, Religion in the Making (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1926), p. 64.

Lawrence, however, is able to resurrect the gods of the tribes of man only because his intuitional system is incoherent. Furthermore, when he insistently maintains to his reader that Jehovah and Christ are dead and must be buried, he is choosing to ignore the simple truth that Ashtaroth and Hermes and the rest also died when they were long ago conquered by monotheism. Whitehead draws the significant conclusion from the fact of the Götterdämmerung:

> The passage of time is the journey of the world towards the gathering of new ideas into actual fact. This adventure is upwards and downwards. Whatever ceases to ascend, fails to preserve itself and enters upon its inevitable path of decay. It decays by transmitting its nature to slighter occasions of actuality, by reason of the failure of the new forms to fertilize the perceptive achievements which constitute its past history. The universe shows us two aspects: on one side it is physically wasting, on the other side it is spiritually ascending.[124]

Lawrence is not ascending when he reverts to tribalism, racism, and the arbitrary gods who pop out of the pristine unconscious, since the objective existence of those gods can be substantiated only through the emotionalisms of long-surrendered forms of ritual.

Though his theory of political leadership has affinities with historical conservatism, its true basis derives from a profound and radical nihilism, as I propose to demonstrate in Part 4. Lawrence is going down and back in time, and he is going out of any known political frame of reference, known that is to say, before the Twentieth Century.

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[124] Ibid., pp. 159-160.

For example, Edmund Burke was a conservative in this sense, and he believed that there was a kind of hereditary experience behind the ruling élite's intuitions concerning what is proper and expedient for this class to do in securing the best policy for a nation; but Lawrence wishes to break through the traditions which Burke held constituted a nation's past, its 'organic' historical growth. Lawrence does not accept the formative influence of history; he will go directly to the knowledge of the race's blood. That is what I mean by his radicalism. His nihilism pertains to the nature of his absolute repudiation of history. He discards whatever order can be described as historical to foster immediate response to the promptings of the gods who depend on the eternal, timeless blood for their continued manifestation in reality.

Lawrence dreaded and hated the anonymous man of mass society, and he thought that if one acted from the urging of inner gods one would find true individuality; but his answer in The Plumed Serpent was the answer of the totalitarians who sought to keep the lonely crowd anonymous while welding it into cohorts obsessed by a destiny. Their efforts were built on militarism, and so is the goal of Lawrence in this novel to be achieved by inspired might; his main characters may live and love like gods, but the faces of the uniformed peons are the faces of men marching in armed ranks; they have no life of their own; they chant the song of the blood of Montezuma.

iv

The Revolt from History

Lawrence selected what he imagined were the essential racial characters of various ethnic groups in past societies, together with their representative gods, and portrayed them as unchanged, latent forces in the lives of human beings today. This belief that spiritual characteristics such as mysticism, or practicality, or idealism are transmitted through the generations in the same way that blond hair and blue eyes are transmitted is another derivative from his doctrine of the blood. It is hard to conceive how one may account for the history of such a people as the Germans if one follows Lawrence's method. For instance, the Nazi politicians who set up the goal of a Thousand Year Reich extolled in their propaganda the blond barbarians of the Teutoberg Forest that crushed Varus' legions, but, in doing so they chose to obscure the historical fact that the northern hordes were composed of utterly undisciplined, if brave, fighters. How are the barbarians of the past to be considered the same as the sternly drilled armies of their descendants which the German General Staff sent into the fields of two World Wars? It follows that in order to live reasonably in the present it is imperative to consider the complicated social, political and economic reasons for the collapse of the various dispensations men have previously known. The critic needs to stress when

considering the "many-sided Lawrence"[125] that a regard for historical truth permits no one to forget what he pleases about the conditions of former societies; neither is one at liberty to remember merely the beautiful or pleasant features of an old 'synthesis' which pleases him, be it Pagan, Medieval, or the Confucian harmony under the Han Dynasty. Of course, writers like Pound or Lawrence may call the best aspects for our contemplation as exempla, but the best aspects never should be taken as the whole truth.

After the First World War the sentiment was endemic that Western Civilization was totally corrupt and exhausted. According to Spengler the modern cycle of events was hurling Europe into interregnum, into another period of timeless chaos. As Kangaroo demonstrates, Lawrence thought Europe no longer on this brink, but already fallen into the gulf. For himself he considered that he had successfully rejected both parts of the Western body-mind dualism by identifying idealism and materialism as two peas in one pod and thus anathematizing them -- if one may take Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, Fantasia of the Unconscious, and Studies in Classic American Literature as his full statements. But, from the solution he offers in these works it is apparent that he abandoned the chief characteristic of the age: the achievement of a histori-

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[125] This is Sigrid Undset's epithet; cf. The Achievement of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Harry T. Moore (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press: 1953), p. 59.

cal method of thought which searches for a rational structure to help explain the origins of the present through its development from the past.[126]

As far as he is concerned the European past is dead, over and done with and vanished. What Lawrence thought of America, his next place of sojourn after these books were written, is shown by The Plumed Serpent. In this novel he presents dramatically what he had said in Studies in Classic American Literature: that the Western continent has been eviscerated by the culture of the ghouls from Europe who settled it, that it is a conglomeration of tongues and races bred down to zombies through machinery's use. The loathesomeness of Americans from the United States is caused by the "spirit of place."[127] From the primeval beginnings Mexico and the territory to its north are the lands of death; death reeks from their raw soil, especially so among the volcanic aridities of Mexico, where it was only natural and proper for the Aztecs to

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[126]Cf. Mannheim, "Historicism," Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge, pp. 84-133.

[127]Cf. "The Spirit of Place," Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 16. "Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars: call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality. The Nile valley produced not only the corn, but the terrific religions of Egypt. China produces the Chinese, and will go on doing so. The Chinese in San Francisco will in time cease to be Chinese, for America is a great melting pot.... Men are less free than they imagine; ah, far less free. The freest are perhaps least free." On this basis Lawrence assumes that Mexico produces Mexicans and death.

speak to their gods with human sacrifice:

> Death to this, death to the other, it was all death! death! death! as insistent as the Aztec sacrifices. Something forever gruesome and macabre.[128]

Yet Lawrence had read Prescott's History;[129] during the first seventy-five pages of that work he certainly should have learned not only that the Aztecs sacrificed thousands of prisoners yearly to their various deities, but also that before the coming of Cortes the regions they inhabited in central Mexico were stands of very heavy forests growing out of the fertile lava topsoil. There were no hot parched areas in the Aztec domains, so it ought to have been fairly difficult for any modern like Lawrence to visualize the awful spirit of death one may associate with the mountainous aridities of today being exhaled amid the cool shades of the old deciduous giants formerly growing in the royal preserves that covered the country.[130] It must be

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[128]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 45. Chapter I, "Beginnings of a Bull-fight," gives a portrait of two Yankees which shows them to be cold and unscrupulous sensation seekers. Ibid., 11.

[129]Cf. William York Tyndall, "The Plumed Serpent," The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence, p. 180. "...While or before he was in New Mexico or Mexico, Lawrence read Prescott's Conquest of Mexico, Thomas Belt's Naturalist in Nicaragua, Adolphe Banelier's The Gilded Man, Bernal Diaz's Conquest of Mexico, Humboldt's Vues des Cordillers, and several volumes of the Anales del Museo Nacional of Mexico."

[130]As a matter of fact, so jealously were the forests cared for that the taking of even deadwood from the ground was punishable with death up until 1430 or so; the death penalty was abolished by the great Tezcucan king, Nezahualcoyotl (1425-1470). Cf. W. H. Prescott, The History of the Conquest of Mexico (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853), I, 110ff.

concluded that Lawrence's evocation of the Aztec past is based on a deliberate disregard and misrepresentation of geographic fact.

A respect for historical truth will not allow the illicit projection of the present into the past, especially when a false metaphor like that of the jaguar's purring is expanded into a vast cultural image intended to explain a bygone civilization. Tolstoy, for example, walked over the battlefields of Austerlitz and Borodino in preparation for War and Peace, but Lawrence refused to be bound by the ordinarily accepted chronologies which regulate time. Even if Lawrence had intended accurate depiction of the Aztecs, one might ask, is there enough left of Zapotecan Mitla or Aztecan Tenochtitlan and of the culture of the Indians who fought there to give him grounds for his deductions about the spirit of their place?[131] Instead of resting with his bits of archaeology and anthropology, he focused on Prescott's

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[131]The Plumed Serpent treats not merely geography and history superficially, but presents profound spiritual and linguistic matters in terms of tea table chitter: "But if you like the word Quetzalcoatl, don't you think it would be wonderful if he came back again? Ah, the names of the gods! Don't you think the names are like seeds, so full of magic, of the unexplored magic? Huitzilopochtli! - how wonderful! And Tlaloc! Ah! I love them! I say them over and over, like they say Mani padma Om! in Thibet. I believe in the fertility of sound. Itzpapalotl - the Obsidian Butterfly! Itzpapalotl! But say it, and you will see it does good to your soul. Itzpapalotl! Tezcatlipoca! They were old when the Spaniards came, they needed the bath of life again. But now, rebathed in youth, how wonderful they must be! Think of Jehovah! Jehovah! Think of Jesus Christ! How thin and poor they sound! Or Jesus Cristo! They are dead names, all the life withered out of them." This is Don Ramón speaking. The Plumed Serpent, p. 57.

horrified pictures of the Aztec abominations[132] and interpreted their society by the criterion of Theosophy, using especially the arcana which Madame Blavatsky jerrybuilt out of the jumbled relics of times and places other than Central America under the Indians.[133] Thus, since he relies on the utterly a-historical perspective of the Theosophical rigmarole, it seems natural to him that the Mayas and Aztecs are the co-heirs with Egypt and Mesopotamia of the world-culture of lost Atlantis.

> She had a strange feeling, in Mexico, of the old prehistoric humanity, the dark-eyed humanity of the days, perhaps, before the glacial period. When the world was colder, and the seas emptier, and all the land-formation was different. When the waters of the world were piled in stupendous glaciers on the high places, and high, high upon the poles. When great plains stretched away to the oceans, like Atlantis and the lost continents of Polynesia, so that seas were only great lakes, and the soft, dark-eyed people of that world could walk around the globe. Then there was a mysterious hot-blooded, soft-footed humanity with a strange civilization of its own.
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> Till the glaciers melted, and drove the peoples to the high places, like the lofty plateaux of Mexico, separated them into cut-off nations.
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> Sometimes, in America, the shadow of that old pre-Flood world was so strong, that the day of historic humanity would melt out of Kate's consciousness; and she would begin to approximate to the old mode of consciousness, the old, dark will, the unconcern for death, the subtle, dark consciousness, non-cerebral, but vertebrate. When the mind and the power of man was in his blood and his back-bone, and there was the strange, dark inter-communication between man and man, and man and beast, from the powerful spine.

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[132] Prescott, History of the Conquest of Mexico, I, 84ff.

[133] Cf. Tindall, "The Plumed Serpent," The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence, pp. 182 - 184.

> The Mexicans were still this. That which is aboriginal in America still belongs to the way of the world before the Flood, before the mental-spiritual world came into being.[134]

The simplest confutation of this hypothesis comes from the archaeologists, who find that the highest cultures of the Americas stand upon buried strata of the artifacts of poorer and more primitive workmanship; that the deeper one digs into the 'Middle Culture' middens the lower are the levels of achievement;[135] and that in the Southwestern United States one finally unearths the meagerly chipped flints and bones of 'Folsom Man' (c. 12,000 - 20,000 B.C.), who is surely not a survivor of the catastrophe which engulfed Atlantis and Mu, judging from his poor technological attainments.

Before continuing with this discussion of the effects of Lawrence's revolt from historical fact, it might be well to mention the importance of the historicist outlook. Professor Mannheim attributes the chief claim to wisdom of our age to this intellectual disposition:

> Historicism is... neither a mere fad nor a fashion; it is not even an intellectual current, but the very basis on which we construct our observations of the

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[134]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, pp. 414-415. Such a belief may be answered by Morris R. Cohen's remark, "... If biological facts are the key to history, the record not only of Nazism, but of the past five thousand years of human experience, which reveals no significant change in man's biological inheritance, is a blank page." The Meaning of History (La Salle, Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1949), p. 185.

[135]Cf. G. C. Vaillant, "The Middle Cultures in the Valley of Mexico," The Aztecs of Mexico, pp. 46-62.

> socio-cultural reality. It is not something artificially contrived... a program, but an organically developed basic pattern, the Weltanschauung, itself which came into being after the religiously determined medieval picture of the world had disintegrated and whom the subsequent Enlightenment, with its dominant idea of a supra-temporal Reason, had destroyed itself.
>
> Those present-day Romantics who deplore the lack of a contemporary Weltanschauung, who have the slogan 'organically developed' constantly on their lips and who miss this 'organically' developed' in present-day life, these romantics fail to notice that it is just historicism, and historicism alone, which today provides us with a world view of the past, and that historicism alone could have developed 'organically' out of the preceding historical intellectual roots. In contrast... it is precisely romanticism - in so far as it propogates an earlier pattern of the world view as a standard for the conditions of modern life - which appears artificial, contrived, and merely a 'programme.'[136]

It is outside the scope of this study to show that the confusion of the intellectuals, of which one prime symptom was primitivism, began in the 20th Century when Europe attained the historicist vantage from which it looked at the world of past historical forms from above, as it were; or, that, having burst the bonds of parochial nearsightedness, European artists found themselves becalmed on a sea of choices where too many diverse periods seemed to be

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[136] Mannheim, "Historicism," Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge, pp. 84-5.

'contemporary.'[137] Mannheim censures those 'romantics' who attempt to choose among divers past modes whatever pleases them as a way of life; in the first place, it may be impossible to have the power to choose at all, and in the second, a choice, if it can be made, might well prove uncreative since an eclectic unity is not unity, but rather more like a mixture than a compound. Mannheim does not

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137A sociologist, Pitirim A. Sorokin, finds this historicist 'contemporaneity' dismaying; he calls the present state of society a disintegration of the Western heritage, a 'world's fair,' an all-pervading syncretism where no 'organic cultural taste' is possible. He writes: "The mind of contemporary man is... a dumping place of the most fantastic and diverse bits of the most fragmentary ideas, beliefs, tastes, and scraps of information..." and "our intellectual life is... a spineless and disjointed syncretism which pervades all our social and mental life. Our education consists mainly in pumping into the mind-area of students the most heterogeneous bits of information about everything. Our newspapers and magazines reflect the same syncretism elevated into a dogma of 'all the news'.... Our science changes its hypotheses every decade or year. Our ethics is a jungle of discordant norms and opposite values. Our religious belief is a wild concoction of a dozen various 'Social Gospels,' diversified by several beliefs, of Christianity diluted by those of Marxianism, Democracy, and Theosophy, enriched by a dozen vulgarized philosophical ideas, corrected by several scientific theories, peacefully squatting side by side with the most atrocious magical superstitions. So also are our philosophies and Weltanschauung, our fine arts and tastes. With an equal enthusiasm we accept the Gregorian Chants and 'The St. Louis Blues'; the Bible and the erotic novel; behaviourism and the Neo-Thomism; the Divine Comedy and Paradise Lost, and Esquire and The Grapes of Wrath; psychoanalysis and the Confessions of St. Augustine; jitterbugs and classical dance." The Crisis of Our Age (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1941), pp. 250-252. It is also of interest to note that the form of T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland resembles a dramatization of Spengler's morphological charts of civilization; in an unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Harvey S. Gross has discussed the influence of the historicist outlook on Eliot's poetry; cf. "T.S. Eliot and the Value of Historical Knowledge," The Contrived Corridor: A Study in Modern Poetry and the Meaning of History (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1954), pp. 66-131.

think it possible to revive the absolute quality of the outlook of any particular 'organic' vision of the past, but he does find a viable solution in the quality of historically oriented knowledge:

> The alternative...consists in the following: not only the necessary partisan character of every form of political knowledge is recognized, but also the peculiar character of each variety. It has become incontrovertibly clear to-day that all knowledge which is either political or which involves a world-view, is inevitably partisan. The fragmentary character of all knowledge is clearly recognizable. But this implies the possibility of an integration of many complementary points of view into a comprehensive whole.[138]

Even if this is granted as a possibility, one must ask how an integration of the world can be facilitated by Lawrence's conception of a group of provincial races and religions who are sealed off by their leaders in ignorance of themselves and of each other. Since The Plumed Serpent is presented in terms of religion, let us for the moment speak of history as the evolution of religious thought; in this case, it can be seen once again that his conception of the world and man's peculiar nature prevents him from answering the questions put by the diverse facts of history. For instance, Don Ramón Carrasco may be asserting something truthful when he says that the god of the Mexicans ought to be dressed in huaraches and serape.[139] But it is patent that each of the higher religions lays claim to the absolute truth

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[138] Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p. 132.

[139] Cf. The Plumed Serpent, p. 359.

of its own vision; therefore, when the Mexican accidentally encounters some god from the rain-forests of the Belgian Congo who is wearing nothing but the clout which holds a medicine bag of magical baptismal charms, surely his contemplation will reveal to him that each god's existence tends to cast doubt upon that of all other gods. Don Ramon is begging this question when he says to the Bishop of the West:

> "Father, why not let the Catholic Church become really the Universal Church?"
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> "Why not let it be the Universal Church of Mohammed as well; since ultimately God is One God, but the peoples speak varying languages, and each needs its own prophet to speak with its own tongue. The Universal Church of Christ, and Mohammed, and Buddha, and Quetzalcoatl, and all the others - that would be a Catholic Church, Father."[140]

The Bishop of the West grants that the god of whom all the prophets speak is One God, but he is a peaceable man, and a Roman Catholic; waiving his faith's objection to Ramon's query, he has sufficient grounds to reject it because he knows that in setting up all manner of parochial churches and local gods Ramon is banishing any imaginable hope for peace between men. Actually, Ramon is advocating the idolatry of cults and nothing more, not true religions for the masses of humanity; he does not want to move forward to the level of a religion which is based on an articulated

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[140] Ibid., p. 262.

theology such as the various prophets of the world have striven for despite their awareness that churches always settle for a reversion to communal religious practices of formalized unreasoned emotion and ritual. Ramón contents himself with the hazy thought expressed by Theosophical symbolisms:

> "...Quetzalcoatl is to me only the symbol of the best a man may be, in the next days. The universe is a nest of dragons, with a perfectly unfathomable life-mystery at the centre of it. If I call the mystery the Morning Star, surely it doesn't matter! A man's blood can't beat in the abstract. And man is a creature who wins his own creation inch by inch from the nest of cosmic dragons."[141]

I have called Ramón's purpose one of establishing a cult rather than a true religion. Cults are defined as a return to pre-rational religion as it existed before Greek thought scrutinized the traditional rituals and dogmas of its own society. The Greeks considered that a

> [d]ivine personality was in the nature of an inference from the directly apprehended law of nature, so far as it was inferred. Of course there were many cults of divine persons within the nature of things. The question [of the validity of cults and the whole nature of the universe] concerns a divine person substrate to the nature of things.[142]

The difference between a cultus and a true religion is based on the fact that

> religious history has disclosed that the coming of rational religion is the consequence of the growth of a world consciousness [italics mine]. The later phases of the antecedent communal type of religion are dominated by the conscious reaction of human

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[141] Ibid., 271. In this passage Don Ramón is explaining himself to Kate.

[142] Whitehead, Religion in the Making, pp. 63-64.

> nature to the social organization in which it finds itself. Such reaction is partly emotion clothing itself in belief and ritual, and partly reason justifying practice by the test of social preservation. Rational religion is the wider conscious reaction of man to the universe in which they find themselves.[143]

The 'universe' is clearly not Mexico, or Persia, or India, as Lawrence claims in his definition of the spirit of place. Thought must go further if it is to achieve a truly religious level:

> In its solitariness the spirit asks, What, in the way of value, is the attainment of life? And it can find no such value till it has merged its individual claim with that of the objective universe [italics mine]. Religion is world loyalty.[144]

But, as has been shown by the passages quoted from Kangaroo (pages 74-75 above), by the time Lawrence is dramatizing religious questions in The Plumed Serpent he has given up 'world loyalty,' determined to be true only to the dark gods within, to the individual human's apprehension of forces originating within the subjective universe, without attempting to test them by what may lie outside the bourn of the self. He assured himself of their metaphysical validity by identifying the electrical phenomena of the known universe with the instinctual drives of the 'blood.' In The Plumed Serpent he tried again to make himself believe that this conception carried the mysterious truth of the nature of things:

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[143] Ibid., p. 42.

[144] Ibid., p. 60.

> "No! It's not a helpless, panic reversal. It is conscious, carefully chosen. We must go back to pick up the old threads. We must take up the old, broken impulse that will connect us with the mystery of the cosmos again, now that we are at the end of our own tether. We must do it. Don Ramón is right. He must be a great man, really. I thought there were no really great men any more: only great financiers and great artists and so on, but no great men. He must be a great man."
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> She was again infinitely reassured by this thought.[145]

Thus, when Lawrence looks at the world in this fashion he cannot rise to rational religious thought because he believes in a man who is a god, whereas it is clear that

> [a]ny proof [of what is meant by god] which commences with the consideration of the character of the actual world cannot rise above the actuality of this world. It can only discover all the factors disclosed in the world as experienced. In other words, it may discover an immanent God, but not a God wholly transcendant. [In the context, Buddhism does the former, Semitic monotheism attempts the latter.] The difficulty can be put in this way: by considering the world we can find all the factors required by the total metaphysical situation; but we cannot discover anything not included in this totality of actual fact, and yet explanatory of it.[146]

The conclusion to be drawn in this case of religious development is that by disdaining what history teaches about the levels of the different religious ideas of various periods of man's intellectual growth, Lawrence also destroys any standard by which he can measure the value of his scheme for a Mexican state religion. I have called this neglect of history primitivistic because Lawrence was neither naive

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[145]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 135.

[146]Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p.71.

nor ignorant; on the contrary, he wilfully pursues his course into the past. Since the historicism of his age presents him with many forms from the past, he takes favorite specimens and projects them anachronistically into the present. This is an unfortunate trait in his primitivism because it purposely disregards the precepts of reason. For example, it denies the fact that any religious tag-end imported from the past necessarily drags its whole world in after it; if one takes but a remnant and uses it, one is doing so in ignorance, and if one wilfully neglects the whole context of an idea or practice or belief, one cannot claim to be reviving a way of life at all. If Lawrence had respected scientific methodology, this truth would have been demonstrated to him by the techniques of the archaeologists who were unearthing potsherds in Mexico and trying to reconstruct from them the movements of the various Indian cultures through the Valley of Mexico. Furthermore, Lawrence does not ask why one should select one past rather than another. Consequently he destroys the historicist world view implicit in himself as a modern when he finds it irreconciliable with his fantasy of a pre-Flood civilization. This is his anti-historicism.

The revolt from history implies also a revolt against the idea of society. It constitutes a refusal to accept the present and the arbitrary commitment to it which comes of having been born at one time and not another. And this refusal suggests that Lawrence is ultimately revolting

against the tragedy, or comedy, of being human, an idea put forward by Joseph Wood Krutch.[147] Paradoxically, Lawrence's nihilism, one aspect of this total revolt, is perhaps the redeeming side of his anti-historicism - perhaps, because the issue is complex and equivocal, as the following review shows.

Albert Camus has interpreted the history of nihilism which colors the intellectual struggles of Europe since the French Revolution.[148] He calls nihilism a creative force in the adventure of ideas. Lawrence's life and writings may unquestionably be taken as representative specimens of the history of rebellion; however, the pathos of his thought is that he was himself confused. The real meaning of his revolt never became clear to him insofar as it was to be seen as a culminating aspect of historical questions much greater than himself because he tended to think of himself as a

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[147]Krutch, "D. H. Lawrence," op. cit., p. 320. "... Lawrence's abandonment of England and his wanderings in Australia, Mexico, and the American Southwest were outward signs of the fact that he had given up that white man's civilization which he so bitterly reviled... Essentially an anarchical individualist, his absorption in the problems of the individual in general and of himself in particular implied that it was useless to consider how men might manage to live together when it was not yet clear how each could live with himself. He was perpetually asking what human nature was capable of and he never succeeded in giving an answer satisfactory to himself. It was the universe that he would not accept and he was angrier at God than he was at kings and censors....He was far more inclined to believe that civilization was going down in a stupendous debacle than to hope that even the frankest and freest discussion would save it."

[148]Albert Camus, The Rebel, trans. Anthony Bower (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953).

lonely voice. Had he been born and reared on the Continent to which he fled from England, it is possible that the conservative restraints and the non-conforming individualism of his Puritanical heritage might have been obviated; as it is, those very factors served to distort his convictions about society so that such a novel as The Plumed Serpent may be taken as an effort to reconstitute the social order on bases resembling vanished traditions. While the rebels, the nihilists, as Camus shows, were in the most radical van of European thought, attempting to destroy all vestiges of the past in order to make men utterly and truly free, Lawrence maintains a febrile grasp on a remnant of the dissolved Christian trinity, the Holy Ghost which prompts the individual, and also exalts the amorphous peasant masses, that portion of humanity which is the last to be overcome by the juggernaught of technology; while the rebels sought the utterly new from the future, Lawrence thought to find it in the Indians of the Americas who, living unconsciously rooted in the land, might yet be in touch with a sound religious sense of the oneness of things; in short, he says often in The Plumed Serpent that men must go back and down to pick up the lost element if they are to be saved. Lawrence's methods of retrieving and integrating the clue to the future, are the things which mark him a primitivist, rather than a nihilist. To put it another way, Lawrence begins in revolt as did the European rebels, but he finds other answers.

Yet, he was a nihilist when he cried, "Away with eternal truth. Truth lives from day to day..."[149] he was a nihilist when he said, "Only we know this much... Love, and merging, are now only part of the death-process. Comradeship - part of the death-process. Democracy - part of the death-process. The new Democracy - the brink of death. One Identity - death itself"; and yet again, "We have died, and we are still disintegrating.... But IT IS FINISHED."[150] When he blames our dying society for the tenacity with which it assumes its hypocritical mask of living value he is in the company of the nihilists who, "decrying the human condition and its creator, have affirmed the solitude of man and the non-existence of any kind of morality," and like them he too has "tried to construct a purely terrestrial kingdom where [his] chosen principles will hold sway."[151] But the rebels found their issues illuminated through an attentive study of history's records of the various classes which have been in power and their changing philosophies in the context of society as a whole; that is, the knowledge of history was to the first great rebels an absolute necessity in bringing about order and freedom: to destroy the past one had to know the past.

Camus explains how the search for freedom by the

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[149]Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, p.1

[150]Ibid., p. 183.

[151]Camus, The Rebel, p. 72.

19th Century nihilists led to the subjection of man in the 20th:

> ...Sade and the romantics, Karamazov or Nietzsche only entered the world of death because they wanted to discover the true life. So that by a process of inversion, it is the desperate appeal for order that rings through this insane universe. Their conclusions have only proved destructive to freedom from the moment that they laid aside the burden of rebellion, fled the tension it implies and chose the comfort of tyranny or of servitude.[152]

In Kangaroo, for example, the death of the ordering Creator was symbolized by the European decay Richard Lovat Somers hated: the "dead cathedrals" manifested the destruction of the social order in which the deity had onced lived. But the activism and planned illiteracy of the programme in The Plumed Serpent's tyranny and servitude is a consequence of a-historical metaphysics which lead Lawrence's Mexico in the same direction as the Nazis and the pseudo-historical Bolshevists who rewrite history as they please.[153] The de-

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[152] Ibid., p. 72.

[153] In pointing out how freedom and history are necessary to one another, Toynbee makes this pertinent observation: "...'objective' history is always elusive. The historian's most sincere attempts to grasp it are always partly baffled by the inescapable subjectiveness of his own point of view. Might not an omnipotent dictator, armed with new weapons of psychological technique, be able to cut his subjects off completely from all contact with the objective past? Might not he be able to impose on them a view of history that was, not theirs, but his? If this nightmare could be translated into reality in the interests of authoritarian government, a latter-day mankind would be reduced to the condition of its most primitive ancestors. It would be in history without having any knowledge of history; and this ignorance of history in a world whose living fauna included human beings would be still more weird than the earlier and later ignorance of history in a universe without any human inhabitants." Arnold J. Toynbee, "The Elusiveness of History," Encounter, III (October, 1954), 35.

feat of the nihilists' goal of freedom and the substitution for it of a nihilistic totalitarianism came from the denial of any meaning to history.

> If man is reduced to being nothing but a character in history, he has no other choice but to subside into the sound and fury of a completely irrational history or to endow history with the form of human reason. Therefore the history of contemporary nihilism is nothing but a prolonged endeavour to give order, by human forces alone and simply by force, to a history no longer endowed with order.[154]

The Black, Brown and Red totalitarians created revolutions to impose their respective orders, and so denied the purposes of the rebels who had protested against the injustices of the old society.

> The revolution, obedient to the dictates of nihilism, has in fact turned against its rebel origins. Man, who hated death and the god of death, who despaired of personal survival, wanted to free himself in the immortality of the species. But as long as the group does not dominate the world, as long as the species does not reign, it is still necessary to die. Time is pressing, therefore persuasion demands for leisure and friendship a structure which will never be completed; thus terror remains the shortest route to immortality. But these extremes simultaneously proclaim a longing for the primitive values of rebellion. The contemporary revolution which claims to deny every value is already, in itself, a standard for judging values. Man wants to reign supreme through the revolution. But why reign supreme if nothing has any meaning? Why wish for immortality if life is so hideous? There is no method of thought which is absolutely nihilist except, perhaps, the method that leads to suicide, any more than there is absolute materialism. The destruction of man once more affirms man.[155]

Though it might be said in Lawrence's behalf that by avoiding

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[154] Camus, The Rebel, p. 191.

[155] Ibid., p. 216.

any rational conception of history he may possibly have been trying to avoid the forceful imposition of the totalitarians' order - and this is certainly one significant statement of The Man Who Died - it would be more true to realize that the ultimate answer which nihilism found in its betrayal by the totalitarians was never realized in Lawrence's thought because his nihilism was vitiated by a 'religious' anti-historical primitivism. Thus, the redeeming feature of The Plumed Serpent is that in some obscure way the novel is an attempt to affirm man by declaring the advent of the "new day" that Don Ramón campaigns for. Unfortunately, the belief in a state religion was in effect a denial of the rebel's responsibility for making history by learning from history; when Ramón claims to be following his destiny, even if this sounds like making history, the critic can point out that Ramón's postulates tend towards the denial of man in their elevation of the blood's dictates over reason. And in the last analysis even Ramón's religious appeal is based on the worship of force, for it would have been useless without Cipriano's troops. In short, Lawrence begins with the great nihilists by rebelling in the name of spontaneity and freedom, and ends by introducing old gods surreptitiously into what is actually a corporative peasant state. The peculiarly arbitrary logic of events overwhelmed those who sought to control history through knowledge of history together with those like Lawrence who sought either to flee it or deny it altogether.

The metaphysics operating in The Plumed Serpent is supported by no values higher than those develving from a primordial sexual demiurge. If "self-consciousness is not self-knowledge,"[156] what is the reasonable critic to say when confronted with the tone of zealotry in this novel? Thus, at the very least, the question of the facts of history, that is, merely of time's passage, let alone the meaning or ordering of events, is important because the critic must inevitably ask, what is to prevent yet another, stranger god from replacing Quetzalcoatl after Don Ramón dies, just as once Jesus replaced Quetzalcoatl? One answer was given in Germany after Lawrence was dead: the state became god because men could not bear freedom's solitude. Through he took the step forward that Nietzsche imposed on those coming after him, perhaps Lawrence was frightened by the utter chaos which his own proclamation of the death of Jehovah and His Son exposed to him.[157] Lawrence had not learned the whole lesson which Nietzsche had to impart:

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[156] Santayana, Dominations and Powers (New York: Scribner, 1951) p. 53.

[157] Cf. Camus, The Rebel, p. 63. "It can be said that Nietzsche rushes, with a kind of frightful joy, towards the impasse into which he methodically drives his nihilism. His avowed aim is to render the situation untenable to his contemporaries. His only hope seems to be to arrive at the extremity of contradiction. Then if man does not wish to perish in the coils that strangle him, he will have to cut them at a single blow, and create his own values."

> Never again after Nietzsche will it be appropriate for the single individual to take on himself the burden of human destiny. After Nietzsche not merely God, but messianism itself was dead. Sub specie aeternitatis it may be said that he died that all after him might be saved from the illusion of a god either outside, or more dangerously, inside the subject.[158]

If there is one clear thing about the political religion of The Plumed Serpent it is that Lawrence is deifying man in Mexico. Perhaps it is this attempt which is the fundamental cause of Lawrence's anti-historical attitude: since there is no escape from utter nihilism except suicide (or complete individual responsibility, which I have shown Lawrence wished to keep from almost all men but the few élite), he chose to deny man by raising him to a position as the vehicle of many gods, and the location of a god is in timelessness - whether he lives outside of the universe or in the blood.

Yet, as I have already implied through the exegesis of Lawrence's myth of The Plumed Serpent (cf. Chapter II), his ultimate purposes (despite his own dogmas) were artistic as well as prophetic - and art is on the side of life and history, not death. This matter will be referred to again in the concluding chapter. For the moment however, his campaign against 'the machine' will be analyzed as another extension of his primitivistic effort to establish all values in the naked soul of a "dark-eyed, soft-footed" humanity stripped of every rag of its historical vestment.

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[158] Whyte, The Next Development in Man, p. 129.

V

Against the Machine

Lawrence well knew that it must have taken unimaginable labors to subdue and to ravage the American continent, yet he slashes mercilessly at "idealist-materialist" America which, according to him, invented machinery *because* of its idealism:

> You *can't* idealize hard work. Which is why America *invents* so many machines and contrivances of all sort: so that they need do no physical work.[159]

It is unnecessary to cite additional passages from his metaphysics, but those which were brought forward in Part 2 of this chapter will be recognizable as the formative ideas in the following two disquisitions on nature and machinery.

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[159] Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, p. 115. Memoirists like to relate their surprise in finding him scrubbing floors or doing dishes; cf. Moore, *The Intelligent Heart*, p. 298; Mark Schorer relates what he was told by the Signora Mirenda, Lawrence's landlord at the house where he lived in 1927-1928: "...He liked much to work around his house. He cooked...he washed the floors, he washed the clothes. He was very handy with the needle, and he turned his own shirt collars." Cf. Mark Schorer, "Two Houses, Two Ways," *New World Writing* (New York: The New American Library, October, 1953), pp. 152-153. But it is also true that Lawrence was quite incapable of real physical labor, as Chapter XII, "The Nightmare," in *Kangaroo* reveals. The hero, Somers, was too small, weak-chested and spindly to be drafted at a time when almost anybody at all was taken. Somers didn't want to fight; yet, to be sent home time and again from the physical examinations! One incident was particularly galling, and may reflect the humiliation that had always pursued Lawrence from infancy: on a night spent in the barracks another draftee took the broom away from Somers when he began to sweep up the floor. This is ironical when one reads Lawrence's expression of scorn for Americans who invent machinery so as to avoid the work of opening frontiers.

> Beautifully the sailing-ship nodalizes the forces of sea and wind, converting them to her purpose. There is no violation, as in a steam-ship, only a winged centrality. It is the perfect adjusting of ourselves to the elements, the perfect equipoise between them and us, which gives us a great part of our life-joy. The more we intervene machinery between us and the naked forces the more we numb and atrophy our own senses. Every time we turn on a tap to have water, every time we turn a handle to have fire or light, we deny ourselves and annul our being. The great elements, the earth, air, fire, water are there like some great mistress whom we woo and struggle with, whom we heave and wrestle with. And all our appliances do but deny us these fine embraces, take the miracle of life away from us. The machine is the great neuter. It is the eunuch of eunuchs. In the end it emasculates us all. When we balance the sticks and kindle a fire, we partake of the mysteries. But when we turn on an elecric tap there is as it were a wad between us and the dynamic universe. We do not know what we lose by all our labour-saving appliances. Of the two evils it would be much the lesser to lose all machinery, every bit, rather than to have, as we have, hopelessly too much.[160]

> So that electricity seems to be the first, intrinsic principle among the Forces. It has a mystic power of readjustment. It seems to be the overlord of the two naked elements, fire and water, capable of mysteriously enchaining them, and of mysteriously sundering them from their connections. When the two great elements become hopelessly clogged, entangled, the sword of the lightning can separate them. The crash of thunder is really not the clapping together of waves of air. Thunder is the noise of the explosion which takes place when the waters are loosed from the elemental fire, when old vapours are suddenly decomposed in the upper air by electric force. Then fire flies fluid, and the waters roll off in purity. It is the liberation of the elements from hopeless conjunction. Thunder, the electric force, is the counterpart in the material-dynamic world of the life force, the creative mystery, itself, in the creative world.[161]

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[160] Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 137.

[161] Ibid., p. 138. This electricity concept is put into practice in The Plumed Serpent; cf. Chapter XII, "The First Waters," and Chapter XIII, "The First Rain."

It may be interesting to note that the image, or symbol, of the sailing ship's "winged centrality" appeared in Kangaroo in the chapter on marriage, which depicts the two Somers as two captains on one frigate struggling for the helm, and battered by contrary winds (or wills) while they wrestle to steer the ship from the Atlantic to the Pacific and vice versa;[162] also, the "winged centrality" appeared again later as "the small, poised, perfect body that waves wings of thunder and wings of fire and night ..." in The Plumed Serpent's iconography (quoted above, page 36). In the second passage just cited one must observe that the principles of the material universe are expounded in noticeably sexual terminology, though it is also true that thunderbolt symbolism is a theological motif.[163] Both of these passages are clues to the 'expressive,' psychological forces at work in Lawrence's later writings; it will be suggested in the course of Part 6

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[162]Lawrence, "Harriet and Lovat at Sea in Marriage," Kangaroo, pp. 188-196.

[163]"The thunderbolt (vajra) is one of the major symbols in Buddhist iconography, signifying the spiritual power of Buddhahood (indestructible enlightenment) which shatters the illusory realities of the world." Joseph Campbell, The Hero With the Thousand Faces, p. 87. Also, "We know that among primitive peoples warriors may speak of their weapons as thunderbolts. Sicut in coelo et in terra: the initiated warrior is an agent of the divine will: his training is not only in manual but in spiritual skills. Magic (the supernatural power of the thunderbolt), as well as physical force and chemical poison, gives the lethal energy to his blows. A consummate master would require no physical weapon at all; the power of his magic would suffice." Joseph Campbell, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

that they may be the determining factors in The Plumed Serpent, and that most of Lawrence's theorizing represents a thinly-disguised rationalization of strange emotional conflict.

However, it will be best to pursue his ideas on their overt intellectual level for the moment. Before these passages occur in Studies in Classic American Literature Lawrence had devoted some pages to castigating Benjamin Franklin as the symbol of the despicable machine-worshipping Americans. It is too true that Franklin's portrait can be seen hanging over prudential saws in many business offices; yet, it is also true that his kite-experiments with electricity initiated the development of the electric motor which was coming into its own in Lawrence's time. There is a simple dilemma in Lawrence's formulation of man's proper relation to nature's force: if one cannot accept the fruits of Franklin's investigations, neither can one embrace the naked elements of fire and water by squatting over embers in a cave. And there is no alternative between the two, for there is no stopping point between the squalid nakedness of the fireless savage of pre-history and an atomic generator of the electricity which runs washing machines. Lawrence's logic, if driven to its conclusions, asserts that even a loincloth puts a "wad between us and the dynamic universe"; but one must recall that in the temperate zones even Stone Age culture Indians wore moccasins between themselves and

"the great mistress." That he followed his logic to its conclusions is demonstrated in his late story "Sun" in which the heroine walks about naked, letting her body act as a storage battery for what an American psychological cult flourishing today calls 'orgones.'[164]

Lawrence's conception of savagery is not necessarily one that can be subsumed under 'cultural primitivism.' This reductio of his insistence on 'naked facts' might sound like cavilling but for the certain manifestations in society which show that he was not alone in his anxiety over losing contact with the primal forces. The first quarter of the century witnessed the beginnings of the rage for sunbathing. In the 'New Germany' of the late Twenties people began to take to the woods for weekends of sun, for mudbathing, and for orgies.[165] Symptomatic today of the flight from the cities is the growing fancy in the United States for camping in the outdoors. On the other hand, the machine is the only thing that makes a return to Nature possible under conditions favoring conscious spiritual delight and love for Nature's creations; the machine

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[164] Lawrence, "Sun," The Later D.H. Lawrence, ed. William York Tyndall (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952). In his later years he fought off doctors and took "health cures"; cf. Moore, op. cit., pp. 369, 415-418.

[165] This period is described in memoirs recently written by two other Britons: Stephan Spender, World Within World (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951); and Edwin Muir, "Dresden Hellerau, Vienna -- A Memoir," Encounter, II (May, 1954), pp. 36-43.

draws its tooth and claw; and Americans are camping secured by portable shelter, light, canned food in formerly inaccessible unspoiled regions. More seriously, it can be argued that Lawrence's crusade against machinery implies that he thinks so little of humanity's creative potentiality that he can say seriously the machine is "the great neuter" which will "in the end emasculate us all." For the very neutrality of the machine exposes the sentimentality of his case by revealing that man alone is the responsible moral agent in the known extent of his universe. The inference gradually asserts itself that Lawrence, in refusing to accept the challenge of technology, was not really a moral man, which is, after all, the chief claim of the cultural primitivist. Whatever Lawrence may preach, his philosophic principles lead in a direction contrary to morality. When he takes up the cause of Sex and Decency in literature as it is opposed to Comstockery, or when he battles for what he thinks constitutes human freedom as against social hypocrisy, he seems to be supporting a strict and proper morality, dignity and self-respect. Yet at bottom his condemnation of the machine may reflect a nature unfree in thought, action, or sexuality, and an <u>unconscious hypocrisy</u> of his own. Because civilization requires a certain amount of conscious hypocrisy and self-deception, as Freud suggested, Lawrence's plea for nakedness may also be read as symptomatic of his confusion of scientific thought with ethics; he is concurring with

others who have moved towards a scientistic barbarism. The following arguments will attempt to substantiate this claim.

Lawrence himself chose the grounds for discussion when he brought the neuter machine into the moral issues of our times.

> I am a moral animal. But I am not a moral machine. I don't work with a little set of handles or levers.
>
> Here's my creed, against Benjamin's.
>
> "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 try always to recognize and submit to the gods in me and the gods in other men and women."[166]

The contention here is that such a statement shows a subtle immorality of his own in opposition to the immorality he imputes to Franklin. Indeed, it is a credo of amorality that may be termed positively inhuman because it sets aside any criteria of responsibility, even towards a hateful society, in favor of what he chooses to call gods. This is not what Nietzsche's nihilism proposed for man; in fact, it is diametrically opposite, for the "strange gods" are personifications of the utterly anarchic. Moreover, when

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[166] Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 26.

these gods are set up, as Lawrence arranged matters in The Plumed Serpent, in a racial pantheon, they bring men in the end to slavery, which I shall show is the necessary concomitant of the denial of technology. It is true Lawrence desired to be free; but freedom requires the severest kind of submission of the inner gods to the guidance of Eros.

> Because his mind was free, Nietzsche knew that freedom of the mind is not a comfort, but an achievement that one aspires to and obtains, at long last, after an exhausting struggle. He knew that there is a great risk in wanting to consider oneself above the law, of finding oneself beneath the law. That is why he understood that the mind only found its real emancipation in the acceptance of a new obligation. If nothing is true, if the world is without order, then nothing is forbidden; to prohibit an action, there must, in fact, be a standard of values and an aim. But, at the same time, nothing is authorized; there must also be values and aims in order to choose another course of action. Absolute domination by the law does not represent liberty, but neither does absolute freedom of choice. Chaos is also a form of servitude. Freedom only exists in a world where what is possible is defined at the same time as what is not possible. Without law there is no freedom. If fate is not guided by superior values, if chance is king, then there is nothing but the step in the dark, an appalling freedom of the blind. At the conclusion of the most complete liberation, Nietzsche therefore chooses the most complete subordination.... Rebellion ends in ascetism.[167]

As the governor of morality, ascetism does not promulgate the sway by racial leaders over a rapt mass of mankind which is the sole answer of The Plumed Serpent to modern needs; ascetism is the individual's discipline, his control over the choice of gods who shall step into "the clearing

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167 Camus, The Rebel, pp. 62-63.

of the known self." Lawrence's metaphysics actually proposes that men shall be as neuter as the machine since they are to be driven by what he calls the polar forces of male and female in a duality of life and death. These forces are but the gods of another kind of machine. However, creativity is that in man which denies death or defies it; creativity is in perpetual rebellion against all the origins of dark formlessness and destruction in society and nature. According to Camus' account, when the recent history of Europe made plain that the order of the world of man was not imposed either by gods or by the One God, but was man's own creation, the next step was to discover the principles by which he might better dispose himself and his world. Nietzsche perceived this clearly; Lawrence is for letting the jungle creep back into the homestead in the civilized glade: this is the full challenge of his work which Vivas wrote must be met in full if he is to be understood.[168]

Perhaps the virulence of Lawrence's animus against the machine stems from his covert hypocrisy; in his definition of the soul it is indistinguishable from a dynamo, and this is his fundamental belief, plead as he will for spontaneity. The psychoanalyst could explain his self-contradiction by calling his argument a kind of paranoidal projection in which he diverts his hatred for himself and what he thinks other men to be like against machines (the

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[168]Cf. pp. 15-17, above.

important causes of this psychological situation must inevitably remain hidden to a large extent). Granted the horrors of society in this epoch of machine culture, Lawrence has ostensibly very good grounds for his struggle and protest. Yet the civilized mind must account for all the possible factors. Camus, though he has witnessed more horrors in the Forties and Fifties than even Lawrence could have believed might come to pass, observes simply:

> The very forces of matter, in their blind advance, impose their own limits. That is why it is useless to want to reverse the advance of technology. The age of the spinning-wheel is over and the dream of a civilization of artisans is vain. The machine is only bad in the way it is now employed. Its benefits must be accepted even if its ravages are rejected. The truck, driven night and day by the chauffeur, does not humiliate the latter who knows it inside out and treats it with affection and efficiency. The real and inhuman excess lies in the division of labor. But by dint of this excess, a day comes when the machine capable of a hundred operations, operated by one man, creates one sole object. This man, on a different scale, will have partially rediscovered the power of creation which he possessed in the days of the artisan.... Either the value of limitation will be realized, or contemporary excesses will only find their principle and peace in universal destruction.[169]

Lawrence isolated only the one ugly factor in the present and plumped for its immediate exorcism. He recognized that the separation of "mechanical power and emotional power"[170]

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[169]Camus, The Rebel, p. 262.

[170]"The divorce of mechanical power and emotional power can only be overcome by a new overriding principle which reveals that they both derive from a single source." Cf. Whyte, op. cit., p. 113.

was a culmination of European dualism, and his response to the situation was to execrate idealism and materialism as two faces of the same coin which he would have none of. But, it must be asked, where can there be sane footing outside the reintegration of Love and Power, especially when the inherited thought of the West has been summarily blasted by his nihilism?[171] L.L. Whyte believes that the new ground is appearing in the emergence of what he calls 'unitary thought,'[172] and his argument counters Lawrence's plea for a machineless past by showing that dualism is not the machine, but Europe.[173] Though Lawrence may have con-

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[171]Lawrence knew he was in this impasse: "If barren idealism and intellectualism are a curse, it's not the head's fault. The head is really quite a sensible member, which knows what's what: or must know. One needs to establish a fuller relationship between oneself and the universe, and between oneself and one's fellow man and fellow woman. It doesn't mean cutting out the 'brothers-in-Christ' business simply: it means expanding it into a full relationship, where there can be also physical and passional meeting, as there used to be in the old dances and rituals. We have to know how to go out and meet one another, upon the third ground, the holy ground." Cf. "Letter to Rolf Gardiner, 11 October, 1926," The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, p. 671.

[172]For a definition of 'unitary thought,' cf. Whyte, op. cit., p. 113.

[173]"There is...no break from Pythagoras and Plato to Descartes, Newton, and the nineteenth century. The tradition is working out the consequences of its original impetus....the tradition also set in motion contrary processes which ultimately lead to its own decay.... The modes appropriate to one stage of development always lead to their own supersession, since when they have played their part and one period is mature, another period opens in which other modes become appropriate. Thus in any developmental process temporary forms always work so as to bring about their own decay, though it is not always possible to distinguish in advance what is passing and what permanent in any contemporary process." Ibid., p. 113.

sidered himself a prophet of the return to 'organic unity' he was in actuality proclaiming an absolute in his sea of timeless blood. In The Plumed Serpent he names it "life": "Therefore we turn to life; and from the clock to the sun and the stars, and from metal to membrane."[174] Sex is but his trope for that absolute, and, when God, the sourceless mystery from whom the personal gods emanate is in his cosmology merely electricity, mystic to be sure, what else can a human be but a dynamo in which that "first, intrinsic principle among the Forces" is, to use his own term, "circuited"?

Perhaps the most terrible consequence of his campaign against the machine is its exaltation of the master-servant "blood-reciprocity" which is a "natural form of human coition, interchange."[175] This natural relationship has been woefully disrupted by the technology created out of "the Idea." As Lawrence puts it,

> [the] master and man relationship is essentially, a polarized flow, like love. It is a circuit of vitalism which flows between master and man and forms a very precious nourishment to each, and keeps both in a state of subtle, quivering,

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[174]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 360.

[175]Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 129. The context is a discussion of the floggings witnessed by Richard Henry Dana and reported in his Two Years Before the Mast.

vital equilibrium. Deny it as you like, it is so.[176]

To deal with such a statement it is necessary to point out that the history of mankind demonstrates no natural hierarchy with which to buttress an argument against technology, and that what Lawrence says "is so" can be denied only by affirming the machine's neutral promise to men of liberation from slavery. When Lawrence writes about the flogging which Dana recounts, he avers that it did both men good for Joe to be whipped by the Captain; he is asserting merely that the servant is a 'natural slave,'[177] Lawrence's

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[176]Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 127. Lawrence explains the flogging as a reestablishment of equilibrium by using 'natural analogy': "Storms are a sort of violent readjustment in some polarized flow. You have a polarized circuit, a circuit of unstable equilibrium. The instability increases till there is a crash. Everything seems to break down. Thunder roars, lightning flashes. The master roars, the whip whizzes. The sky sends down sweet rain. The ship knows a new strange stillness, a readjustment, a refinding of equilibrium." Ibid., p. 128.

[177]There is a difference between servants and slaves, which makes it all the more vital to show that Lawrence is describing slavery when he talks about master and servant. "The relation between Master and Servant is agnatic, not cognatic; that is to say, it is not given by nature or fate but comes into being through an act of conscious volition. Secondly it is not erotic; an erotic relationship, e.g, between man and wife or parent and child, comes into being in order to satisfy needs which are, in part, given by nature; the needs which are satisfied by a master-servant relationship are purely social and historical,...A contractual relationship comes into being through the free dicision of both parties, a double commitment. The liberty of decision need not be, and indeed very rarely is, equal on both sides, but the weaker party must possess some degree of sovereignty whatsoever; he cannot even say, 'I would rather starve than work for you.'" W. H. Auden, "Balaam and the Ass: On the Literary Use of the Master-Servant Relationship," Encounter, III (July, 1954), 35.

metaphysics lead directly to slavery and nowhere else, for what choice is likely or even possible when all relations between individuals are formed by a "natural circuit"? Before the machines slavery was universal even in the highest civilizations;[178] without machines there is inevitable slavery for the mass of men, for power is then in the possession of Nature, not men.[179] Indeed, freedom can be found only through the machine, for "the growth of technology is the greatest among the accessory causes which weakened the necessity for slavery."[180] That such a deliverance to freedom is not simple, the miseries attendant on the machine have shown; but the difficulty without it

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[178] "This assumption that a complex urban civilization requires a base of slavery was so universal, both in practice and in implicit presuppositions, that we may assume it to be derived from some well-founded reason in the conditions permitting the formation of the earlier phases of civilized life. The Egyptians wanted bricks, so they captured the Hebrews. The confusion of tongues associated with the tower of Babel...is at least well-founded as a reference to the confusion of races amid the slave populations supplying the mechanized manpower for the building of cities." Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (London: Penguin Books, 1942), pp. 21-22. Also "Slavery was the presupposition of political theorists then; Freedom is the presupposition of political theorists now." Ibid., p. 22.

[179] In eliminating machines from the ideology of The Plumed Serpent, Lawrence has erected gods of nature again who display old characteristics, for a backward step in technology entails a regressive theology: "...In early pahses of thought the powers of Nature became the minds of Nature - minds bestial, ruthless.... In all stages of civilization the popular gods represent the more primitive brutalities of tribal life. The progress of religion is defined by the denunciation of gods." Ibid., p. 19.

[180] Ibid., p. 37.

is worse.[181]

The historical periods which furnish the myths and rituals Lawrence yearned to see living again are incommensurable with the present forms of society, or any society which retains our scientific ideas, because technology makes an instinctive and tradition-bound human organization impossible; technology is like a natural force in that it makes its own demands to which men must adjust.[182] That any sort of tribal society concocted today is false can be gauged by the fantastic amounts of mechanized force and cruelty required by the Nazis and Bolshevists to bring it about. The world has crossed an impassable gulf: all efforts to return depend henceforward on abuse of the neutral machine, which is only to say its use as an instrument of

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[181] "There is a problem to be solved, and its complexity is habitually ignored by impetuous seekers. The difficulty is just this: It may be impossible to conceive a reorganization of society adequate for the removal of some admitted evil without destroying the social organization and the civilization which depends on it. An allied plea is that there is no known way of removing the evil without the introduction of worse evils of some other type." Ibid., p. 30.

[182] Concerning the slave polity Whitehead says, "... We now discern a certain simplemindedness in the way our predecessors adjusted themselves to inherited institutions. To a far greater extent the adjustment was a matter of course; in short it was instinctive.... Instinctive adaptation was so pervasive that it was unnoticed. Probably the Egyptians did not know that they were governed despotically, or that the priests limited the royal power, because they had no alternative as a contrast either in fact or in imagination. They were nearer in their thoughts to the policital philosophy prevalent in an anthill." Ibid., p. 63.

enslavement.

However, it may be said that Lawrence started out on the right track when he desiderated a psychic basis on which to found freedom. According to Whitehead, for instance, the speech of Pericles put "forth the conception of the organized society successfully preserving freedom of behavior for its individual members."

> Fifty years later...Plato introduced deeper notions from which all claims for freedom must spring. His general concept of the psychic factors in the Universe stressed them as the source of all spontaneity, and ultimately as the ground of all life and motion.[183]

Yet, the Lawrence who wrote The Plumed Serpent had moved on from freedom to barbarity:

> The Barbarian speaks in terms of power. He may plaster his lust with sentimental morality of Carlyle's type. But ultimately his final good is conceived as one will imposing itself upon other wills. This is intellectual barbarism.[184]

And in the end, the character type of the barbarian is one of those which "must be excluded from those effectually promoting freedom," for "the pursuit of freedom with an intolerant mentality is self-defeating" and "promotes a frame of mind of which the issue is intolerance."[185] Whitehead also says in this connection that there will be no hope of solving the problem of liberty for the individual without

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[183] Ibid., p. 66.

[184] Ibid., p. 67.

[185] Ibid., pp. 67-68.

the machine: technology has introduced a novelty to civization which "consists in the deliberate formation of institutions, embodying purposes of special groups, and unconcerned with the general purposes of any political state, or of any embodiment of tribal unity playing the part of a state."[186] Though Lawrence may have been right to hold in contempt those freedoms pompously trumpeted by the politicians, when he repudiates the machine he loses the crucial implement that can unlock the gates of the mind to freedom of action, and freedom of action is the first and last goal of our existence as he himself tirelessly proclaimed.[187]

As an example of how his bias led him astray even in his judgment of the American Indians who had no engines and no wheel, he remembers or chooses to use only part of

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[186] Ibid., p. 70.

[187] Whitehead's distinctions are important in this respect; he writes, "When we think of freedom, we are apt to confine ourselves to freedom of thought, freedom of the press, freedom for religious opinions. Then the limitations to freedom are conceived as wholly arising from the antagonism of our fellow men. This is a thorough mistake. The massive habits of physical nature, its iron laws, determine the scene for the sufferings of men. Birth and death, heat, cold, hunger, separation, disease, the general impracticability of purpose, all bring their quota to imprison the souls of women and men. Our experiences do not keep step with our hopes. The Platonic Eros, which is the soul stirring itself to life and motion, is maimed. The essence of freedom is the practicability of purpose. Mankind has chiefly suffered from the frustration of prevalent purposes, even such as belong to the very definition of its species. The literary exposition of freedom deals mainly with the frills. The Greek myth was more to the point. Prometheus did not bring mankind freedom of the press. He procured fire which, obedient to human purpose, cooks and gives warmth. In fact, freedom of action is primary human need." Ibid., p. 84.

Prescott's description of their sensitive character which was broken under European domination.[188] But he forgets at the same time the picture Prescott painted of the Aztec culture's proud roads, along which relays of runners brought fresh seafoods to the Emperor's table, and the solid roads laid down from the heights of the Andes by the Incas, along which marched their conquering armies; the Indian civilizations in fact aggrandized themselves by their roads, as have all others. Nevertheless, as far as Lawrence is concerned today, these roads are not to be permitted to extend for the automobile because this machine is not attuned to the red man's spirit:

> ...Down on it all, like a weight of obsidian, comes the passive negation of the Indian. He understands soul, which is of the blood. But spirit, which is superior, and is the quality of our civilization, he darkly and barbarically repudiates. Not until he becomes an artisan or connected with machinery does the modern spirit get him.
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> And perhaps it is this ponderous repudiation of the modern spirit which makes Mexico what it is. But perhaps the automobile will make roads even through the inaccessible soul of the Indian.[189]

Extending our purview to other societies north of Mexico, it might logically be said that it was no boon, whatever the Plains Indians may have thought, when they took the

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[188]"The American Indian has something peculiarly sensitive in his nature. He shrinks instinctively from the rude touch of a foreign hand. Even when this foreign influence comes in the form of civilization, he seems to sink and pine away beneath it." Prescott, The Conquest of Mexico, I, 50ff.

[189]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 113.

European horse to themselves for transport to new hunting grounds, or to remove from the shoulders of women and dogs their camps.

Both Whitehead and Lewis Mumford have explained in detail that technology is nothing new. Whitehead writes:

> The life of man is founded on Technology, Science, Art and Religion. All four are interconnected and issue from his total mentality.... No social organization can be understood without reference to these four underlying factors.[190]

> Till [the seventeenth century] the technology of the ancients, in their prime, probably surpassed that of the moderns.[191]

> In the ancient world Mesopotamia and Egypt were made possible by irrigation.... The Roman empire existed by virtue of the grandest application of technology that the world had hitherto seen: its roads, its bridges, its aqueducts, its tunnels, its sewers, its vast buildings, its organized merchant navies, its military science, its metallurgy, and its agriculture. This was the secret of the extension and the unity of Roman civilization.[192]

With this statement in mind, it will be best to return to the metaphor of the sailing ship used by Lawrence in his essay on Dana's Two Years Before the Mast (quoted at the beginning of this section; cf. page 157 above). He seems to have believed that the sailing ship, let us suppose an ordinary American clipper packet, is not a machine, that only coal, oil, steam engines make machines. This is, however, an arbitrary distinction between one sort of machine

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[190] Whitehead, The Aims of Education and Other Essays (2d; London: Williams & Norgate, Ltd., 1950), p. 111.

[191] Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, p. 36.

[192] Whitehead, The Aims of Education, p. 112.

and another that stems from an emotional reaction to the way a machine operates in relation to the body, rather than comprehension of the intrinsic principle of its design. But as "the sailing-ship nodalizes the forces of the sea and wind," so does a jet airplane nodalize the wind or it never leaves ground, so does a submarine nodalize the pressures of the sea or it never returns to the surface. In short, when we speak of machinery it must be said that it begins with the kind of flints so poorly hewn that it is almost impossible to believe they were shaped by human hands for specific purposes. The difference between the instruments of neolithic men and our micrometrical gauges are ultimately but differences in degrees of skill.[193] If it is true that technology, science, art and religion issue together from man's

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193. While the growth of machines is the most patent technical fact of the last thousand years, the machine, in the form of the fire-drill or the potter's wheel, has been in existence since at least neolithic times. During the earlier period, some of the most effective adaptations of the environment came, not from the invention of machines, but from the equally admirable invention of utensils, apparatus, and utilities. The basket and the pot stand for the first, the dye vat and the brick-kiln stand for the second, and reservoirs and aqueducts and roads and buildings belong to the third class. The modern period has finally given us the power utility, like the railroad track or the electric transmission line, which functions only through the operation of power machinery. While tools and machines transform the environment by changing the shape and location of objects, utensils and apparatus have been used to effect equally necessary chemical transformations. Tanning, brewing, distilling, dyeing have been as important in man's technical development as smithing or weaving." Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilization (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), p. 11.

total outlook, it is not sound thought to single out the machine for abuse. Mumford suggests that the monstrosities evoked by the machines have come from man's misuse or unimaginative use when "an elaborate mechanical organization is often a temporary and expensive substitute for an effective social organization or for a sound biological adaptation."[194] Lawrence decides that the sailing ship is better than steam or oil ships because men's muscles are in joyful play with wind and wave; he writes an analysis of Two Years Before the Mast which rejoices in the brutal conditions of labor that preceded power-driven vessels. Those conditions may have brought about floggings, but floggings are indeed a good thing because master and slaves are then humanly, 'organically,' integrated. His justification of flogging is specious at best:

> As long as man has a bottom, he must surely be whipped. It is as if the Lord intended it so.
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> Why? For lots of reasons.[195]

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[194] Ibid., p. 275. Also, to elucidate this citation from Mumford, cf., "...The machine is ambivalent. It is both an instrument of liberation and one of repression. It has economized human energy and it has misdirected. It has created a wide framework of order and it has produced muddle and chaos. It has nobly served human purposes and it has distorted and denied them. Neither this new type of civilization nor its ideal has gone unchallenged: the human spirit has not bowed to the machine in complete submission. In every phase of existence the machine has stirred up antipathies, dissents, reactions, some weak, hysterical, unjustified, other that are in their nature so inevitable, so sound that one cannot touch the future of the machine without taking them into account." Ibid., pp. 283-284.

[195] Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 127.

Whatever reasons Lawrence has for defending flogging may be rationalizations of what can only be termed the obscure problem of his personality; it may be that he enjoys the notion in a morbid sense.[196] But here it may be said that Dana's book shows vividly the old time sailor's immense labors, the terrors of sailing round Cape Horn during mid-winter in a wooden ship loaded almost to unnavigability, and the sufferings of the men from scurvy because of the lengthened voyage against the winds; all this is neglected by Lawrence for the sake of the sentimental image of sails, men and seas in "nodalized" conjunction. This image really focuses the anachronism, the slave politics, the machine-phobia, and eccentric metaphysics of its author, and it spells "not a release but a confession of complete failure."[197]

Finally, a few words ought to be said about

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[196] Flogging has a peculiar symbolic value for certain psyches; some insight to the problem may be had from Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten," Collected Papers, II, pp. 172-201.

[197] Mumford, op. cit., p. 299. This historian condemns the machine haters: "Some of those who shrink from the degree of social control necessary to operate the machine rationally, are now busy with plans for scrapping the machine and returning to a bare subsistence level in little island utopias devoted to sub-agriculture and sub-manufacture. The advocates of these measures for returning to the primitive forget only one fact: what they are proposing is not an adventure but a bedraggled retreat, not a release but a confession of complete failure. They propose to return to the physical conditions of a pioneer existence without the positive spiritual impulse that made the original conditions tolerable and the original efforts possible. If such defeatism becomes widespread it would mean more than the collapse of the machine: it would mean the end of the present cycle of Western Civilization." Ibid., p. 299. As I have suggested earlier, Lawrence declared that our cycle had already collapsed; this is what makes his challenge, to use Vivas' expression, so extreme.

Lawrence's Indians. In Mexico he found a mass of peasants who had not been visited with the latest products of machine technology. Since they had obviously managed to survive on their low level beneath white culture, it inspired him with the hope that they could bring on a renascence if only the proper spiritual impulse were given. In the light of anthropological knowledge his expectations, if he meant what he said about the brown and red races to be taken literally, are based on wrong and insufficient premises. During the same years he was in Mexico, Robert Redfield also lived there; this anthropologist stayed in Tepoztlán, in the State of Morelos, from November, 1926, to July, 1927. Tepoztlán is perhaps more native than Lawrence's "Sayula," for it is not on a lake and does not have a hotel for tourists. Redfield states that his village of four thousand almost pure-blooded Indians were incapable of reversing time: gods or no gods, the Mexican is not Aztec, Toltec or anything else romantic. The Mexican may, as do many of the older folk, speak only Nahuatl; whatever the case, Lawrence was able to gather his information only because "the essential bilinguality of the population reflects the even balance of the culture between Indian and European elements...."

> ...The culture is neither aboriginal nor Spanish, but a close integration of both -- it is Mexican. The inhabitant of Mexico, generally speaking, is the product of those two heritages. But in Tepoztlán, a pueblo, which was long established before the Conquest on the site which it still occupies and which began immediately after the Conquest to receive elements of European cul-

> ture, the community itself is the product of that fusion.[198]

It is interesting to consider what some of these European elements were which the Indians first met.

> During the early part of the colonial period the forms of Christianity and a few important elements of Spanish material culture -- iron, plow, cattle, swine, and fruit trees -- became incorporated into an Indian culture that had been stripped by the padres of most traits of primitive ritual and belief.[199]

Since a small thing, culturally speaking, like iron metallurgy once changed the entire path of humanity's development, it should not be disregarded in considering spiritual matters. But in Lawrence's new culture, Don Cipriano breathes spirit into his modern troops by importing the dances of the more savage Indians of the North of Mexico (and New Mexico, where Lawrence had seen Hopi and Zuni pueblo ceremonial dancing); he exhorts his peons to turn from "metal to membrane" to get the necessary regenerative impulse:

> Cipriano was determined to get some discipline into them. Discipline is what Mexico needs, and what the whole world needs. But it is the discipline from the inside that matters. The machine discipline, from the outside, breaks down.
>
> He had the wild Indians from the North beat their drums in the barracks-yard, and start the old dances again. The dance, the dance which has meaning, is a deep discipline in itself. The old

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[198]Robert Redfield, Tepoztlán: A Mexican Village (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 29-30.

[199]Ibid., p. 28.

> Indians of the north still have the secret of animistic dancing. The dance to gain power over the living forces or potencies of the earth.... The shield and spear dance, the knife dance, the dance of ambush and the surprise dance....[200]
>
> "This is the oil of the stars. Rub it well into your limbs and you will be strong as the starry sky. This is the red blood of volcanoes. Rub yourself with it, you will have the power of the fire of the volcanoes, from the centre of the earth."
>
> He encouraged them to dance the silent, concentrated dances to the drum, to dance for hours, gathering power and strength.
>
> "If you know how to tread the dance, you can tread deeper and deeper till you touch the middle of the earth with your foot. And when you touch the middle of the earth, you will have such power in your belly and your breast, no man will be able to overcome you. Get the second strength, get it from behind the sun. Get the second strength."[201]

Twenty years after Redfield's stay, Oscar Lewis went to Tepoztlán to make his monumental study.[202] It is instructive to learn from him that he was able to win the confidence and intimacy of the Indians only through his generosity with technological aid; he had to bring down a team of agricultural experts to study the old fields, import new grains and livestock breeds -- about this the peasants were adamant. They wanted not dances from the north but medicine and agronomy; without science nothing

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[200] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, pp. 363-364.

[201] Ibid., p. 365.

[202] Oscar Lewis, Life in A Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Revisited (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1951).

whatever could be done to know them or their ways or their beliefs.[203] It is clear that Lawrence could have known nothing either were it not for his assumption that blood speaks to the sensitive blood; but The Plumed Serpent also reveals quite as clearly that he is not relying altogether on mystic insights: Cipriano's real source of inner discipline is totally European.

> He made long, rapid marches across the wild Mexican country, moving light and swift [Lawrence may conceivably have gotten this from such an old source as Caesar's Conquest of Gaul; certainly Prescott's description of Aztec fighting technique presents the very opposite, and this is one reason why Cortes' small band proved too terrible to the Indians]. ...He pursued the bandits with swift movements. He stripped his captives and tied them up. But if it seemed a brave man, he would swear him in. If it seemed to him a knave, a treacherous cur, he stabbed him to the heart, saying:
>
> "I am the red Huitzilopochtli, of the knife."
>
> Already he had got his own small, picked body of men out of the ignominious drab uniform, dressed in white with scarlet sash and the scarlet ankle cords, and carrying the good red and black serape....
>
> He divided his regiment up into little companies of a hundred each, with a centurion and a sergeant in command. Each company of a hundred must learn to act in perfect unison, freely and flexibly. "Perfect your hundred," Cipriano insisted, "and I will perfect your thousands and tens of thousands."[204]

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[203] Also, Redfield remarks about his materials that "they are far from constituting an ethnographic monograph on the people of Tepoztlán. Eight months is too short a time within which to secure the data.... One would have to spend a considerable longer period and one would need a command of both languages spoken in the community, not merely a fair knowledge of one of them. Eight months is not even time enough to correct all one's initial blunders." Redfield, op. cit., p. viii.

[204] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, pp. 365-366.

The obvious counterpart to this statement was made in Europe by the Nazis, who were to "perfect" millions so that Rommel could lead his crack Afrika Korps. There is but a slight difference: the Germans would use machines. Lawrence thinks to revive Mexicans with drums and singing, much as the Salvation Army arouses stupified drifters with the portable organ, bass drum, cornet, and gospel-singing. It may be true that some men can be saved by striking the soul directly with music, uniforms, and hymns to the gods, but not the generality of society unless it is drilled in the mass for Red Square parades; those who resist for any reasons are to be stabbed to the heart. In brief, The Plumed Serpent shows that Lawrence did not trust to the passional centers alone; to put it another way, his doctrine of inner force and compulsion is reflected by outer violence and cruelty. The machine which he barred from Mexico, symbolized by Ramón's exchange of drums in church towers for old iron bells, does not in any way preclude the necessary use of the sort of force Lawrence attributes to a machine society.

The mighty hatred of power machinery is another feature of Lawrence's primitivism that constitutes a psychological retreat from contemporary reality which seems to have taken the form of assuring himself of his "organic' being by denying the life machines possess as extensions of the human arm, and thereby denying the life -- let it be called 'mechanical' during our decades of transition --

which has come into a kind of symbiotic relation with our machinery. Bergson dubbed man Homo faber. Lawrence cannot logically accept the sailing ship and the spinning wheel while refusing the application of utensils and power tools and machines. At the same time, it can very well be suggested that there is pathology in his use of naked power concepts from physics to give the human organism its 'material' base of existence; it is as if he is saying that matter and spirit are in the end merely matter, that 'forces' are alive, that 'spirit' dies into forces as our bodies and breath are constantly on the wing betwixt sun, moon, and earth. With such a position he puts himself on an entirely different side from those radical critics of machine culture like Mumford or Frank Lloyd Wright.[205] Mumford condemns men themselves; this is proper, for while a man's outlook is vulnerable to suasion a machine can only be wrecked.[206] One may rightly wonder if Lawrence

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[205]Cf. Frank Lloyd Wright, The Future of Architecture (New York: Horizon Press, 1953).

[206]"We have merely used our new machines and energies to further processes which were begun under the auspices of capitalist and military enterprise: we have not yet utilized them to conquer these forms of enterprise and subdue them to more vital and humane purposes .... In city growth...we have utilized electric and gasoline transportation to increase the congestion which was the original result of capitalistic concentrations of coal and steam power: the new means have been used to extend the area and population of these obsolete and inefficent and humanly defective metropolitan centers. Similarly the steel frame construction in architecture, which permits the fullest use of glass and the most complete utilization of sunlight, has been used in America to increase the overcrowding of buildings and the obliteration of sunlight." Mumford, op. cit., p. 265.

was aware that he wished to destroy he knew not what, and to remember that the Temple of Dagon buried Samson as well as the Philistines.

Frank Lloyd Wright may be reckoned a prophet too; certainly he has inveighed against the machine style of our time with all the fury Lawrence exhibits. Yet Wright envisions man's escape from the hideous cities through the means of technology alone. Every gasoline station in the wilderness is a potential hub for a decentralized depot of supply. Men will be able to live in nature in security and comfort, even quite out of the sight of other men, yet never out of reach of transport; they will through telephone and radio and television be able to bring the world to themselves. Furthermore, the new technology provides them with light and heat and shelter in a variety of design unthinkable before the present. If, as Whitehead asserts, freedom means freedom of action and practicability of purpose, then technology has conquered all man's previous obstacles, saving the cruelty of the gods in men and the fact of death. One thing is clear from Lawrence's rejection of the machine: insofar as he rejected it he rejected true freedom, no matter what claims his life and works made for that goal.

vi

Mythomania: The Use, and Misuse, of Myth in Modern Primitivism

Before examining Lawrence's use of myth in The Plumed Serpent,[207] it will be helpful to refer to Eliot's "The Wasteland." This poem provides a viable contrast to the novel for various reasons which the following analysis shall bring forward. "The Wasteland" transmogrifies our society into the image of the Fisher King's demesne, but assigns no explicit causes for the dessication of the spirit which is its subject: things are merely shown the way they truly are through contrast with a con-

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[207] This definition of myth and ritual underlies my analysis: "...Rituals and emotions and myths reciprocally interact; and the myths have various grades of symbolic truth as being representatives of large ideas only to be apprehended in some parable. ...The general fact [is] that ritualism precedes mythology. For we can observe ritualism even among animals, and presumably they are destitute of a mythology." Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 25.

"A myth will involve special attention to some persons or to some things, real or imaginary. Thus in a sense, the ritual, as performed in conjuction with the explanatory purpose of the myth, is the primitive worship of the hero-person or the hero-thing. But there can be very little disinterested worship among primitive folk - even less than now, is possible. Accordingly, the belief in the myth will involve the belief that something is to be got out of him or it, or that something is to be averted in respect to the evil to be feared from him or it. Thus, incantation, prayer, praise, and the ritual absorption of the hero deity emerge." Ibid., pp. 25-26. "If the hero be a person, we call the ritual, with its myth, 'religion': if the hero be a thing, we call it 'magic.' In religion we induce, in magic we compel. The important difference is that magic is unprogressive and religion sometimes is progressive; except in so far as science can be traced back to the progress of magic. Ibid., p. 26.

fused recollection that once they were not this way. The unfortunate inhabitants of "The Wasteland" can only wonder at the mystery of their plight, and hope that Parsifal will come on his simple quest to make the right, ritually right, queries. In so far as its formal structure employs the mode of myth "The Wasteland" limits itself to the logical reach of myth which presents a picture of the mysterious, causeless, irrational source of things, or the rational source lying beyond comprehension. Genesis, for example, offers such an explanation of man's estate. Yet, because Eliot selects certain dramatic actions, certain voices of city, and certain lines of poetry out of the past, the reader is aware that a sophisticated, historically oriented mind is making the contrasts and irony from which springs the poem's 'metaphysical pathos.'[208] In his later career Eliot turns to the Christian dogma which accepts the proposition that nothing is to be got from God through the mere strength of the worshipper's will, although it is true that the early "The Wasteland" had concluded on a note of quietism: "Shantih shantih shantih."

For the purposes of the present discussion the important point is this: when Eliot presents through the

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[208]"The contrast between the comparative emptiness of Presentational Immediacy and the deep significance disclosed by Causal Efficacy is at the root of the pathos which haunts the world." Whitehead, "Primitiveness of Causal Efficacy," Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 47.

mythic medium of the Fisher King a world of fragments shored against ruins, there is a definite quality of metaphysical regression entailed in which the world is viewed primitively. Perhaps this is a natural quality of the poetic vision.

> To primitive man, and to ourselves on our primitive side, the universe is not so much unfathomable as unfathomed...undiscriminated, unanalyzed.[209]

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[209]"It is not a complex of definite unexplained happenings, but a dim background shot across by isolated vivid effects charged with emotional excitements. The very presuppositions of a coherent rationalism are absent. Such a rationalism presupposes a complex of definite facts whose interconnections are sought. But the prior stage is a background of indefiniteness relieved by vivid acts of definition, inherently isolated. One exception must be made in favor of the routine of tribal necessities which are taken for granted. But what lies beyond the routine of life is in general void of definition; and when it is vivid, it is disconnected." Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 24. This philosophical disquisition constitutes an excellent exegesis of the formal character of "The Wasteland"; the mythic form of the poem takes on grandeur as well as significance when one observes that after the First World War even "the routine of tribal necessities" was shattered.

Malinowski's definition of myth is as applicable to The Plumed Serpent and "The Wasteland" as to primitive life. "...Myth...is not symbolic, but a direct expression of its subject matter; it is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. Myth fulfills in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imager, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom." Bronislaw Malinowski, Magic, Science, and Religion and Other Essays (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1954) p. 101; Cf. also p. 108, p. 110, p. 111, p. 146.

Calling any work primitivistic may be tagging it with a pejorative label; nevertheless the primitivism of such a poem as "The Wasteland" is embodied in a genuine response by a fine sensibility to the conditions of the time. Futhermore, if the poem is an adequate response it cannot be interpreted as a flight into the 'cultural' or chronological' varieties of primitivism. An alternative explanation is that modern primitivism arises because contemporary minds have taken a helpless, naked and unlogical cast; primitivism's recurrence in a new guise may be derivative from the circumstance that today's artist commands less of his culture than did the Elizabethan, though society today may be richer and more advanced. Of course, it is also true that the metaphysics of science are unstable and fluctuating; but this situation offers no excuse for the anti-rationalism dominant in primitivist thought. Perhaps the artists have failed because of the great complexity of contemporary life, or perhaps they have been unwilling to understand the significance of the established facts, not to mention the variety of philosophical systems which remain to be erected on the facts; whatever their reasons, it must be admitted that there is an utter difference between having lived at a time when mythical and religious thought was simply pre-scientific, and using the mythic form of thought with scientific counters.

Despite the fact that "The Wasteland" may be considered primitivistic because of its mythic form there is a

great difference between Eliot's method and the beliefs supporting it and Lawrence's. Eliot's 'rain' is the water of the gushing spirit over the parched plains of human action; in The Plumed Serpent there are posturings and dances to tom-toms which have the purpose of conforming the human being with the cosmos by setting him into a literal connection with it: Lawrence's mythopoeia offers a way of making right through what can only be taken as a magical means. He preaches animistic dances to compel human order; this is a conscious regression to a level where neither the dance nor the religion of the dancer is free of the unconscious practices which will ensure tribal preservation.[210] Thus it follows naturally that all individuals must acquiesce in the rituals of the Mexican State. One of the features of The Plumed Serpent which has brought down criticism of the book is the resemblance between Don Ramon's public rituals and the ceremonial gatherings by the hundreds of thousands at the German Sportspalast, a comparison which will

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[210] It is as if Nijinsky or Marthan Grahame were to declare that they performed not pure dances which are expressions of their spirits in our culture, but that their dancing was indispensable for the maintenance of life itself. In this case the art of the dance would show neither variety nor evolution, and criticism would be impossible, for it would not be art but ritual. Among primitives, for example, conformity to ritual is so strong that criticism and variation of practices is usually accomplished only by unusual individuals of the type our society terms 'disturbed.' Cf. Richard Chase, The Quest for Myth (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), pp. 82-88.

come to mind for anyone who has seen the official Nazi propaganda films, "Triumph of the Will."

The question of what Lawrence meant to convey by his ritual practices has not been elucidated; since myth is generally explanatory of ritual, it is necessary to explain the rituals before the myth which grew out of them can be explained. In his "Introduction" to The Plumed Serpent, Professor Tyndall remarks that the critic can detect "yoga in those postures by which Don Ramón restores his soul."[211] Here is the passage referred to:

> It was a hot, still afternoon. Clouds were standing erect and splendid, at the west end of the lake. Ramón went into his room and closed the window-doors and the shutters, till it was quite dark, save for yellow pencils of light that stood like substance on the darkness, from the cracks of the shutters.
>
> He took off his clothes, and in the darkness thrust his clenched fists upwards above his head, in a terrible tension of stretched, upright prayer. In his eyes was only darkness, and slowly the darkness revolved in his brain too, till he was mindless. Only a powerful will stretched itself and quivered from his spine in an immense tension of prayer. Stretched the invisible bow of the body in the darkness of the inhuman tension, erect, till the arrows of the soul, mindless, shot to the mark, and the prayer reached its goal.
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> Then suddenly, the clenched and quivering arms dropped, the body relaxed into softness. The man had reached his strength again. He had broken the cords of the world, and was free in the other strength.[212]

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[211]Tyndall, "Introduction," The Plumed Serpent, p. xii.

[212]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 168.

In the first place, it must be observed that very little genuine information is possessed about the nature or practice of yoga, though its ends are widely if superficially supposed to be known;[213] in the second place, it can be demonstrated by reference to another form of Buddhism which is active today that whatever Lawrence intended in Ramón's ritualism bears no similitude to the practices or goals of true yoga - indeed, that all Ramón does and proclaims runs exactly counter to yoga.[214]

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[213] A summary of the present state of yoga indicates that at best Lawrence could have known only book-learning which was itself second- or third-hand. "The systematic study of the Yoga has now been stopped for hundred of years, having gone into a state of decay on account of idleness, ignorance, and the unscrupulousness of the generality of its later-day followers. The cancer of laziness, selfishness, vanity, and delusion commenced to work its destruction at the beginning of this age.... Corrupted rites, false ideas, dogmatic tenets, which human selfishness begot in the course of ages, led man to practice social abuses and crimes, evils so common and rampant that Yoga was perforced compelled to retire to secret abodes, until in this day only mere remnants of it are available to the average seeker. Even in India, the home of Yoga, supreme ignorance prevails about Yoga in general, and especially is this so in educated circles. Yet it is not thought to be lost by those who are well practiced in some of its arts, and who may be presumed to know. However, very few persons are really competent for Yoga in its higher forms, since they have not the determination to devote the time...necessary...." Theos Bernard, Hindu Philosophy (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), pp. 88-89.

[214] These are the promises of yoga; "Yoga gives its devotees a tangible knowledge of the future and unseen world; it enables man to appreciate the life around him and gives him the power to make that life worth appreciating. What the intellectual, moral, and spiritual man hopes for, whatever he loves, wishes, or wills is to be found in the teachings.... The practice...enhances the sensibilities and powers of man; therefore, Yogis claim a far-reaching knowledge of the secrets of nature and an extensive control over natural phenomena. Ibid., p. 88. The analysis in the text will show that Don Ramón is moving in a different direction.

Zen Buddhism has recently come to the attention of the West through D.T. Suzuki's translations of its aphorisms.[215] Like yoga, Zen is taught through the most painful individual self-discipline. Its goal is not the annihilation of the ego but its submergence into the whole being which is man. Through submergence it captures the total perception of the world external to the skin of which the human organism is capable. It is a divestment of the insulating clothing of unconscious reaction, those habits or learned responses clogging "the doors or perception," to use Blake's words; its purpose is to see through the eye, not with the eye. Zen cannot be apprehended by reading about it in books. It has no literature other than a few obscure tales about the Old Zen Masters, and the Koans, or aphorisms, which are part of the devotee's training. The monk who is a pupil of the Zen Master may spend many years trying to 'crack' the cryptic lesson of the koan assigned to him.

In dealing with Lawrence's supposed use of yoga, it will be most proper to bring forward a revealing essay written by another European.[216] Eugen Herrigel, a German professor of philosophy, spent seven years under a Master of archery in order to learn Zen's application to that

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[215]Daisetz T. Suzuki, An Introduction to Zen Buddhism (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1949). Cf. also, Alan W. Watts, The Spirit of Zen (London: John Murray, 1936).

[216]Eugen Herrigel, Zen in the Art of Archery, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York: Pantheon Press, 1953).

art. Herrigel suffered in his daily sessions tortures inconceivable to the uninitiate; four years passed before he was even permitted to notch an arrow to his bowstring. Lawrence spent exactly six weeks in Kandy, Ceylon, writing letters and working on a translation;[217] one may therefore ask: was he then instructed into mysticism or yoga, or was his knowledge acquired by such means as Madame Blavatsky used to attain hers?[218] Herrigel shows that the only way to approach the phenomenon is a long and tortuous one.[219] On the other hand, it may be objected that the novelist might have picked up enough to describe things convincingly from the outside. But this objection is met by the fact that Don Ramon's technique itself is quite contrary to the mystic's:

> The demand that the door of the senses be closed is not met by turning energetically away from the sensible world, but rather by readiness to yield without resistance.[220]

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[217] Cf. Moore, The Intelligent Heart, pp. 288-290.

[218] Cf. Gertrude Marvin Williams' biography of Mme. Blavatsky, Priestess of the Occult: Madame Blavatsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946).

[219] "...Though I knew how to circle around what one may call the primordial mystic phenomenon, I was unable to leap over the line which surrounded the mystery like a high wall. Nor could I find exactly what I sought in the extensive literature of mysticism, and, disappointed and discouraged, I gradually came to realize that only the truly detached can understand what is meant by 'detachment,' and that only the contemplative, who is completely empty and rid of the self, is ready to 'become one' with the 'transcendant deity.' ...There is and can be no other way to mysticism than the way of personal experience and suffering, and that, if this premise is lacking, all talk about it is so much empty chatter. But how does one become a mystic? How attain the state of real, and not just imaginary detachment?" Herrigel, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

[220] Ibid., p. 56.

But it is clear that Ramón turns wilfully away into his prayer; he is wrong in his posture of utter tension and wrong in aiming "the arrows of the soul" at a particular mark:

> Care has only to be taken that the body is relaxed whether standing, sitting, or lying....[221]

Thus, one is forced to the conclusion that in Lawrence's description of Don Ramón's trance there is, instead of some kind of yoga, an orgastic practice. This is confirmed by the passage's pervasive phallic symbolism: the clouds stand "erect and splendid"; in the dark room there are "yellow pencils of light that stood like substance on the darkness, from the cracks of the shutters"; Don Ramón stands "stretched, upright," he "quivers ... in an immense tension" and then drops on his bed into a flaccidity which is followed by a dreamless sleep. All this imagery is in greater resonance with the sexual emphasis of the whole novel than with yoga's detachment. This is the place to mention another curious passage from the novel, although its significance will be gone into

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[221] Ibid., p. 51. "This state, in which nothing definite is thought, planned, striven for, desired or expected, which aims in no particular direction and yet knows itself capable alike of the possible and the impossible, so unswerving is its power -- this state, which is at bottom purposeless and egoless, was called by the Master truly 'spiritual.' It is in fact charged with spiritual awareness and is therefore called 'right presence of mind.' This means that the mind or spirit is present everywhere, because it is nowhere attached to any particular place. And it can remain present because, even when related to this or that object, it does not cling to it by reflection and thus lose its original mobility."

later on. In the pages describing Kate Leslie's sensations during intercourse with Don Cipriano, the "frictional" European mode of coition is denounced in favor of a non-phallic, quiescent technique. Whenever Kate shows signs of the "Aphroditic" irritability, excitement and climax, Cipriano withdraws himself. Finally, Kate learns to experience her fulfillment in an oceanic "gushing" rather than in the febrific action she once knew.[222] This discovery of a new type of orgasm which obviates the masculine necessity of "friction" ("friction" may well be an inescapable fact of feminine physiology, too), leads one into the psychological problems of the author in which literary criticism may seem to some extent irrelevant. However, the remarkable thing in the matter of the book's presentation of spiritual disciplines is that masculine genitality has returned via what Lawrence apparently conceived to be a mystical exercise of the body.

In any case, Ramón is incapable of achieving the fundamental goal of detachment, since his aim is directed particularly towards a somewhere: he is praying with all his strength to the "sun behind the sun," the place from which his "second strength" comes. Furthermore, as an "Initiate of the World," he is struggling to subdue Spanish Christianity; his first sign of success in the latter cause comes when his wife, the fanatic Carlota,

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[222] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, pp. 422-424.

perishes for Jesus rather than remain his wife. Two points are made by the Zen student regarding the private and public sides of the accomplished mystic's way; if he knows himself to have achieved 'right presence,' he must forget it lest it vanish forever,[223] and if he is a Master he must begin again as a pupil in order to attain the last goal, which is not knowledge *of* the way but ar 'artless art' *in* the way.[224]

It is a profound and irrefragable truth that to understand detachment one must experience it. Lawrence is gravely at fault in this matter; though he attacks the wordy ones, the 'idealists' who talk about life in sheer

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[223] "...Inwardly, for the archer himself, right shots have the effect of making him feel that the day has just begun. He feels in the mood for right doing, and, what is perhaps even more important, for all right not-doing. Delectable indeed is this state. But he who has it, said the Master with a subtle smile, would do well to have it as though he did not have it. Only unbroken equanimity can accept it in such a way that it is not afraid to come back." Herrigel, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

[224] "In spite of the unexampled discipline to which the Zen Master has patiently and humbly subjected himself he is still a long way from being so permeated and irradiated by Zen that he is sustained by it in everything he does, so that his life knows only good hours. The supreme freedom has still not become a necessity to him.

"If he is irresistibly driven towards his goal, he must set out on his way again, take the road to the artless art. He must dare to leap into the Origin, so as to live by Truth and in the Truth, like one who has become one with it. He must become a pupil again, a beginner; conquer the last and steepest stretch of the way, undergo new transformations. If he survives its perils, then is his destiny fulfilled; face to face he beholds the unbroken Truth, the Truth beyond all truths, the formless Origin or origins, the Void which is the All; is absorbed into it and from it emerges reborn." *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

ignorance, he is himself writing about what he could not have understood. He is using yoga, or whatever it was he picked up in his reading,[225] and he is bowdlerizing it. Moreover, the intention of Ramón's doctrine is the destruction of European culture in Mexico. But Herrigel and Suzuki report that in Japan people from all branches of professional life -- businessmen, soldiers, politicians, artists -- are Zen pupils: there is no incompatibility with modern tedhnological culture for Zen; Zen was taught six hundred years ago to Samurai, Zen is being taught today to citizens of a mechanized society and to German idealists. Even if Ramón is granted to have true knowledge of the way, he is perverting it by instructing simple peasants who have undergone no individual self-discipline in the postures of "connection"; instead, he gives them a communal immersion not even remotely similar to detached ego-mastery; he is, in brief, travestying all mystic tenets.

The following paragraphs from The Plumed Serpent will serve as illustration of the foregoing discussion of the ritualistic basis of Ramón's teaching; they will also present material for the subsequent analysis of myth and theology in the novel. In "The First Rain," Chapter XIII, the seasonal downpours have come, bringing spring to Mexico; Don Ramón, witnessed by Dona Carlota and Kate

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[225] Moore discounts assertions by some Eastern writers that Lawrence was directly influenced by various Hindu doctrines; cf. The Intelligent Heart, pp. 188-189.

Leslie and a crowd of his peons, is welcoming the waters of rebirth:

> "Serpent of the earth," he said; "snake that lies in the fire at the heart of the world, come! come! Snake of the fire at the heart of the world, coil like gold round my ankles, and rise like life around my knee, and lay your head against my thigh. Come, put your head in my hand, cradle your head in my fingers, snake in the deeps. Kiss my feet and my ankles with your mouth of gold, kiss my knees and my inner thigh, snake branded with flame and shadow, come! and rest your head in my finger basket! so!"
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> "I tell you," he said, "and I tell you truly, at the heart of this earth sleeps a great serpent, in the midst of fire. Those that go down in mines feel the heat and sweat of him, they feel him move. It is the living fire of the earth, for the earth is alive. The snake of the world is huge, and the rocks are his scales, trees grow between them. I tell you the earth you dig is alive as a snake that sleeps. So vast a serpent you walk on, this lake lies between his folds a drop of rain in the folds of sleeping rattlesnake. Yet he none the less lives. The earth is alive.
>
> "And if he died, we should all perish. Only his living keeps the soil sweet, that grows you maize. From the roots of his scales we dig silver and gold, and trees have root in him, as the hair of my face has root in my lips."[226]
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> "Speak then to the snake of the heart of the world, put oil on your fingers for him to taste the oil of the earth, and let him send life into your feet and ankles and knees, like sap in the young maize pressing against the joints and making the milk of the maize bud among its hair.
>
> "From the heart of the earth man feels his manhood rise up in him, like the maize that is proud, turning its green leaves outwards. Be proud like the maize, and let your roots go deep, deep, for the rains are here, and it is time for us to be growing in Mexico."[227]

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[226] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 195.

[227] Ibid., p. 196.

Suddenly the drum began to give a very strong note, followed by a weak: a strange, exciting thud.

Everybody looked up. Ramón had flung his right arm tense into the air, and was looking up at the black dark sky. The men of the ring did the same, and the naked arms were thrust aloft like so many rockets.

"Up! Up! Up!" said a wild voice.

"Up! Up! cried the men of the ring, in a wild chorus.

And involuntarily the men in the crowd twitched, then shot their arms upwards, turning their faces to the dark heavens. Even some of the women boldly thrust up their naked arms, and relief entered their hearts as they did so.[228]

Even as he spoke the wind rose, in sudden gusts, and a door could be heard slamming in the house, and a shivering of glass, and trees gave off a tearing sound.

"Come then, Bird of the great sky!" Ramón called wildly. "Come! Oh Bird, settle a moment on my wrist, over my head, and give me power of the sky, and wisdom. Oh Bird! Bird of all the wide heaven, even if you drum your feathers in thunder, and drop the white snake of fire from your back to the earth again, where he can run in, deep down the rocks again, home: even if you come as the Thunderer, come! Settle on my wrist a moment, with the clutch of the power of thunder, and arch your wings over my head, like a shadow of clouds; and bend your breast to my brow, and bless me with the sun. Bird, roaming Bird of the Beyond, with thunder in your pinions and the snake of lightning in your beak, with the blue heaven in the socket of your wings and clouds in the arch of your neck, with sun in the burnt feathers of your breast and power in your feet, with terrible wisdom in your flight, swoop to me a moment, swoop!"

Sudden gusts of wind tore at the little fires of flame, till they could be heard to rustle and the lake began to speak in a vast hollow noise,

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[228] Ibid., pp. 196-197

> beyond the tearing of trees. Distant lightning was beating far off, over the black hills.[229]

Immediately after this hypnotic scene in the novel, which is reminiscent of the symbolism of the puppet-master in Thomas Mann's "Mario and Magician," Don Ramón bids his peons sit, and then gives them a sermon on what it means for them to become "Men and Women of the Morning Star." Both the ritual of the greeting of the rains and the mythical interpretation which explains it are synthetic creations; this fact cannot be adequatley appreciated unless it is shown how little of Aztec Mexico informs The Plumed Serpent and how much derives from peculiar psychological motifs or motivations in Lawrence.

Professor Tyndall seems to accept Lawrence's use of Aztec religious themes as means of presenting his message; but the extreme caution of various anthropological reports must serve as a warning that the novelist may be very much astray both in his presentation of the strange, alien, obdurate quality of the Mexican today and the Indian of the vanished past. As far as the exceedingly complex religion of the historical Aztecs is concerned, there is almost no clear parallel between it and The Plumed Serpent. There were at least fifty-three principal gods and goddesses, deities, spirits, and forces at the head of the Aztecan theological edifice. Lawrence selects only three: Quetzalcoatl,

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[229]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 197.

Huitzilopochtli, and 'Malintzi.' And Quetzalcoatl presents a confused problem to the archaeologist:

> Quetzalcoatl the Feathered Serpent, God of Civilization and the planet Venus, seems to have been widely venerated, but under different guises....Quetzalcoatl had several forms shared by distinctive divinities. The sculptures of Teotihuacan and Chichen Itza show that a feathered snake was honoured, and the local records mention Quetzalcoatl and Kukulcan, Nahuatl and Maya names having the same meaning. At Tenochtitlan there is ample evidence of a feathered-serpent cult, but the records refer to Xiuhcoatl, "Fire Snake," as well as to the standard sacred variety. The term Quetzalcoatl applies as well to a bearded god with a projecting mask, also called Ehecatl, the "Wind God"....In addition to this confusion over Quetzalcoatl, the God of Civilization, the annals and myths tell of Quetzalcoatl, the great king, who civilized the Toltecs and left for the east to return again. The friars seized upon this myth as evidence that St. Thomas the Apostle had visited Mexico and converted its inhabitants, who later slid back into pagan ways.[230] Therefore, the friars, to justify the Conquest, made much of a blonde god who, after taking leave of his people, promised to return from the east by sea. Yet the Quetzalcoatl of the Valley of Mexico manuscripts was

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230 Lawrence uses the friar's myth repeatedly in the novel as an explanation for Quetzalcoatl's return to Mexico, and as a basis for his liquidation of Christianity in Chapter XVIII, "Auto da Fe." He probably picked up the monks' take from Prescott, who mentions the legend in the Conquest; cf. Vol. 1, 59-60.

> never blonde but usually black in beard and face paint, when he was not shown as the masked Wind God, Ehecatl.[231]

It was probably enough, not taking into account the identification of Quetzalcoatl with the Wind God, for Lawrence to have learned this deity to be the God of Civilization and of the Morning Star (a favorite of the occultists) for him to have used him as the chief god for his tale of renascence in Mexico. Huitzilopochtli, the great War and Sun God, was the chief god of the Aztecan Tenochtitlan, their capital city. 'Malintzi' was Metzli, the Moon, or Moon Goddess. Lawrence's confusion over this name derives possibly from Prescott's name for Cortes' mistress, Malinche, whom

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[231] G.C. Vaillant, The Aztecs of Mexico, p. 174. "As if the confusion between a man and god of many guises were not baffling enough for the historian, we find to our dismay that the title Quetzalcoatl not only was given to the rulers of the Teotihuacan Toltecs but was also borne at Tenochtitlan by the chief priests who exemplified the learning of the time. Distinguished authority has supported the hypothesis that a Mexican named Quetzalcoatl went to Yucatan, where he attained high office and absorbed the civilization of the Maya. Later he returned to Mexico and taught a version of the calendar, as well as many other useful arts, to the peoples of the plateau. Others, more romantic, see in Quetzalcoatl an Irishman, Norseman, or even Atlantean, who popped into Mexico and spread sweetness and light. I, personally, believe that the introduction of superior culture elements and the creation of local arts as well might not only lead to the invention of a God of Civilization, but also endow individual innovators with the name of that god. The conflicting data suggest to me that the name and concept did not originate in any one person, but resulted...from the experience of many peoples over a long period of time in explaining and honouring the introduction of those benefits which ensured their corporal and spiritual well-being." Ibid., pp. 174-175.

Vaillant calls Marina.[232] These, the three chief gods of The Plumed Serpent, are incarnate in Don Ramón, his Indian General Cipriano, and Kate Leslie, the Irishwoman who is at the bottom of her soul in contact with the Tuatha de Danaan because she possesses "the almost deathly mysticism of the aboriginal Celtic or Iberian people."[233]

Why these three gods? The answer is to be found in the Fantasia of the Unconscious where the three principal dynamic forces of the universe are Earth, Sun, and Moon, the first of these entities being suspended between the voluntaristic and involuntaristic pulls of the latter two. Yet there is a more fruitful approach to the significance of these symbols possible. An Argentine psychoanalyst, Angel Garma, has written an interesting analysis of the motif of the winged serpent so prominent in Indian iconography. In summary, the thesis runs as follows:

> These serpentine figures are symbolic representations of the male genitalia. Regressive anal, excremental representations intervene also in the genesis of this kind of ornamentation.... The same genital and anal excremental symbolism is found in the gods of the wind, Quetzalcoatl of the Aztecs and Kukulcan of the Mayas, that are represented as feathered serpents, as their names indicate.[234]

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[232] Ibid., p. 235.

[233] Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 415.

[234] Angel Garma, "The IndoAmerican Winged or Feathered Serpent, The Step Coil, and the Greek Meander: The Unconscious Meaning of Serpentine Ornamentation," The American Imago, III (Summer, 1954), 113-145. Cf. p. 145.

Garma's essay is useful for its discussion of the winged serpent in which the phallus is, of course, recognizable; but the analyst makes very clear through a wealth of allusion that such symbolizations of male genitalia are frequently allowed to be expressed only by means of a regression to an anal symbolism wherein the excrementa are identified with snakes, and flatus with the wind. Sometimes a further displacement of flatus from the lower part of the body, which is in the same erogenous zone as the genitalia, to the mouth takes place; this gives rise to the universal primitive idea that the breath is the substance of the spirit: such is ruach, in Hebrew the divine breath which gave life to the clay Adam of Genesis. (In English the words 'afflatus' and 'inspiration' are used in connection with the spirit, as distinguished from 'inhale,' which denotes the pulmonary action.) It is an obvious fact that one of Lawrence's prime topics in his later years is phallus worship. Also, it should be recalled that in Fantasia of the Unconscious he wrote of the breath going out to the sun and returning again before being inhaled during the daylight hours, and of the breath voyaging to the moon and back again during the night hours. Therefore, in interpreting the symbolism of The Plumed Serpent's characterizations from the psychoanalytic angle, it is possible to take the predominant phallicism of his later mode of work and his metaphysical description of the 'life-breath of the universe' as hints. Ramón is

Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent or the Wind God; he is of the earth, earthy; thus his phallic postures and orgastic trances become comprehensible as expressions of a psychological symbol and not as disciplines of yoga, and thus his role as the inseminator of a new Mexican culture may be explained. As the wind god bringing the fertilizing rain he is derivative of the earth ('dirt' equals excrement) because of an anal regression from phallic to excremental symbolism. Cipriano is described much as Lawrence looked -- small, dark, with a beard -- and Cipriano becomes the God of War who is the Sun God; also, he becomes Kate's husband, that is, as the Sun he is the opposite "dynamic" pole to the Moon. Between Sun and Moon the Earth is suspended; and the earth is described by Lawrence in The Plumed Serpent as a gigantic living serpent, in short, the phallus which is the principle of life itself in primitive ritual.

This triad is the only one that mattered to Lawrence. Furthermore, since such symbolization, based as it is on fundamental male-female conceptions springing from the Id, is wellnigh universal in human psychology, there is no reason why it should not have been an obvious factor in his method of composition, in which "the novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen."[235] But there is more involved in The Plumed Serpent's theogony than the

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[235]Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, p. 10.

mere expression of simple symbols: there is in fact an Oedipal drama taking place which may at bottom be the main inspiration of the book. Don Ramón is the great phallus, the feathered serpent, of Mexico, he is the big, older man, the father figure of the novel; yet, Cipriano the small-sized man, the fierce little 'son' of Ramón, is the one who marries Kate the blonde woman, the twice-widowed mother of grown children.[236] If Sons and Lovers be taken as the terrible expression of Lawrence's complex, it is also true that that novel does nothing to solve his personal problems, for those problems reappear in a subterranean fashion in Mexico, and the secret story of the son who robs and marries the mother by killing the father occurs all over again.[237] In all the previous novels this drama lies in partial abeyance; in Sons and Lovers Paul Morel had had to give up his mother for the world, though he had not given her up for Miriam; in Women in Love Rudolph Birkin marries Ursula Brangwen, but their

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[236] Also, the 'son' of Ramón becomes Huitzilopochtli, the 'Sun' God, or the source of "the second strength"; he is the "sun behind the sun" -- which may be read as, the "'son' behind the sun," and the sun is a recurring symbol in severe psychosis in which it usually represents the father.

[237] Moore asserts frequently that Lawrence "had shaken off his mother-attachment by writing Sons and Lovers" and that "if the attachment had survived, it would have appeared obsessionally in the later works, but they only occasionally contain a faint echo of such a relationship." The Intelligent Heart, p. 52. This analysis shows Moore to be quite wrong in denying either the persistence of an Oedipus complex or its frequent derivative, homosexuality. Moore brings up the whole subject again and again, an indication that he is never sure of his stand; cf. pp. 32-33, 51-53, 132-134, 138-139, 215-217, 222 (a discussion of unpublished parts of Women in Love), and pp. 442-443.

marriage is unsound and unsure since Rudolph is searching for he knows not what relationship, and it is made clear that it is not one of sexual passion by the fact that Gerald Crich, his foil, dies of passion; in Aaron's Rod the Oedipal complex is dramatized by means of inversion, one of its results: the homosexual struggle between Aaron Sisson and Lilly is left unresolved at the end; but, in The Plumed Serpent Lawrence finally succeeds in marrying Kate-Frieda-Mother. There is a covert and ravelled symbolism buried in Kate Leslie's status as a widow in this novel's opening chapters; the question can be broached with Kangaroo, which "is not really a novel but a special kind of production, in the category of such books as Sartor Resartus."[238] The argument here devolves from this strange book of soul-searching in which Lawrence's schizoid withdrawal from the world and his symbolic death can be detected in the characterization of its hero, Richard Lovat Somers.

In The Plumed Serpent Kate Leslie-Frieda Richthofen Weekley Lawrence appears husbandless in Mexico City. This woman has had two previous mates; the first gave her two children, but she divorced him -- just as Frieda left her husband, Ernest Weekley, and her children for D.H. Lawrence. Kate's second husband, the brilliant Socialist Joachim Leslie, had died incapable of giving her the

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[238] Ibid., p. 293.

children she wanted from him; it is hinted that Leslie was impotent, or infertile, because his daemon, his passion for social reform had exhausted him (the critic mindful of the psychology of sublimation is right to ask whether this Leslie person may not have been daemonically intellectual as a result of some sexual incapacity). This Joachim Leslie whom Kate of The Plumed Serpent laments over for his obsession with politics and writings on social welfare is the very image of the fellow called Somers in Kangaroo, the preceding novel -- the same Somers who, incidentally, chose not to die writing in the service of political reform. Nevertheless, despite what Kangaroo insists is Somers' choice to live, the novel signalizes Lawrence's symbolic death. Here is the explanation: at the close of the hectic events in Kangaroo Somers rejects Ben Cooley, the man with the pouch, Ben Cooley, the chief kangaroo of the rightist political movement. This man is a father-imago, the Jehovah-figure Somers himself calls him repeatedly. Furthermore, Cooley asserts categorically (and quite irrationally so far as any possible motivation in the novel shows) that his surrogate son Somers is killing him as surely as is the bullet in his guts -- in fact, he roars out in livid rage from his hospital deathbed that the bullet is nothing to him, that it is the will to live which has been killed because his offer of love to Somers has been killed. Thus, for the psychic crime of killing his father, Somers-

Lawrence pays (according to the talion of the unconscious[239]) by dying as Leslie-Lawrence before The Plumed Serpent ever opens, that is, at some moment in the short years between one novel and the next. This sequence of events is unmistakable and swift to develop.[240] It may be asserted that Lawrence is not psychically dead in The Plumed Serpent because he is present in the novel as Don Cipriano Viedma, but this objection can be met on two levels: first, as a human character he is not well-developed: Tyndall remarks

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[239]Cf. Fenichel, op. cit., pp. 44,77,291,459ff.

[240]Freud summarizes his final belief concerning his much-debated hypothesis of the primal murder of the Urvater: "...we can...clearly perceive the part played by love in the origin of conscience and the fatal inevitableness of the sense of guilt. It is not really a decisive matter whether one has killed one's father or abstained from the deed; one must feel guilty in either case, for guilt is the expression of the conflict of ambivalence, the eternal struggle between Eros and the destructive or death instinct. This conflict is engendered as soon as man is confronted with the task of living with his fellows; as long as he knows no other form of life in common but that of the family, it must express itself in the Oedipus complex, cause the development of conscience and create the first feelings of guilt. When mankind tries to institute wider forms of communal life, the same conflict continues to arise in forms derived from the past - and intensified so that a further reinforcement of the sense of guilt results. Since culture obeys an inner erotic impulse which bids it bind mankind into a closely knit mass, it can achieve this aim only by means of its vigilance in fomenting an ever-increasing sense of guilt. That which began in relation to the father ends in relation to the community. If civilization is an inevitable course of development from the group of the family to the group of humanity as a whole, then an intensification of the sense of guilt - resulting from the innate conflict of ambivalence, from the eternal struggle between the love and death trends - will be inextricably bound up with it, until perhaps the sense of guilt may swell to a magnitude that individuals can hardly support." Civilization and Its Discontents, pp. 120-122.

that, "although we are told that [Cipriano] is both goatish and cocky, he is no more substantial than something out of melodrama";[241] second, if he is supposed to be Lawrence, he is not as Somers was Lawrence, nor as Paul Morel, Rudolph Birkin, Lilly were each Lawrence - he is an incarnation of the Sun God, Huitzilopochtli.

I have found it necessary to go into the secret history of the author in such detail in order to explain why Lawrence took over so little accurate information concerning Aztec religion that it is almost meaningless to make any comparisons between it and The Plumed Serpent, and to expose what is masked by the little that is Aztec.[242] What has such secret history to do with the use, or the misuse, of mythology? The discussion of the remaining portion of the study is devoted to two replies to this question, the second reply growing from the first: first it will be shown that Lawrence's particular use of mythic form has been miscomprehended by one important critic who favors both him and the literary technique in question, and second, that the mere use of myth in and of itself tends to result in a primitivism which is necessarily retrogressive.

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[241] Tyndall, "Introduction," The Plumed Serpent, p. viii.

[242] For a detailed confirmation of this statement, The Plumed Serpent's theology should be compared with Vaillant, The Aztecs of Mexico; cf. Chapter X, "Religion," and Chapter XI, "Ritual," pp. 168-204.

When The Plumed Serpent was reissued in 1952, Professor Tyndall wrote an introduction to it which reflects a mature opinion of the novel since it derives from the close study of the later Lawrence represented by D. H. Lawrence and Susan His Cow. Tyndall states that the novel's method is based on the technique of allegorical analogy, which "is the important literary method of our time"; that it is "composed of symbols" which aim at the "recovery of the way of knowing that produced the myths"; that, "like ritual or music, [it] is significant form through which we may conceive reality";[243] and that it "is a great metaphor for a feeling about reality" which "brings... back...magic and wonder."[244] Concerning analogy, it must be remarked that that literary form was indeed the important way of knowing 'reality' before the world of scientific fact was accepted in modern Western times; however, an outstanding feature of today's primitivism is precisely the revival of analogy not as a literary device merely, but as a way of producing knowledge of the world which is suppose to be as viable as scientific fact. There is an important difference between the medieval and the modern mode: Dante's anagogical presentation of 'reality' was based on the current knowledge of the objective universe;

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[243]Tyndall, "Introduction," The Plumed Serpent, pp. xii-xiii.

[244]Ibid., p. xiv.

it pointed towards certain supposed correspondences of values with facts as they were known; it did not point from values towards facts. It is true that a fact today is established by rigorous thought; it is also true that for the known facts it is extremely difficult to find unquestionable values. The problem of The Plumed Serpent is in this respect extraordinary, for in its myth values and facts are deduced from each other, or, alternatively, confounded with each other. We have seen that Lawrence calls the sun, the moon, and the earth literal sources of life and death, not the symbols but the actual "poles" of life and death; also, they are symbols for father and mother and the world-phallus, for Cipriano-Lawrence-son cum Ramón-Lawrence-father and Kate-Frieda-mother cum Kate-Frieda-wife. Furthermore, though the sun's value as source and sustainer of all life is indisputable, it does not follow from this as a fact that the sun is a physical emanation of the "first individual's death." If the sun be taken as a symbol of God, and if its symbolic interpretation depends on the living blood's, or the life breath's, polarity with the physical sun, then such a symbol belongs to an archaic form of monotheism. Finally, if the sun is called 'father' - and this analysis had indicated that indirectly Lawrence is calling the sun father, as the moon is mother, and their male child is earth - the problem is best considered along psycho-

analytic lines.[245] The 'reality' that Tyndall says is brought back through magic is the same one described by Lawrence in Fantasia of the Unconscious; given Lawrence's values, it could be no other. And the magic of the novel is an attempt to make right through a compelling connection of humans with the trinity of poles; the "salutes" and "animistic dances" to the tom-tom are not mere forms of ceremony but magical practices.[246] On the surface it may seem that Lawrence's aim is to bring back "a way of knowing"; nevertheless, the source of the rituals is so peculiarly private that it precludes any real coherence between what was the culture of pre-Hispanic Mexico and the world revealed in The Plumed Serpent. As the preceding analysis suggests, the novel's myth is a dramatic rationalization of ideas in no way connected with the reality of

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[245]Cf. Fenichel, op. cit., pp. 205-215. Also, Karl Abraham, "Restrictions and Transformations of Scoptophilia in Psychoneuroses; with Remarks on Analagous Phenomena in Folk Psychology," Selected Papers (London: Institute of Psychoanalysis and The Hogarth Press, 1927), pp. 169-234; and Theador Reik, Ritual: Psychoanalytic Studies (New York: Farra, Straus and Company, 1946).

[246]It has been recently pointed out that Tyndall's acceptance of Lawrence as a symbolist is mistaken, and that Lawrence is a ritualist; cf. Mark Spilka, "Was D.H. Lawrence a Symbolist?", Accent, XV (Winter, 1955), 49-60. I believe Mr. Spilka's conclusions are correct as an appraisal of Lawrence's literary form, but lacking in their neglect to evaluate both the origin and meaning of his rituals, as well as their significance for literature - that is, their intellectually retrogressive character. He approaches Lawrence from the same the point of view (e.g. Cassirer's writings) as does this essay, but finds nothing disconcerting in his novels.

past or present. Speaking of the novel's "feeling about reality," Tyndall says, "Conditioned by place and contemporary politics (of which on one level the book is a nightmare vision), that feeling is the wonder of all things - even of such politics."[247] Here it must be objected that the levels of allegory usually travel parallel and congruent; and when Tyndall says that the book is on one level a nightmare, it was for its author, at the time of writing, the unveiling of the new era.

The chief error would seem to lie in accepting Lawrence's obscurantism by urging a relativity of criticism in which the novel is "plainly mythical," no matter which criterion of myth is employed.[248] Professor Tyndall seems to agree with Lawrence that myth is non-discursive, and therefore he writes that the novel's triumph is its conveyance by means of mythic form of "the very sensation of life."[249] But, myth is not, as Lawrence thought, non-discursive; myth is a story not a symbol, and even symbols,

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[247]Tyndall, "Introduction," The Plumed Serpent, p. xiv.

[248]Ibid., p. xiii. "'The symbol,' says Lawrence... is 'a complex of emotional experience. And the power of the symbol is to arouse the deep emotional self...beyond comprehension.' Myth, which is composed of symbols, narrates a 'whole human experience, of which the purpose is too deep, going too deep in the blood and soul, for mental explanation or description.' Whether we agree with him that myth is nondiscursive presentation, with the anthropologists that it is cultural sanction, or with the psychoanalysts that it is Oedipal dream, The Plumed Serpent is plainly mythical."

[249]Ibid., p. xiii.

when written up on the level of literature, which is to say, in a language, are discursive because language is discursive. The genesis of myth may lie in ritual, but myth tells ritual meanings in a narrative.[250] Language seems to originate in a lyrical expression and not through a logical process of systematic analogies;[251] though there is such a thing as the mythical 'image,' it depends on language, which is intrinsically discursive.[252] Language grows out of mythical thought or perception, but it is this discursive speech

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250"Mere ritual and emotion cannot maintain themselves untouched by intellectuality. Also the abstract idea of maintaining the ritual for the sake of the emotion, though it may express the truth about the subconscious psychology of primitive races, is far too abstract to enter into their concious thoughts. A myth satisfies the demands of incipient rationality. Men found themselves practising various rituals, and found the rituals generating emotions. The myth explains the purpose both of the ritual and of the emotion. It is the product of the vivid fancy of primitive men in an unfathomed world." Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 23.

251"...The primary function of linguistic concepts does not consist in the comparison of experiences and the selection of certain common attributes, but in the concentration of such experiences, so to speak, in distilling them down to one point." Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. S. K. Langer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 37.

252"...The development of language appears to be the counter-part of the development which mythical intuition and thought undergo; for one cannot grasp the true nature and function of linguistic concepts if one regards them as copies or representations of a definite world of facts, whose components are given to the human mind ab initio in stark and separate outline. Again, the limits of things must first be positied, the outlines drawn, by the agency of language .... "Ibid., p. 37.

which marks civilization's progress.[253] Therefore, if Lawrence has recovered "the way of knowing that produced the myths," then it is an ineluctable conclusion that The Plumed Serpent is a primitivistic novel in the most fundamental sense: it is the expression of a primitive mind.[254]

Lawrence did not write a mythical book composed of non-discursive images; the novel has no analogies; it is not an allegory in which the "questing girl becomes the

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253"...Mythical thinking transcends the original vagueness of 'complex' intuitions and proceeds to concretely defined, distinctly sundered, and individualized mental constructions. This process, too, is determined primarily by the lines which activity takes; so much so that forms of mythical invention reflect, not the objective character of things, but the forms of human practices." Ibid., p. 41.

254"It was a long evolutionary course which the human mind had to traverse, to pass from belief in a physical magical power comprised in the Word to a realization of its spiritual power. Indeed, it is the Word, it is language, that really reveals to man that that world of natural objects and touches his weal and woe more directly than physical nature. For it is language that makes his existence in a community possible; and only in society, in relation to a 'Thee,' can his subjectivity assert itself as a 'Me.' " Ibid., 60. As I showed in Chapter II, The Plumed Serpent is a mythic book; but, as I have been concerned to reveal in Chapter III, it is not a myth about the real world, because the nature of real mythic presentation is based not on "a substratum of thought but of feeling;" and, "what is characteristic of primitive mentality is not its logic but its general sentiment of life...its view of nature is neither merely theoretical nor merely practical; it is sympathetic.... Myth is an offspring of emotion and its emotional background imbues all its productions with its own specific color... the deep conviction of a fundamental and indelible solidarity of life that bridges over the multiplicity and variety of its single forms. [The primitive] does not ascribe to himself a unique and privileged place in the scale of nature. The consanguinity of all forms of life seems to be a general presupposition of mythical thought." Cassirer, Essay on Man (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953), pp.108-109.

artist's deepest self in search of a subject and a place."[255] Rather, the action of the novel, the novel's story itself, is the "offspring of [an] emotion" that "imbues" it "with its own color" (cf. Note 254); it is an artistic projection of the psychic crisis of Lawrence's own life upon Mexico. To be sure, that crisis is bound up with events in the outside world in such a way that it was possible for Lawrence to compose a book which the critical and artistic fashion of the time considers mythical because of a miscomprehension of the nature of myth; moreover, the book was a result of the despair he felt for the world; but the vehemence of the novel and its proper meaning can be interpreted solely from the obscure history of his own psyche, not from the history of Europe. And, since The Plumed Serpent is such a projection of the artist's personality, the mythic trappings of the Indians' way of life diminish in artistic importance, and are valuable only as they provide materials for comprehending and criticizing his intellectual world.[256]

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[255] Tyndall, "Introduction," The Plumed Serpent, p. vii.

[256] Sigrid Undset remarks that Lawrence was repelled by what he thought he sensed in the "brown-eyed" peoples: "He set out on journeys all over the world to find people and places which might represent the object of his dreams - the primitive, unworn, red-blooded. He found them nowhere - he was not at home among the dusky natives of Ceylon, nor among the Australian colonists, Polynesians, nor dancing Indians in Mexico. The contact with foreign conditions seems in itself always to have troubled Lawrence...With his own hypersensitive eyes he was revolted by the reptilian lack of sympathy he thought he could discern in the impenetrable dark eyes of really primitive peoples - though time after time he tries to accept and admire them, as he does in his tales from Mexico." Cf. The Achievement of D.H. Lawrence, pp. 57-58.

Except as a key to the content of the book, his philosophy also loses any importance of its own when placed in the light of the primal heroic myth buried in the matrix of the novel. As Chapter II pointed out, this particular kind of mythic construction is a reproduction of the one great spiritual adventure produced by all peoples and times; as such, it has not the bearing Lawrence seems to have intended it should have when he wrote the book as a primer expounding the leadership idea.

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to show why I have stated earlier (cf. page 211) that the use of myth tends to result in a retrogressive primitivism. These few remarks will summarize the main points of the chapter and prepare the way for the final discussion of The Plumed Serpent's value.

Lawrence's use of mythic symbols is marked by the irrelevancy of the particular cultural forms from which he has chosen them to the essential subject matter of the novel. Because his primitivism derives from an a-historical attitude he finds it easy to use myths socially and spiritually foreign to the culture he is really speaking to - the Western European. The artists who have like Lawrence used myths often expressed, even if only indirectly, an extremely radical or reactionary political theory. Extreme politics is the inevitable consequence of their literary philosophy, which seeks to project and so revive what they consider an 'organic society': they base an ideology or a utopia on the previous form of cultural achievement they think a myth ex-

presses. Nevertheless, the historically oriented critic cannot avoid the observation that the 'organic whole' is often merely a part of the present social reality, or merely a group of elements (which may bear some future promise) isolable from the present.[257] The programmes of artists such as Pound or Eliot are characterized, as utopias always are, by their completely given forms; they lead to what Karl Popper calls the 'closed society.'[258] It is paradoxical, and significant of the intellectual confusion that leads to modern primitivism, that although artists may advocate these social forms they do not realize that creativity is arbitrarily restricted by such societies. For example, there is the spartan Republic of Plato from which all untrammeled poets are to be banned, and in which the graphic arts are to be censored, and the modes of music permitted are to be determined in advance. This is a natural result of the finished metaphysics of the philosophic rulers. The same criticism applies to all other projectors of model social organisms based on pre-established limitations. On the other hand, a historicist like Mannheim hopes to provide for an open society based on free criticism,[25

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[257]For example, Eliot has proposed a kind of Christian 'pastoral' primitivism; cf. Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).

[258]Karl Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950).

[259]Cf. Mannheim, "Some Problems Arising out of Regulation of Cultural Life, Particularly in a Dictatorship," Man and Society, pp. 108-114.

and a philosopher like Whitehead desires only a free "adventure of ideas."

Earlier it was remarked that "The Wasteland" presented a viable myth because the poem appealed to the civilized sense of the past. The ritual of the search for the Holy Grail was taken by Eliot from Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance; it is Christian, and it is employed to confront a dying society which was once upon a time Christian. The important point in this distinction of Eliot's myth is that he has manipulated the story of the Fisher King to present an extended metaphor of the religious theory of Christian life, and this theory is basically an historical drama: it has its end open indeterminately in the future, either because the Day of Judgment has been indefinitely postponed or arbitrarily held in abeyance. Later, Eliot approaches Lawrence's a-historicism; in Murder in the Cathedral one finds him saying that perhaps the Day of Judgment is present eternally; and this position is explained in the Four Quartets, for "Burnt Norton" calls time future "equally unredeemable" with time past, and time present located behind and before. "The Dry Salvages," however, offers at least a blessing: "Fare forward, traveller."

Lawrence, in contradistinction to Eliot, chooses a religious myth in which any form of escape is intrinsically impossible. His fundamental neglect of historical perspective on the social origins of his sources places him right at the door of death, for he has chosen to live only in

the present moment, and to live without individual will. But he must have realized that death represents no solution to anything whatsoever; and the work of his later period reveals him fleeing from death and disintegration within and without, searching for an enduring vehicle of spirit.[260] He finds it in the blood, and reduces all things to this universal solvent. His search is fruitless in this respect, not merely for the philosophical inconsequence of Fantasia of the Unconscious, but because his belief found its expression in the noxious political theory of The Plumed Serpent. Furthermore, whatever may be the images rising persistently before men they do not come from the blood, for there is no life for them in that salty red sea. Archetypal images are the creatures of the forms of the imagination; they come from those categories of conception innate in the mind's ordinary tendency to create symbolic expressions; they are not a product of the atomic or radiological substances of the solar system, and there is no necessary intrinsic correlation between the real universe

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[260] James Joyce, whose sense of the past so encumbered him with its conglomeration of phemomena, satirized the wish for release in his characterization of Stephen Dedalus, the abstracted languid poet murmuring half to himself, "History...is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake." Ulysses (New York: The Modern Library, 1934), p. 39.

and the forms presented in human intuition.[261]

Even if, speaking philosophically for the moment, the symbols or forms of perception, discursive and non-discursive alike, are subsistent in a world such as Santayana's realm of essence, where they may be revived because they have once existed, or where they wait for an opportunity to give them existence, or where they remain hopelessly never to be realized in existence, the criterion of their value can only be judged on the basis that human labor must make them real in order to extract, to precipitate them out of essence. This labor is the civilized effort responsible for the sense of the past; the realm of essence is a Pandora's box which humanity is compelled to open, but it must be wisely opened. The myth used by modern primitivism is not a product of civilized conscience, and in Lawrence's hands it becomes a weapon against the historical mind which remembers the evil as well as the good in the past.

261"...The problem is new, since all ages before ours believed in gods in some form or other. Only an unparalleled impoverishment in symbolism could enable us to rediscover the gods as psychic factors, which is to say, as archetypes of the imagination..." C.G. Jung, quoted by Joseph Campbell, op. cit., in a note, pp. 104-105. Cf. also, Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies in Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934); and, Studies of Type-Images in Poetry and Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

CONCLUSIONS

One of the main points of the previous chapter depends on the distinction between the great formal world myths whose essence Lawrence thought he was recreating in the rituals of The Plumed Serpent, and the true mythic content of the novel which, though it resembles in almost every detail the underlying pattern of universal psychological experience that informs the great world myths, sprang immediately from the crisis of his inner life. In other words, myth-making is a quality of the mind which is innate, persisting below all cultures and all conscious mental habits or training. The unconscious fantasies of the individual are in this respect mythical, for the myth is a narrative of his ultimate motives, actions and wishes.[1] This explanation of the basic nature of myth in respect to the individual explains the congruence of Lawrence's production with its formal prototypes in history. The true myth of The Plumed Serpent is therefore

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[1] "...Poetry is a primitive, a fundamental product of man's mind and that wherever it has appeared it has striven against human bias and exclusiveness to transfigure itself into myth." Richard Chase, The Quest for Myth (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), p. 131. This is a very erudite and exhaustive monograph on the subject, which supports my conclusions about literary primitivism. For example, Chase observes: "Yet it is just those writers [Lawrence, Eliot, Joyce, Yeats] who most ardently desire the return of the mythmaking of the primitive ages who have, among others, done much to make it difficult. They have projected their most compelling desires, tied them up neatly, labeled them 'the mythopoeic age' and consigned them to the oblivion of the remote past." Ibid., p. 110.

a more genuine production than other works of the modern period which have used myth as a literary device, such as Joyce's Ulysses, where The Odyssey provides a scaffolding designed to tie Leopold Bloom's peregrination about Dublin together. Therefore it may be remarked that the use of myth as a literary technique marks the modern primitivists among whom Lawrence is most notable; on the other hand, this investigation has attempted to extricate the spontaneous myth buried beneath the syncretic collection of archaelogical fragments Lawrence considered his true content.

Accordingly, The Man Who Died is a myth, too; it is not about Jesus but about Lawrence himself, and it forms the fitting afterthought to The Plumed Serpent. Its tale describes the break-through from the heart of darkness which was the psychic death of himself. "The man" wakes in a cave; he rolls away the stone, and comes to life for the first time since his birth: he has finished with his messianic mission, and the veil of allusion has been finally torn away.[2] This novella might be termed the Paradiso of the great myth under discussion.[3] The Inferno

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[2]Two years before the publication of this short book, Lawrence had used the tomb figure in this connection: "And then there will never be a millenium. There will never be a 'true societal flow' -- all things are relative. Men were never, in the past, fully societal -- and they never will be in the future. But more so, more than now. Now is the time between Good Friday and Easter. We're absolutely in the tomb. If only one saw a chink of light in the tomb. door." In a "Letter to Dr. Trigant Burrow, 3, August, 1927," The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, p. 687.

[3]That the expression, Paradiso, does not necessarily imply triumph can be seen from the poem, "The Ship of Death," also written at this period of his life.

is probably made up of the tortured strivings of most of his previous novels; however, it will be more to the purpose here to designate the climax, the death-pang of his soul, as the story called "The Woman Who Rode Away." The heroine of this story is given no name, but she is the Kate-Frieda character of The Plumed Serpent, roughly ten years younger; curiously enough, her husband is like Somers-Lawrence (of Kangaroo), only ten years older.

> She had two children, a boy and a girl. And her eldest, the boy was nearly ten years old before she aroused from her stupor of subjected amazement. She was now thirty-three, a large, blue-eyed, dazed woman, beginning to grow stout. Her little, wiry, tough, twisted, brown-eyed husband was fifty-three, a man as tough as wire, as tenacious as wire....[4]

The woman rides out from her husband's mining home (a significant detail of description) to find the Chilchui Indians, who live in some inaccessible valley of northern Mexico.

> There was supposed to be one tribe, the Chilchuis, living in a high valley to the south, who were the sacred tribe of all the Indians. The descendants of Montezuma and the Aztec or Totonac kings still lived among them, and the old priests still kept up the ancient religion, and offered human sacrifices -- so it was said.[5]

The Chilchuis take her; they care for her as the Aztecs cared for their principal sacrificial victims, and in the end they sacrifice her as she lies oiled on the sacred

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[4]"The Woman Who Rode Away," Stories, Essays and Poems (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1939), p. 167.

[5]Ibid., p. 170.

block, spread-eagled and naked, at the back of a cave in the cliff side: at the moment the shafts of the setting sun enter the cave and reach her body the knife strikes her heart. The purpose of these Indians in killing her is to regain their primitive potency from the white civilization which she represents.[6] The story has elements a little more authentic than those in The Plumed Serpent (except for the substitution of flint knives for obsidian, perhaps to give a rather primeval touch), but the strange metaphysical beliefs of Fantasia of the Unconscious and of the novel are strongly in evidence:

> Only the eyes of that oldest man were not anxious and fixed, and as if sightless, they watched the sun, seeing beyond the sun. And in their black, empty concentration there was power, power intensely abstract, and remote, but deep, deep to the heart of the earth, and the heart of the sun. In absolute motionlessness he watched till the red sun should send his ray through the column of ice [that hangs over the cave's "lip," as Lawrence describes it]. Then the old man would strike, and strike home, accomplish the sacrifice and achieve the power.[7]

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[6] "And we, who are red and black and yellow [notice, this chief of a lost tribe speaks for all dark races, not solely the Indians], we who stay, we shall have the sun on our right hand and the moon on our left. So we can bring rain down out of the blue meadows, and up out of the black; and we can call the wind that tells the corn to grow, when we ask him, and we shall make the clouds to break, and the sheep to have twin lambs. And we shall be full of power, like a spring day. But the white people will be a hard winter without snow." Ibid., p. 200.

[7] Ibid., pp. 206-207. It is significant that Lawrence writes, not rays, but "ray," which is the father-imago's red, phallic singularity; also, the cave is called "orifice."

Thus this story whose deepest theme is the perception of death is the prelude to the mythic journey undertaken by Kate Leslie in the novel which follows.

There is still another matter which is puzzling about the form of The Plumed Serpent, which enacts only Separation and Initiation, the first two parts of the basic formula of the world myth. Lawrence seems to have considered it satisfactory that the heroine has gained the boon she sought in the underworld; this boon is "intrinsically...an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration and freedom)."[8] Yet though the last chapter of the novel is entitled "Here!", it must be asked exactly where she is. The answer to this question is a rather interesting one.

This "Here!" is located not in reality, but at the very nadir of the initiatory experience, for Kate Leslie has decided to remain with the source of her immortality, which is "experienced as a present fact"[9] and symbolized by the marriage of Malintzi to Huitzilopochtli. Joseph Campbell cites a Tantric aphorism which expresses this sensation of immortality: "It is here! It is here!"[10] She remains be-

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[8]Campbell, op. cit., p. 187.

[9]Ibid., p. 189.

[10]Ibid., p. 189. If this problem is to be considered from the standpoint of Lawrence's anti-historicist politics, it is an attitude very similar to Christian Chiliasm; for a discussion of this historical phenomenon, cf. Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, pp. 190-236.

cause it is clear that her reborn state depends for its existence on her contact with the vital, elemental, and utterly impersonal forces she has found. She has discovered no less than the eternal, virginal communion in body and spirit; together with Cipriano, who is the other half of the integral whole of selfhood, she has become the embodiment of the Tao, that is, a symbol of the universe in which male and female elements are in proper equilibrium. But, by remaining "Here!" she is refusing to return to the world where age and death await all. In this case it is necessary to conclude that her choice to remain in a timeless world constitutes a flight from the fact of death into life, and life is an impossible possession. Don Ramón himself teaches this oldest of truths:

> "Take nothing, to say: I have it! For you can possess nothing, not even peace.
>
> "Nought is possessible, neither gold, nor land, nor love, nor life, nor peace, nor even sorrow nor death, nor yet salvation."[11]

This inconsistency between what Lawrence thought to be the teachings of his novel and what is revealed by its myth shows that he may not have been aware of the origin and direction of its profounder meanings. In its final chapter he has placed his heroine in a regenerated Mexico which is a kind of Shangri-La, or paradise. The idea of paradise seems to be an indestructible fact of human

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[11]Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 179.

psychology.[12] Certainly it is the climax of the mythic journey; but the whole cycle of a hero's adventure also contains the Return to reality. This return was not achieved by Lawrence until he wrote The Man Who Died, and it is the irony of his life's story that though in his end was his beginning, that beginning came just before he died. The phoenix symbolism that obsessed his last years may be more unequivocably satisfied by this interpretation of his writings than through references to his interest in The Book of Revelations and The Apocrypha. Returning to the teachings of The Plumed Serpent, it must be said that Lawrence may have considered it artistically justifiable to close the novel as he did, for he regarded his mission as an attempt to recover for the men of the machine world the primitive energy which had been so long denied them that they were

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[12]Freud's treatment of it is important: "...Paradise in itself is nothing but the mass-phantasy of the childhood of the indiviual. This is why in paradise men are naked and unashamed, until the moment arrives when shame and fear awaken; expulsion follows, and sexual life and cultural development begin. Into this paradise dreams can take us back every night; we have already ventured the conjecture that the impressions of our earliest childhood (from the prehistoric period until about the third year) crave reproduction for their own sake, perhaps without further reference to their content, so that their repetition is a wish-fulfillment.

"What are the profoundest depths of the eternal nature of humanity, which the poet commonly hopes to awaken in his listeners, but these stirrings of the psychic life which are rooted in that age of childhood, which subsequently becomes prehistoric? Childish wishes, not suppressed and forbidden, break into the dream behind the unobjectionable and permissably conscious wishes...." The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (New York: The Modern Library, 1938), p. 296.

in danger of losing it forever.

The search for a true sexuality was part of his struggle against both pornography and Comstockery in which he strove to attain the heretofore impossible goal of combining materialism - his own system of psycho-sexual materialism - with the inherited wisdom that prescribes the path to immortality. This was a mistake; as Campbell points out:

> The research for physical immortality proceeds from a misunderstanding of the traditional teaching. On the contrary, the basic problem is: to enlarge the pupil of the eye, so that the body with its attendant personality will no longer obstruct the view.[13]

It is important to notice that Lawrence disliked spiritualism, which he regarded as a kind of mental perversion occasioned by unhealthy sexual relations;[14] but it is also the fact that he did not consider the possibility that a renewed sexuality may not be the way for mankind - unless almost every conceivable form of society is done away with.[15]

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[13]Campbell, op. cit., p. 189.

[14]He inveighs expressly against table-rapping, ouija-board sessions, and the like in Studies in Classic American Literature, pp. 118-119.

[15]Freud's speculation on this topic is extremely pertinent: "The sexual life of civilized man is seriously disabled, whatever we may say; it sometimes makes an impression of being a function in process of becoming atrophied, just as organs like our teeth and our hair seem to be. One is probably right in supposing that the importance of sexuality as a source of pleasurable sensations, i.e., as a means of fulfilling the purpose of life, has perceptibly decreased. Sometimes one imagines one perceives that it is not only the oppression of culture, but something in the nature of the function itself, that denies us full satisfaction and urges us in other directions. This may be an error; it is hard to decide." Civilization and Its Discontents, pp. 76-77.

Thus, it may be suggested that even in the matter of sexuality, where the views expressed in his essays and polemics, and expecially in Lady Chatterley's Lover, seem wholesome and wise, Lawrence may well have been moving into a dead end street. As far as the final chapter of The Plumed Serpent is concerned, it represents a coming to rest in a phatasmogoric Mexico of Lawrence's creation where power and sexuality are inseparable and immortal because they are "immanent" in the "present fact" of the inchoate, prehistoric depths of the psyche. At best, such immortality is real only in the sense that myths are real, and yet even myths feature a return to the tangible world.

This study has stressed a mythical interpretation of The Plumed Serpent as the proper approach for unravelling its contradictory and unresolved critical standing, as well as clarifying the tangled complexity of the ideas warring in his later works. Yet final questions remain to be answered. Is the book, when all it contains is before us, a satisfactory novel or not? The answer, as I must submit in the following discussion, is difficult, and perhaps rather ambiguous.

One cannot fail to be impressed by the detailed fidelity of the secret myth of The Plumed Serpent to the

pattern of the 'monomyth.'[16] As I have said, I believe Kate Leslie's story was spontaneously produced by Lawrence; it is true, of course, that he was soaked in archaeology and anthropology, and thus there is no mystery in supposing that it was easier for him to express his conceptions through the formal pattern of the heroic quest because of this side of his learning. On the other hand, while the production of a true literary myth is commendable, the messianic preacher in Lawrence sought to justify the ineffable fount of his artistic creativity by erecting a great doctrine based on the specious theosophical theology of dragons, salamanders, pole stars, nerve centers, and so

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[16] This brings up the question as to what basis Lawrence ought to be judged on; Tyndall is interested in his 'romanticism': "...It is fitting we should understand the unclassical present. For this purpose D. H. Lawrence is very useful. In his life and work he conveniently combined most of the elements of contemporary romanticism. In his transcendental attitude toward nature, savages, the past, intuition, and the relations between men and women and in his devotion to Susan, the central religious tendency of recent romanticism is plain. His more than Methodist enthusiasm, his sensibility, his sensationalism, and his hatred of science and reason are the normal accompaniments or manifestations of the modern distemper. His sufferings and response were those of the sentimental artist in our times, but for this reason he is a more suitable subject for study...." D. H. Lawrence and Susan His Cow, pp. 199-200. However, when considering how to evaluate the artistry of his works, Krutch's comment must be remembered: "Perhaps this fact [the clue to the exact nature of Lawrence's "quarrel with the conditions of human existence"] more than any other will be responsible for his failure if it should happen, as seems not unlikely, that his work is finally judged to be extraordinarily interesting rather than absolutely great. ...One can seldom forget for long the riddle which his temperament propounds or read many pages without beginning to speculate, not about the work itself, but about the possible genesis of the mood which inspired it. And when this is true of a novelist, it is proof that his novels are not absolutely of the first rank." "D.H. Lawrence," op.cit., p. 346.

forth. This procedure is one that mistakes the products of man's religious imagination for veritable essences in the world of existence by identifying certain aspects of reality with the creative faculty which produced them; however, though the creative faculty lives, its symbols become no more than dead and self-contradictory reifications when they are projected into the real universe. Tyndall, for instance, remarks that "Don Ramón's religion unites the European and the Asiatic with the Indian."[17] However, religion and theology are two different things; Lawrence may seem to be bringing theological symbols into universal syncretism, but it is quite impossible to make the varied great world religions coalesce because they are immiscible on the level of the practice of religion, since as varied ways of knowing each is indissoluble from its languages and peoples.[18] And of course this point may be illustrated by reference to Lawrence himself: there is the same great logical disparity between theology and the practice of any religion as there is between his personal theological construction and his religious attitude, with its myth, its animism, magic and theosophy - all part of the

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[17] Tyndall, "Introduction," The Plumed Serpent, p. xii.

[18] "We should not...confuse religion with theology. Theology and theological dogma have always been the preoccupation of a very limited number of men; and a purely theological myth is an impossibility." Cf. Richard Chase, Quest for Myth, pp. 82-83.

psychological constellation of his character.[19]

There is another problem posed by Lawrence's personal religion. In the 20th Century, many sophisticated literary critics and intellectuals have turned to religion and re-entered various churches. Lawrence was not among them because he boldly plunged below the socially inherited anthromorphic forms of the Western religions, and even its transcendantal theology, into the cosmogonic stratum below the conventional images of man's self - into animism, magic, and the worship of instinct in the form of an egregious ithyphallicism. Although one can regard both the minor intellectualistic and major camp-meeting, positivistic mass revivals of religion as lamentable, a critic like Eliot is on very firm ground in objecting that it is futile to resurrect the "Pan-world." And Freud, who was himself against the "illusion of religion," and who was championed by the exponents of a rational rapprochement to the problems of man's sexual nature, thought he discerned an essential

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[19]Tyndall offers an explanation of the confluence of Lawrence's 'religion' with his 'theology': "But however odd their confusion may at first appear, animism and theosophy are not ill-assorted. One is primitive, the other primitivistic; a belief in either depends more or less on the findings of the anthropologists...." D. H. Lawrence and Susan His Cow, p. 144. Nevertheless, I have tried to show that the animism was a natural result of his psychological formation, the theosophy its rationalization. Mark Spilka's analysis, "Was D. H. Lawrence a Symbolist?", shows that Lawrence had been writing ritualistically, that is, employing techniques based on what can only be explained as an animistic insight, long before he had begun to talk of Frazer and Frobenius and the theosophists.

difference between the quality of the antique practices and modern sex.[20] But Lawrence, in describing modern sex as "sex in the head," has not the same basis as Freud; Lawrence attacks prudery in all its forms as the neurotic result of repression, while Freud views any culture, even the most rudimentary, as a system of repressing the instinctual drives. Thus, if Freud's conception is accepted as being basically correct, it is possible to understand why The Plumed Serpent had to conclude without the heroine's return from the lower world. There is an immitigable disjunction between the aboriginal twilight Kate Leslie discovers and the official Quetzalcoatl society that informs the 'realistic' content of the novel, since that society is, after all, a form of culture. In short, the fundamental question concerning Lawrence's religion as promulgated in The Plumed Serpent is, even if the Pan-world survives in humanity, how can this elemental power be brought back in its pristine form and on its own terms to any culture whatever? Freud's evaluation of this problem must be cited at some length:

> The liberty of the individual is not a benefit of culture. It was greatest before any culture, though indeed it had little value at that time, because the

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[20] "The most pronounced difference between the love life of antiquity and ours lies in the fact that the ancients placed the emphasis on the instinct itself, while we put it on its object. The ancients extolled the instinct and were ready to ennoble through it even an inferior object, while we disparage the activity of the instinct as such and only countenance it on account of the merits of the object." Freud, The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, in a note on p. 563.

> individual was hardly in a position to defend it. Liberty has undergone restrictions through the evolution of civilization, and justice demands that those restrictions shall apply to all. The desire for freedom [symbolized, for example, in The Plumed Serpent, by the phallic whirlwind] that makes itself felt in a human community may be a revolt against some existing injustice and so may prove favourable to a further development of civilization and remain compatible with it. But it may also have its origins in the primitive roots of the personality, still unfettered by civilizing influences, and so become a source of antagonism to culture. Thus the cry for freedom is directed either against particular forms or demands of culture or else against culture itself. It does not seem as if man could be brought by any sort of influence to change his nature into that of the ants; he will always, one imagines, defend his claim to individual freedom against the will of the multitude. A great part of the struggles of mankind centres round the single task of finding some expedient (i.e., satisfying) solution between these individual claims and those of the civilized community; it is one of the problems of man's fate whether this solution can be arrived at in some particular form of culture or whether the conflict will prove irreconcilable.[21]

Granted that Lawrence may have been quite justified in sending Kate Leslie in search of real life and true freedom; nevertheless, The Plumed Serpent finds two answers, neither satisfactory: individual freedom, or power to achieve the ends of desire, is only in the elemental darkness of first forces, and social freedom in the communal will where there is no regard for individual independence. Lawrence's value as a rebel is qualified because he sought and found in this novel an inexpedient (i.e., unsatisfying) form of culture; furthermore, after his death, the primitivistic religion of the state which is based on outgrown forms of

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[21]Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, pp. 60-61.

thought (forms always renewable, however, through regression) led in other hands to serious efforts to transform human nature "into that of the ants." If it were possible in considering the novel to separate the two contents of The Plumed Serpent, one could say Bravo! to Kate Leslie, and Down with Quetzalcoatl! Yet, as means and ends the two contents are inseparable: Kate can find "the watercress of immortality" at the "bottom of the bottomless sea"[22] only by becoming the goddess Malintzi and by living with a general of armies who is a god of war. Later, Lawrence was aware of this dilemma; he said that he had given up the leadership idea,[23] which is an indication that he had believed in the use of force as the means to reach certain desired ends for human society. The Man Who Died shows he finally realized that all the ceremonies and social plans for utopia will only eventuate in a multiplicity of ceremonies, godlings, and governments.

Finally, in judging whether The Plumed Serpent is a satisfactory novel, the two contents must be both considered. For its formal aspects, it may be said that had

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[22]This is the exploit of the Babylonian hero, Gilgamesh; cf. Joseph Campbell, op. cit., p. 187.

[23]Cf. The Letters of D. H. Lawrence. For the present period of history he thought that "leadership has died... save for Mussolini." In a "Letter to Rolfe Gardiner, 4 March, 1928," pp. 704-705. In this respect he refers specifically to The Plumed Serpent's message; cf. "Letter to Witter Bynner, 13 March, 1928," p. 711.

it not been for the route of the mythical adventure in search of life and power and freedom Kate Leslie's story might have constituted as badly made a novel as Kangaroo.[24] As it stands, this hidden myth is beautiful because it is one of the basic themes of humanity. The matter of the content of the novel is a more complex problem. As this study of his primitivism suggests, Lawrence found only death, though he sought life; possibly his protestations in favor of sexual potency and the life-germ are signs of his despair over the lack of both in himself and in the world about him; yet his very protestations are something to be learned about his world and ours.[25] Furthermore, it must be remembered, after one has considered all that is reprehensible in his thought and works, that he was an artist and a rebel, and that "artistic creation is a deamnd for unity and a rejection of the world."[26] Thus, if it is permissible to consider The Plumed Serpent and The Man Who

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[24]He seems to have regarded Kangaroo as an extremely experimental novel: "I have nearly finished my novel here - but such a novel! Even the Ulysseans will spit at it." "Letter to S.S. Koteliansky, 9 July, 1922, Encounter, I (December, 1953), 32.

[25]V. S. Pritchett, in lauding Lawrence, wrote that all his work contains what England was feeling and thinking for twenty years; cf. "Sons and Lovers," The Living Novel (London: Chatto and Windus, 1946), p. 137.

[26]"Art is an activity which exalts and denies simultaneously.... But it rejects the world on account of what it lacks and in the name of what it sometimes is. Rebellion can be observed here in its pure state and in its original complexities. Thus, art should give us a final perspective on the content of rebellion." Camus, The Rebel, p. 222.

Died as related parts of one mythic story concerning Lawrence's innermost life, it can be seen that on the level of philosophy and politics, of religion and social gospel, there is a shift of ideology between the two. In the former work Lawrence preaches the total domination of the human spirit by impersonal forces of a world-will, but the latter affirms the single integrity of the individual who must go his own way.[27]

Herein lies the fundamental ambiguity of even a negative conclusion. Camus' history of nihilism explains that the rebels marched into death in order to proclaim life. Similarly, The Plumed Serpent shows that turn away as he will from the real world Lawrence is inevitably driven to restore some semblance of order because of the stubborn necessity inherent in the very nature of rebellion and the practice of art. This is tantamount to declaring that artistic creation is its own justification and reward; yet, under modern conditions, "to create...is

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[27] In the conclusion of The Man Who Died, the dismembered Osiris (Jesus-the-man-Lawrence) is made whole by the disinterested love of the girl, and since the mourning Isis has found her mate again the world is reconstituted.

to create dangerously."[28] Thus, exclusive of the great myth, the novel's content, that is, its philosophic and political programme, is ultimately unsatisfying to the rational mind not because it is composed of mere rationalizations deriving from the problems of his personality, but because it offers forms of order that are fossils from the graves of the past which lies beneath all the settlements of human culture. As events in Germany showed after Lawrence's death, it is possible to return to slavery, to an a-historical mentality, and to demolish what is rational and humane in culture. On the other hand, one may entertain the speculation that some form of totalitarianism which is an imposition of a rational order through force may prevail over human society for a long period in the future; furthermore, ultimately there may be, as Freud suggested, no reconciliation possible between the individual's claim to freedom and the demands of a rational society. Nevertheless,

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[28]"Today when collective passions have stolen a march on individual passions, the ecstasy of love can always be controlled by art. But the ineluctable problem is also to control collective passions and the historic struggle. The scope of art, despite the regrets of the plagiarist, has been extended from psychology to the human condition. When the passions of the times put the fate of the whole world at stake, creation wants to dominate the whole of destiny. But, at the same time, it maintains, in the face of totality, affirmation of unity. In simple words, creation is then imperilled, first by itself, and then by the spirit of totality. To create today, is to create dangerously." Camus, The Rebel, p. 242. Here, Eric Bentley's statement that Lawrence throughout his later writings oscillated between a philosophy of Love and Power finds its philosophical explanation. Lawrence's work embraces both the ecstasy of love and the collective passions of the historic struggle, and both supply the basis for The Plumed Serpent's significance.

Lawrence's primitivism did not constitute a solution of this problem, since, founded on a total revolt from the type of rational thought which, symbolized by science, appeared to him as an undesirable kind of non-human or machine thought, it is an implicit rejection of the possibility or necessity of humane society. He did not seem to realize that men would not give up either the fruits of science or its mere pursuit as a successful mode of satisfactory human activity and intellectual discipline. His revolt against this unique development was a challenge to civilization itself.

I have called his revolt primitivistic because his anti-intellectualism manifested itself in terms of a calculated psychological reversionism and a wholly gratuitous flight from whatever one might choose to select as the few ppor facts of history. This study has contended that however poor these facts may be they are indubitable facts, and so deserve respect. It has also been pointed out that Lawrence's primitivism was partly colored by nihilism because it desired to dispose of the intellectual presuppositions of contemporary civilization in the name of human dignity and freedom; yet, unlike the nihilism of Nietzsche, for example, it did not accept a rigorous ascetism as the only possible safeguard through the chaos which would be engendered by the destruction of all the old forms. To put it another way, Lawrence's nihilism is primitivistic because it wished to reestablish vanished modes of wholeness, spontaneous action, thought and life whose former existence

is founded on guesses at best, and it is this consideration which led me to suspect that his plea for spontaneity may have been a mask for irrational forces embodying the mere will to destruction.

Yet, The Plumed Serpent's importance is not diminished by its irrationality; it is to Lawrence's credit that he was a fearless if dangerous creator who, by worshipping the daemonic, reminds rationality that the irrational is never to be denied, and perhaps never to be comprehended, but that if it is admitted it may be controlled. The Plumed Serpent's terrible beauty is to be admired, certainly; but since it takes on many aspects of the sublime, it is to be feared for its inhumanity, too. Perhaps this is the true burden of Lawrence's prophecy: that man's future is bringing an end of what he has heretofore thought to be his humanity; perhaps by seeking the primitive and archaic he was protraying an inhuman future that might well be upon his contemporaries. If so, his work gives criticism the wherewithal to deny that future, and in denying it to seek the rational alternatives. This will in the end redound to Lawrence; his phoenix will have risen from its ashes, but it will be an altogether different creature from the one that he could have expected or wished.

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