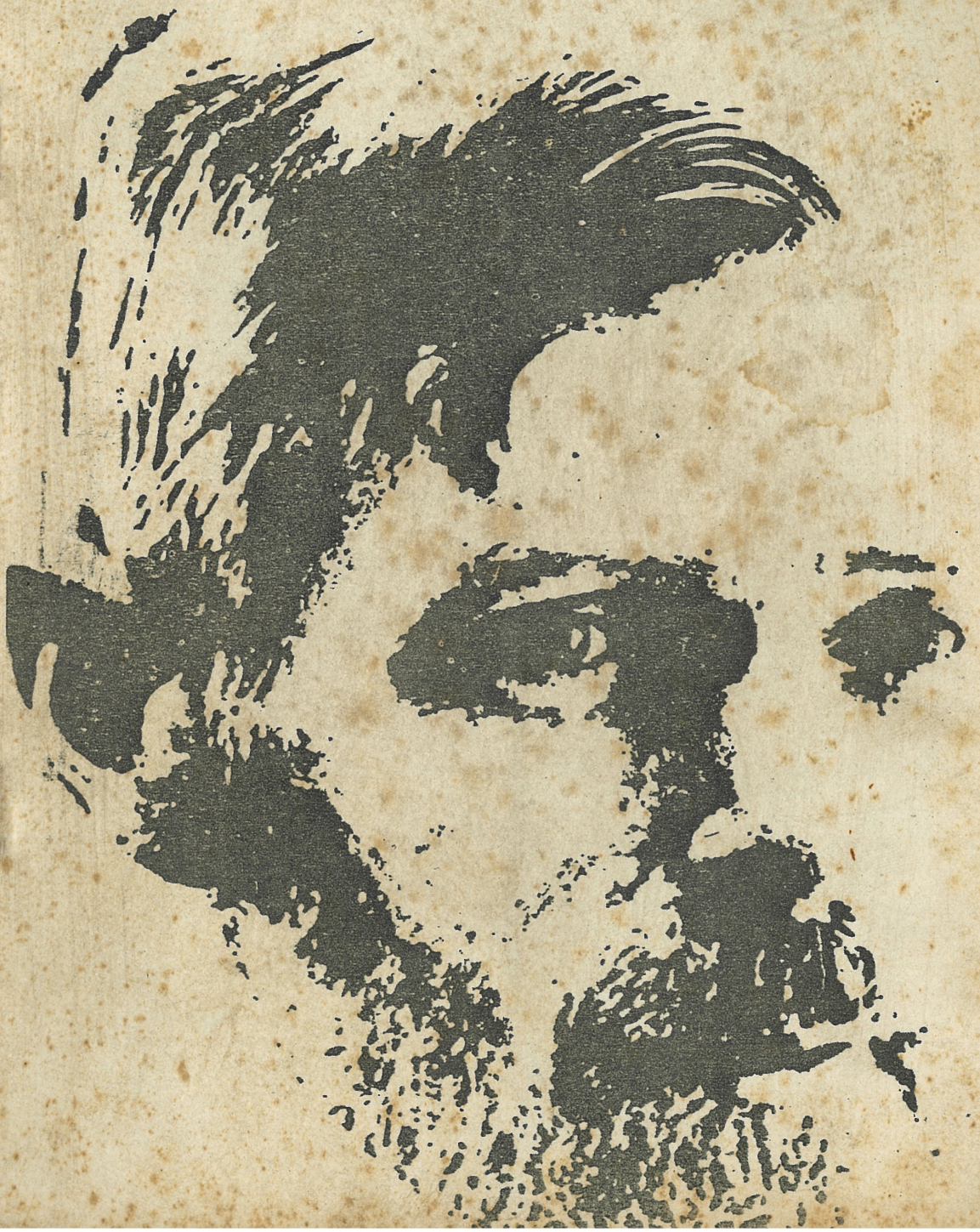
WAGDY FISHAWY

D. H. LAWRENCE
A CRITICAL STUDY



D. H. LAWRENCE
A CRITICAL STUDY

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TO

THE PHOENIX
IN THE BURNING FLAMES

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

If Dryden had known Ben Jonson ; if Coleridge had supped with Shakespeare ; if Arnold had sailed with Shelley, Gittings caroused with Keats, and Empson argued with Milton, what a fascinating dimension had been added to their criticism of these great writers ! And some critics there are who have had personal ties with those whose works have been the objects of their analytical faculties. For this reason we lend an especially attentive ear to Coleridge when he speaks of Wordsworth ; and for the same reason we should pay particular regard to John Middleton Murry's criticism of D.H. Lawrence.

The relationship between Murry and Lawrence was one of the closest to have existed between a creative writer and a man who was also to become one of his most perceptive critics. It was a passionate, shifting relationship. Lawrence could love Murry with an intensity which made him yearn for a pact of bloodbrothership ; he could also react so bitterly as to call Murry a "toad", an "obscene bug", and a "small stinker". Interesting in itself, the relationship is still more compelling because of the autobiographical nature of Lawrence's writings. Murry figures, to a greater or lesser degree, in several of Lawrence's novels. His comments on them have therefore quite exceptional interest and importance.

The critic who is personally invovled is, of course, not likely to be the most objective of commentators, and it is particularly necessary that his criticism should itself receive interpretation. Dr. Fishawy, during his sojourn in England, studied

intensively both Murry's life and his writings, and it is with every justice that he focused his study upon Murry's discussions of Lawrence's novels and of his own place in them. Murry was strongly post-Freudian in his approach to literature. His criticism is rooted in spychological considerations. This is appropriate both to Lawrence's novels, in which the author's tormented efforts to explore and to transcend his own personality are so evident, and to discussions of the mysterious elements in his personal relationship with the novelist. There are mysteries which, it seems likely, Murry himself did not care to probe too deeply. His fourth wife is still alive. More evidence may come to light in the future, as those who knew Murry and Lawrence drop away.

Meanwhile, Dr. Fishawy offers us a scholarly, eminently readable study which cannot but deepen our insight into Murry as critic, Lawrence as novelist, and both of them as men of exceptional talent and unique individuality. Dr. Fishawy writes of Murry with veneration, as an enthusiast. It is to be hoped that his work will help to establish both Murry and Lawrence in their proper places in the hierarchy of English literature.

Stanley Wells.

CHAPTER I

A NOVELIST AND HIS CRITIC

This chapter represents an attempt to place John Middleton Murry and D.H. Lawrence in critical perspective, which means that the personal relation between the novelist and his critic is going to be explored, and that Murry's critical approach to Lawrence's production will be expounded. Personal interpretation and critical evaluation will be, carefully and cautiously, given whenever it is necessary and possible, for the relation between the two men was not simple ; it was as difficult and as complicated as the intricate threads of a tangled clew.

To Murry, Lawrence was a genius, a prophet, an angel, a devil, and a divided man to the end ; (1) the sensitive soul that uttered the grim words : "the world is a lovely place if one avoids man so why not avoid him ! why not ! why not ! I am tired of humanity."(2) At times, he seemed to Murry to be another John the Baptist, standing by the side of the river Thames, threatening woe. Nevertheless, Murry declared in the **Adelphi :** "I follow Mr. D.H. Lawrence into rebellion, and carry my small flag in the shadow of his sombre-splendid banner."(3)

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(1) J.M. Murry, **Reminiscences of D.H. Lawrence** (London, 1933), p. 166.

(2) **Selected Letters,** with an introduction by Aldous Huxley (London, 1971), p. 176.

(3) **The Adelphi** (October, 1923).

To Lawrence, Murry, as an individual, had a promising and "genuine side to his nature" ; he was the right man to be taken for the disciple who would carry the banner and follow the same track defending the master's message. To use Mrs. Carswell's expression, he perceived in Murry a "colleague and successor who would build up the temple when he, Lawrence, had cut out the ground". (4) As a critic, Lawrence put it beyond all doubt that Murry was the best critic in England : "I am sure you are the best critic in England : I'm **sure** you can help terrifically to a new, cleaner outlook" (**Selected Letters,** p. 72).

But, in spite of these highly charged opinions, expressing mutual respect, admiration and love, the most prominent two leading figures of the twenties could not get on with each other; they fell apart. To trace the cause and effect of this bitter conflict, it is necessary to begin with the early developments in the relationship between the two men.

Murry met Lawrence for the first time in 1913, Just at the beginning of their career : Lawrence was not yet in the full circle of light, though known as the promising author of **Sons and Lovers** ; and Murry was living with Katherine Mansfield, with nothing at his back as a man of letters except the **Rhythm** which he edited in collaboration with his beloved. Lawrence sent them a short story — his first contribution to the **Rhythm** — which they accepted enthusiastically, welcoming the young

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(4) Catherine Carswell. **The Savage Pilgrimage** (London, 1932), p. 29.

novelist as a fellow way-farer, and inviting him to their flat. What happened during this first meeting, what effect the two men had on each other, is not given in detail in Murry's two major works on D.H. Lawrence. (5) In his **Reminiscences,** Murry is content to say : "Only one vivid picture remains, of ourselves sitting in opposite pairs on the two sides of an omnibus as we went off to lunch somewhere in Soho. Lawrence was slim and rather boyish, he wore a large straw hat that suited him well. Mrs. Lawrence, a big Panama over her flaxen hair. Straw hats, and sunshine and gaiety" (p. 33). Though what is given is not enought, one does not hesitate to say that the first meeting was a success; the mere use of the word "gaiety" is highly indicative of a mutual response which was confirmed by Lawrence's invitation to the Murrys who were to call in at Broadstairs "the very next sunday."

Murry, who was still on the threshold of the unknown in his relation with Lawrence, did not take the invitation seriously, thinking that it was no more than a mere expression of good feelings ; so he did not go. Undoubtedly, he was wrong in his evaluation of the situation, which was due to a lack of understanding. Nonetheless, he tried to account for it by saying that "if we had really believed that we were expected to be there, we should have explained that we hadn't the money" (**Reminiscences,** p. 34). The idea of their being so poor seemed, to Lawrence, a very stupid one, for, as he wrote in his letter to

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(5) **Son of Woman,** and **Reminiscences of D.H. Lawrence.**

them, "you seemed to me rich." In the same letter he renewed the invitation, hoping that the Murrys would be able to pass a week-end with them :

> Come for the week-end and bathe. We've got a tent in a little bay on the foreshore ,and great waves come and pitch on high up, so I feel like Horace, about to smite my cranium on the sky. I can only swim a litte bit, and I am a clown in the water, but it is jolly. So you come and bathe on Saturday. It'll be high tide then about five. And bathe on Sunday and bathe on Monday morning. Then you will feel much jolier. (**Reminiscences**, p. 35)

Receiving this letter, Murry and Katherine joined the Lawrences at Broadstairs, where they passed a really jolly time, swimming "naked in the half light."

Lawrence, at such an early period of his career, needed friends, or to be more accurate one must say that he wanted disciples ; and in Murry, he thought, he found a "Peter", the first of the disciples. So, he began by asking him to leave all he had — though what Murry had was not much — and follow him to Italy. Once more Murry committed the same mistake of promising without giving himself the time to think about the possibilities and the prospects of his going to such a place. He began to think only after the Lawrences had left. His position was difficult, and his going to Italy was, to him, a step leading into a wilderness where he would not have the slightest chance of earning a living : "I was only a journalist and could see no way at all of making even ten shillings a week from Italy. I was not like Lawrence, a writer of books — I had to wait another four years to get even my first book published, and that was

published only because I owed the publisher £ 25 and there was no other way to pay the debt" **(Reminiscences,** p. 36). Consequently, he did not go to Italy, as he had promised.

Lawrence's reaction was a "furious" letter, full of abusive words which hid beneath them an emotional strain and perhaps love for the man to whom they were addressed. Murry could not help blaming himself, for Lawrence had succeeded, in a relatively short time, in winning his admiration. To fail a man of Lawrence's mettle was not to pass without reaction ; Lawrence's violent words created in Murry a new surge of feelings : "Lawrence loved men, and he kindled love in them. I had never felt for a man before what his letter made me feel for him. It was a new thing, aunique thing, in my experience ; and it was to remain unique" **(Reminiscences,** p. 36). What intensified Murry's feeling of remorse was the sad and sorrowful tone of Lawrence's letters. He was lonely, unhappy, and "fed up with miseries and sufferings." He needed friends, true individuals who could believe in him as a man with a mission, not as a mere being that had the ability to produce something readable." "Can you understand," he wrote to Murry in 1914, "how cruelly I feel the want of friends who will believe in me a bit ? People think I'm a sort of queer fish that can write ; that is all, and how I loathe it : There isn't a soul that cares a damn for me, except Frieda — and it's rough to have all the burden put on her" **(Selected Letters,** p. 73).

In June 1914, Lawrence returned to England to live with Frieda at Cholesbury, in Buckinghamshire. The Murrys lived

with them for ten days, while furnishing and decorating a cottage of their own. During this period, Murry tried to have an understanding of Lawrence's way of thinking which seemed, to him highly philosophical, if not mysterious. Lawrence spoke about Dostoeivsky, love and law, the sensuous nature and Murry's lack of it ; then about the nature of the tragic work and the creation of character in the novel. There was a streak of philosophical mysticism colouring and sometimes discolouring Lawrence's argument which made it difficult for Murry to have a full grasp of what Lawrence was driving at : "I tried to unrderstand Lawrence's words in those days ; sometimes I got half-way, but seldom nearer" (**Reminiscences**, p. 46). There was a gap, though not a wide one at that time, but still a gap, between the two men's ideas, in addition to a difference in education. Murry had fifteen years of serious classical education of which he could not easily free himself to accept Lawrence's sensuous mysticism. Richard Aldington, an acquaintance, if not a friend, of both Murry and Lawrence comments on Murry's puzzled attitude by saying that : Lawrence made no effort to clarify this uncertain mystical thought. He knew that Murry was an Oxford man who had been through the schools, knew the terms of philosophy and had been trained in logic. With his phobia against being worsted in an argument, his feeling that he must play the leader and superior in company, he may have thought that the more vaguely he talked and the more he hashed up symbolism and metaphysics the less chance Murry had to refute him. He certainly had Murry puzz-

led — and if a philosopher cannot understand a new philosophy, who can. (6)

So, from the start Lawrence's thought was incomprehensible to Murry, it was neither well established nor clearly defined. More serious than this was the fact that Murry was approaching Lawrence as a person and a writer of a bright genius who should be accepted and read with joy - an idea which Lawrence abhorred, simply because he wanted Murry to take him for a leader, a prophet. Lawrence was not asking for equals ; he was yearning for a group of people who would be inspired and illuminated by his own ideas, and who would have full faith in his moral teaching : "I call it, helping people to have **faith.** I am rather great on faith just now, I do believe in it. We are ashamed of ourselves out of existence. One ought to have faith in what one ultimately is" **(Refiniscences,** p. 52). But Murry would not take him for what he wished himself to be ; and so by refusing to believe in him as a master with a new message, Lawrence jumbed to the conclusion that Murry had failed him.

By personal experience that was always to be felt on the pulses — Murry's most effective way of gaining knowledge — he discovered that Lawrence was a divided personality : three "distinct" Lawrences that appeared, to the unknowing, as if they were a well-integrated whole. But to Murry the essence of the Lawrentian personality was discernible, though not fully comprehensible. The first Lawrence was the man as a person

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(6) Richard Aldington, **A Portrait of A Genius, But...** (London, 1950), p. 158.

approaching his acquaintances and dealing with them as persons, directly and naturally, without allowing social berriers or matters of faith to intervene in the contact ; this Lawrence was loving and lovable. The second Lawrence was the impersonal one, in whom Murry saw "a man of destiny, a prophet, a Messiah." This was the most impressive of the three : an overpowering personality that ,at times, overwhelmed Murry by the magnitude of its prophetic tone. By the use of the word "prophet", Murry does not mean that Lawrence had the power to prophesy, or that he was divinely inspired :

> By calling Lawrence a prophet, I do not mean that he prophesied truly. I am convinced that much of his actual prophecy was false — and some of it even pernicious. What I mean is hard to convey, except in peculiar terms. But I might say that in Lawrence life itself was making an experiment towards a new kind of man, and that the experiment was crucial. Everything that he did and was, was therefore significant ; it had a meaning transending Lawrence's own personality. **(Reminiscences,** p. 63)

It is worth noting that this prophetic side of Lawrence's personality was stressed, not only by Murry, but by so many a critic who supported and cinfirmed Murry's standpoint. It is quite enough, here, to refer to Aldous Huxley's introduction to Lawrence's letters, where Lawrence is described as a man who "sees more than any human being ought to see" **(Selected Letters,** p. 27). Lawrence himself, in one of his letters to Mrs. Carswell, indicated implicitly what Murry had strated explicitly : "I believe that a single individual may prove to be of more worth than the whole generation of men in which he has lived"

(**The Savage Pilgrimage,** p. 263). Undoubtedly, the man implicated was no other than Lawrence himself.

The third Lawrence was a terrible personality that Murry did neither love nor admire : a "man possessed by the Furies," who hated everything and who had a diabolical desire to destroy everything. To his crushing devastating personality, Murry was once a victim. In one of his terrifying fits, Lawrence called Murry a dirty bug sucking human blood. "I was only once," said Murry, the "actual victim of one of these outbursts of rage, and then it passed into a kind of delirium during which he would call out my name in the night with all manner of strange and to me unintelligible denunciations. And again the impression made upon me was ineradicable. It was a turning point in our relation "(**Reminiscences,** p. 64). This strange and raging Lawrence was feared, avoided, and at times hated, not only by Murry but also by a good number of the Lawrence circle who were nunplussed and estranged by his fits of frenzied rage. Philip Heseltine observed that, though Lawrence was an outstanding thinker and a prominent creative writer, social relationship with him was a kind of impossibility : "He acts like a subtle and deadly poison. The affair by which I found him out is far too long to enter upon here.... The man must really be a bit mad, though his behaviour nearly landed me in a fearful fix." (7)

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(7) Aldington, **op. cit.,** p. 178.

This Lawrence was very difficult to approach and perhaps impossible to satisfy. His self-confidence, which quite often verged on the brink of arrogance and unbearable pride would not allow him by any means to admit, even on the rarest of occasions, that he was wrong, or that he had failed in dealing properly with others, or that his mind was "distraught in a chaos of contradictions." Murry stated condidly that Lawrence was trying incessantly to smother the love that was palpitating within his heart; he would sacrifice and deny it, if it was the only way for him to show his perfect male power. The image of a dream-figure Lawrence: "a bloody and brutal savage, a born hunter," was always haunting him, as if it were an obsessional nightmare from which there was no awakening, no deliverance, no hope of salvation. He was doomed, as Murry said, to be one of the damned. Aldous Huxley tried to account for such a state by saying that Lawrence's gift condemned him to lead a solitary life; secluded and barred, he lived in his own prison unable to break the chains and get into touch with his fellow beings. It was the price of genius. He would, as his mother told him at he beginning of his career, "battle, battle, and suffer." Battling his way to fame, he faced the inevitable: a life-long suffering. This point is stressed by Aldous Huxley in his introduction to Lawrence's letters, though he contradicts himself when he says that Lawrence knew "how to adapt himself. To one correspondent he is gay, at moments larky - because larkiness is expected of him. To another he is gravely reflective. To a third fe speaks the language of prophesying and revelation" (**Selected Letters,** p. 29). Here, one cannot help

pointing out Huxley's miscomprehension of Lawrence's personality; it was not adaptability; it was the divided personality of the man, the artist, and the prophet which was intelligently perceived and described by Murry. Moreover Lawrence's own words refute the allegation of self-adaptability: "I suffer badly from being cut off.... At times one is forced to be essentially a hermit" (**Selected Letters,** p. 20). Nonetheless, Huxley may be excused, for he did not pass through the long, fluctuating, and agonizing Murry-Lawrence experience. He knew Lawrence circa 1926, some few years before the latter's death, when the geniune Lawrentian flame was about to be extinguished .

Lawrence's loneliness and seclusion drove him to cling to Murry: a man of the same unique mettle, though separate and divided in a different way. In 1916 he asked Murry and Katherine to join them in Cornwall where his sufferings were unendurable as a result of the feeling of his being completely cut off from the rest of humanity. The nervous strain created by the devastating World War was depressing him, and the helplessness of his being unable to participate — though he proudly denied it — was gnawing at his heart. With the Murrys, he and Frieda would be able to create their own "little world" and escape from the "contagion". The appeal, said Murry, "was of a kind that we could not resist. It was made with all his amazing tenderness and deep affection. We two were the only people remaining in his life, he said; he looked at the rest across a grave" (**Reminiscences**, p. 76).

It was difficult for Murry and Katherine to reject the appeal of a man who relied desperately on his faith in them. In April (1916) they joined the Lawrences in Cornwall, where they lived in a neighbouring cottage. But from the start everything indicated that such a neighbourhood would not be a success, and that the "little world" of Lawrence's dream would crumble and collapse at the feet of its dream-maker : the man who was always hoping against the very nature fo things. "The white gulls wheeled about, crying desperately ; and our hearts sank. We tried to be gay, not to disappoint Lawrence, ... but we felt like weeping. Our fairy-tale was over" (**Reminiscences,** p. 77).

"Our fairy-tale was over", such an expression is quite honest, and significantly indicative ; the promising friendship between the two men was fated to wither as a result of an unacceptable damand : Lawrence asked Murry to submit to a state of mindlessness and blood-brothership. Lawrence, appalled by the enormity of the destruction all around him, could not avoid succumbing to some dreadful lapses of mindlessess which had all the impressive power the nightmare. Murry thought it was his function to help his friend out of such a distressing state, but Lawrence, being Lawrence, tried to drag him into the heart of the maelstrom of mindlessness. Moreover, he exerted a forlornly reckless effort to force Murry into what he called the "Blutbrüderschaft." Murry, Lawrence insisted. should swear to be faithful to a sacramental "blood-brotherhood" between them. Murry, lacking in understanding of what Lawrence meant by his words, declared that his love

for Lawrence was so true and genuine that there was no need for "any kind of sacrament". Such a declaration was not enough to satisfy the "dark gods" that were festering under Lawrence's skin. "Mingling of blood" was an urgent necessity that should not be eschewed, "so that neither of us could go back on it." Murry was scared and nauseated. He declared that he was "half-frightened, half-repelled"; his drawing back in sickening despair was so apparent as to make Lawrence cry in frenzied rage: "I hate your love, I **hate** it. You're an obscene bug, sucking my life away." The defeat of friendship was then absolute: "The vindictiveness with which he said it made me almost physically sick. But the words were burnt into my brains. Now I was scared and utterly out of my depth. The only thing to do was to go away" (**Reminiscences,** pp. 79-80).

What Lawrence was exactly asking for will remain an unapprehended mystery in the Murry-Lawrence relationship, in spite of the fact that so many an attempt has been made to clarify the point and discover the truth. Yudishtar claims that the man-to-man relationship, which Lawrence was asking for, was absolutely intellectual, void of any unkempt "emotionalism". To support his case Yudishtar quotes two of Lawrence's letters to Cynthia Asquish and to Katherine Mansfield. In the first Lawrence tells lady Asquith that "he [Murry] would not believe in the work. He would deplore it. He says the whole thing is personal: that between him and me it is a case of Lawrence and Murry, not of any union in an idea". In the second letter Lawrence writes at length elaborating the idea referred to, in passing, in the first letter :

> I want relations which are not purely personal... but relations based upon some unanimous accord in truth or belief, and a harmony of purpose, rather than of personality. I am weary of personality. It remains now whether Murry is still based upon the personal hypothesis : because if he is, then our ways are different. I don't want a purely personal reationship with him ; he is a man, therefore our relation should be based on purpose ; not upon that which we are, but upon that which we wish to bring to pass." (8)

Yudishtar's contention, then, is that the Murry-Lawrence relationship, from Lawrence's standpoint, should be based on a unity of purpose ,on what Lawrence calls in the **Fantasia** the purposive urge. The relationship is thus intellectualized and raised above the doubts of the loathsome physical ; there is no "sloppy emotionalism in mind." What is passing strange is that Yudishtar seems to have forgotten, what he has stated in his "An Approach" at the beginning of the book. He quotes the same part of Lawrence's letter to Katherine, and gives a completely different interpretation. The only way, says Yudishtar in his comment on the letter, "of true relationship between men is for them to meet in some common belief : but Lawrence wished this belief could be also physical and not merely mental. He wanted the expansion of friendship and brotherhood into a full relationship where there could also be physical and passional meeting. (9)"

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(8) Yudishtar, **Conflict In The Novels of D.H. Lawrance** (Edinburgh, 1969), pp. 186 - 187.

(9) **Ibid.**, p. 39.

The contradiction between the two different interpretations of one and the same letter is quite apparent; it needs no comment. But it must be said that the second interpretation is more accurate and more convincing than the first one.

E.W. Tedlock, though he does not elaborate the point, states bluntly that the friendship Lawrence asked was more than what "Murry was prepared to give" (10) But it seems that Tedlook does not have much to say, the point is referred to in passing, without being explored or supported, perhaps bceause it is not in the main current of his stream of thought.

George Ford is not ambigious in his reference to the Murry-Lawrence friendship. He affirms that Lawrence's insistence on having a friendship based on blood-brothership was a demand that had a tinge of abnormality about it; Murry, scared, fled away in dismay, and Lawrence was left aolne, in bitterness, to bewail the loss of a friendship he had never succeeded to attain. The **Blutbrüderschaft,** says G. H. Ford, which Lawrence "kept proposing led, instead, to a gradual dissolution of the relationship. By June 1916 Murry fled in alarm from an incomprehensible and undefined intimacy.... Even after a considerable cooling-off period Lawrence raised the subject again in a letter to Katherine Mansfield in 1918 : "I believe tremendously in friendship between man and man, a pledging of men to each

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(10) E.W. Tedlock, **D.H. Lawrence: Artist & Rebel** (The university of New Mexico Pres, 1963), p. 106.

other inviolably. But I have never met or formed such a friendship.... Please give the letter to Jack. I say it to him particularly'." (11)

Ford's use of the two adjectives "incomprehensible" and "undefined" is superbly honest. There is no pretension or pomposity on the critic's side ; neither does he throw his arrow beyond the frontier of his own knowledge.

Richard Aldington is admirably judicious in his attempt to explicate the relationship between Murry and Lawrence at its climacteric. He does not have the least doubt concerning the fact that to Lawrence, Murry meant so much, more than any other man in the Lawrence circle. He accounts for Lawrence's frenzied bursts of rage against Murry as an irrevocable proof of the depth of Lawrence's love for Murry. Such an attitude on Lawrence's part was splendid, but for "a twist to this affection which Murry could not accept. Lawrence had at this time got into his head the notion of Blutbrüderschaft.... He never stopped to ask whether this barbaric whimsy of bloo-brotherhood had any charm for his friend." (12) Of course it had not any "charm" for a man of Murry's caliber and constitution. Ignoring Murry's evasion, Lawrence, persistently and insistently, tried hard to force him into what Aldington calls the mystical-sensual notion of bloodbrotherhood. Disappointed and frustrated by Murry's repulsion Lawrence was nervously driven to the verge of "insanity."

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(11) D.H. Lawrence : **The Rainbow and Women In Love a Casebook**, edited by Colin Clarke (London, 1969), p. 37.
(12) Aldington, **op. cit.**, p. 182.

On the whole Aldington seems to be sympathetic with Murry ; he deals with the point extensively, easily demonstrating the irrationality of Lawrence's attitude towards Murry. But once more the question imposes itself forcibly : what was the nature of the blood-brotherhood which Lawrence was frenziedly yearning for ?

Here, one may suggest, perhapse wrongly, that Lawrence was suffering from suppressed homosexual tendencies. One person, only one, could have revealed the **secret** of the whole mystery, but unfortunately that person is by now dead and buried in one of the graves of Thelnatham Churchyard. But even had he been brought back from the dead, Murry would have never told the truth : "I had been deliberately reticent on many points" ; and again : "It is my deep conviction that no circumstantial record of my relation with Lawrence can ever give the truth. If the story is given from my side suppression is inevitable" (**Reminiscences,** p. 11). This is honestly true, for, undoubtedly, Murry knew much more than what is expressed in his writings, but, as G. Wilson Knight puts it, he was reluctant to speak more openly." (13)

However, hostilities between the two men did not flare immediately on both sides : Murry was too much of a coward to begin a serious breach in their relationship, and Lawrence was still in need of friends who could understand his ideas and who would help him in realizing the world of his dreams which was

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(13) Colin Clarke, **op. cit.,** p. 137.

represented, at that time, in the fascinating idea of creating a "Rananim". Still, he hoped that Murry would be one of the main pillars of the newly created world. Murry refers to Lawrence's notion, but he does not develop the idea : "We would get away to an island : Lawrence, Frieda, Katherine, Koteliansky, and I. The island has a name — Rananim — with the a's very long. The name is Hebrew, and it was supplied by Koteliansky : it came from a Hebrew chant : I have forgotten what it means" (**Reminiscences,** p. 40). Though Murry was not clear about the meaning of Rananim, as the quotation indicates, a satisfactory interpretation can be found in George J. Zytaruk's introduction to Lawrence's letters to Koteliansky which were published in 1970 under the title : **The Quest for Rananim.** Zytaruk agrees with Murry's argument that the term was provided by Koteliansky, and that the origin of the word could not be easily determined ; it "has been the subject of controversy". But, Zytaruk adds :

> K. W. Gransden has supplied some useful suggestions: The promised land has many names. Lawrence's name for it was **Rananim.** This is difficult to explain, but it seems probable that Kot [Koteliansky] may have had something to do with the Hebrew root meaning "rejoice",... Kot used to amuse Lawrence by chanting a phrase which Lawrence, not quite correctly, transliterates as "Ranane Sadikhim Badanoi", "Rejoice, O ye righteous in the lord." It may also be connected with the ward Ra'annanim, meaning green, fresh, or flourishing, an adjective found in the fourteenth verse of psalm 92. (14)

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(14) **The Quest for Rananim, D.H. Lawrence's Letters to S.S. Koteliansky, 1914 to 1930,** edited with an introduction by George J. Zytaruk (McGill, 1970), p. XXVIII.

Though the word is Koteliansky's the idea was one of the most fascinating dreams of Lawrence's youth. From the very beginning of his life he yearned for a big house where he could live with his mother, with the people he liked all around him, in a world of permanent happiness: "Wouldn't be fine ! Wouldn't be just !" It was a hope to which he clung, regardless of all perversity and hostility; a colony should be formed, whatever the cost and hazards might be, where he could live with some people who loved him and believed in his ideas. It was Lawrenc'e Utopia, the promised land, the colony of escape: "I want you, he requested in one of his letters to Ottoline Morrell, "to form the nucleus of a new community which shall start a new life amongst us —a life in which the only riches is the integrity of character. So that each one may fulfil his own nature and deep desires to the utmost.... It is communism based, not on poverty but on riches, not on humility but on pride, not on sacrifice but on complete fulfilment in the flesh of all strong desire, not on heaven but on earth". (15)

Night after night, as Murry related, they talked incessantly of their "Rananim." Murry's apparent enthusiasm, which was an indication of his love for the personal Lawrence, enlivened Lawrence who thought that his friend had, at last, believed in him as a leader, endowed with the power of performing a miracle. Lawrence's optimism reached the verge of the impossible : "Only wait", he wrote to Koteliansky, "and we will remove mountains and set them in the midst of the sea." (16)

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(15) Aldington, **op. cit.,** pp. 161 - 2.
(16) **The Quest for Ramanim, op. cit.,** p. 28.

But misunderstanding between Lawrence and Murry was mutual as well as inevitable. Lawrence could not appreciate the difficulty of his friend's position, and he never cared to consider that Murry had his own career to pursue and his own future to make. And Murry, on the other hand, was not willing to commit himself to a philosophy which he could not thoroughly comprehend : a philosophy that seemed, to him, to be based on the worship of the flesh and nothing but the flesh. The gulf between the two men's trends of thought was wide ; the possibility of coming to a compromise was, nearly, non-existent and quite hopeless. Murry believed — in so far as the relation between man and woman was concerned — in the extremity of spiritual love ; Lawrence was at the very end of the opposite pole, with a firm belief in the dark, unfathomable sources of the flesh. Each of them thought that the path he was treading upon was the right one ; no meeting point was to be expected, for the two paths were founded on parallel lines of opposition. But this vehement contrarity had its attraction for Lawrence. "Precisely because I was the person who could not understand Lawrence, I was called to be the person who must understand him" (**Reminiscences,** p. 15).

The problem was a question of understanding, and it was unsolvable. Lawrence did not demand an intellectual understanding ; what Murry was required to do was to go through a love experience similar to that of Lawrence. Such a demand struck Murry as a kind of impossibility which he could neither try nor achieve, "for, mingled with the core of Lawrence's love experience, was a pure hatred" (**Reminiscences,** p. 16).

Henceforth, failure in the relation between the two friends was unavoidable. Murry regretfully admitted that "I was summoned to be... his [Lawrence's] friend. I failed.... The part I was called upon to play in Lawrence's life was that of the friend who understood. I did not understand. The experience that had shaped, the experience that was shaping Lawrence when I first came to know him intimately was beyond my range. There was nothing in my own small experience which corresponded even remotely to that which was most vital in his own" (**Reminiscences,** pp. 12 - 13).

The cause of Murry's failure is, now, quite evident: he loved an ideal Lawrence, a Lawrence whom he created, elevated, uplifted, and idolized as if he were an apotheosis of perfection. As for the real Lawrence — the man with all his defects as a divided human being — Murry, being a coward by nature, could neither face nor love. It was only after Lawrence's death that Murry was able to liberate himself of the Lawretian idol, and to think of the real one that had once been. To face the real Lawrence, says Murry, "meant to hate him, with a pure hatred, and contend with him until we both were vanquished. And because I was incapable of this destiny, this supreme service which he demanded of me, I smouldered against him with a hatred that was impure, until at last my own being began slowly to be. But my love for the ideal Lawrence died terribly hard, and I believe that only with his bodily death could it have been finally overthrown" (**Reminiscences,** p. 26).

Murry's own words validate the verdict passed on Murry by

Lawrence: "You shouldn't say you love me, You hated me intensely." Though the statement is sweeping in its generalization, it contains a part of the truth: Murry hated and, at times, reacted violently against Lawrence's denial of the "spiritual man in him."

Inevitably, Murry perceived that to be Lawrence's friend was to be his enemy, to fight him, in order to rescue him from himself. But he could not fight Lawrence; he had not the courage to face him man to man. He looked up at Lawrence as his superior: a high-pinioned genius hovering in skies different from and higher than his own. The bondage of his love for such a man was too strong to let him fly in his face, contradicting or opposing his impersonal beliefs, as he should have done at that time.

But with the passing of time Murry's liberated individuality began to cristallize. And as the gap between him and Lawrence grew wider, he felt that a collision with Lawrence was unavoidable and that he had the growing power to go through it and endure the bloody thrusts of a bitter struggle. In the last resort, says Murry, "it was the old instinctive certainty that either he must destroy me, or I him. In the earliest days, it had come to me that he wanted to dsetroy me. Now, a dim conviction was beginning to grow in me that I could destroy him. And this dim conviction took shape and form precisely as the Knowledge of my own identity began to penetrate me. And this identity began to harden in me only after I had let him go his way. As I then, in the foreknowledge of irrevocable

separation, slowly became my real and impersonal self, so slowly I became aware that it was not Lawrence who could destroy me, but I who could destroy Lawrence" (**Reminiscences**, pp. 23-24). To destroy Lawrence was, to Murry, to free him from his self-division and replace it by self-integrity and wholeness of body and soul; a task — to put it bluntly — beyond the power of Middleton Murry.

However, the falsity of their friendship did not last long; hostilities began to flare. In 1915 **The Rainbow** was published, then banned as obscene. The most prominent men of letters, with the exception of Arnold Bennett, did not bother to defend Lawrence against a hostile and unjust verdict, he was left alone to find his way out of the impasse. Lawrence looked to Murry, a critic with a rapidly growing reputation, but even he remained silent. This created in Lawrence a sense of disappointment and frustration; he lost his faith in Murry. "Murry does not want to help me, and he won't," was Lawrence's final impression.

The breach between them took place in July 1916, and Lawrence, acting on the impulse of the moment, as was typical of him, did not disguise his attitude or hide his indignation. He was betrayed, as he believed, by the closest of his friends. "Murry and I", he wrote to Catherine Carswell, "are not really associates. How I deceive myself. I am a liar to myself about people.... I give up having intimate friends at all. It is self deception" (**The Savage Pilgrimage**, p. 47). Having rejected Murry as a friend, Lawrence began his "vituperation." "Murry

is a toad — all right," he wrote to Koteliansky in October 1916, "with the toad in him I have nothing to do any more" (**Quest for Rananim,** p. 94). Not only was Murry a toad, but he was also a mud-worm, a filthy stinker. Dostoevsky, said Lawrence in another letter to Koteliansky, "is big & putrid, here, Murry is a small stinker.... And Murry, not being an artist, but only a little ego, is a little muckspout, and there is an end of it. I never said he was honest.... I have liked him and I don't like him any more. Basta ! ... I have had filth in my mouth, Now I spit it out.... I don't want to hear you talk for a fortnight about Murry.... Stink bores me, as well as oppresses me" (**Quest for Rananim,** p. 103).

This torrent of abusive language reveals the hate and anger, as well as the suppressed love, of a frustrated and disappointed friend who, expecting and hoping for too much, got nothing but the disillusionment of his day-dreams.

In a fit of uncontrollable anger, Lawrence tried to crush Murry as a writer, when Murry was just at the beginning of his career. Commenting on Murry's **Still Life,** Lawrence described it, ironically, as no more than "words, words, words" ; the novel, to him, was absolutely worthless, without any significance as a creative work of art : "It is a kind of wriggling self-abuse which I can't make head or tail of" (**Quest for Rananim,** p. 103). Any way, having given vent to his discontent in different ways and by all means, Lawrence grew tired of it all. In resignation and despair of having the friend he needed, he wrote to Koteliansky on the 7th of November 1916, "I have done with

the Murries [sic], both, for ever — so help me god" (**Quest for Rananim**, p. 95).

Lawrence felt stabbed in the heart by the sense of failure: failure to have even one faithful disciple. Like a Prometheus bound, the vulture of disappointment began to gnaw at his heart, driving him to terrible fits of revolt, agony and despair. His friends, he thought, were against him: they did not believe in his ideals; Murry was against him: he denied his message of the flesh; England was against him: it banned his work and was bent on destroying his career. "It was true," said Murry, "we were in different degrees, all against him" (**Reminiscences**, p. 49). Murry, though he loved Lawrence as a person, disliked what he called the "prophet" in him. The personality of this new and promising genius was attractively fascinating: "I have never known such sheer, rich, simple human happiness — which naturally included misery — as we used to have with him. As a person, we were utterly for him" (**Reminiscences**, p. 50). But as a man with a message, they disappointed and failed him. His thought and philosophy were beyond the power of comprehension, as if they were the jargon and notions of a person coming from a different sphere. Lawrence the prophet was a monstrosity in the world of men. "Lawrence the person," Murry admitted, "Lawrence the writer, we accepted them both with Joy; but Lawrence the prophet — yes, we were all against him" (**Reminiscences**, pp. 50-51).

The only hope for the rejected "prophet" was to exist, to leave the stage where he had been denied and persecuted. He was not to be crucified; no, he would not allow them to touch

him ; his time had not come yet. He had to go first into the wilderness and from there preach his message ; and in the ripeness of time he would fall, but never in England.

Like a denounced Christ he asked for his boat and left, without disciples, for he had none ; they had betrayed him a long time before. It was true that each in turn kissed him, and he knew the meaning of the Kiss : final abandonment. The picture of Judas wobbeld in front of his tired eyes. "The time is fulfilled," he seemed to be repeating the words of Christ, but he would not be forced to the cross ; he would leave the land that had spurned him. In November 1919, Lawrence left England on a "savage pilgrimage" round the world.

From that time till 1923, there was a thorough estrangement between Lawrence and Murry ; Murry neither saw nor heard from him ; the only connecting link was Lawrence's books to which "I felt an increasing hostility." But it must be mentioned that Murry, now and again, tried to renew the relation with Lawrence. In 1922, he wrote Lawrence a letter suggesting a renewal of their friendship. The offer, on Lawrence's side, was unacceptable. Nevertheless, Lawrence left seen a glimpse of glittering hope : "Heaven knows what we are and how we should feel if we met, now that we are changed : we'll have to meet and see" **(Rminiscences, p. 104).**

Murry began to regain his faith in Lawrence after reading the **Fantasia of the Unconscious.** It coincided with the death of Katherine Mansfield, when he was overwhelmed by a sense of loss. Here, Lawrence's **Fantasia** played a prominent part in

regenerating Murry's faith in the living and the dead. The book was, to him, a "wonderful" achievement, a new declaration of faith that "was completely convincing to me in my new, half-convalescent, half-confident condition. Here was something in which I did veritably believe with all my heart, and all my mind, and all my soul" (**Reminiscences,** pp. 105-6). Consequently, he would be Lawrence's "man", his true and most faithful disciple : "He would lead and I would follow." Lawrence, on the other hand, hearing of Katherine's death, sent Murry a sympathetic and encouraging letter, saying that they would "unite" once more after his return to England : "It has been a savage enough pilgrimage these last four years."

In a flare of enthusiasm, Murry, was up in arms preparing the way for his leader's return. He would cling to Lawrence carrying his "small flag" in the "shadow" of the "sombre" and "splendid banner". The **Adelphi** was to be founded as a mouthpiece of Lawrence's new faith, as expressed in the **Fantasia.** Murry would not be the editor ; he would only be a "locum tenens," waiting for the coming of the right man who had the genius and the ability to lead. He waited, and waited for long ; Lawrence was not as good as his word. His fear of England was still unvanquishable : "I mistrust my country," he wrote to Murry in February 1923, "to identify myself with it anymore. And it still gives me a certain disgust. But this may pass. I feel something must happen before I come back" (**Reminiscences,** p. 106).

Lawrence's hesitation puzzled Murry. Lawrence would

come, then he would not come ; he admired the **Adelphi,** then he condemned it. "I like what you say about faith," he wrote to Murry, encouragingly. But to Koteliansky, he put it quite bluntly that the **Adelphi** was a miserable disappointment : "The **Adelphi** also came, & oh dear, I was badly disappointed. It seemed to me so weak, apologetic, Knock-Kneed, with really nothing to justify its existence. A sort of beggar's whine through it all. Mr. Well's parsnips floating in warm butter. Mr. Joiner screamingly ridiculous. No really ! Is this the best possible in England ?" (**Quest for Rananim,** p. 255).

That is why he hesitated. Something should happen before his return to England, and it did not happen ; the **Adelphi** for which he was called back to lead was a ludicrous enterprise. This attitude perplexed and frustrated Murry who could not understand the real motive of Lawrence's behaviour. In any case, the actual cause of Lawrence's hesitancy may be — as accounted for by Catherine Carswell — that he preferred a writing of a new novel in congenial circumstances to a return to England where he would collaborate with a man whom he did not trust. This then, said Mrs. Carswell, "and nothing more sinister was what in Murry's phrase, ailed Lawrence." His "strange instability" and the rest of the fatal sounding phrases mean no more than that an imaginative writer preferred the peaceful production of a new novel in fostering circumstances to throwing in his lot with a new magazine of which he was doubtful along with a man whom he had no cause to trust (**The Savage Pilgrimage,** p. 183).

One cannot help feeling an element of truth in Mrs. Carswell's account, though her book, on the whole, gives one the impression that she was driven by prejudice and personal hatred against Murry, which made her, at times, falsify facts in order to humiliate her adversary and show that his dealings with Lawrence were unrespectable. (17) She is justified in saying that Lawrence preferred to stay away, producing a new work of genius, and in adding that he did not trust Murry. But she shoots beyond the mark, when she alleges that Lawrence's behaviour was consistent. Lawrence's letters show that her stormy attack against Murry's "fatal sounding phrases" is no more than a clever and deceptive use of empty words and hollow phrases. Some lines from Lawrence's letters to Murry must be quoted to justify and support Murry's position against the intelligently intended deception of Mrs. Carswell (18): "I like Mexico, and am still uncertain of my movements. But feel sure I shall be in England before the Autumn" (27 April, 1923); "You'll think I do nothing but change my plans — I cannot help it. I go out to buy my ticket to New York and Europe, then don't buy it" (3 May, 1923); "Don't know why I find it so hard to come to England: but I do. And when I meet Englishmen out here they make me sick" (26 May, 1923); "I think I shall come back now. I shall be back by the beginning of December. Work with you a while on the Adelphi.... But I will come back — I won't say home, it isn't home" (25 October, 1923).

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(17) See **The Savage Pilgrimage**, pp. 10, 34 - 35, 38 - 39, 75,98.
(18) The full text of the letters is in **Reminiscences**, pp. 181 - 185.

In any case, Lawrence was forced back to England, when Frieda left him, against his own will, to see her children in London. It was her decision and, being a woman of a strong will, he could not detain her. But, as he admitted, he could not stand alone without a woman at his back. So, he followed her to England in December 1923. Murry, who met him at the station, was shocked by his appearance : "He looked positively ill", and "his face had a greenish pallor." The first words he uttered, as Murry stated later on, were : "I can't bear it" (**Son of Women**, p. 331). Lawrence was repelled by his going back to England, it made him sick, and he could not stand it, for it was beyond his power of endurance. Just after his arrival, he wrote to Witter Dynner : "Here I am — London — gloom — yellow air — bad cold — bed — old house — Morris wallpaper — visitors — English voices — tea in old cups — poor D.H.L. perfectly miserable, as if he was in his tomb.... As it is, for my sins, and Frieda's I am in London" (**Selected Letters,** pp. 146 - 147). It was not suprising, then, that he returned to England with a "greenish" face, a man diseased both physically and psychologically.

In spite of this self-evident truth, Mrs. Carswell tried to give events a slight twist in order to suit her own purpose. To her, it was quite natural that Lawrence should be shocked to deathly paleness at the sight of his wife waiting for him "so chummingly" with Murry. "Though Murry," said Mrs. Carswell. "might be Lawrence's self-appointed lieutenant on a self-constituted **Adelphi,** Frieda was another matter. Here Murry would

find himself up against the "Unknown God" with a vengeance. In Lawrence's marriage there was no place for any kind of lieutenancy" (**The Savage Pilgrimage,** pp. 192-3). The implications of Mrs. Carswell's hint indicate the existence of a dishonest relationship between Frieda and Murry, and that Murry unscrupulously betrayed his friend. The verification of such an accusation is not so easy to derive. It is true that Murry used to call on Frieda as a close friend, but this must not be taken as an evidence that he betrayed Lawrence. It is also true, as Murry confessed in **Between Two Worlds,** that the fleshy voluptuous woman proposed a love-affair, which was unhesitatingly declined by Murry, out of respect and "loyalty" to his absent friend.

To be suspected by Lawrence was to Murry an unthinkable thought. So he was whole-heartedly, and in complete devotion, ready to follow the author of the **Fantasia** to the promised land. But Lawrence's first suggestion was that the **Adelphi** should be an unsheathed, blazing sword, attacking everything, everything that the English society stood for; everything should "explode in one blaze of denunciation." Once more, Murry was perplexed. The hate-urge was still the main motive behind Lawrence's action creating in him a terrifying lust for destruction. It was the force of such astonishing and compelling circumstances that made Murry hesitate, then draw back in fear, as he had done before, though for different reasons : "I did not need a Lawrence to show me the way to nihilism. I had been there, and emerged again, it was not possible for me to return."

(**Reminiscences,** p. 111).

However, Lawrence, as usual, changed his position; he would not edit the **Adelphi,** and he would not stay in England. Murry should give up the Adelphi and go with him to New Mexico where they would form the "nucleus of a new society." But at the very heart of such a society, Murry saw that Lawrence was aiming at the creation of a "Death-mode", instead of a life-giving-mode, which inevitably would result in nothing but disaster. Lawrence felt that Murry was not ready to join him though Murry declared that he would follow through "personal affection". But this was not satisfactory for a man who wanted men to follow him, not as a person, but as a leader and a saviour, coming with a new set of ideals to re-create a society in his own dream-image. The result was distressing; painful incidents took place, reaching a climax in the famous Café Royal-scene.

Lawrence in an attempt at a show of benevolence and blessedness, gave a dinner party at the "Café Royal", where he told his friends that his stay in England was unbearable, and that if they truly loved him, they should follow him to the new land. Murry in particular, had to make his decision : he had either to stand by the **Adelphi** or by Lawrence. There was no alternative. Lawrence's condition — during the dinner-party — was pitiable ; he drank to excess and could not endure the effect of the "port" to which he was not used. In a flush of love and enthusiasm, Murry embraced and kissed Lawrence. This episode is of crucial importance in the relation between Murry and Lawrence. Two versions can be easily provided : the first is naturally Murry's, and the second is Mrs. Carswell's. What I next remember, says Mrs. Carswell who was an eye-witness,

> is Murry going up to Lawrence and Kissing him with a kind of effusiveness which afflicted me. He must have been sensible of my feeling because he turned to me.
>
> "Women can't understand this," he said, "This is an affair between men. Women can have no part or place in it."
>
> "May be," said I, "But anyway it wasn't a woman who betrayed Jesus with a Kiss."
>
> At this Murry again embraced Lawrence, who stood perfectly still and unresponsive, with a dead-white face in which the eyes alone were alive.
>
> "I have betrayed you old chap, I confess it," continued Murry. "In the past, I have betrayed you. But never again. I call you all to witness, never again." **(The Savage Pilgrimage,** pp. 211-212)

The whole incident, as Mrs. Carswell relates it, ended dramatically : Lawrence, at once, after hearing Murry's confession of betrayal, collapsed, losing consciousness. The import of the quotation lies in the use of the verb "have betrayed. "It undoubtedly refers to the alleged love-affair between Murry and Frieda; the confession, from Mrs. Carswell's point of view, was more than a confirmation to Lawrence's doubts, and that is why, being unable to endure the fatal shock, he fell down unconscious as a lump.

Murry's version reverses the whole situation by changing the tense of the verb "have betrayed", to "don't promise not to betray" ; and so the story takes a completely different turn. It is true, Murry admits, that he kissed Lawrence for the "first and last time" in his life, but he contends that the real words he uttered were : "I love you, Lorenzo, but I won't promise not to betray you" (**Reminiscences,** p. 175).

Here, some crucial questions arise : What did Murry mean by his not promising to betray ? What was the nature of the secret that frightened Lawrence so as to make him collapse at the mere thought of its being revealed ? What did Murry exactly mean ? To such questions there is no definite answer. Murry was the only man who had the power, if he wished, to divulge the essence of the mystery. But he preferred to be as deadly silent as a piece of stone, though he stated clearly that it had nothing to do with his going to New Mexico, or even with the suspected Frieda affair. His words to Lawrence, "had no relation to any act of mine that was in contemplation at the moment" ; they represent the "final position of my 'principle' against Lawrence's 'principle'." This means that the situation was quite clear in front of Murry's eyes ; nevertheless, he would not be candid in writing about such an enigmatic situation : "I had glimpsed the mystery of Lawrence's life, and I knew that he was, somehow, irreparably cut off from his fellow-men, as by death. No human contact was possible for him.... If he had led the way where Man must follow, then I was no man. To follow where he had led was for ever, and for ever, impossible to me" (**Reminiscences,** pp. 178 - 179).

The hint to Lawrence's mystery, which created a gap of mutual "understanding" between him and Murry, reminds one of Lawrence's "blood-brotherhood," the suppressed homosexual tendencies which he desired to give vent to in his relationship with Murry. This view can be supported by some words which Murry was forced to use in self-defence against the charges of Mrs. Carswell :

> The reason why I did not go [to New Mexico] **cannot be fully told** [italics mine]. I have gone so far as I decently can.... In terms, and on the plan, of this present narrative, the reason why I did not go was that Lawrence would have had me go under conditions which were humanly impossible to me. In my effort to alter these conditions I behaved like a lunatic, or like a rat trying to escape from a trap. Since I could not alter them, and they were humanly impossible, I stayed at home.
>
> (**Reminiscences,** pp. 174 - 175)

The implications of the quotation are full. They need no further comment.

This time the breach between the two men was decisively final : Lawrence was asking a great deal, more than any man could give. And so he left for New Mexico and Murry stayed in England. They did not see each other till the end of 1925, when Lawrence finally decided to leave America and settle in Italy. On his way, he passed some time, in England, with his sister. Murry met him, for the last time, just before his leaving for Bden - Baden ; their last meeting was characteristically "sad and ghostly". Lawrence's final verdict was : "It was no good our meeting".

Here, one cannot help introducing the standpoint of the American "critic", Horace Gregory, who says confidently : "It would seem from Huxley's editing [of Lawrence's letters] that Murry made all the later advances. This is not strictly true. **There is enough** evidence [italics mine] from other sources

(Mrs. Carswell in particular) that Lawrence refused to break with Murry for reasons of his own. (19)

This sounds very strange, sheer critical nonsense which denotes nothing but the complete ignorance of the "critic". He takes Mrs. Carswell for an authority supporting his contention that Lawrence refused to break with Murry. One suspects his reading, with open eyes, **The Savage Pilgrimage** of Mrs. Carswell, for had he read it attentively, he would have never fallen into such a ridiculous mistake. Mrs. Carswell is very clear on this point. She states forcibly that Lawrence's rejection of Murry's approaches was irrevocable. Murry, says Mrs. Carswell,

> had written opining that so far as he was concerned (I use his own phrasing) there seemed no reason why they should not write occasionally to one another. But to this Lawrence had not replied. The rumour that Lawrence was dying, however, gave Murry another chance, and he wrote his third unsolicited letter. In it he said he had heard that Lawrence was passing from this world. Would not Lawrence therefore like him — Murry — to come out and and hold his — Lawrence's — hand ?....
>
> This time Lawrence replied.... No, said Lawrence in effect. He was not passing out just yet, but if he was, it would not willingly be with Murry's hand in his. Death-bed reconciliations were not his line. Leave such things to the editor of the **Adelphi**. Once and for all Lawrence hoped never to see Murry again, in this world or the next.
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> (**The Savage Pilgrimage**, pp. 282-3)

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(19) Horace Gregory, **D.H. Lawrence, Pilgrim of the Apocalypse : A critical Study** (New York, 1957), p. 99.

Thus, Gregory's thesis falls down to pieces. The above quotation proves, indisputably the falsity of Gregory's assumption. One can add piles of evidence to show Gregory's lack of comprehensive reading, even of Lawrence's letters. But few sentences will suffice. In February, 1926, Lawrence wrote to Dorothy Brett : "Murry wrote to me to define my position. Cheek ! It's soon done with regard to him. **Pour moi vous** n'existez pas, mon cher" (**Selected Letters,** p. 154). The upshot of this argument is that what Gregory lacks is understanding. He should have read with a clear mind and open eyes, then he should have assessed judiciously and critically before putting forward his sweeping and unjustifiable generalization.

Murry made so many an attempt to get touch with Lawrence, especially before his death. But Lawrence's verdict was sharp and decisive, as if it were an edict of destiny. "Believe me," he wrote to Murry, for the last time, on the 20th of May 1929, "we belong to different worlds, different ways of consciousness, you and I, and the best we can do is to let one another alone, for ever and for ever. We are a dissonance.... It is no good our meeting — even when we are immortal spirits, we shall dwell in different Hades. Why not accept it ?"

(**Reminiscences,** p. 210)

This was genuinely true. And on the 2nd of March 1930, Lawrence passed away, without giving his close friend and adversary the slightest chance to see him. Nevertheless, for Murry, Lawrence was not dead : "The dead don't die. They look on and help." He would keep faith.

CHAPTER II

A SON AND A LOVER

Murry would keep faith by writing a book, telling the truth about his friend as an unparalleled individual genius. He thought that the moment of realization was at hand, and that the fact about Lawrence's life and work should be illuminated. It was on the strength of this point that Mrs. Carswell, who was very clever in discolouring Murry's intentions to suit her own purposes, condemned Murry. She argues, in **The Savage Pilgrimage,** that Murry should have made up his mind about Lawrence while Lawrence was still alive, for in such a case, Lawrence would have been given the chance either to rejoice and be happy about the praise, or to defend himself against the attack.

Mrs. Carswell's charge sounds, to the unsuspecting reader, quite plausible and convincing, but it can be counterbalanced by Murry's self-collected and veracious account. He could not face Lawrence while he was alive, neither did he have the courage to fight him. He was bound, as he said, to an ideal Lawrence by a great love that would blur all facts and distort the truth. In Lawrence's life, the writing of **Son of Woman** was impossible, for Murry had either to say his say to Lawrence himself, or to say nothing at all ; he preferred to be silent. Moreover, he believed that he needed time to grow into a separate and

detached individuality, so as be able to see clear-sightedly and evaluate, if possible, objectively. This emergence into separateness was not feasible under the overwhelming spell of Lawrence's personality. The writing of **Son of Woman**, says Murry, "was my final act of self-liberation : my complete entry into my own identity. That for myself. For Lawrence it was my final purgation from the ideal love towards him ; at long last I had dared to love the real man : to hate him, to contend with him, and to love him indeed. Therefore it was not I who loved him, but that in me which is beyond myself. **Son of Woman** at the core is an utterly impersonal book : it is the holocaust of my personality. In 'destroying' Lawrence, I 'destroyed' myself. The destiny which united us is fulfilled" **(Reminiscences**, pp. 26-27).

Murry's critical approach was clearly defined. He was to write the history of Lawrence's life, as reflected in his works; no private incidents would be included, nor any personal secrets revealed :" I shall reveal nothing which Lawrence himself did not reveal. There is nothing else to be revealed" **(Son of Woman**, p. 21). What Murry provides, in his book, is an intelligent illumination of Lawrence's actual and fictional life, shedding gleams of light on the dark and hidden parts of his friend's unique personality. In so doing, reading the life in the works, Murry is, all the time, governed by an "imaginative sympathy," for what he is basically trying to do is to give an enlightened understanding of his friend's life. This means that Lawrence's works are to be used as autobiographies, the only available and valid record of his life. It also means that Murry is going neither to pass a critical judgment, nor to give an objective

evaluation of Lawrence's books as works of art. This indicates that the placing of Lawrence, as a novelist, in the great tradition is not an essential part of Murry's task simply because he believes that no final assessment can be provided. Lawrence, Murry asserts, is not to be judged, but to be loved : "If, at the end of the story they feel that this great and frail and lovely man, this man of sorrows, this lonely hero, has been judged by one who was once his friend, then not Lawrence has been judged, but the friend" (**Son of Woman,** p. 13). But, being essentrally a literary critic, Murry could not help giving his critical pronouncement. Consequently, a contradiction, between the theory the practice ,emerges. This necessitates a thorough examination of Murry's critical apparatus.

Murry divides his book, **Son of Woman : The Story of D.H. Lawrence,** into four parts, each dealing with a particular phase of Lawrence's life and work. The first period begins with Lawrence's childhood and ends with his mother's death, whereas the second begins with his meeting with Frieda, and ends with the end of the war. The third starts with his leaving England in ۱۹۱۹ and is concluded by his return in 1923. The last period begins with his final rejection of England and ends with his death in March 1930.

The first part begins with Lawrence as a son and a lover, and ends with Lawrence as a "sex-crucified" man. Murry deals with the three main works produced during this period : **The White Peacok, The Tresspasser,** and **Sons** and **Lovers.** But in spite of the fact that there are scattered references to the first

two novels, it must be admitted that the stress falls heavily, if not wholly, on the last one. **Sons and Lovers,** Murry believes, is the best record of the early life of its gifted author. Before his death, Lawrence himself affirmed that "the first part of **Sons and Lovers** is all autobiolography." If **The White Peacock** is a "story", **Sons and Lovers** is the life of a man who tries heroically to rid himself of the burden of his past. With it, says Murry, Lawrence "tries to put his youth firmly behind, and to stand stripped to run his own race. He is the brilliant jewel-brown horse-chesnut of his favourite image, newly issued from the burr. He breaks forth from the husk of youth, from the husk which had been one flesh with him till his emergence, and takes the past into conciousness and cognisance. That knowing is as much a severance as an acknowledgement. Lawrence therefore tried to make it extraordinary complete."

(**Son of Woman**, p. 23).

This is a point on which nearly all critics agree : the auto-biographical element in **Sons and Lovers** is preponderous, the story of Lawrence's early life is told in its fullest sense. It may seem, now, somewhat stale and hackneyed, having been dealt with by prominent critics as well as by unheard of reviewers. Murry's importance lies in the fact that not much was known about Lawrence in 1930, and that his book, the first on Lawrence, was at that time a pioneer work and a genuine contribution by a man who knew, more than any other man, definitely and thoroughly what he was writing about. Henceforth, arises the outstanding importance of **Son of Woman.**

Murry starts with the birth of Lawrence on the 11th of September 1885. One finds it unnecessary to follow the minute details provided by the critic ; it is quite enough to expound the main points. Lawrence was brought up in an uncongenial atmosphere which was the result of an unequal marriage between two essentially different persons. The father, according to Murry, was a pure animal, irresponsible and dishonest; the mother, on the other hand, represented the extreme opposite : puritanically honest and heroically responsible.

One wonders whether Murry is giving his own standpoint, or merely following the novelist's tale. One tends to say that he is content to relate Lawrence's tale, giving — as he has promised — no comment ; he does not commit himself to a definite position by taking sides. In any case, it must be stated that the mother was neither angelic nor heroic. On the contrary she was a narrow-mindedly selfish creature who believed that her essential function as a wife was to change the nature of her husband, to destroy his self-integrity, in order to create him anew, in her own image. Morel is described as a "soft, non-intellectual, warm" man who naturally "did the right thing by instinct, and who succeeded by the sheer naturalness and liveliness of his movement, in fascinating the puritanical young lady : "She was a puritan, like her father, high-minded, and really stern. Therefore the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her life was, seemed to her something

wonderful, beyond her" (**Sons and Lovers**, p. 18).(1) It was that wonderful and fascinating something in Morel that she wanted to get hold of, to possess and devour, fanatically and ravishingly as if she were a Nemesis springing in fury from beyond the unknown. But, being unable to master and change him, she decided to destroy him.

One finds oneself compelled to elaborate the point and do justice to a man who has never been given his due by most of the Lawrence critics. Murry ignores the point completely, though he could have thrown much light on it. In the same way, the majority of succeeding critics have either been negligent or silent, as if they were stricken by the Murryesque taciturnity, and as if there were a conspiracy of silence against poor Morel. This silence — intended or unintended, one cannot be sure — created the impression that morel was an unapproachable monster, or as Murry says, an irresponsible animal. Richard Aldington portrays him as an ignoramus who could "barely sign his name," and contrasts him with his cultured wife who "read a good deal and wrote poetry."(2) Graham Hough stamps him as "brutal" even Lawrence himself failed to be just to his father.

Murry states that Lawrence made a great effort to be fair to his father, "to hold the balance" judiciously between his parents, "but not being God, he found the task impossible" (**Son of Woman**, p. 24). Once more, one is tempted to disagree with Murry. Lawrence did not make a great effort, as alleged by

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(1) All references to Lawrence's works are made to the Penguin Edition, 1971, except when otherwise indicated.

(2) Aldington, **op. cit.**, pp. 4-5.

Murry, to hold the balance of jutsice unbiassed between his parents. From his clildhood he was prejudiced against his father. The mother's point of view was taken for granted without any discrimination, which is quite natural in the case of a child : the father was a despicable liar and drunkard, therefore he should be hated and despised. The milk that Lawrence was weened on was mixed with hatred for his father ; the blood that fell from the mother's brow, on the child's forehead, announced, symbolically enough, that the blood of the mother was on the head of the child who was, in such a condition, fated to take revenge. And Lawrence's revenge was spontaneously reflected in the injustice inflicted on the father in **Sons and Lovers.**

There is no "great" effort, on the part of Lawrence, even at a show of justice. He admits frankly that he was not impartial, or ethically noble in portraying his father as Morel. But later in life, Lawrence shifted his ground and took the side of the father. "My mother," said Lawrence in an unpublished document, "fought with deadly hostility against my father, all her life. He was not hostile till provoked, then he too was a devil. But my mother began it. She seemed to begrudge his very existence. (3) In retrospect, Lawrence was able see more objectively than at the time of his deep involvement in the fatal struggle. He discerned clearly that his mother's attitude was appallingly unjust. That is why in 1922 he thought of rewriting **Sons and**

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(3) Quoted in Yudishtar, **op. cit.**, p. 91.

Lovers. In their early years, to quote R.E. Pritchard for support, "the children had accepted the dictum of their mother that their father was a drunkard, therefore was contemptible, but as Lawrence had grown older he had come to see him in a different light; to see his unquenchable fire and relish for living. Now he blamed his mother for her self-righteousness, her invulnerable Christian virtue in which she was entrenched."(4) It would have been better for Murry to see perceptively and comment, if possible, objectively on the injustice done to the father in **Sons and Lovers,** so long as he was writing the real history of a real Lawrence, having — as he admitted — been rid of the influence of the ideal one.

However, the mother did not succeed either in changing her husband or in destroying him. Morel was scarcely touched by the terrible tragedy that was taking place in front of him. His animal cunning, to borrow one of Gregory's expressions, had saved him. But the breach between husband and wife was complete. Instead of being frustrated or lost, Mrs. Morel turned to her children for satisfaction. William and Paul responded whole-heartedly to their mother's plaintive appeal. But under the yoke of his mother's spiritual love, William cracked, collapsed and passed away. Quite naturally, Paul was to become her only 'man', through him she would have the life - fulfilment

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(4) R.E. Pritchard, **D.H. Lawrence : Body of Darkness** (London, 1971) p. 35.

of which she had been deprived. He should live for her, and only for her. Unable to devour the husband, she relentlessly, decided to devour the son. Here, one does not hesitate to describe Mrs. Morel as a momist. (5)

The inevitable outcome of this 'momism' was the creation of a state of abnormality in the child. According to Murry, the mother had "unconsciously roused" in her son an immature sexual yearning : "She had, by the sheer intensity of her diverted affection made him a man before his time. He felt for his mother what he should have felt for the girl of his choice" (**Son of Woman** p. 29). Murry quotes the scene of Paul's illness, after the death of William, to vindicate his point of view. The boy realizes his mother in the flesh : "He realized her. His whole will rose up and arrested him. He put his head on her breast and took ease of her for love". (**Sons and Lovers**, p. 175). Murry's comment on the whole scene is poignantly significant. He does not hesitate to say that it would have been better for such a boy to die than to be driven, in such a way, into sexual consciousness. He was called upon, says Murry, "to feel for his mother all that a full-grown man might feel for the wife of his bosom" (**Son of Woman,** p. 30).

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(5) 'Momism' is a word coined by Philip Wylie to describe American mother's who dominated their sons in his novel **Generations of Vipers.**

Murry's analysis, illuminatingly, exposes to full light the very essence of the truth. Lawrence was lamed by his mother's love which in reality verged on the sexual. It started with his early childhood, and the yearning, to be in his mother's arms, never ceased till her death : "Paul loved to sleep with his mother. Sleep is still more perfect, in spite of hygienists, when it is shared with a beloved. The warmth, the security, and the peace of soul, the utter comfort from the touch of the other, Knits the sleep, so that it takes the body and the soul completely in its healing. Paul lay against her and slept" (**Sons and Lovers**, p. 87).

The above quoted lines show clearly that the perversion began at an early stage. It clung to Lawrence like a malady that would never be eradicated but with the victim's death. This is not an exaggeration, for even Paul's speeding of his mother's death can be interpreted in sexual terms. He killed her to possess her, to have her as his own without a partner. She had never been described so "amorously" as when she was on her deathbed. Again she was, to her son, the "virgin mother" dreaming her young dream. At that moment he felt that she was his own beloved and that he was her only lover : "He Kneeled down, and put his face to hers and his arms round her: "My love —my love —oh, my love !" (**Sons and Lovers**, p. 484). "Passionately" he Kissed her, but he felt the coldness against his month. It was the moment of final realization : he could not get at her ; she was gone.

Thus one does not hesitate to accept the full inferences of

Murry's view that what Lawrence felt for his mother was what a man might feel for his wife. This view can be reinforced by what Jessie Chambers wrote about the relation between Lawrence and his mother :

> The day before his mother's funeral we went on a walk together....
> At the end of that same walk, as we stood within a stone's throw of the house where his mother lay dead, he said to me :
> "You know, J. I've always loved mother."
> "I know, you have." I replied.
> "I don't mean that," he answered. "I've loved her — like a lover — that is why I could never love you." (6)

Murry believes that the result of the strong and binding tie between mother and son was no less than the maiming of the son : Lawrence was emotionally crippled, he was fated by the force of his own circumstances to be a sexual failure. To put it in Murry's words, he became a "sex crucified man." His relation with women were doomed to frustration and disappointment, then to a bitter hatred against women, which was to develop, dangerously into a hatred against mankind. Hate, Murry asserts, was the only outlet for a man who found himself incapable of giving love.

To illustrate his point, Murry relates Lawrence's first love-experience. When he was sixteen, Lawrence "met the girl

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(6) Quoted in Graham Hough, **The Dark sun : A Study of D.H. Lawrence** (London, 1956), p. 39.

Miriam, whose destiny was to be linked with his own for the next ten years, until his mother's death" (**Son of Woman,** p. 30). He mixed with the family, and the farm where they lived became a "second home to him." The Leivers' kitchen was his favourable place ; the parlour was an attraction : Mrs. Leivers' "unworldliness" was lovable ; Mr. Leivers was full of life and warmth ; Edgar he loved. Besides, there was Miriam with her silent and charming appeal, drawing him, all the time, to her : "To be there was an exhilaration and a joy to him."

Murry does not reveal the personality of Miriam's prototype in actual life, though he was sure that Miriam was not a creation of Lawrence's fertile imagination. She was the first girl with whom he was initiated into a life-experience which he felt bitterly on his pulses. She, Murry notes, "encourged, stimulated, and appreciated his gifts ; she saw in him the wonderful being that he was, and she had fallen in love with him long before he with her. She was free to fall in love; he was not. So that when we say that Lawrence fell in love with Miriam, we mean that had he been free, and not bound, and ever more deliberately and tightly bound, he might have fallen in love with her, as she undoubtedly did with him. He fell in love with her, only so far as he was capable of falling in love (**Son of Woman,** p. 31).

What attracts the attention, in Murry's comment on the love capability of Paul and Miriam, is that he uses Lawrence's proper name, whereas he leaves "Miriam" as it is, without referring to the proper name of the actual personality. So it

oppears as if he were mixing between fiction and reality. But this attitude can be simply justified : Murry is still holding back ; he will not tell what has not been told by Lawrence himself. However, it is no secret, now, that Miriam is the embodiment of the personality of Jessie Chambers who, herself, publicized the story by publishing Lawrence's letters to her, though under the initials of E.J.

The irony of the whole situation between Lawrence and his girl lies in the fact that it was Lawrence's mother who brought the young couple in touch with each other but unexpectedly she found herself fighting ruthlessly and bitterly for the love of her son. It was Mrs. Lawrence who "met Mrs. Chambers in chapel and after unburdening herself in talk of many troubles agreed to take her youngest boy out to the farm for tea." (7) Consequently, the love-story began.

Murry, perceptively, states that Lawrence did not tell the truth about his relation with Miriam (Jessie) : "Lawrence tells it as though Miriam failed him." He portrayed her as a sensitive, chaste and spiritual girl who was aroused to disgust even by the mere idea of any sexual intercourse. Physical contact made her shrink back in fear ; her true ecstacy lay in the spiritual communion and response she could get from creatures and beings all around her. "You see", says Paul to Miriam, "I can give you a spirit love, I have given it you this long, long time ; but not embodied passion. See, you are a nun. I have

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(7) Aldington, **op. cit.**, p. 20.

given you what I would give a holy nun — as a mystic monk to a mystic nun.... I do not talk to you through the senses — rather through the spirit. That is why we cannot love in the common sense" (**Sons and Lovers,** p. 307). And again : "The serpent in the grass was sex. She somehow did not have any." Lawrence's prejudiced pronouncements against the girl give full justification to Murry's belief that Lawrence was not telling the truth about the real cause of his sexual failure. "It is essential." says Murry, "to grasp as clearly as we can the subtle human tragedy of the affair with Miriam. It was the tragedy of Lawrence's entry into sexual life, and it haunted him all his days. In **Sons and Loyers** he conceals the truth" (**Son of Woman,** p. 32).

What is prominent here, is Murry's insistence on the fact that Lawrence tried by all possible means to "conceal the truth," a point stressed time and again in Murry's comment : "In the story, Miriam is sacrificed because Lawrence cannot tell the truth." One must say that though this is true, it is not the whole truth : Lawrence, at some moments of revelation, discerned that the defect lay in his own make-up, in his nature as an abnormal individual: "I can only give friendship — it is all I'm capable of, **it's a flaw in my make-up** [italics mine]. The thing overbalances to one side — I hate a toppling balance. Let us have done" (**Sons and Lovers,** p. 271). The deficiency was there, and it — though at rare moments — was felt and confessed : "Was he deficient in something ?" asks Lawrence, "Perhaps he was." There was also that soul - crushing confession that created between the son and the mother a terrifying

gap of mutual understanding : "I never will see. I'll never marry while I've got you — I won't" (**Sons and Lovers,** p. 300). The upshot of all these quotations is that they prove quite easily that though Murry's statement is partially true, it is not accurate : Lawrence's attempt to conceal the truh was neither absolute nor even successful.

In any case, Murry reiterates that Lawrence should have, without any obliquity, put the blame on his mother. She had successfully taken from her son what she had not the slightest right to take, or even to ask for. She fought for her son's love desperately and relentlessly, believing that it was her full right to be fulfilled in him. That is why her battling against Miriam was mercilessley fierce : " 'She exults — she exults as she carries him off from me,' Mrs. Morel cried in her heart when Paul had gone. 'She's not an ordinary woman, who can leave me my share in him. She wants to alsorb him, She wants to draw him out and absorb him. She wants to absorb him till there is nothing left of him, even for himself. He will never be a man on his feet — she will suck him up.' So the mother sat, and battled, and brooded bitterly" (**Sons and Lovers,** p. 237). Ironically enough, the same accusation can be directed against the mother. Her own judgment of Mariam, without any distortion of facts can be applied to her : She would never let her son be a man ; she would absorb his whole existence into hers. That is why her fear of Miriam reached a pinnacle of horror : Miriam was a woman who exactly resembled her. The inevitable result of the conflict was the defeat of Miriam.

Paul, frustrated and crushed by his mother's suffering, sided with her against his girl. He could not help it, for the mother's influence was deeply rooted in both his mind and blood. If Miriam was the cause of his mother's torture, then Miriam should be sacrificed ; his mother would never suffer as long as he had the power to stand by her.

Murry notes that Lawrence's resignation and sacrifice of the girl was a violation of his self-integrity and a sin against the wholeness of his being. Consequently, he emerged out of the experience disastrously crippled ; his passions were perverted, wrongly directed to a source where it would be next to impossible to find a release. A new "release" was to be found. Clara was to be the woman with whom Paul could find his salvation. She was different from Miriam ; being a married woman, it was easy for her to take and give.

Once more, Murry points out the source of the disaster before its taking place. Paul's desire was not for" the Woman, but for the release through the woman, and the woman gives not from desire but from pity" (**Son of Woman,** p. 35). Frustration was inevitable. But one feels that Murry probes deeply into the secret of Lawrence's life when he declares that Lawrence was not made for sex. It is all wrong, says Murry emphatically, "humanly wrong. This man, we feel, has no business with sex at all. He is born to be a saint : then let him be one, and become a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven. For him we prophesy, sex must be one long laceration, one long and torturing striving for the unattainable. This feverish effort

to become a man turns fatally upon itself ; it makes him more a child than before. He struggles frenziedly to escape being child-man to his mother, and he becomes only child-man again to other women and the first great bond is not broken" (**Son of Woman,** p. 36).

Murry gives his verdict as if he were one of the ancient pilgrims of the Apocalypse ; his fearful use of the terms "prophesy" and "Kingdom of Heaven" in such a context, gives his judgment the sanctity of a religious ordeal. To Murry Lawrence was a sexually doomed man ; to be sexually fulfilled and wholly satisfied was against the nature of things. Sexual salvation for Lawrence could never be attained without a miracle. He was doomed as a male ; it was his destiny and be could not escape it.

In his debâcle, Lawrence tried desperately to find a way out. To break the tie that bound him to his mother, to inflict pain upon her, was an unthinkable thought. His love-affairs with women of his choice were tragical ; they made his soul bleed and there was no healing. He did not possess the will-power to choose for his self-integrity. Consequently, the life-long tragedy was unavoidable.

Here, Murry hints, for the first time, at Lawrence's homosexual tendencies. He suggests that Lawrence was driven by the force of his circumstances to direct his emotions to a man : "What genuine and unhesitating passion there was in Lawrence's life before his mother's death went to a man, not a woman"

(**Son of Woman**, p. 37). It was the only way to avoid frustration and sexual failure. Murry finds it quite easy to illustrate his point, trying, as has been declared, to get Lawrence's personal life out of his works. Miriam's brother, Edgar, is Lawrence's chosen friend, though the relationship is not explicity stated. But in **The White Peacock,** the friendship between Cyril and George is clearly described : it is unequivocably indicated that it reaches the brink of the physical touch. The bathing-scene, between George and Cyril, is the best illustration of this point: "...and laughing he took hold of me and began to rub me briskly, as if I were a child, or rather, a woman he loved and did not fear, I left myself quite simply in his hands, and to get a better grip of me, he put his arm round me and pressed me against him, and the sweetness of the touch of our bodies one against the other was superb. It satisfied in some measure the vague, indecipherable yearning of my soul.... Our love was perfect for a moment, more perfect than any love I have known since, either for man or woman" (**The White Peacock,** p. 257).

Such an outlet, however. is not quite apparent in **Sons a Lovers.** But generally speaking, it was not easy for Lawrence to find the right man who would wholly submit to the rituals of his blood-brotherhood. Therefore ; it seemed to him that if his mother died, he would be liberated and set free from the crippling bond that spoilt his life ; but he was hoping against hope, for it was too late. The death of Paul's mother at the end of the novel is significantly symbolic. It is an embodiment of Lawrence's dream to get hold of the holy grail and from the

ancient temple proclaim the salvation of his body and soul. He speeds her to death, by mixing a "fatal dose" of morphia in her milk. She would be released into death, and he would be released, from a strong grip, into the fullness of life.

But it was of no avail. Murry sympathetically notes that though his mother's death set him free to have a woman of his own choice, it did not help him to become whole : "To set free is not to make whole. The freedom he gained by his mother's death was wholly external ; his soul was in bondage still. Not directly to her, ... but to that irreparable inward division into which she had compelled him" (**Son of Woman**, p. 47). Lawrence, then was a wretched "victim" : nothing would save his soul, not even his mother's death. On the contrary, her death intensified his misery. In the absolute loneliness of his soul, he felt crushed the only pillar that supported his life crumbled, fell down, and faded away out of sight. She had gone, never to come back again ; and being without a woman at his back, he was exposed : "for ever behind him was the gap in life." That is why he yearned hopelessly for her coming back to him. Without her every thing seemed quite different ; the real and the unreal mixed and wobbled in front of his unseeing eyes. "There was no reason why these things should occupy the space instead of leaving it empty." The world of time was swallowed by a timeless phenomenon that sprang as if from nowhere. To him there "was no time, only, space. Who could say his mother had lived and did not ? She had been in one place, and was in another ; that was, all and his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and

he was with her still. They were together" (**Sons and Lovers,** p. 510).

Murry does not comment on the end of **Sons and Lovers,** though psychologically, it seems, of vital importance. He does not account for Paul's sudden pull towards life which occurs in the very last five lines of a tragic work that amounts to more than five hundred pages full of sombre and awful events, and which was declared by Lawrence, himself, to be a faithful representation of the tragedy of his generation. Does the pull towards life mean that Lawrence has performed the miracle of self-resurrection ? The concluding paragraph strikes a sudden and unexpected note of optimism : "His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly" (**Sons and Lovers,** p. 511).

Lawrence once said, in one of his letters, "do not trust the artist, trust the tale." Here, one tends to believe neither in the artist nor in the tale. The conclusion of the novel is illogical and seems to be imposed on the whole work. There is nothing in Paul's previous history that convinces one that he could so decidedly and forcibly resist the pull towards death and opt for life. Moreover, Lawrence himself said in a famous letter to Edward Carnett that his hero "is at the end naked of every thing, **with a draft towards death** [italics mine]. It is a great tragedy, and I tell you I have written a great book," (**Selected Letters,** p. 48). The contradiction, between Lawrence's letter and the concluding paragraph of the novel, is quite

obvious. That is why one tends to trust neither the tale nor the artist : **Sons and Lovers** is not tragedy proper.

One can safety say that Murry, as a literary critic, is supremely acute when he ignores the conclusion of the novel. To him it does not exist. Whether the hero turns to life or to death is of no great account. The tragedy had taken place in Lawrence's personal life : it was inevitable. His relation with his mother had created in him a kind of tenderness that amounted to sexual impotence. He became what Murry calls "a sexual weakling."

So, this is the harvest of the years of the first period of Lawrence's life that ended with the great crash of his mother's death (1910) : he emerged out of the experience a tender man with a divided soul. According to Murry, Lawrence "between sixteen and twenty six, ... touched the pinnacle — the extremity of anguish, the extremity of desperation ,the extremity of cleavage" (**Son of Woman,** p. 53). And in such a state Lawrence would take the first step into the unknown, to begin the second phase of his life.

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CHAPTER III

A WOMAN AT MY BACK

Lawrence stands on the threshold of the second period of his life, a divided man trying to achieve a desperately wished for self-integrity. His spiritual senstiveness, together with his less than normal sexual vitality obsessed him, as if they were a lump of lead blocking his throat, smothering his life, and threatening his existence.

In his long and agonizing search for a release, Lawrence began with the idea of regaining innocence in matters of sex. "The tragedy of his life," says Murry, "was that he could not regain it," for it could never be regained but through pure love, love void of hate, which Lawrence was incapable of giving to any living woman. It was emotionally and psychologically beyond his power. "It was not his fault," Murry retorts, "he was so conditioned. Since he could not wholly love a woman, sexual innocence was for ever unknown to him, save as a dream of a thing that might be" (**Son of Woman**, p.97). Murry's use of the word "dream" indicates the hopelessness and the intensity of Lawrence's dilemma. In actual life, he would never attain a state of innocence in matters of sex ; it needed wholeness, and he was divided.

Being so hopelessly crippled, Lawrence began to think of the sexual and the spiritual as completely distinct and separate:

The sexual desire carried with it its own validity." Such a conclusion was so obviously false that even Lawrence himself was not convinced of its authenticity. What he really believed in "was something quite different, and quite true, namely that in a man and a woman who are whole, as he never was whole, the spiritual and the sexual might be one .... He believed in a harmony which it was impossible for him to achieve without a physical resurrection" (**Son of Woman,** p. 32). Lawrence was aware of the falsity of his idea of separate sexuality, for he was sure that, without the spirit, it would be no more than sensuality, which was unacceptable. Nevertheless, he was always tempted to it as the last and only possible resort.

Lawrence persisted in defending the wrong line of thought by insisting on the irreconcilability of the "higher" and the "lower" desires. The spiritual and the sensual, from Lawrence's standpoint, are two opposite poles that will never meet, and to reconcile the contraries is a vain impossibilty. Lawrence's doctrine is based on an eternal conflict. Hatred is the main link between the two planes : the spiritual hates the sensual and vice versa. This, Murry notes, was "painfully true of Lawrence. The cleavage was agonizing in him. But to fulfil the 'spiritual man', and fulfil the 'sensual man', where such a fearful division exists, is impossible. The 'spiritual' man can be fulfilled only by the annihilation of the 'sensual' man ; and the 'spiritual' man by the innihilation of the 'sensual' man. To fulfil both is to fulfil neither, but only to maim both, and finally to kill them" (**Son of Woman,** p. 98).

To explicate Lawrence's doctrine, one must say that, to him, pure love is attainable only through the spirit; the flesh cannot give it, for the dark passion of the animal instinct radiates nothing but hate which inevitably leads to conflict and 'mutual destruction' of both male and female. Lawrence seems to be expounding a doctrine based on his own experince, which cannot be taken for a general rule. Furthermore, Lawrence's attiude is fatally false : man and woman can be perfectly fulfilled and unified through physical love which reaches its consummation and beatitude in a state of innocence. It is a fatal lie, Murry argues, to conclude that the flesh and the spirit are irreconcilable : "If it were true, then there would be no hope for humanity at all. For if it were true, then mankind must choose : either the way of the spirit, and a total asceticism and an eventual self-annihilation : or the way of the flesh, and a total repudiation of the spirit, and a relapse into the pure animality of hatred and lust ,from which man has so painfully won his way" (**Son of Woman,** p. 99).

Thus, Murry absolutely disagrees with Lawrence's formulation of the flesh and blood. and even Lawrence's concept of the 'Holy Ghost' does not satisfy him. It was another outlet by means of which Lawrence tried to escape his self-division. The two "Infinites" of the spirit and flesh can be related into "oneness" through the mediation of the "Holy Ghost of the Christian Trinity." To this new idea Murry retorts by saying that the unity, alleged by Lawrence, is a superficial one ; it is neither valid nor genuine, because it is only a "bodily union." The two

"Infinites" are still separate and irreconcilable in one and the same person. What happens is that the body, at times, submits to the spirit, and at other times to the flesh. The prevelance of the one, and the sinking of the other to the background, gives the semblance of consistency and unity to the behaviour of the individual man. To Lawrence, this apparent unity is the "Holy Ghost." But once again, Lawrence felt the superficiality of his doctrine : the "Holy Ghost" unity was not authentic. The division was still there, to be acutely reflected in Lawrence's two great novels : **The Rainbow,** and **Women in Love.**

The rainbow was Lawrence's symbol of the unfeigned wholeness of man, a wholeness which Lawrence could mot attain, for the spirit and the flesh "have been torn asunder in him, and cannot be united. His effort is to reconcile the unity which he desires with the division which he knows ; and sometimes he writes out of his desire for unity, and sometimes out of his knowledge of division. So that he may, as we have said, deceive the very elect, if that were possible" (**Son of Woman,** p. 101). What is significant, here, is that Lawrence tried to escape the consequences of the whole conflict by throwing himself in the arms of a woman, which was a fatal mistake. It meant that Lawrence's "tenderness" would be fully exposed. But Lawrence could not stand life without a woman at his back. And it happened, by mere chance, that he met Frieda some time after his mother's death, when he was bewildered into a shadow, lost in a dream. It was at a bleak time, when he was trying to escape from the heart of darkness. that he found her ushering him to the "humming, glowing town."

Frieda von Richthofen was the daughter of a German aristocrat ; her family belonged to the ruling-class, which means that she was brought up with all the privileges of wealth, luxury and authority. She married a professor of philosophy at the university of Nottingham to whom Lawrence, during his unaccomplished university studentship, went for advice. He was invited to lunch in the professor's house, in April 1912, where he saw Frieda and was, on the spur of the moment, struck by her as a woman for life : "She is the woman of a life-time." Though she was about six years older than he and mother to three children, she was passionately attracted to him. Her description of Lawrence, at that time, deserves quoting, for it reflects her first impressions. She portrays him as "a long, thin figure, quick, light sure movements. He seemed so obviously simple. Yet he arrested my attention. What Kind of bird was this ?" (8) He seemed to her as if he were one of the sons of God coming to court one of the daughters of men. He loved her intensely, and she responded fervently, payiny no heed either to her husband or to her children. They eloped in 1912.

Murry does not say much about Frieda as a person, or about the circumstances that led to the Lawrence - Frieda saga. (9) But her personality is skilfully rounded up, by Dr.

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(8) Quoted in Daniel Weiss, **Oedipus In Nottingham : D.H. Lawrence** (University of Washington Press, 1962), p. 84.

(9) This may be due to the personal relationship between Murry and Frieda especially after Lawrence's death.

Leavis, in one masterful statement : "She was neither maternal in type nor intellectual ; she had no place in the community, no social function, and nothing much to do." (10)

Nevertheless, in Frieda, Lawrence found his lost paradise. He imagined that he would be fully fulfilled, and that he would become whole. The elopement, though degrading and morally corrupt, brought him an undreamt of happiness. He did not care for morality ; the question of right and wrong was irrelevant. He had discovered his new world, and he decided to live it wide and long. Unfortunately, this developed in him a firm belief in the efficacy of the impulsive action : the mind is not to be trusted, for it can go wrong, but the blood is always right and true. In 1913, he wrote to Ernest Collings : "My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels, believes and say is always true .... All I want is to answer to my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind or moral or what not." (11)

Reasoning and intellectualism lost their meaning, Lawrence's new faith was formed by his own experience which, though irrational, was one of the greatest achievements of his personal life. Nonetheless, Murry predicted a struggle between Lawrence and Frieda, through which Lawrence would suffer terribly to the bitter end. The thrilling moments would soon

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(10) F.R. Leavis, **D.H. Lawrence : Novelist** (London, 1955), p. 49.

(11) Quoted in Hough, **op. cit.**, p. 55.

be over, and the division in Lawrence would work disastrously. He was not deceived by the confessio amantis of Lawrence's liber amoris, though the beginning of the affair was deceptively promising. In June 1912, Lawrence wrote to Mrs. S.A. Hopkin: "I love Frieda so much .... I never knew what love was before .... The world is wonderful and beautiful and good beyond one's wildest imagination. Never, never could one conceive what love is, before hand, never. Life can be great quite godlike. It can be so. God be thanked I have proved it" (**Selected Letters,** p. 41). He believed that he would dissolve under Frieda's warm breath, only to be created anew : healthy and whole. Resurrection, he thought, was at hand.

Here, one cannot help supporting Murry's view when he says that Lawrence was writing his life-history in his novels. In **Women in Love,** Lawrence betrays himself, to the extent of stark nakedness, when be says : "But the passion of gratitude with which he received her into his soul, the extreme, unthinkable gladness of knowing himself living and fit to unite with her, he, who was nearly dead, who was so near to being gone with the rest of his race down the slope of mechanical death.... He worshipped her as age worships youth, he gloried in her because, in his one grain of faith, he was young as she, he was proper mate. This marriage with her was his resurrection and his life" (**Women in Love,** pp. 416 - 147). Though Lawrence reversed the situation and made Birkin older than Ursula, the essence of the mood is one and the same : the dream of resurrection. It may be said that it has been achieved in the

novel, but the point is controversial. (12) What one, resolutely, insists on is that resurrection for Lawrence was a deluding mirage, an impossibility.

Lawrence's dream of joy was destined to end quickly, leaving Lawrence, in a state of stunned wakefulness, to face the frightful truth of his physical incompatibility. Let him hide, pretend, and disguise ; it was always there, within him, and there was no escape. He tried to slip into a state of forgetfulness, through perverted sexuality, but Frieda held back in fear. Lawrence's poem "The First Morning" reflects the irony of the whole situation, when the woman cries :

> I am afraid of you, I am afraid, afraid !
> There is something in you destroys me — !
> Ah, you are horrible ;
> You stand before me like ghosts, like darkness
> upright.

Murry accounts for the cause of the rift, between Lawrence and Frieda, by saying that Frieda's soul was always yearning for her children. This, indirectly, reminded Lawrence of his physical impotence ; it was an indication that Frieda was not sexually fulfilled. Hence, sprang the hatred and fear that possessed Lawrence's whole being ; the thought that Frieda would desert him drove him to agonizing bursts of anguished anger mixed with terror and despair. He was a cripple, leaning with all his weight on the strong arm of a woman who, as

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(12) It will be elaborated when dealing with **Women in Love.**

he believed, was able to support him against the whole world : "It is hopeless for me to try to do anything without I have a woman at the back of me" (**Selected Letters,** p. 20). But what he was always ignoring was that such a woman should be fulfilled, and that he was incapable of it.

Therefore, Lawrence's humiliation was inevitable : Frieda offered him the full ripeness of her womanhood, but his male power was deficient. Sexual fulfilment can never be one-sided, for, in such a case, it loses its significance and becomes a bewildering frustration. Lawrence's impotence drove him to an indignation which was to develop into a devastating sense of harted. The man, says Murry, "is humiliated, as by impurity into which he is plunged. He is caught in a destiny of degradation, engulfed in a flood of vileness rising from his own depths. From humiliation he reacts into frenzied self-assertion. He strikes out wildly, like a blinded man. 'This misery of your dissatisfaction and misprison stupefies me,' he cries" (**Son of Woman,** p. 68). The authenticity of Murry's evaluation of the situation is well-supported, and a refutation is nearly impossible. In October 1910, Lawrence wrote to Murry, "Frieda and I have finished the long and bloody fight .... It is a fight one has to fight .... But, oh dear, it is very horrible and agonizing." (13) The conflict was tragically regrettable. Frieda was "baffled" and frightened ; at times she thought that Lawrence had lost his wits and lapsed into a state of madness out of which he would never emerge.

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(13) Quoted in Yudishtar, **op. cit.,** p. 36.

Murry's view, on the inevitability of the conflict between Lawrence and Frieda, has been espoused and supported by most of Murry's contemporaries and successors. Mabel Dodge Lulan throws a gleam of light, on the Lawrence-Frieda relationship, which, in essence, conveys the general thesis of Murry's view. Lulan relates that he "saw the big voluptuous woman standing naked in the dim stone room where we dressed and undressed, and there were often great black and blue bruises on her blond flesh .... 'I cannot stand it,' she wept. 'He tears me to pieces. Last night he was so loving and so tender with me, and this morning he hates me. He hit me — and said he would not be any woman's servant. Sometimes I believe he is mad !' ... Whenever, reunited to Frieda, he capitulated to her and sank into the flesh, he beat her up for it afterwards." (14) Hate-in-love was Lawrence's serious malady, as diagnosed by Murry, and the bruises on Frieda's body prove that the diagnosis has been skilfully studied and carefully pronounced.

To the woman, Lawrence was a maimed child, and he resented the degradation. He wanted to be always seen in the garments of a giant, a dangerous wild creature, a dominant male who had "pounced upon her." He would be no "woman's servant" ; so she must submit and serve. But she would not submit because the giant male power, which Lawrence tried to exhibit, was, to her, no more than the fantasy of a sick imagination. The position was crucial. If Lawrence was to be saved,

(14) Quoted in Weiss, **op. cit.**, p. 108.

he had to choose and the choice should not be between one woman and another : it should be between "the woman and no woman." There was no alternative : "Unless Lawrence can find within himself the strength to be veritably alone, to withdraw finally from his sexual relation, he is doomed to spend his life distraught between humiliation and extravagant masculine assertion" (**Son of Woman,** p. 73).

This bloody fight between Lawrence and Frieda is artistically delineated in **The Rainbow** and **Women in Love** which are recognized as the two great masterpieces of Lawrence's genius at the very height of his ripeness and maturity. Here, one finds it necessary to expound, analyse and evaluate Murry's views on Lawrence's two great novels.

Without any divergence, Murry persists in following his line of criticism : to find Lawrence in his work. This second period of Lawrence's life is an exploration of the man-woman relationship — or to put it more accurately, the Lawrence-Frieda relationship — in the works of Lawrence. The conflict between Will and Anna, Skrebensky and Ursula, is the conflict between Lawrence and Frieda ; and the failure of the two men represents the failure of Lawrence himself. Murry does not refer to the first generation, the story of Tom and Lydia does not occupy much of his thought.

The opening of the "Anna Victrix" chapter is the most splendid piece of writing ever done by Lawrence ; the whole chapter wins Murry's unlimited admiration. Anna, strong,

powerful, beautiful, passionate and "unashamedly physical" represents Frieda Lawrence ; even her foreign origin is a part of Frieda's foreigness. She takes Will superbly and recklessly; she exalts ravishingly, asking for nothing but the complete surrender of the man to her overwhelming bodily attractions and desires : "She began to draw near to him, she nestled to him. His limbs, his body, took fire and beat up in flames. She clung to him, she cleaved to his body. The flames swept him, he held her in sinews of fire. If she would kiss him ! He bent his mouth down. And her mouth, soft and moist, received him. He felt his veins would burst with anguish of thankfulness, his heart was mad with gratefulness, he could pour himself out upon her for ever" (**The Rainbow,** p. 156). This yielding to the woman is momentary, something that will not last long, as it painfully reminds Lawrence of his dependence on a woman and his subsequent humiliation. One expects a quick "reaction," and it comes with "sickening speed." Will's helpless dependence irritates and bores Anna ; at first he is ashamed of his weakness, then his shame changes into anger. Will gives vent to genuine Lawrentian bursts of frenzied fury. He strikes diabolically at her, being possessed by a devouring desire to devastate and destroy. She must submit to his maleness ; she must bend and serve in complete obedience. But it is not so easy. Anna strikes back, using all her womanly tricks, and lacerates him fatally. She decides to desert him, to leave him alone with the "unclean dogs of the darkness setting on to devour him."

The struggle between Will and Anna is typically similar to

that between Lawrence and Frieda : it always ends in the feverish attempt to lapse into the forgetulness of sex. This is stated by Lawrence when he describes his hero as a man who "seemed to live with a strain upon himself, and occasionally came these dark, chaotic rages, the lust for destruction. Then she fought with him, and their fights were horrible, murderous. And then the passion between them came just as black and awful" (**The Rainbow,** p. 209). Consciously or subconsciously they fight, in spite of the fact that they love each other, and that the passion is always taking hold, to consume them, in the end, in one blazing flame. She fights fiercely, rousing him to the highest pitch of his dark desires, then he takes her keenly and instantly, without tenderness.

But the story of the rainbow, Murry states cautiously, is not thoroughly autobiographical : "It departs from the naked facts of Lawrence's experience." This means that Murry does not consider Lawrence's novels as a literal-history of their author. He has the power to discriminate between fact and fiction. So, when Graham Hough attacks Murry's critical approach as absurd, one feels that the term "absurdity" must be applied to Hough himself, for he should have read Murry with more understanding. The chimax of methodological absurdity, says Hough, "is reached by Middleton Murry who begins his **Son of Woman** by saying that 'there is and can be but one true life of Lawrence ; and it is contained in his works' ; and then proceeds throughout to blame the work for not telling the story right." (15)

(15) Hough, **op. cit.,** p. 13.

The fault, here, does not lie in Murry's work, but in a lack of perception on the side of his critics. The amazingly curious thing is that a critic like Yudishtar indiscriminately follows the steps of Hough in attacking Murry. To him, Murry "proceeds to blame the works for not telling the truth." (16) There is no originality in Yudishtar's standpoint. He does no more than copy Hough's words, and if one substitutes Hough's expression "the story right", for Yudishtar's truth, the plagiarism becomes shamefully apparent.

Any way, Murry has an acute critical ability to discriminate between reality and invention. He asserts that **The Rainbow** does not relate "the naked facts of Lawrence's experience." Lawrence's imagination grants Anna her wished for fulfilment, and leads Will to what might have seemed to him a rebirth. Anna is with a child and Will, learning to be alone, is "reborn for a second time" : he finds his separate self-integrity. This, of course, is very far from being related to Lawrence's life. But even in the novel this peaceful co-existence and apparent reconciliation is deceptive. "The dawn", says Murry, "is a false dawn" ; he will not be deceived. Will will not bear his loneliness, he goes back to Anna to fight and submit and be humiliated. She, say Murry, "has destroyed his belief in himself, and his belief absolutely. She has undermined his own separate creative purpose. He has lost faith in his own ideal, his own vital illusion. In their symbolic visit to Lincoln Cathedral, Anna deliberately shatters her husband's passionate ecstacy" (**Son of Woman,** p. 81).

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(16) Yudishtar, **op. cit.,** p. 2.

Eugene Goodheart, agreeing with Murry's view, states that the degrading failure stems from Will's "attempt on occasion to impose his will on her and his passion for spiritual transcendence climaxed by his mystical experience on his visit to Lincoln Cathedral." (17) She laughs at him and ridicules his spirituality. Murry interprets the symbolism of the Cathedral-scene as the destruction of the "spiritual ideal" by means of the sexual one. Will revolts against the woman in an attempt to defend his smouldering spirituality, but it is of no avail. As Murry puts it, "he cannot move forward to create and embody a new harmony." Being crippled by his disability, he acquiesces in the status quo, "lapses into the woman," and is beaten. "For Will and Anna," says Leavis, echoing Murry, "the experience at Lincoln is in large measure defeat. Will in the main subsides into an inert day-to-dayness of home, work, and church.... Anna subsides into motherhood, (18) " which is far from being a fulfilment.

Will is vanquished by Anna "Victrix". Here, again Murry differentiates between Will and his creator: Lawrence has not yet lost hope ,the struggle is not over ; the spirit and the flesh must be given another chance to reach a reconciliation. This necessitates the creation of a third generation in the Brangwen family, for with Will and Anna the battle has been over. Ursula, their child, begins the new phase. The sexual struggle is not

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(17) Eugene Goodheart, **The Utopian Vision of D.H. Lawrence** (The University of Chigago Press, 1963), p. 120.

(18) Leavis, **op .cit.,** p. 132.

extinguished by the defeat of Will. Once more it flares nightmarishly when Ursula begins her feverish struggle, towards sexual consummation, with her lover Anton Skrebensky.

Some of the similarities and differences between Anton and Will can be pointed out in passing. Both are spiritual, though Will's spirituality is more powerful in its intensity. Will has a creative mind, he is an artist by nature and profession ; Anton is a mechanic, an engineer in the army who believes that he has a duty towards his country and that this duty must be consciously and conscientiously performed. What is significant is that, to some extent, both represent their own creator. The part they play in the exhausting man-woman struggle reflects the agony of Lawrence's frustration as a sexually unfulfilled man.

The nature of the fight between Ursula and Skrebensky is different from that between Anna and Will. Ursula is essentially different from her mother. From the very start she does not submit to Anton, she resists maliciously and react destructively. Unsatisfied, she becomes possessed by an "instinctive" desire to annihilate her man and destroy him completely. Her love is strong and overwhelming, without pity, without remorse :

> She took him in the kiss, hard her kiss seized upon him, hard and fierce and burning corrosive as the moonlight. She seemed to be destroying him. He was reeling, summoning all his strenght to keep his Kiss upon her, to keep himself in the kiss.

> But hard and fierce she had fastened upon him, cold as the moon and burning as a fierce salt. Till gradually his warm and soft iron yielded, yielded, and she was there fierce, corrosive, seething with his destruction, seething like some cruel, corrosive salt around the last substance of his being, destroying him, destroying him in the Kiss. And her soul crystallized with triumph, and his soul was dissolved with agony and annihilation. So she held him there, the victim, consumed, annihilated. She had triumphed : he was not any more. (**The Rainbow,** p. 322)

She seems to be intent on destroying him. He is taken unawares and his masculinity is painfully pulverized. But the bitterness of the experience does not seem to have created in him a sense of resistance to save his manhood. On the contrary, he forgets all about it, goes to the Boer War, and comes back after six years, yearning for sex.

The coming back of Anton seems to be a happy return, for both Anton and Ursula are engulfed by an overwhelming sexual union. Lawrence asserts that it is the happiness of wild animals; the "sensual sub-conscious" is their world of time and space. They go to London for some weeks, then decide to leave England. They stay, at Rouen for a while, where "the old streets, the cathedral, the age and monumental peace of the town took her away from him." Here a crucial change takes place : she does not want him. Murry accounts for it by saying that the cathedral is of great symbolic significance : "Ursula at this crucial moment has a recoil from the sensual sub-consciousness to spirituality" (**Son of Woman,** p. 85). They return

home, possessed with a secret sense that their relationship is doomed to death ; no power will save it, not even a miracle.

Lawrence's dependence on a woman is clearly reflected through Anton. The characteristic weakness of the Lawrentian hero takes possession of him. Ursula must not desert him ; he must cling to her with all his might, for she is the membrane that connects him with life and existence. His salvation depends on her being with him ; to marry her is the only way to possess her, and for ever. He succeeds in meeting her, but a dagger seems to be suspended in the air, separating them. Her hostility will not be concealed ; she degrades him, laughing at his "idealism" and what he calls his duty towards his country. Unfortunately, he reacts in a way that, catastrophically, brings his own destruction. In front of her, he flirts with her sister, Gudrun. At once, she lets fly her dagger into his heart to make him bleed to death : "In passionate anger she upbraided him because, not being man enough to satisfy one woman, he hung round others. 'Don't I satisfy you ?' he asked of her, again going white to the throat. 'No', she said. 'you' ve never satisfied me since the first week in London. You never satisfy me now. What does it mean to me, your having me' —" (**The Rainbow**, p. 462). The secret is revealed : he is not the man ; so she will not marry him.

Nonetheless, Anton is given a last chance, to prove his maleness, before the final cataclysm takes place. For a while, they live together in an isolated house by the sea. Here, the final and terrifying test has to be gone through. She takes him out

under the full "burning" moon ; he has to prove himself or perish. "He felt as if the ordeal of proof was upon him, for life or death." There was no alternative : "She lay motionless, with wide-open eyes looking at the moon. He came direct to her, without preliminaries. She held him pinned down at the chest, awful. The fight, the struggle for consummation was terrible. It lasted till it was agony to his soul, till he succumbed, till he gave way as if dead, and lay with his face burried, partly in her hair, partly in the sand, motionless, as if he would be motionless now for ever, hidden away in the dark, buried, only buried, he only wanted to be buried in the godly darkness, only that, and no more" (**The Raibow,** p. 480). This is more than enough to bring about Anton's final collapse. Ursula's weary, disgusted voice derisively announces the end, as if it were the last toll before the burial of the dead : "It is finished. It has been a failure." And the failure, from Murry's point of view, is Lawrence's "final sexual failure."

Murry's interpretation of the last important scene, between Ursula and the horses, is superbly authentic. It shows clearly that Murry has an acute perceptiveness ,very rare among the Lawrence critics. Lawrence, in one of his great master strokes, portrays a scene in the wood where Ursula in her pregnancy is chased by horses ; they come nearer and nearer to crush her, then they run away and wait ; they are behind her, they "thunder" upon her ; they will triumph over her in her weakness and crush her to extinction. In her desperate attempt to escape she climbs a tree ,only to fall on the "other side of the hedge," thus getting rid of the horses and at the same time

getting rid of her pregnancy : "She lay as if unconscions upon the bed of the stream, like a stone, unconscious, unchanging, whilst everything rolled by in transcience, leaving her there, a stone at rest on the bed of the stream, unalterable and passive, sunk to the bottom of all change" (**The Rainbow,** p. 490).

Murry's illuminating comment on the scene proves him to be one of the most prominent critics, a perfect master of his material. To him there is no actuality or matter of factness in the whole scene. The horses are no horses ; it is nothing but a projection of the inner upheaval within Ursula's soul, a final rejection of what remained of Anton within her body. Ursula, says Murry's "is made to undergo a sort of physical-mystical experience, an annihilation of the personality. When in the last chapter the horses stampede upon her, she dies, and rises again in a new world" (**Son of Woman,** p. 89). The symbolism of death and resurrection ,used by Murry, indicates that Ursula's connection with her past is cut off ; the past, with Anton Skrebensky enshrouded by its cloak, is a thousand times dead. She faces the world as if she were a newly-born babe looking at the rainbow : still, there is hope.

Murry believes that Ursula, as a character, is "completely incredible." He is convinced that her personality is not well-integrated, being a mixture of the "sexual woman" and of "Lawrence's own manly experience." She works as school mistress for a while, goes to the university and leaves it, disillusioned and disappointed ; she attacks war, industry and social distinction : "the chief vision of which she is the vehicle is the vision

of the darkness with which the conscious, personal, deliberate social life of mankind is surrounded" (**Son of Woman,** p. 89). In short, she is Lawrence's mouthpiece ,a medium through which he expresses his thought. And in this way not being herself, she loses credibility.

Here, one cannot find the courage to support Murry against Lawrence. It is true that Ursula's character is not well cristallized, but it must be taken into consideration that she is young, unexperienced and immature. But as she takes her plunge into life, she gains in ripeness till she reaches the peak of her maturity. Moreover, Murry should have taken into account that Lawrence's method of characterization does not follow the old tradition of the English novel. The conventional character has no place in Lawrence's works. In April, 1912, he writes to Edward Garnett : "I say, don't look for the development of the novel to follow the lines of certain characters : the characters fall into the form of some other rhythmic form, as when one draws a fiddle-bow across a fine tray delicately sanded, the sand takes lines unknown." (19)

On the whole, Murry's attitude towards **The Rainbow** is not favourable. He regarded it, when it appeared in 1915, as a destructive work. That is why he avoided reviewing it, and that is also why Mrs. Carswell attacked him savagely as an apostate and a traitor. Murry tried to defend himself against Mrs. Carswell's charge by saying that, at that time, he was not prominent

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(19) Clarke, **op. cit.,** p. 29.

as a critic, and that it was not in his power to defend Lawrence's condemned book, if he wished : "For me, in 1915, to have asked for the new Lawrence novel for review in the **Westminster** or the **Daily News** or the **Literary Supplement** would have to meet with certain refusal. For Lawrence was, at that time, emphatically the coming man. His books were, naturally the perquisite of the most established reviewers" (**Reminiscences,** p. 134). But Murry's excuse sounds flabby and naive. The truth is that the novel was condemned as a destructive work, a "monotonous wilderness of phallism." It was prosecuted by the Public Morality Council, as a mass of obscenity of thought, idea, and action throughout." The attack was unanimous, resistance was of no avail, for to resist the current meant to be swallowed by a whirlpool, with no return. Lawrence, himself, confessed, in a letter to Waldo Frank, that he had been writing a "destructive" work, otherwise he could have never called it **The Rainbow** : "what I did through individuals, the world has done through the war. But alas in the world of Europe I see no Rainbow." (20)

However, Murry's position may be justified. He was unable, being a coward by nature, to stand by Lawrence in the face of a hostile world ; it was beyond his power as a man, and outside the range of his capability as a literary critic. But his personal abhorrence of the work must not be ignored. He was

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(20) Clarke, **op. cit.,** p. 30.

repelled by destructiveness and defeatism that prevailed throughout the novel. It was not the work he expected from a man, whom he considered and looked up to as the awaited leader who would point out the way to salvation. Instead of expressing himself with the grandeur and magnitude of such a prophetic soul, Lawrence, according to Murry, did nothing but reveal the nakedness of his frailty, dependence, and humiliation. It might have seemed, to Lawrence's friends, that Murry was inhuman is his interpretation of **The Rainbow,** for he laid bare "the physical secrets of a dead man." But in the case of Lawrence it was unavoidable. To the last, states Murry, Lawrence "conceived it as his mission to teach us the way to sexual regeneration, and he claimed to give the world the ultimate truths about sex. If we take him seriously, we must take his message seriously. Continually in his work we are confronted with sexual experience of a peculiar kind; it is quite impossible to ignore it....

The Rainbow is the story of Lawrence's sexual failure. The two men, who have succumbed to the woman, are one man, himself. The rainbow, in a symbolic sense of a harmony between spirit and flesh, is as far away as ever at the end of the book (**Son of Woman,** pp. 88-9).

In spite of the hopeful and optimistic note that ends the book, with the rainhow as a symbol of a new heaven and a new earth, the harmony between the spirit and the flesh is not achieved. The defeat of the men is regrettable, the victory of the women is lamentable, for both victory and defeat lead into

death. Harmonious consummation and fulfilment are still far away, beyond the great arches of the rainbow that envelops Lawrence and his characters. But Lawrence does not give up ; he makes the second great attempt in his wonderful masterpiece : **Women in Love.**

This novel, Murry notes, revolves round the personal relation and the "conflict between Lawrence and Frieda and Katherine and me." Lawrence and Frieda are represented as Birkin and Ursula, Murry and Katherine as Gerald and Gudrun. Such a view, lacks accuracy especially in the case of Murry and Katherine as characters in the novel.

Murry's thesis, that the struggle between Lawrence and Frieda has led to the artistic creation of Birkin and Ursula, is a valid one. Lawrence's letter to Edward Garnett, in April 1914, is a good illustration of Murry's view : "It is a good and beautiful book. Before, I could not get my soul in it. That was because of the struggle and resistance between Frieda and me. Now you will find her and me in the novel, I think, and the work is of both of us." (21) But whether Birkin is Lawrence himself, or a mere exponent of Lawrence's main ideas, is not of serious consequences, so long as he is dealt with, artistically, as a character within the general frame of the work of art. If one is not misled, Lawrence portrays him objectively, ridiculing his eccentricities and laughing at his defects and whimsicalities. If Birkin is an honest presentation of Lawrence, then Lawrence

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(21) Clarke, **op. cit.,** p. 27.

is laughing at himself. To Ursula he is a preacher; to Gudrun, he is an egotist who listens to no voice but his own: " 'He cries you down, repeated Gudrun. 'And by mere force of violence. And of course it is hopeless. Nobody is convinced by violence. It makes talking to him impossible — and living with him I should think would be more impossible' " (**Women in Love**, p. 297). This is the true Lawrence with his most palpable deficiencies.

As for Gerald, one cannot consider him as a convincing representation of the Murryesque individuality. The derivation is so partial and the resemblance is so slight to the extent that Murry himself "did not, even in 1921, reagard that crucial novel as having any special reference to me ..., or that the real core of it was precisely that abortive struggle between a conscious Lawrence and an unconscious Murry at Higher Tregerthen" (**Reminiscences,** p. 18). R.E. Pritchard thinks that Gerald embodies some of the qualities of Murry, as well as of "a Major Barber, who was blond, blue-eyed, had accidentally killed his brother, and was a modernizing mine-owner in Eastwood, and perhaps [of] Lawrence's older brother." (22) So it cannot be said that Gerald is an impersonification of Murry, or that his life with Gudrun is based on Murry's life with Katherine, though, on one occasion, Lawrence made use of an event that took place in their actual life. What one is referring to, here, is the letter-scene at the Pompadour. As Murry relates, the event took place, in 1916, in the Café Royal, where some of Lawrence's

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(22) R.E. Pritchard, **op. cit.,** p. 85.

acquaintances sat, reading and "jeering" at **Amores** : Lawrence's newly published volume of poetry. Katherine, though not on friendly terms with Lawrence at that time, could not bear the triviality and stupidity of the situation. She left the table, where she was sitting with "Koteliansky and Gertler," took the volume quietly, and moved away in silence, leaving the sneering group stupefied. The main figure in the hostile clique was Philip Heseltine whom Lawrence ridiculed savagely.

The only change that Lawrence makes in the whole incident is that he substitutes a letter for the volume of poetry. Yet, it must be said that Gudrun is very far from being a portrait of Katherine ; the whole idea, as Murry notes, is "a singularly fantastic one." But whether Murry and Katherine are involved or not, is of no consequence to Murry as a critic. The novel is significant to him in so far as it throws light on Lawrence's life and throught.

Lawrence, as Murry emphasises, appears on the stage of action as Rupert Birkin, and Ursula becomes **the** woman. Lawrence's main objective is to force the woman into complete submission ; she had to admit his male superiority. Ursula, Birkin insists, must surrender unconditionally ; she must accept him "finally" as an absolute lord and master. This does not mean that he needs an odalisque ; he only wants "a woman to take something from him, to give herself up so much that she could take the last realities of him, the last facts, the last physical facts, physical and unbearable" (**Women in Love**, p. 331).

Henceforth, springs the conflict between Ursula and Birkin. She is a womanly woman, full of life and charm : an "unconscious bud of powerful womanhood." With all his spirituality and perversity, Birkin is drawn to her, feeling that she is his "future". But the kind of love he yearns for frightens her ; she will not accept his fallacious idea of "Mutual unison in separateness." He will not give himself even to the woman of his choice ; self-abandonment, to him, is nearly impossible. On the other hand, she will not have him that way ; she must either "have him utterly," or not at all. So, from the very start their relationship becomes a challenge, and she makes it clear that she is ready to fight him for what she believes to be normal and right : "She had stated her challenge to Birkin, and he had, consciously or unconsciously, accepted. It was a fight to the death between them — or to new life" (**Women in Love**, p. 159).

Murry lays his stress on the chapter entitled "Excurse," for in this chapter the man-woman conflict attains a unique climax of frustration, agony and pain. But he states bluntly that the whole chapter, regardless of the strongly moving passion, appears to be fundamentally false ; it "strikes even the unadvised reader as invented and untrue." Yet, it can be really understood, if the reader succeeds in getting a fairly good idea about Lawrence's famous poem "Manifesto", where perverted sexuality is openly asked for :

> I want her to touch me at last, ah, on the root and
> quick of my darkness
> and perish on me, as I have perished on her ....
> When she has put her hand on my secret, darkest
> sources, the darkest out goings

when it has struck home to her, like a death, 'this
is him !' she has no part in it, no part whatever,
it is the terrible **other**
when she knows the fearful **other flesh,** ah, darkness
unfathomable and fearful, contiguous and concrete,
when she is slain against me, and lies up in a heap
like one outside the house,
when she passes away as I have passed away, being
pressed up against the **other,**
then I shall not be confused with her,
I shall be cleared, distinct, single as if burnished in
silver,
having no adherence, no adhesion anywhere,
one clear, burnished, isolated being, unique,
and she also, pure, isolated, complete,
two of us, unutterably distinguished, and in unutter-
able conjunction. (Quote in **Son of Woman,** p. 109)

It is not an exaggeration to say that all Lawrence's sexual philosophy is nearly expressed in this poem. Lawrence, yearning for a sexual redemption which he is incapable of achieving, is asking for a union in separateness which is not quite natural, if measured by the normal modes of behaviour. The point Murry advances, though he does not state explicitly, is that the poem is suggestive of Lawrence's tendency to preach the gospel of sexual liberation by means of anal intercourse, achieved through the phallic power.

The comparison between "Manifesto" and "Excurse" is significant ; they were written at about the same time in 1916, and what Lawrence is demanding in the poem, is asked for by Birkin in **Women in Love.** He will not take Ursula as she has been taken before ; she does not satisfy him that way. He contends that she must accept and submit to his physical

demands. Lawrence himself seems to be imaginatively satisfied, when he makes his hero take the woman "at the roots of her darkness and shame — like a demon, over the fountain of mystic corruption which was one of the sources of her being, laughing, shrugging, accepting, accepting finally" (**Women in Love,** p. 343).

Murry confesses that he does not understand what Lawrence means by "the fountain of mystic corruption". Yudishtar makes an attempt to explain the mysterious and baffling statement by saying that Ursula's "fountain of mystic corruption" and the "roots of her darkness and shame" signify the pure sensuality of Ursula's nature. But such an interpretation is neither convincing nor satisfactory. Ursula is always referred to as a perfect woman, and if one follows Yudishtar's viewpoint, one will find it very difficult to account for Ursula's repulsion and disgusted fury that follow immediately after Birkin's exultation. She reacts violently, savagely and mercilessly, exposing the foulness of his perversity: "What you are is a foul, deathly thing, obscene, that is what you are, obscene and perverse. You, and love ! You may well say you don't want love. No, you want **yourself,** and dirt and death — that's what you want. You are so **perverse,** so death - eating" (**Women in Love,** p. 346). This does not indicate that what has been imposed upon her, as Yudishtar alleges, is pure sensuality, for pure sensuality, even if it amounts to animality does not approach perversity, obsenity, death - eating and dirt. Yudishtar's thesis does not hold ground.

Murry stresses the sexual depravity of Birkin ; it can never be concealed. He is convinced that "Lawrence is Birkin, and what Lawrence knew about Birkin, he knew about himself." He does not try to disguise the truth. or hide what he really is : "No doubt Ursula was right. It was true, really, what she said," What is remarkable, here, is that Lawrence makes Ursula submit to Birkin's perversity. Not only does she take him for what he is, but she even exults over her self-defeat, taking a full plunge into the new experience : "They threw off their clothes, and he gathered her to him, and found her, found the pure lambent reality of her ever invisible flesh. Quenched, inhuman, his fingers upon her unrevealed nudity were the fingers of silence upon silence, the body of mysterious night upon the body of mysterious night.... She had her desire of him, she touched, she received the maximum of unspeakable communication in touch.... She had her desire fulfilled. He had his desire fulfilled. For she was to him what he was to her, the immemorial magnificence of mystic, palpable, real otherness" (**Women in Love**, p. 361).

The above quoted lines show clearly that the consummation has nothing at all to do with the phallic power ; it is anal, achieved through the touch. That is why Murry attacks the "false" conclusion of "Excurse". The consummation, he asserts, had never taken place in Lawrence's life ; Frieda was not that sort of woman who could easily give way to Lawrence's perverted tendencies ; the supremacy of the "ultra phallic" power was never acknowledged by her. Here, one must point out the fact

that Murry has gone too far in his biographical interpretation of the text. He has been judicious at the beginning of his book, where he has tried to distinguish between fact and fiction. But, here, his standpoint is regrettably unacceptable. He must not blame the work for not "telling the truth" ; the "Excurse" must not be dismissed as false simply because it does not literary portray a part of Lawrence's actual life.

But such aberrations and deflections, however, are not strange in the field of literary criticism. The significance of Murry's explication lies in the fact that it has led to a wide range discussion of perverted sexuality in Lawrence's novels. It can be safely said that most of the succeeding critics have taken great interest in Murry's viewpoint : a consideration and a reconsideration of the ultraphallic power and the sexual abnormality of the Lawrentian hero have become one of their main targets.

R.E. Prichard stresses the fact that Lawrence, being sexually frustrated, resorted to the "most denied and guilt-ridden [aspect] of physical being : the anal excremental." in order to overcome the tormenting sense of his inability to cope with his woman's sexual demands. Lawrence, says Pritchard, "frequently asserts that the true self is located in the regions of the lower back, at the base of the spine." (23) This is obviously a

(23) R.E. Pritchard, **op. cit.**, p. 24.

mere justification for Lawrence's yearning for an anal possession of his woman, a desire which was again never fulfilled in the real life. Nevertheless, Lawrence gave vent to all the suppressed emotions, turning his dream into fictional reality. The exploration of the anal source was his only way to resurrection. Will, in **The Rainbow,** represents the dream-Lawrence immersing himself in his own source of healing :

> But still the thing terrified him. Awful and threatening it was, dangerous to a degree, even whilst he gave himself to it. It was pure darkness, also. All the shameful things of the body revealed themselves to him now with a sort of sinister, tropical beauty. All the shameful natural and unatural acts of sensual voluptuousness when he and the woman partook together ,created togther, they have their heavy beauty and their delight. Shame, what was it ? It was part of the extreme delight. It was that part of delight of which man is usually afraid. Why afraid ? The secret, shameful things are most terribly beautiful. They accepted their shame, and were one with it in their most unlicensed pleasures.
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> (**The Rainbow,** pp. 237-8)

Conventional morality is out of question, conventional sexual intercourse is not to be thought of, it is under the ban. The shameful and the abnormal are delightfully accepted, so long as they lead to an infinite pleasure and unlimited satisfaction. The voluptuous sensuality, though perverse, degrading, and death-like, is hailed and accepted.

G.W. Knight, who admits that Murry's "acute commentary has assisted my understanding," follows the same track in his comment on sexuality in **Women in Love,** taking Murry's "I know what Lawrence **meant** by his writing far better than other men," as indisputably axiomatic. In matter of fact, his whole essay on **Women in Love** depends on Murry's criticism of the novel, and feels that Knight's contribution is slim and unremarkable. He agrees with Murry's point that Lawrence "seems to be 'demanding a new kind of physical contact' accompanied by 'fear and terror'.". The "frontal" phallic intercourse is to be replaced by the dark sensuality of the "rounded loins." Throughout the essay, Knight is overwhelmed by Murry's commentary ; his conclusions are always in accord with "what Murry says," and "what Murry calls," and "what Murry observes." A representative passage of manageable length may be quoted to show the extent of Murry's influence on Knight's understanding: "In **Women in Love** the implements [of anal sexuality] are the fingers but, as again in **Lady Chatterley,** it is a matter less of love than of deliberate and 'impersonal' ... 'sensuality'... and it is to this extent 'inhuman'.... It touches the inmost non-human being of the person 'mystically-physically'... ; as Murry observes..., 'it does not admit of individuality as we understand it'. In what Murry calls this 'ultra-phallic realm' sexual distinctions are transcended 'beyond womanhood' in a dark 'otherness' at once 'masculine and feminine'." (24)

(24) Colin Clarke, **op. cit.,** p. 139.

Knight puts it explicity that anal sensuality is shamelessly practised, through the touch, in **Women in Love,** and through the phallic power in **Lady Chatterley's Lover.** But again, Murry's influence pops through the concluding lines : "Murry did not like it ; but it seems that he has suffered some injustice from admirers of Lawrence. Granted his knowledge, he was very reticent. There were obvious reasons why he could not speak so clearly as we can to-day". (25)

The Murry-Knight interpretation of sexual perversity in Lawrence's works is discussed by G.H. Ford in his essay : "Women in Love : the Degeneration of Western Man," where he states that Knight's comment aroused the attention, and provoked the anger of reviewers and critics, to the extent that **Lady Chatterley's Lover** was prosecuted for the second time : A lawyer, the Warden of All Souls at Oxford, discovered that in one of the several sexual encounters described in the novel, **intercourse in the Italian style** [italics mine] had been practised. It had also been occasionally practised, it seems, by Will and Anna in **The Rainbow** and by Birkin and Ursula in the scene of the Tyrol." (26)

But Ford cautiously does not commit himself to an emphatic support of Knight's view. To him, as to Frank Kermode, (27)

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(25) **Ibid.**, p. 141.
(26) **Ibid.**, p. 143.
(27) See his essay on "Lawrence And The Apocalyptic Types" in Colin Clarke, **op. cit.,** pp. 201 — 18.

Lawrence is never clear on the point ; in most cases he contradicts himself in a confusing manner : "The novelist has pictured Birkin as rejecting 'the African process' and then shown him as, in effect, succumbing to it," (28) which means that he lacks consistency, and so no final conclusion is to be drawn. Nevertheless, it must be said that Ford seems to ignore the fact that Birkin's hesitation does not last for long, and that the anal touch, though "horrible", "bestial" and "degraded" is finally accepted and rejoiced in : "They might do as they liked — this she [Ursula] realized as she went to sleep. How could anything that gave one satisfaction be excluded ? What was degrading ? Who cared ? Degrading things were real, with a different reality. And he was so unabashed and unrestrained" (**Women in Love**, p. 464).

Such a message is met by complete rejection from Murry who, in 1924, declared quite bulntly that he was stringently opposed to Lawrence's doctrine because it seemed to him false and deathly. Lawrence, in **Women in Love,** is deliberately "obscene" in the "exact sense of the word." Murry is repelled and disgusted by the repugnant mindless sensuality offered and propagated by Lawrence as a means of sexual regeneration. The exploration of the anal sources was pursued by Lawrence only as a disguise and an ascape from his own weakness and futility. Natural fulfilment in a woman was "denied" to him ; so he

(28) **Ibid.,** p. 183.

intentionally deceived himself and deceived his fellow-men by portraying perverted sexuality as the only way to sexual regeneration — he was "henceforward, veritably a doomed man." In his criticism of **Women in Love**, Murry concentrates on the relationship between Ursula and Birkin in the novel in general and in "Excurse" in particular. His explication of sexuality and sensuality has directed the steps of many critics, as has been shown in the case of G. Wilson Knight. But this is not the only achievement of Murry as a leading Lawrence critic. His interpretation of the moon-stoning scene was unique in its time : he is incontroversially considered the first critic to point out the influence of the moon on the Lawrentian character.

The strange chapter "Moony" is highly expressive, though it seems, to the hasty reader, unintellingible. The difficulty of the scene lies in its obscure symbolism. Brikin, in a mood of frenzied frustration under the full moon, curses Cybele : "The accursed Syria Dea !" Then staring at the water of a pond in front of him, he faces the bright moon. The man and the moon in complete isolation — though Ursula is hiding unseen in the background — confront each other. The whole situation appears as if it were a challenge offered by the moon and accepted by Brikin ; he decides to destroy the moon : "He stood staring at the water. Then he stooped and picked up a stone, which he threw sharply at the pond. Ursula was aware of the bright moon leaping and swaying, all distorted, in her eyes....

Then he stooped and groped on the ground. Then again there was a burst of sound, and a burst of brilliant light, the moon had exploded on the water, and was flying asunder in flakes of white and dangerous fire" (**Women in Love**, p. 278). For some moments it seems to Birkin that there is no moon ; his victory, he thinks, is complete ; he has succeeded in breaking it into pieces, puting an end to its influence. But to his disappointment, the moon, persistently, gathers itself once more, winning back its complacent completeness, which drives Birkin into a fit of dissatisfied frenzy : "Like madness, he must go on. He got large stones, and threw them, one after the other, at the white-burning centre of the moon, till there was nothing but a rocking hollow noise, and a pond surged up, no moon any more" (**Women in Love**, p. 281). But it is of no avail ; the moon gathers itself into unity, and the impossibility of its destruction symbolizes Birkin's final defeat.

Murry points out that Birkin's fight against the moon is, in fact, a fight against Aphrodite, "the divinity under whose cold light Ursula annihilated the core of intrinsic male in Lawrence's last incarnation as Anton Skrebensky" (**Son of Woman, p. 118**). In **The Rainbow,** Ursula annihilates Anton in a full moonlight by the side of the salty water of the sea, as if she were a sea-born Aphrodite, leading a helpless victim to an "ordeal of proof... for life or death." Anton tries, in utter helplessness and dismay, to escape the moon, leading her to the dark hollow, but she refuses ; it must be on the "slope full under the moonshine." Failure becomes inevitable ; Anton is crushed to dust and ashes. It is all symbolism. says Murry, "full moonlight for

the extreme of consciousness in the sensual darkness ; the sea for its salt corrosiveness, and because Aphrodite is sea-born" (**Son of Woman,** p. 95).

The prominence of Murry's interpretation has been acknowledged and appreciated by many critics. Yudishtar asserts that it was "J. Middleton Murry who first pointed out that Birkin is here trying to destroy Aphrodite", though he adds that there is a reference to the same point in Lawrence's **Fantasia of the Unconscious,** where Lawrence "equates moon 'with sea-born Aphrodite, mother and bitter goddess.' (29)." No other significant interpretation has been given since Murry ; Eliseo Vivas and Graham Hough, though in different ways, come to Murry's conclusion : Cybele is identified with Aphrodite who is the terror of men, the possessive female, the "Magna Mater." Even Leavis, with all his arrogance and individually sophisticated style, adds nothing of value to Murry's domineering comment. "The possessiveness," says Leavis, "he divines in Urrula..., he sees in the reflected moon." This is all Leavis's contribution which apparently does not constitute any substantial originality or conspicuousness ; on the contray, it seems trivial and cursory, if compared to Murry's outstanding exposition.

To round up the whole argument, one must stress the fact that Murry's attitude is that of a critic who attempts by all possible means to give an accurate revelation of Lawrence's

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(29) Yudishtar, **op. cit.,** p. 175.

conflict and suffering as well as the development of his throught. The fight between Lawrence and Frieda is embodied in the struggle between Birkin and Ursula which ends, symbolically, in the defeat of Birkin. It is true that a sense of fulfilment colours the Ursula-Birkin relationship, but Lawrence was convinced that the fulfilment was imaginary. That is why he turned, as if driven by a harrowingly merciless destiny, to explore the possibility of a relation with a man. The hunger for a woman, says Murry, "has proved disastrous, in spite of the assertions of actual, and the reports of imaginary fulfilment." So it was inevitable that Lawrence should turn to a man to find an outlet for the devastating misery that, like the vulture of Prometheus, was gnawing at his heart. This theme emerges for the first time in **Women in Love,** represented in the Birkin-Gerald relationship. Birkin believes that a man-friend is an indispensable necessity that must be attained by all possible means. Birkin's words to Gerald are clear enough to express Lawrence's view : "You've got to take down the love-and-marriage ideal from its pedestal. We want something broader. I believe in the addifional perfect relationship between man and man — additional to marriage" (**Women in Love,** pp. 397-8). The nature of such a relationship is clear : it must be a blood-brotherhood. The sensual and the spiritual are to be fused and merged ; their friendship is intellectual and spiritual, so what they need is to be "more or less physically intimate." The offer is gently rejected by Gerald who cannot pledge himself to his friend. He carries on with Ursula's sister,

Gudrun, and that is why, from Birkin's standpoint, he dies catastrophically in the inhuman world of the snow. He gives himself an easy victim to "Aphrodite the deathly". Had he pledged himself to the man first, Birkin meditates, he could have pledged himself to the woman afterwards. This morbid thesis of blood-brotherhood will be artistically delineated in Lawrence's two following novels : **Aaron's Rod** and **Kangaroo.**

CHAPTER IV

BLOOD-BROTHERHOOD

The third period of Lawrence's life begins with the great man as a savage pilgrim, with his back to England and his face towards the wilderness of the unknown. From whence he would utter his oracle and preach his gospel expecting the whole world to listen to him as its sole master and prophet. But before taking a full plunge into the exploration of this glorious Lawrentian dream, one finds it indispensable to discuss briefly the causes and consequences of Lawrence's bitter dispute with England.

Before leaving England in 1919, Lawrence suffered terribly from what Murry calls "a kind of persecution-mania". He was gaining prominence as a literary genius of considerable stature, but at the same time he felt persecuted and rejected, as if there were a conspiracy of death against him. **The Rainbow** was banned as a work of demonic obscenity which should be pulverized. To Lawrence's astonishment, the contemporary critics and men of letters held back ; they would not utter one brave or just word to help a man who was writhing on the verge of the chasm of destruction. Lawrence was a free-lance writer, and the suppression of his work meant no less than his starvation. That is how hostility began ; Lawrence found nothing to feed on, in England, save the Dead Sea apples. Humanity

appeared, to him ,dry and rotten to the very core. He was left alone to face "the ultimate" experience of annihilation. So Lawrence, Murry says, "had some excuse for believing that the powers that were, were determined to destroy him" (**Son of Woman,** pp. 126-7). The natural reaction was inevitably a flagrant hate and an indomitable wish for destruction. In February 1916, he wrote to Koteliansky : "I feel anti-social. I want to blow the wings of these fallen angels. I want to bust'em up. I feel that everything I do is a shot at these fallen angels of mankind. Wing the brutes. If only one could be a pirate or a brigand nowadays, an outlaw, to rob the angels and hang them on a tree" (**The Quest for Rananim,** p. 69).

But this was not all. The feeling of persecution was relentlessly deepened in him by the "inhuman" treatment and torture inflicted on him, by his countrymen, during the war. With a German wife, no visible means of earning a living, and a life of seclusion in a cottage that "looked directly over the Bristol Channel," Lawrence was taken for a spy. His reaction to the charge together with the humiliating experience of his conscription are splendidly portrayed in the "Nightmare", the purely antobiographical chapter in **Kangaroo** : "They had once threatened to arrest him as a spy, and had insulted him more than once. He would never forgive them" (**Kangaroo,** p. 237). And in the agonized fury of an unjustly injured man, he utters the contemptuous words "I am not a spy. I leave it to dirtier people."

Murry believes that lawrence could have avoided suspiction by leaving Cornwall, and by moving "inland" where he could have led a peaceful life. But Lawrence was not such a man : it was against his nature to be cowed and abashed by threats founded on false accusations. So he stuck to his guns, insisted on staying in his cottage, and in a challenging spirit of perversity began to sing German songs. The antagonism was not hidden, and naturally suspicion took roots.

Catherine Carswell thinks that the move inland was not so easy for Lawrence, because he had already paid a year's rent and he was not so well off as to make a financial sacrifice ; moreover, the "annexe was furnished and painted." Such an account can be easily rejected on the grounds that Lawrence never cared either for money or for possessions. Nevertheless, one would agree with Mrs. Carswell, when she prudently says that it was the act of sheer "bullying" that antagonized Lawrence and made him resist frantically. The last part of Mrs. Carswell's account corresponds to some extent, with Murry's understanding of the situation. Of course, says Murry, "if some one had been there to answer the question correctly, and to say that he stayed there because he wanted to be persecuted, because he wanted to suffer, because to wanted to hate them and mankind for making him suffer, because he wanted to be able to spew England out of his mouth, the answer would have seemed pure nonsense. But it would have been true. Lawrence wanted the darkness and the horror and the sense of malignancy that he felt in Cornwall" (**Son of Woman**, p. 127).

But Lawrence's position can be defended and his hatred can be justified. Murry should have added that it was England that encouraged Lawrence to "spew" her out of his mouth, and that it was his countrymen who, by their hostility, forced him to hate them. Even Murry, who was supposed to be a friend, did not exert the slightest effort to support Lawrence's position. On the contrary, he attcaked Lawrence vehemently, labelling him as the "outlaw of English literature," and the "enemy of civilization." He tried to account for this strange behaviour by saying that, at that time, he was the only critic who took Lawrence seriously : "I was the only English critic who took up his challenge with a vehemence comparable to that with which he had flung it down" (**Reminiscences,** p. 239. But it is easy to detect the falsity of Murry's attitude. Of all the English critics, he was the only one who knew for sure how difficult and problematic Lawrence's situation was. Instead of launching such a vicious attack, he should have spared a word or two for a distressed genius, or at least he should have remained reticent, letting the storm pass without adding more fuel to the blazing flame. Murry's behaviour was improper, a fact which Murry himself could not deny : "Well, I changed" he admitted later on, "I came to believe that Lawrence was right and I was wrong" (**Reminiscences,** p. 240). It was detestable persecution that Lawrence was offered, and he had nothing to give in return except contempt and hate : "what people want is hate and nothing but hate.... I abhor humanity, I wish it was swept away" (**Women in Love,** p. 141).

Furthermore, Lawrence's feeling of hatred and frustration was deepened by the "humiliating" experience of conscription, when he was "summoned to join the army." They handled his private parts, looked at the dark source of his body, laughed mockingly at his frailty, paying no heed to the sacredness of the human body. Then he was rejected as medically unfit. The whole scene is bitterly portrayed in "The Nightmare," where Lawrence's hero reaches the highest pitch of degradation :

> He put his hand between Somer's legs, and pressed upwards, under the genitals. Somers felt his eyes going black.
> "Cough". said the puppy. He coughed.
> "Again", said the puppy. He made a noise in his throat, then turned aside in disgust.
> "Turn round," said the puppy. "Face the wall."
> Somers turned and faced the shameful monkey-faces at the long table. So, he had his back to the tall window : and the puppy stood plumb behind him.
> "Put your feet apart."
> He put his feet apart.
> "Bend forward — further — further —"
> Somers bent forward, lower, and realized that the puppy was standing aloof behind him to look into his anus. And that this was the source of the wonderful jesting that went on all the time. (**Kangaroo,** pp. 281 - 2)

The outcome of the experience was a devastating spiritual disaster. Lawrence told Frieda that it would be better for him to dissolve and fade away than to have his legs put in "Khaki," joining an "unjust" war. But at the same time he was humiliated by the sense of his futility ; he hated being rejected as a consumptive misfit.

The war was, to Lawrence, the last fatally poisoned arrow directed at his heart. It destroyed his personality, annihilated his existence, and changed him into an abstraction. It was the incubus that crushed his being, changing him into a good-for-nothing creature : "The war finished me," he wrote to lady Cynthia Asquith, "it was the spear through the side of all sorrows and hopes" (**Selected Letters,** p. 78). It was more than enough to drive him mad ; he could not bear any longer "to let the madness get stronger and stronger possession."

Murry asserts that the war and Lawrence's feeling of persecution were not the main cause of his frustration : the whole dilemma emanated from his sexual failure and his never-fulfilled yearning for a man-friend. Eliseo Vivas's comment on this point concurs with Murry's pronouncement. To Vivas Lawrence's "alienation" was not mainly caused by the war ; it originated and took roots in his past, a past that was feeding on the very entrails of his spirit. "What the war did," says Vivas, "was merely to bring on an added trauma, a more severe one, one that brought up all the dregs of hatred and frustration and rejection." (1)

Any way, Lawrence's last and decisive resolve was to leave England, if he was to be saved. England, as he thought, had insulted him both physically and spiritually. The ties between

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(1) Vivas, **op. cit.,** p. 55.

him and his country were snapped : "Something is broken. There was only a "tomb" which he should avoid ; he had to look for another heaven and earth. And in ultimate despair, he uttered the painfully depressing cry : "No more quibbling and trying to do anything with the world. The world is gone, extinquished, ... gone for ever.... I am not going to strive with anything any more— go like a thistle-down, anywhere, having nothing to do with the world, no connexion." (**Selected Letters,** p. 95). In November 1919 Lawrence left England and, though he returned two or three times on short visits to see his sister, he never returned spiritually. It was finished ; to him, England was dead.

Lawrence began to regain his faith in life, immediately after leaving England. His "savage pilgrimage" round the world was not so much of an escape as it was of a relentless search for a place where he could fit in as a master and a prophet, and where he would realize his utopian dream of creating a "Rananim."

Lawrence's move forward was inevitably directed to an unkown land : "Unknown, that is, in Lawrence's particular sense, a land which has not been mastered by a human culture," where he would be "the Moses, the law-giver, who should bring its soul to consciousness" (**Son of Woman,** p. 169). But the sort of consciousness he aimed at was different from the "sordid" consciousness of modern life which he would never accept, and which he would fight to the very last breath. It had let his

"saintly" being with a flop into the mud. "A condition of life more primitive, pre-mental, pre-christian" would be tried, though the issues were not certain ; but he would have a go at teaching people the truth about life : a "truth that would solve all problems at their source. "Rananim" must come into existence, and he should be the chosen one who would lead his people to the promised land. The prophetic tone of his words in **Women in Love** was still ringing in his ears : "There must arise a man who will give new values to things, give us new truths, a new attitude towards life, or else we shall be crumbling to nothingness in a few years, a country of ruin" (**Women in Love,** p. 59). Lawrence's serious fault was that he mistook his power as a writer for the power of a reformer and a prophet.

Lawrence went to Germany, Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia ; he tried to get in touch with his fellowmen, in order to fulfil the dream of creating a new life-mode. But Europe failed him. It became unreal. And so "the rainbow begins to shine over America ; and Lawrence has conceived the idea that he will make his way round the world. Europe is finished now, as England was finished" (**Son of Woman,** p. 167). He would go to the virgin land of Australia, then to America, preaching the main thesis of **Fantasia of the Unconscious** : leaders, he would go on hammering, "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" (**Fantasia of the Unconscious,** p. 88). And,

without any doubt, Lawrence expected himself to be the chosen leader : the Saviour of the human race.

Here, a consideration of Murry's views on the **Fantasia of the Unconscious** cannot be burked, for it is Murry's firm belief that, of all Lawrence's books, the **Fantasia** is the most fascinating: "I marks the zenith of his mortal course.... In it he declares his faith.... It is a kind of self revelation. In this halcyon moment, he looks back calmly upon his own life and sees clearly what he is, how compounded, how conditioned, how compelled. And, in essence, **Fantasia of the Unconscious** is the effort, born of this clear self-knowledge, so to change the world of man that in future no child shall be compounded, and conditioned, and compelled as he was" (**Son of Woman,** p. 19).

It was in Germany (August 1920) that Lawrence started writing **Fantasia of the Unconscious.** It was finished (October 1920) "amid the trees of the Black Forest, at Ebesteinburg." In the perfect tranquillity that reaches the verge of charmed stillness, where the world of time and the timeless world seemed to be indistinguishable, Lawrence conjured the spirit of his past. And, like a Buddha struggling heroically to find a way out of the deathly womb of melancholy, disease, and despair, he began his splendid meditation ; wounded humanity must be healed ; the divided souls must become whole ; the desperate, the melancholic ,and the agonized must, in bliss, be created anew ; the sufferers must suffer no more ; people, all people, must rejoice and listen to the good news : Lawrence's gospel would show them the way.

The **Fantasia,** according to Murry, is "absolutely" a great book : "I cannot doubt that it will be a fountain of life for many years to come, and to generations yet unborn" (**Son of Woman,** p. 171). He believes that it is a natural growth of Lawrence's small book **Psycho-Analysis and the Unconscious.** The significance of the two parts (2) is that they are a direct result of Lawrence's "philosophy" and an indispensable commentary on his creative work. The father-mother-child relationship and the man-woman conflict are well analysed, and an equilibrium is reached in the end.

Murry's argument begins with a question about the meaning of the unconscious. Does the unconscious imply the "preconscious and pristine," or "is it the place or condition in which exist desires stimulated by the mind but rejected by the moral consciousness ?" (**Son of Woman,** p. 174). The unconscious, from Lawrence's, point of view, represents the individual soul which is the true expression of the genuineness of life ; "it is the spontaneous life-motive in every organism" : where the individual life begins, the unconscious also begins, they are inseparable. By the unconscious, Lawrence explains, "we wish to indicate that essential unique nature of every individual creature, which is, by its very nature unanalysable, undefinable, inconceivable. It cannot be conceived, it can only be experienced in every single instance" (**Fantasia,** pp. 214-5). What prevents

(2) Murry consciders **Psycho-Analysis and the Unconscious** as the first part of **Fantasia of the Unconscious.**

Lawrence from using the word "soul" to indicate the unconscious, though it is what he means, is that it has been "vitiated by the idealistic use."

Lawrence believes that in every individual there are two upper centres of the unconscious. The lower centres are located in "the sympathetic plexus and voluntary ganglion" ; the upper centres are "the sympathetic plexus in the breast," and the "thoracic ganglion in the shoulders." The lower plane is the sensual, the upper is the spiritual. The two planes must be held in complete harmony ; otherwise, the individual life will lose its normality and divided souls will emerge miserably to create a kind of life which is no life.

In point of fact, one finds Lawrence's explication somewhat confusing. Even Murry himself finds it difficult to understand Lawrence's physiology of the nervous system. But, on the whole, he does not bother "whether Lawrence has correctly located his centres or not. The location may be quite arbitrary, but the psychological distinctions he is making are real" (**Son of Woman,** p. 180). In particulars, Lawrence must not be taken for a reliable authority, a fact which he admits frankly when he says : "I am not a scientist. I am an amateur of amateurs. As one of my critics said, you either believe or you don't.... I proceed by intuition. This leaves you quite free to dismiss the whole wordy mass of revolting nonsense, without a qualm" (**Fantasia,** pp. 11-12).

Lawrence's main objective in the **Fantasia** is to establish an

equilibrium between the upper and lower centres ; the "sensual" and the "spiritual" man within the individual must be kept in perfect order. This is to be done freely and instinctively without the slightest interference from the mind which must be considered as a "subsidiary mode of experience". Such a trend of thought may appear trivial or nonsensical, but, to Murry, it is "sanity itself". He believes that Lawrence's pronouncement is sagacious, and if it does not lead to the expected conclusion, by being strictly adhered to, the blame must not be lain on Lawrence, but on those who have failed to understand him. Obviously, Murry states, "if we are still the unconscious victims of the tyranny of mind, we shall resent Lawrence's effort to emancipate us from that tyranny" (**Son or Woman,** p. 183).

Equilibrium, then, is Lawrence's key-word ; its loss means the creation of abnormal creatures, divided human beings like himself. He lays the responsibility — for the balance of the two scales of the upper and lower planes — first and foremost on the shoulders of the parents. The mother must make no demands for the love of her son, and in the same way the father must let his daughter alone, without stimulating, prematurely, the spiritual side of the child's nature. The children must not be crippled by the misdirected emotions of their parents. An unsatisfied and frustrated mother must not turn to her son for satisfaction :

> Seeking, the fulfilment in the deep passional self ; diseased with self-consciousness and sex in the head,

> foiled by the very loving weakness of the husband who has not the courage to withdraw into his own stillness and singleness, and put the wife under the spell of his fulfilled decision ; the unhappy woman beats about for her insatiable satisfaction, seeking whom she may devour. And usually, she turns to her child. Here she provokes what she wants. Here in her own son who belongs to her, she seems to find the last perfect response for which she is craving. He is a medium to her, she provokes from him her own answer. So she throws herself into a last great love for her son, a final and fatal devotion, that which would have been the richness and strength of her husband and is poison to the boy. (**Fantasia**, p. 125)

Such an attitude is fatally disastrous because, by prematurely arousing the child's "passional nature," it paralyses its capability to practise normally a true sexual relationship.

The main objection to Lawrence's thesis is that he is, in the main, generalizing his own predicament, making his own particular case as if it were a universal phenomenon. It is true that for Lawrence the problem was distressingly overwhelming, but this does not necessitate that for the rest of men it has the same painfully devastating influence. But, on the whole, "the extremity of his own case made him more keenly aware of the elemental problem ; we may not suffer from a 'mother-fixation' like him... ; we may not have become the victims of 'idealism' in prcisely the same way as he : but that 'idealism' is, in one form or another, the real canker of our modern life is surely evident" (**Son of Woman**, p. 176).

Murry does not deal extensively with the **Fantasia** ; he does not approach Lawrence's expositition of the man-woman relationship and refers in passing to Lawrence's analysis of the

purposive and the sexual urge ; Lawrence's attitude towards evolution, science, knowledge, and leadership, is also ignored. But he stresses the fact that, by writing the **Fantasia,** Lawrence was yearning for a harmony, a state of wholeness, which he could not attain ; he was fatally crippled, and his case was incurable. Yet the **Fantasia,** according to Murry, must be looked at as a book of wisdom, a new gospel that aims at the regeneration of life : "It is for the creation of a new generation that the **Fantasia** was really written ; to save the children from being bullied and warped and destroyed by the vicious ideal. The men and women to whom Lawrence addresses himself cannot be saved in their own lives, any more than Lawrence himself could be saved. But life can be saved. We cannot ourselves have life in its fullness, but we will have life-wisdom ; we can restore life to those who come after us. The **Fantasia** is radiant with life-wisdom" (**Son of Woman.** p. 185).

The main argument of the **Fantasia** — about leaders and leadership — is reasserted in **Aaron's Rod** : Lawrence creates his dream-friend, Aaron, and asks him to submit and follow. Murry concentrates on the relation between the two men in so far as it throws gleams of light on Lawrence's personal life ; the other parts of the book, as a work of art, are cleverly burked, for they are of no great value to the main issue of Murry's study.

Aaron and Lilly are representatives of two sides of the Lawrentian personality ; Aaron is "extraordinarily like Lawrence, or like Lilly". The similarity between the two men is

striking : they belong to the same class, and were brought up in the same district ; both are artists, though they express themselves differently. Aaron "in the crucial moments of his positive and complete thinking, utters himself through music, on his flute and Lawrence the author translates his meaning into words" (**Son of Woman,** p. 200). This identification of the two characters with Lawrence himself is, almost unanimously accepted by Lawrence's critics. Richard Aldington, in his introduction to **Aaron's Rod,** identifies Lilly with Lawrence, Tanny with Frieda, and Aaron with Murry. It was Murry whom Lawrence wanted for a follower and a disciple. Lawrence, says Aldington "was really more attached to Murry than to any other of his men-friends, and he was always willing to forget how bitterly he had hurt his friend in hope of a reconciliation. This was always hopeless, because what Lawrence wanted was not a friend but an utterly obedient and subservient disciple" (**Aaron's Rod,** introd., p. 8). But in his book, **A Portrait of A Genius But** ..., Aldington asserts that, after leaving England for the continent, Aaron becomes a close reflection of Lawrence, representing his experience and thought. Undoubtedly, this view is in complete accordance with Murry's interpretation which is, also, adopted by Graham Hough when he declares that Lawrence has split himself into two : "Lilly is Lawrence the prophet, and Aaron is the escaped denizen of Eastwood".(3) Even Horace Gregory, though aggressive in his attitude towards Murry, cannot help acquiescing to Murry's view. (4) F.R. Leavis

(3) Hough, **op. cit.,** p. 96.
(4) Gregory, **op. cit.,** p. 52.

who, as he admits, has been well-versed in Murry's criticism of Lawrence, arrives at the same conclusion, though he uses different terminology to express his thought : "As Aaron presses his questions, his doubts, and his ironies — and he does so pertinaciously in this chapter (X) — we have a sense that this is something very like a **dialogue intérieur,** and that Aaron is an alter ego"(5).

Regardless of this unanimous agreement which evidently shows Murry's priority, one cannot hesitate to object and declare in the teeth of all critics, Murry included, that Aaron's main qualities, as an individual, are a faithful representation of Murry's personality. The experience may be different, but the essentials are the same. Murry's cold-blooded selfishness that, at times, reaches he verge of the inhuman, his cowardice, reticence and aloneness are quite apparent in Aaron's behaviour and way of life. Aaron's wife describes him as "quiet, quiet in his tempers, and selfish through and through. I've lived with him twelve years — I know what it is. Killing" (**Aaron's Rod,** p. 56). In a fit of rage and despair she cries out at him : "You're unnatural. You are not a man. You have not got a man's feeling.... You are a coward. You are running away from me, without telling me what you've against me" (**Aaron's Rod,** p. 151). Aaron, like Murry, is "a special man, a man of peculiar understanding, even though as a rule he said little" (**Aaron's Rod,** p. 33). The Aaron-Murry aloneness and self-centredness are

(5) Leavis, **op. cit.,** p. 39.

candidly stated : "His intrinsic and central aloneness was the very centre of his being. Break it and he broke his being" (**Aaron's Rod**, p. 197). And again Aaron seems to be uttering Murry's thoughts when he says : "I like being myself — I hate feeling and caring, and being forced into it. I want to be left alone" (**Aaron's Rod**, p. 85). What one is driving at is that Aaron is not Lawrence, in spite of the fact that Lawrence dyes him with some of his colours. Aaron is, essentially Murry ; henceforth the struggle between Aaron-Murry and Lilly-Lawrence gains both prominence and significance, in so far as the biographical line is followed, which is undoubtedly Murry's critical criterion.

The story begins with Aaron deserting his wife and children ; he revolts against her domination because it is essentially against his nature : "Born in him was a spirit which could not worship woman : no, and would not. Could not and would not. It was not in him.... He never yielded himself : never. All his mad loving was only an effort. Afterwards, he was as devilishly unyielded as ever" (**Aaron's Rod**, p. 193). Murry accounts for Aaron's desertion of his wife by saying that it is his final declaration of protest and "revolt" against his wife's "unconscious determination" to make him acquiesce and yield to her "sacred priority". This means that Aaron escapes when he feels that his woman is going to victimize him and destroy his integrity as a male. So his running away is justified : he is escaping humiliation.

From the start, Murry makes it clear that Aaron's behaviour is reasonable and that his position is well-founded. Such a view is rejected by F.R. Leavis who believes that the real reason of the dispute between husband and wife is not explicitly stated : "Something has gone wrong between husband and wife. Not that we are told this." (6) It seems that Lottie's complaining, aggressive and domineering personality is not sufficiently realized by Leavis, that is why he does not pay head either to Lawrence's or to Murry's account of the situation. This does not imply that Leavis is following the right track ; what is given in the novel is more than enough to justify Aaron's recoiling into himself. The conflict between husband and wife is rigid, neither of them is going to yield ; so separation is the only way out of such an impasse : "She, realizing, sank upon the hearth-rug and lay there curled upon herself. She was defeated. But she too would never yield.... Come life, come death, she too would never yield. And she realized now that he would never yield" (**Aaron's Rod.** p. 155). Consequently, Aaron leaves his wife, meets Lilly and the relation between the the two men begins to develop.

In Aaron, Lilly "has found his man". They decide to lay the foundation of a new society, but how it is to be constructed is not specifically stated. To Murry, the positive plans are "vague, in fact precisely Lawrence's own plans". But what is important in the relation between the two men is that Lilly asks

(6) Leavis, **op. cit.,** p. 35.

Aaron to yield to him ; such a demand makes the final issues more than doubtful, for it is against Aaron's nature to "yield himself entirely". To find a solution, Lawrence, for his own purposes, creates in Aaron a point of weakness : he cannot bear his loneliness for long ; he needs somebody. Lilly, whose relation with his wife is strongly binding but unsatisfactory, needs a man. This means that a friendship between the two men is indispensable ; "they are made for each other".

In **Aaron's Rod,** Lawrence portrays the most depressing of all his personal problems : his hunger for a man. He creates Aaron, the longed for friend of his imagination and asks him to submit ; the final solution of Lawrence's problem depends on such a submission. It is the main point round which the whole subject of the book revolves. A release is what Lawrence, indefatigably, tries to find. He, says Murry, "the living Lawrence, is an unsatisfied man ; he has not touched, and cannot touch, that goal of true sexual fulfilment. His yearning for love needs a man as well as a woman ; and since that yearning for a man proceeds out of unfulfilment with a woman, it cannot be satisfied ; it demands more from a man than a man could ever give, if he were indeed a man. And nothing less than a man who is a man will do for Lawrence" (**Son of Woman**, p. 206).

Here, Murry suggests that the idea of power and leadership, which emerges at the end of the book, springs directly from Lawrence's sexual frustration. Lacking the indomitable male power to possess a woman, he concentrates on, and devotes all his care and attention to a man : a man who must submit and

follow. Lawrence's true conception of power, says Murry, "was distorted by his personal need ; it passed into the lower order, and became a magniloquent name for a devouring personal possession of another man" (**Son of Woman,** p. 207). Aaron has to surrender his body and soul to the heroic personality of a man greater than himself ; undoubtedly, such a great man is no other than Lilly. In Murry's terms, this simply means that Aaron shall follow Lilly as his body-servant.

What Murry is stressing is that the idea of leadership and even that of discipleship are no more than a fraud ; Lawrence was deceiving himself and deceiving others, for what really he "was asking for was not even a disciple, but simply a lover." The oil-rubbing scene can be referred to as a good illustration of Murry's point of view.

> "I'm going to rub you with oil", he said, "I'm going to rub you as mothers do their babies whose bowels don't work."
>
> ... ...
>
> Quickly he uncovered the blond lower part of his patient, and began to rub the abdomen with oil, using a slow, rhythmic, circulating motion, a sort of massage. For a long time he rubbed finely and steadily, then went over the whole of the lower body, mindless as if in a sort of incantation. He rubbed every speck of the man's lower body — the abdomen, the buttocks, the thighs and knees, down to the feet, rubbed it all warm and glowing with camphorated oil, every bit of it, chafing the toes swiftly, till he was exhausted. Then Aaron was covered up again, and Lilly sat down in fatigue to look at his patient. (**Aaron's Rod,** p. 118)

Aaron's illness in Lilly's flat, and the way Lilly takes care of him, are highly significant. They expose Lawrence's "exquisite tenderness for a man." The physical contact between the two men is portrayed as an essential necessity for Aaron's recovery ; after the rubbing, he is miraculously restored to health. It is simply because he has yielded himself to the touch of another man that he is saved ; without that yielding he would have perished. Before Aaron, Gerald perishes catastrophically because of his rejection of the blood-brotherhood offered by Birkin. But, though the situation does not develop into open homo-sexuality, it indicates its presence at the back of Lilly's mind. Murry does not hesitate to declare it : "Lilly wants a homo-sexual relation with Aaron to complete his incomplete hetero-sexual relation with Tanny. This he calls 'extending' marriage" (**Son of Woman,** p. 211).

It is not altogether irrelevant to assert that, "Low-water Mark", the chapter in which Lilly takes care of his sick friend, is founded on a personal life-experience that took place in February 1915. At that time, Murry, passing a week-end at Lawrence's cottage, felt badly indisposed. Lawrence played the part of the nurse properly and "beautifully", till he succeeded in bringing his friend back to normal. The episode is related in **Reminiscences,** where Murry says : "Lawrence assured me, vehemently that I was ill. He made me go straight to bed, and did not let me get up until he was satisfied I was better. Lawrence was in his element looking after someone, especially someone rather stupid about his body.... There is no more perfect likeness of the man I knew than the picture of Lilly

looking after Aaron Sisson in the little flat near Covent Garden, in **Aaron's Rod**" (p. 53).

Yudishtar's explanation of the scene is in direct opposition to that of Murry. He asserts that an attentive reading of the chapter would eliminate any idea of homosexuality, and prove that Lawrence was only expounding one of the main theses of the **Fantasia** : man's need to have a purposive relationship with other men. He quotes Lilly's words : "So get better my flutist, so that I can go away," and adds that the "entire argument of the novel" undermines the unfounded charge of hamosexuality. (7) Between Murry and Yudishtar, Eliseo Vivas takes a compromising position. He states that it is difficult, "while staying within the context of the story," to come to a final conclusion in so far as the charge of homosexuality is concerned. It is not easy to decide how much is "illegitimate and how much is legitimate" (8) He neither takes sides nor comes to a conclusion.

Horace Gregory, on the other hand, does not hesitate to adopt Murry's view : "The scene between Lilly and Aaron in Lilly's London flat is a famous passage well known to all readers of Lawrence and thrown in high relief by Murry's **Son of Woman** ; there it is used in a literal sense by Murry to prove Lawrence's hatred of women and to hint broadly that he was spiritually undermined by homosexual tendencies. (9) Then he

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(7) Yudishtar, **op. cit.**, p. 227.
(8) Vivas, **op. cit.**, p. 36.
(9) Gregory, **op. cit.**, p. 53.

adds bluntly that homosexuality was included in Lawrence's "scheme" of regeneration.

Graham Hough takes the same stance, approaching the subject from the same angle. He notes that there was a homosexual inclination in Lawrence's personality though it was not given the chance to gain prominence and priority. A quotation from Hough may be more expressive of his own idea : "there is a strong element of that curious homosexual feeling that Lawrence never seems to have recognized as such, which we have already noticed between Gerald and Birkin, Aaron and Lilly." (10)

What one objects to is Hough's supposition that Lawrence was unconscious of his homosexual proclivities. This view is unacceptable on the grounds that Lawrence himself states, in one of his letters, that homosexuality and greatness, in most cases, are coevals : "I should like to know why nearly every man that approaches greatness tends to homosexuality, whether he admits it or not : so that he loves the body of a man better than the body of a woman.... it is the hardest thing in life to get one's soul and body satisfied from a woman, so that one is free from oneself." (11)

The lines just quoted are more than enough to refute not only Hough's point of view, but also the allegations of those who have denied the existence of homosexual tendencies in

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(10) Hough, **op. cit.**, p. 111.
(11) Pritchard, **op. cit.**, p. 54.

Lawrence's life and works. At the same time it validates and proves the authenticity of Murry's perceptive understanding. In any case the whole dispute can be decidedly settled by some lines from one of Frieda's letters (August 1953) to Murry : "There was a real bond between you and L.. If he had lived longer and been older, you would have been real friends, he wanted so desperately for you to understand him. I think the homo-sexuality in him was a short phase out of misery." (12)

It must be emphasised that Murry does not lay any blame on Lawrence ; no living individual has the right to blame him : "Lawrence was what he was, and we accept him whole." He must be taken for what he was, not what he should have been.

Murry sets a clear demarcation between the "two Lawrences" whom he knew : Lawrence the creative writer and Lawrence the depraved personality. A reading of the **Fantasia** and **Aaron's Rod** can easily show the difference between the two characters : the **Fontasia** is a declaration of faith in the purposive-urge as a bond that unites all men. **Aaron's Rod** is an expression of the suppressed yearning for a man-friend. The gap between the two claims is very wide, though in most cases they seem to be confused in Lawrence's work. Against such a "criminal" confusion, Murry is always on guard : "To be united impersonally in creative and purposive activity on the basis of a true marriage fulfilment is one thing ; to be homo-sexually

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(12) David Cavitch, **D.H. Lawrence and the New World** (New York, 1971), p. 223.

united to a man of genius because he finds it impossible to achieve sexual fulfilment in marriage is quite another" (**Son of Woman,** p. 212).

Lawrence's yearning was satisfied neither in actual nor in fictional life. Even Aaron, a Lawrence creation that has been made to give in, refuses to yield. He will not submit himself to any living creature. The last page of the novel ends with an appeal from Lilly asking Aaron to obey and follow. But there is no decisive issue ; the end is left open to speculation :

> "All men say, they want a leader. Then let them in their souls **submit** to some greater soul that [sic] theirs. At present, when they say they want a leader, they mean they want an instrument, like Lloyd George. A mere instrument for their use But it's more than that. It's the reverse. It's the deep, fathomless submission to the heroic soul in a greater man. You, Aaron, you too have the need to submit. You, too, have the need livingly to yield to a more heroic soul, to give yourself. You know you have. And you know it isn't love. It is life-submission. And you know it. But you know against the pricks. And perhaps you'd rather die than yield. And so, die you must. It is your affair". There was a long pause. Then Aaron looked up into Lilly's face. It was dark and remote-seeming. It was like a Byzantine eikon at the moment.
>
> "And whom shall I submit to ?" he said.
>
> "Your soul will tell you," replied the other.
>
> (**Aaron's Rod,** p. 347)

It is needless to say that the submission is meant to be to D.H. Lawrence himself : a leader and a saviour.

In his general comment on **Aaron's Rod,** Murry deals briefly, though illuminatingly, with the novel as a work of art.

To him, it is one of Lawrence's great mesterpieces, if not the greatest of all ; it is full of life and hope rippling with a sense of victory and beauty. **Aaron's Rod,** says Murry enthusiastically, is "the most important thing that has happened to English literature since the war." Here, one must refer to some critics who have critized Murry's attitude without having a full grasp of his standpoint. Eliseo Vivas, for example, attacks Murry's "subjective interpretation," claiming that Murry's enthusiasm is due to the feeling that he himself was implicated in the subject of the book. Then he continues his argument to prove that the book does not deserve Murry's praise because of its glaring defects : most important of which is the lack of unity and creative imagination. (13)

Such a criticism seems to be both irresponsible and groundless. Vivas should have read Murry's analysis and comment to the last letter. It is true that Murry dcelares that **Aaron's Rod** is the first great landmark in the literary field "since the war." But its immense importance springs from the fact that, by writing it, Lawrence turned back "towards human life", which was "for me, an event of national importance. Whether, as a novel, **Aaron's Rod** was better or worse man **Women in Love** simply did not concern me" (**Reminiscences,** p. 168). Evidently, this is a convincing clarification that justifies Murry's position. But it must be added that Murry was not blind to the defects of the novel as a work of art. Vivas's criticism of the

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(13) Eliseo Vivas, **op. cit., see** pp. 21-23.

novel is not an innovation or a really genuine contribution, for what he said in 1961, had been said by Murry more than thirty years before. Murry, acutely and intelligently, points out the defects of the novel as a creative work. The book is deficient in unity and coherence ; the characters are carelessly presented, and Lawrence, himself, appears on the stage to comment on the action. **Aaron's Rod** is not a perfect book, Murry comments, "it is very far from that. It is indeed, in some ways an extremely careless book. A lady who is Josephine Hay on one page becomes Josephine Ford — for no reason — in the next. At another moment the author clean forgets that Lilly, who is, with Aaron Sisson, the chief character in the book has not been through the war. Then it has a positive carelessness, also, which is purely refreshing. Mr. Lawrence breaks off a couple of pages of splendid psychological presentation with this : Don't grumble at me then, gentle reader" (**Reminiscences,** p. 233).

The book, Murry admits, could be bombarded with criticism. Nevertheless, Murry considers it a genuine achievement which proves and validates Lawrence's claim as a great creative force in the field of English literature.

Here, again, one would like to refer to a very absurd point advanced by Horace Gregory who seems to be moved against Murry by an unmotived malignancy. In his very small book on Lawrence, he says : "John Middleton Murry believes that the end [of Lawrence's career] came some years after, in 1920, with the writing of **Aaron's Rod.** All this, of course is nonsense, for Lawrence's creative process moved in a steady

stream." (14) This is far from being what can be considered as literary criticism ; it is an indication of the shallowness and emptiness of the critic's understanding. There are two main reasons that necessarily lead the argument to such a conclusion: Firstly, Gregory gives a sweeping generalization which he cannot support ; he does not say when or where or how Murry has proclaimed Lawrence's end. Secondly, Murry has never prophesied Lawrence's end. On the contrary, he asserts in the **Nation and Athenaeum** (August 1932) that **Aaron's Rod** is but a stage in the development of Lawrence as a novelist ; it "is but a fruit on the tree of Mr. Lawrence's creativeness. It marks a phase ,the safe passing of the most critical phase in Mr. Lawrence's development." In the same essay he expresses his faith in Lawrence's ability to "go on from strength to strength, until the predestined day when he puts before the world a masterpiece". It is not improper, though it is poignantly ironical, to use Gregory's expressions — expressions which he has used against Murry — to attack Gregory himself : one is forced to drop "three quarters", if not all "of his theory overboard" ; the "burden of prove is transferred" from Murry to this unintelligent critic who should be "crushed under its weight". Gregory's arrows return broken into his own heart.

However, one does not like to carry the dispute to the very bitter end, for it will be misleading and the essence of Murry's main argument will be lost. It is preferable to follow

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(14) Gregory, **op .cit.**, p. 30.

Murry's own line of thought and see to what conclusion it is going to lead.

Murry believes that the cardinal thesis of **Aaron's Rod** is indefatigably expounded and emphasised in Lawrence's Australian novel : **Kangaroo.** It is Lawrence's last and most strenuous attempt to communicate with others, and to prove himself a master and a leader of men. In this sense, and only in this sense, with the exception of "The Night-mare," the novel can be considered as autobiographical, for all the Australian characters and scenes are imaginatively perceived and delineated. Lawrence did not know "a soul on the side of the continent." The political movement, round which the main theme of the book revolves, has no roots at all in the Australian soil ; it is created by Lawrence's fertile imagination as a demonstration "of the sort of political leader and movement with which he might usefully work." Accordingly the man-to-man relationship takes a political vein nurtured by a Lawrentian invention.

Kangaroo is a chaotic novel, it reflects the internal turmoil and disturbance of Richard Lovat Somers "Who is Lawrence" himself. Murry claims that, in **Kangaroo,** Lawrence makes his last appearance as the main character, for "it is impossible that he should be a character any more. He is exploded in fragments. Nothing in his being, at the end of the book, is more important than anything else" (**Son of Woman,** p. 238). Though Lawrence begins heroically as a man who has not yet finished with his fellow-men, he dwindles gradually into insigficance ;

then into nothingness. His last attempt, to struggle with men, has been a failure. But, in any case, Lawrence's last effort at leadership deserves consideration.

Somers, leading a life of seclusion with his wife Harriet, decideds to overcome his loneliness and communicate with the world around him. He meets Kangaroo, a leader of a "fascist organization", who aims at the creation of a new society founded on love. But in such a society, Women do not seem to have a place, for love between man and man is Kangaroo's main concern ; it is a movement led by a man for the happiness of man. To Murry, Kangaroo has no roots, in the world of reality ; all his significance lies in the symbolism of his presentation : "Certainly, Kangaroo himself, the impassioned and unmarried idealist, is an invention ; he is a symbol, who makes no impression of human reality upon us. He is the means by which Lawrence tries to decide, in his imagination, whether he would lead or help to lead a nation" (**Son of Woman,** p. 240).

Somers is offered a place in Kangaroo's movement, and at the same time he is tempted by Struthers, Kangaroo's rival, to have a leading place in his revolutionary socialist movement. Somers, attracted by Kangaroo's liveliness and virtuosity, decides to collaborate with him. Here, Harriet begins to interfere ; she knows her husband quite well ; his mettle is not that of a leader, and he is the last man to be fit for leadership. She does not believe in his vain attempts to involve and implicate himself in a world of hostility and bitter conflict ; in the world of men, he cannot be "The" man ; it is not for him. The best

way for him, Harriet says, is to settle down with her, in some quiet place, and be happy. But it is not so easy for Somers to give up and yield to his woman. He believes that he has to communicate and struggle in world of men :

> "I intend to move with men and get men to move with me before I die," he said. Then he added hastily : "Or at any rate I'll try a bit longer yet. When I make up my mind that it's really no good, I'll go with you and we'll live alone somewhere together, and forget the wold.... But not yet. Not till I have finished. I've got to struggle with men and the world of men for a time yet. When it's over I'll do as you say." (**Kangaroo,** p. 77)

Harriet is tolerant and tender in dealing with her husband. In spite of the struggle between them as husband and wife, she appears as if she were a "Kindly, but rather cynical mother, humouring a wayward child". She is sure that his labour will be lost, all his plans will fail, that his defeat will spring from within him, and that he will go back to her, as the last resort, to have his wounds healed. And it comes true, as if it were the oracle of an ancient **seer**. Somers "attracts people, becomes involved with them, gives friendships, swears allegiance, withdraws, lets them down, behaves with complete irresponsibility" (**Son of Woman,** p. 233). Then the whole dream of leadership falls down, with a flop, into the mud ; he cannot bear the responsibility, and he goes back, in defeat, to the woman who has believed in him neither as a master nor as a leader.

Frieda and Lawrence's mother, the only two women who had a tremendous influence on his life, had never believed in

him as an independent personality ; to them such a Lawrence did not exist in the world of reality. His childhood drew the sap of life from his mother's existence, and in his manhood he bent with all his weight on the moral support of his wife. As he confessed, without a woman at his back, his life might have become an intolerable hell, if not an impossibility. The dream of the "sullen" and "obstinate" woman repudiating Somers may be no more than an invention that has nothing to do with the actual life of Lawrence. But, Murry comments, "if it is not a dream he dreamed, it is a dream he imagined he ought to have dreamed" (**Son of Woman,** p. 243). What obsessed Lawrence was that his mother, and his wife following the same track, had never believed in his ideas. They loved him as an individual to the extent of adoration, but as an impersonal ideologist he was beyond them : "He had an ingrained instinct or habit of thought which made him feel that he could never take the move into activity unless Harriet and his dead mother believed in him terribly, in personal being. In the individual man he was, and the son of man, they believed with all the intensity of undivided love. But in the impersonal man, the man that would go beyond them, with his back to them, away from them into an activity that excluded them, in this man they did not find it so easy to believe" (**Kangaroo,** p. 110).

Lawrence's dependence on a woman was inevitable and tragic at the same time. It was out of sheer weakness that he relied on a woman — a woman whom he could not satisfy. He had not the courage to step out of the female, bear the burden of his aloneness and achieve his self-integrity. If Lawrence

"could have had the final courage of his own isolation, how different the remaining story might have been ! Instead of being shattered into fragments, he might have been a perfect unity, a universal man actively by achievement, not passively by destiny" (**Son of Woman,** p. 247). In order to achieve his self-integrity, Lawrence had to abandon the idea of having a woman at his back — a price which he could not pay.

In so far as **Kangaroo** is concerned, Somers cannot prosper in the world of men. unless his woman puts all her faith in him. And his wife will never believe in him so long as she knows that he has no faith in himself. One of them must yield and believe in the other ; she will neither yield nor believe. Consequently, Somers begins his retreat from the world of men ; the dream of the master, the leader, the Saviour, remains a dream : an illusion. The Messiah, in him, falls down dead, before being crucified. He is not the right man for love, or mingling, or intimacy. The irony, here, lies in the fact that it is love, mingling and intimacy that Lawrence has been hankering for in **Women in Love** and in **Aaron's Rod.** But now, as Somers, he will have nothing to do with men. He recoils back, in consternation, to his last refuge — his wife — but neither as a lord nor as a master : a situation which was too difficult for Lawrence. And as a way out of the impasse, Lawrence deluded himself into the fallacy of the "dark God" who "shall enable him to love without killing or being killed." Such an idea will be elaborated in **The Plumed Serpent** which, together with **Lady Chatterley's lover,** constitute the main literary output of the last period of Lawrence's life.

CHAPTER V

THE FALSE PROPHET

The last period of Lawrence's life begins with Lawrence on his way from Australia to America. The voyage to the unknown land is presented gloriously in a halo of serene and solemn light. It is not a flight from Europe and the civilized world ; it is a voyage of discovery of a new mode of life. Lawrence would shape the new land according to his own beliefs, be the Moses of modern times, the only prophet and law-giver who would create a "Rananim" — a peradise on earth. His going to America, as he imagined was not that of an "escaped cock," but of the lord who would reveal the very soul of America and create it anew.

But America as a modern mechanized world did not attract Lawrence ; on the contrary it terrified him. He did not go to New York which was not so different from his homeland. He preferred to go to a "land where there are only birds and beasts and no humanity ,nor inhumanity-masks" (**Selected Letters**, p. 80). His destination was the land of the Aztects whence he would preach his gospel, spreading his influence to white America, in order to reshape it "in accordance with his dream." He imagined himself the accepted prophet who would lead America to "its unknown destiny."

Murry believes that Lawrence was deluding himself. He would not admit that he was "condemned to be an exile and a wanderer in spite of himself. And now, for a moment, he was trying to create an imaginative earthly paradise in white America" (**Son of Woman,** p. 273). However, Lawrence took his abode with the Red Indians whom he felt as his own people. And from the wilderness of the vast deserts of New Mexico, he began to preach his religious doctrine.

Lawrence's religion was that of the "dark God" who is the god of love and death. The definition seems, somewhat, paradoxical. Murry tries to account for it by saying that Lawrence yearned for the creation of a society where all men and women could love each other without fear ; yet, such a society could not be easily created because "human beings **can't** absolutely love one another". Each man, Lawrence believed, "does kill the thing he loves." The "dark God", from his point of view, was the only power that would enable man to love without fighting, "without killing or being killed". To Murry, such a "God" can never exist, "unless he is death himself. Death will detach us from the beloved, whether we will or no. And Lawrence's fevered imagination, seeking an issue from his hopeless imprisonment, seeks a condition of death without being death. He has not had the strength to die, by tearing himself away from the woman ; to die in actual life is beyond his powers. He can only imagine a death" (**Son of Woman,** p. 256).

And Lawrence's newly invented dark god was that strange and mysterious power that would lead to death which was a

resurrection into a new heaven and a new earth where love, as Lawrence imagined it, would prevail.

Generally speaking, the idea of the "dark God" is not easy either to understand or to define. Murry's interpretation is not wholly acceptable by different commentators. Yudishtar, for example, believes that the "dark God" is undefinable ; he is not one god ; he is so many, for not only is he the god of love, but he is also the god of fear and "passion and silence" ; he is the god of the dark passions that emanate from the "sacred aloneness" of the individual man. To describe such a god is to visualize him, and so he loses all the power of mystery ; he should remain, an "unutterable" and "unrealizable" dark god, worshipped without being known.(1) This view is in complete accordance with Lawrence's own formulation which is clearly expressed in **Studies in Classic American Literature** : "I don't know what God is but he is not simply a will.... For me, there may be one God, but he is nameless and unknowable. For me, there are also many gods, that come into me and leave me again. And they have various wills, I must say" (pp. 72-3). Gregory thinks that Lawrence's dark god is a representative of the "old dark religion whose origin lies in a mystery so deep that men cannot comprehend its meaning and is, therefore, still growing." (2)

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(1) Yudishtar, **op. cit.**, p. 241.

(2) Gregory, **op. cit.**, p. 67.

In an ycase, it was Lenrence's aim in New Mexico to revive the old dark pre-christian gods. It was his sole proposition for the regeneration of generation and for the creation of a new Jerusalem. He was convinced that Christianity had failed, and that it had passed beyond a "point of no return" where there was nothing but total eclipse and final collapse. The christian love-mode, if not completely dead, should die, so that a new life-mode may emerge. To tell Lawrence that Christianity was one of the rarest and most wonderful happenings that had ever occurred in the history of the human race, was to tell him a truth in which he firmly believed. But he would add that it was no longer relevant to the "present" state of affairs: "I count Christianity," he wrote to Catherine Carswell, "as one of the great historical factors that has-been. That is why I am not a conscientious objector: I am not a Christian. Christianity is insufficient in me.... Because a thing has been, therefore I will not fight for it" (**The Savage Pilgrimage,** pp. 52-3). The alternative, for Lawrence, was to revive the old pre-christian gods ; ecah nation had to bring its ancient gods back to life.

Lawrence was very serious in his proposition. He thought that his programme of reform should be spread all over the world as a creed in which every one should believe. It seems that Lawrence, though unconsciously, was identifying himself with the "Son of Man" who, two thousand years before, announced the "wonderful news" and preached the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, Lawrence would never admit that he was under the spell of Jesus ,a perversity of nature which sprang from

the fact that he was always trying to suppress his admiration for the Christian "hero".

It was among the Indians, then, that Lawrence began his teaching. By revealing to them the secret of their power, by building a new temple for their old gods, he thought that he would be able to lead them to a life of glorious achievements. This may be interpreted as a rejection of modernism and a turning back to primitivism, which is not really true. Lawrence's reversion to primitivism did not mean submission to what it represented ; it was an attempt to struggle with it in order to create it anew. **The Plumed Serpent** is the novel which embodies Lawrence's thought at that period of time. It is an exposition of his programme to regenerate the degenerating condition of his fellow men— a programme which is religious and sexual at one and the same time :

> "Man shall betray a woman, and woman shall betray a man," said Ramon, "and it shall be forgiven them, each of them. But if they have met as earth and rain, between day and night, in the hour of the Star ; if the man has met the woman with his body and the star of his hope, and the woman has met the man with her body and the star of her yearning, so that a meeting has come to pass, and an abiding place for two where they are as one star, then shall neither of them betray the abiding place where the meeting lives like an unsetting star...."
>
> ... ...
>
> "Go and bathe in the warm water, which is peace between us all. And put oil on your bodies, which is the stillness of the Morning Star. Anoint even the soles of your feet, and the roots of your hair." **(The Plumed Serpent,** p. 345).

In his comment on **The Plumes Serpent,** Murry notes that Lawrence does not appear as the main character, the moving power behind all events. The woman, kate Leslie, who figures as the widow of an Irish patriot, is the centre of interest. With the death of Kate's husband, Joachim, Lawrence himself is dead: "so far as it is imaginatively possible, by killing Joachim Lawrence has achieved... [his] death" (**Son of Woman,** p. 303). The "Woman" becomes the chief character. Leavis does not object to Murry's point, but he gives his own interpretation : "Why should the main character, the centre of sympathetic interest and the dramatized consciousnses through which things are presented, be, in this book, a woman ? A man as imaginative centre would inevitably have been a Rawson Lilly or a Richard Lovat Somers ,and inevitably have been involved in Lawrence's relations with Frieda — and so in all the disabling complexities of attitude. Kate Leslie, though not too distantly related to her, is not Frieda." (3)

But to say that Lawrence will not be involved in the action of the novel, is not absolutely true. Lawrence is resurrected in the form of Ramon Carrasco , the "saviour of Mexico." Being reborn, he emerges into a new form of life with a new woman, Teressa, who, imagintaively submits to him as the perfect male. In Cipriano, the Mexican general, he finds his true mate — a mate of so strong a personality as to make Kate submit of him. So perfection seems to be at hand ; the leader,

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(3) Leavis, **op. cit.,** pp. 69-70.

his general, the submissive woman, all seem to form a harmonious world void of conflict.

Lawrence in **The Plumed Serpent** seems to be taking his revenge on the "Woman" by making her submit to the male virility. But the case is not stated directly ; there is no hint that the attempt to degrade the female is an intended one. The bitterness of the personal conflict is over ; in **Kangaroo**, Lawrence has fought and lost ; now he knows all about his own submission and defeat. He has never succeeded in making his woman submit, and he will never succeeed. Nonetheless he will never admit final defeat : "he seems to say, he is right, although in life he has failed to make good his claim to her submission ; and so he makes her submit to Cipriano" (**Son of Woman**, p. 306). Cipriano, then, represents Lawrence's idea of the conquering male to whom the female gives herself willingly, yielding all her being to the powerful influence emanating from his breast :

> And he, in his dark, hot silence would bring her back to the new, soft, heavy, hot flow, when she was like a fountain gushing noiseless and with urgent softness from the volcanic deeps. Then she was open to him soft and hot, yet gushing with a noiseless soft power. And there was no such thing as conscious "satisfaction". What happened was dark and untellable. So different from the beak-like friction of Aphrodite of the foam, the friction which flares out in circles of phosphorescent ecstay, to the last wild spasm which utters the involuntary cry, like a death-cry, the final love-cry. This she had known, and known to the end, with Joachim.

> And now this too was removed from her. What she had with Cipriano was curiously beyond her knowing: so deep and hot flowing as it were subterranean. She had to yield before it. **(The Plumed Serpent, pp. 439 - 440)**

The woman, here, accepts her destiny, submissively. She receives the kind of sexuality offered to her as it is, not as she wishes it to be. Her desire as an individual female is obliterated, being negated by an acceptance of the male superiority : a superiority which was intentionally created by Lawrence as a compensation for his own inferiority.

Once and again, Murry affirms that, biologically, Lawrence was inferior to his woman. Lawrence "persisted that it was not he, but the woman, who was wrong. She claimed from him as male what she had no right to claim ; her idea of sexual fulfilment was not the true idea of sexual fulfilment. Through Cipriano he makes her accept this perversion of the truth" **(Son of Woman,** p. 307). Murry does not accept Lawrence's words at their face value ; he is not convinced that Kate is really satisfied, though Lawrence puts it beyond any doubt that the fulfilment is absolute in its finality. Murry rejects Lawrence's claim, arguing vehemently that it is all imagination which can never substantiate in the world of reality. Cipriano's personality is "imaginary" ; consequently, the fulfilment he offers can never be a natural fulfilment, it belongs "to another order of existence than any humans know."

Not only does Murry suspect Kate's genuine surrender to

Ciprinao's sexuality, but he also refers to her lack of faith in what Ramon and Cipriano are preaching : the religion of Quexalcoatl and Huitzilopohtli which is essentially a Mexican religion. "The dual divinity of Quexalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli is the Mexican manifestation of the one unnameable God." Kate is not a Mexican, and she has her own Christian God. That is why her conversion to the new religion appears to be a degradation of what is pure in her nature ; she violates the "spirit that is within her." Her involvement in the new religion is superficial and unconvincing. The victory of Ramon and Cipriano over Kate is not absolute ; it appears hollow and undecided : "And even amid her tears, Kate was thinking to herself : what a fraud I am ! I know all the time that it is I who don't altogether want them. I want myself to myself. But I can fool them so that they shan't find out" (**The Plumed Serpent,** p. 461).

Once again Leavis follows Murry's pioneering interpretation when he states that Kate's "alleged final conviction" to live in Mexico and be the bride of Cipriano, the living Huilzilopochtli, is neither compelling nor acceptable. (4)

Furthermore, Murry questions the validity of the Mexican religion itself. He raises the crucial question of its duality : Why is it dual ? Is this duality justified as a divine necessity to reconcile the contraries ? Murry believes that the duality is a mere "manifestation" of Lawrence's inclination ; his new

(4) Leavis, **op. cit.**, p. 72.

religion is a reflection of his own contradictory desires : the eternal love and hate. Ramon stands for love, Cipriano embodies "hate and murder and mindless sensuality" ; the two men are complementary, their otherness forms the completeness of what they stand for. This male duality appears to be irrelevant, for it could have been possible for Ramon to keep Cipriano as his follower or his "servant", instead of allowing him to sit "on his right hand as co-equal god." But Lawrence would have never taken such a turn, for the very simple reason that "the apotheosis of Cipriano satisfies discrepant desires in Lawrence : his desire for a blood-brother to save him from his own weakness ,and his desire for an outlet to his hate" (**Son of Woman,** p. 311).

The creation of Cipriano as a part of the god-head is meaningless. Ramon-Quexalcoatl can stand alone, if he is what he purports himself to be ; he does not need the support of Cipriano, or Kate or Teresa, "save in the capacity of a ministering Magdalene". But Lawrence, by portraying the relationship between the two couples, gratifies his desire to take revenge on the woman by making her submit and rejoice in her submission. To Teresa, Ramon is more than a husband ; he is the source of life, the soul of her very existence ; she is what he wants her to be — to be otherwise is to violate the nature of things : "He is a man, and a column of blood. I am a woman, and a valley of blood. I shall not contradict him. How can I ? my soul is inside him, and I am far from contradicting him when he is trying with all his might to do something he knows about" (**The Plumed Serpent,** p. 428).

Murry's comment on Teresa's attitude is acute, though provocative. He thinks that Teresa's behaviour is no more than a "sort of sacred prostitution", void of sexual satisfaction and personal fulfiment ; her aim is to give Ramon sleep, rest and "renewal". But to prove his point, Murry igrores the fact that Teresa, though she gives herself up completely. does not believe in submission. On the other hand Ramon does not ask for it simply because he does not need it : "He does not ask submission from me. He wants me to give myself gently to him. And then he gives himself back to me far more gently than I give myself to him" (**The Plumed Serpent**, p. 451). Teresa's satisfaction is clearly indicated ; the fact that Ramon gives far more gently than she gives refutes Murry's allegation that there is "no thought of sexual fulfilment for her." She feels Ramon, as she tells Kate, "here ! she puts her hand over her womb."

Nevertheless, the validity of Murry's general view, that Lawrence was achieving imaginatively what he could not achieve in real life, cannot be ignored. Lawrence, resurrected from the dead, was to be born anew in the form of Ramon : the apotheosis of whatever is loyable. admirable and complete. His love for Teresa is pure in its healing power, love void of hate. Murry thinks of them as a "Lawrence and his bride in an earthly paradise". But pure love, to Lawrence. was no more than a dream of joy that could not last ; hate in him was an everlasting flame. That is why he created Cipriano's "hate" and Cipriano's Kate ; they are supposed to complete the divinity

of Ramon and Teresa. But Murry cannot deny that Lawrence, in **The Plumed Serpent,** gives love the upper hand. It is Ramon who leads and rules, and it is he and Teresa who represent the norm that must be followed. "Cipriano's hate," says Murry, "and Cipriano's woman are necessary. But Cipriano and his woman bow down to them, and are governed by them : hate yields to love, and blood-sacrifice is governed by justice" (**Son of Woman,** p. 313).

Once again it must be asserted that Lawrence was dreaming a dream in which he did not believe ; the actuality of life denied it. That is why a sense of doom is always hovering in the air of **The Plumed Serpent,** giving the impression that the regeneration of generation is a deception and that Ramon, in spite of his apparent victory, is shaken from within by a sense of futility and despair. As he tells Kate, he is living among people whom he cannot trust. It is true that they worship him, but it is also true that they may assassinate him. He has no faith in the morrow which is always another day. So even at the very pinnacle of his glory, he has no confidence in a final and permanent victory ; his teaching may crumble, fall down and suffer a total collapse :

> "Do you feel awfully sure of yourself ?" she said.
> "Sure of myself ?" he re-echoed. "No !..."
> "And if you are not sure of yourself, what are you sure of ?" she challenged.
> He looked at her with dark eyes which she could not understand.
> "I am sure — sure— he [sic] voice tailed off into

> vagueness, his face seemed to go grey and peaked, as a dead man's only his eyes watched her blackly, like a ghost's. Again she was confronted with the suffering ghost of the man. And she was a woman, powerless before this suffering ghost which was still in the flesh.
> "You don't think you are wrong, do you ?" she asked in cold distress.
> "No ! I am not wrong. Only maybe I can't hold out," he said.
> "And then what ?" said she, coldly.
> "I shall go my way alone.... It hurts me in my soul, as if I were dying...."
> "But why ? she cried" You are not ill" ?
> "I feel as if my soul were coming undone".
>
> (**The Plumed Serpent** pp. 444-5)

It was Lawrence's soul that was coming back "undone." His attempt, to achieve self-unity in order to re-emerge into life a new man, lacked the sap and vitality of normal life. It was of no avail ; Lawrence was a doomed man, and nothing would save him, not even an imaginative resurrection.

However, Murry, believes that **The Plumed Serpent,** as an embodiment of Lawrence's unrealized dream, is a splendid work of art. It is a manifestation of Lawrence's capability of becoming a great artist in his art. Murry asserts, unequivocally, that this novel is "Lawrence's greatest work of art," a point of view with which Leavis never agrees, for, to him, **The Plumed Serpent** is a complete failure, "a bad book and a regrettable performance." (5) What is remarkable is that Leavis does not support his point, he passes his verdict and leaves it unqual-

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(5) Leavis, **op. cit.**, p. 30.

ified. But on the whole, his view does not represent a strong current of criticism against the book. Though the point is controvertial, it must be mentioned that Murry's view has been shared and supported by more than one critic. Catherine Carswell states, confidently, that Lawrence's Mexican novel is an indisputed masterpiece, "the most ambitious and most impressive novel of our generation." She contends that it is a faultless work that reveals all the genuineness of Lawrence's genius and faith. For this tale, says Catherine Carswell, "Lawrence needed not ony all his genius, but all his long discipline and all his savage pilgrimage. So far from showing 'disintegration' it creates. In it Lawrence's powers as a novelist are established and his thoughts as a man embodied to that extent that it would have assured his place without further production" (**The Savage Pilgrimage,** p. 183). Catherine Carswell's view is in complete agreement with that of Murry, in spite of all the differences between the two critics' approaches and attitudes towards Lawrence's work.

Yudishtar quotes Murry's view, on **The Plumed Serpent** as a great achievement in the world of art, and backs him enthusiastically. To him, the failure of Ramon's "experiment" does not mean that the novel is a failure ; a demarcation must be set between the novel as a work of art and the novel as an expression of a creed. "Middleton Murry," says Yudishtar, "found **The Plumed Serpent** a very remarkable novel," then he adds : "This extraordinary and important novel of Lawrence

will, no doubt, come to be appreciated, and accepted, by more readers and critics in the course of time." (6)

Illuminatingly, Murry declares that Lawrence's great success as an artist, in **The Plumed Serpent,** incorporates his defeat as a prophet. The reason Murry gives is simple, though comprehensive : a return to art for a man who is "essentially a prophet" must lead inevitably to his decline (**Son of Woman,** p, 319). Ramon's "undone" soul is Lawrence's undone belief in himself as a master and a prophet. According to Murry, Lawrence is a great prophet, but he is not a "wise man". He preaches the gospel of the dark gods, the desires of all flesh, the exaltation of the primitive and instinctive, whereas the logical, the intellectual and the spiritual are excluded from his Utopian paradise. Such an attitude is rejected by Murry, though his rejection is not absolute ; Lawrence's creed is both right and wrong : "To insist upon the truth of the biological against the falsity of the false metabiological, which scorns or is superior to the biological, is absolutely right and abundantly necessary ; but to reject the true metabiological with the false, to confuse them and to obscure the distinction between them, is wrong" (**Reminiscences,** p. 254).

Lawrence's primordial mistake is that he does not differentiate between the true and the false in so far as the "metabiological" is concerned. His rejection of evolution and in-

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(6) Yudishtar, **op .cit.,** p. 265.

tellectualism, as stated in the **Fantasia of the Unconscious,** and as indicated in **The Plumed Serpent,** does not lead to the creation of a harmonious unity in a universe which is supposed to be an organic whole. But Lawrence, being naturally divided, could not help reflecting his self-division in his creed.

Inevitably, Lawrence's attempt to create a new religion was doomed to failure, simply because wholeness could not emanate out of division and frustration ; Lawrence was the last man to be a genuine founder of a religion. Richard Aldington asserts that Lawrence's dogmatisation was the inevitable result of his own disappointment. He was yearning for power, leadership and prophecy ; he wanted men to be his followers, to look at him as the only truth, the only absolute, the only idol at the very top of the mountain, but at the same time he would sing a song of resignation and despair. He was denied wholeness, a point which Aldington affirms by saying : "At one moment he would boast himself in uncouth dialect, a collier's son, and the next proclaim himself a mouthpiece of the gods — equal to the gods. himself a god." (7) Such a man would not be a true prophet ; his religion was false and deathly, for it was the religion of "the dark gods." Eliot is, of course, justified when he describes Lawrence as a "heretic", and Frank kermode's view, that he was a "moral terrorist", is not wholly wrong, thought somewhat excessive.

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(7) Aldington, **op. cit.,** pp. 308-9.

The main point of weakness inherent in Lawrence's character is that he lacked belief. This belief is what Murry calls "self-acceptance." Lawrence should have accepted himself as "a beautiful, suffering, divided human being," a fact which terrified Lawrence and drove him frenziedly to the attempt of imposing his will on others—the will of an "infallible prophet." But it was all self-deception, and Lawrence, inwardly, felt it. He was accepted as a man but rejected as a prophet. It was his destiny, and he reached the final moment of illumination in **The Plumed Serpent**, when, like Ramon, his soul came back to him undone. America, the promised land of the new Moses was the doom of his prophetic soul : "Doom ! Dom ! Doom ! Something seems to whisper it in the very dark trees of America. Doom.... We are doomed, doomed. And the doom is in America. The doom of our white day" (**Studies in Classical American Literature,** p. 168-9).

Lawrence, as he confessed in his letter to Witter Bynner, was to become a lamb at last. He realized the futility and the vanity of his attempts to become the great prophet and the inspired leader of men. So he shifted his grounds, trying to find a new relationship based on more modest and, if possible unanimously acceptable terms. In his own words, "the new relationship will be some sort of tenderness, sensitive, between men and men and men and women, and not the one up one down, lead on I follow, **ich dien** sort of business" (**Selected Letters,** pp. 166-7). It can be safely said that "tenderness" is Lawrence's final message, and that it represents the whole thesis of his last novel : **Lady Chatterley's lover.**

Murry does not write much about **Lady Chatterley's Lover.** He thinks that the book is oppressive and obscence ; its main significance, if it has any significance at all, lies in what Murry calls, time and again, Lawrence's imagined "physical resurrection." Lawrence is risen from the dead, in the form of Mellors, a new man endowed with extreme sexual attraction and virility. "In Oliver Mellors the gamekeeper," says Murry, "Lawrence is physically reborn, and he imagines a woman for himself. He is thirty-nine years old in his reincarnation ; Connie Chatterley is twenty-six. The whole book really consists of detailed descriptions of their sexual fulfilment" (**Son of Woman,** p. 364). The description of sexuality is neither praised nor accepted by Murry ; he finds it hopelessly "suffocating", for there is nothing "beyond" it. Mellors' declaration that he stand for "the touch of bodily awareness between human beings... and the touch of tenderness" (**Lady Chatterley's lover,** p. 292), does not seem to have the slightest impression on Murry who believes that it is not pure tenderness : it is "mixed up with a lot of rage." He argues that it was beyond Lawrence's power to give pure tenderness. This does not mean that Lawrence did not have tenderness ; on the contrary, he had it and in abundance. What he lacked was "the courage of it," which, had he got, would have changed the whole history of his life : he would have become "really dangerous" as a leader and as a prophet, "which he is not." Therefore, Lawrence's gospel of tenderness is rejected as a spurious creed that lacks credibility.

But Murry is not so naive as not to perceive Lawrence's

aim of writing **Lady Chatterley's lover.** By revealing the secrets of sex, Lawrence was "cleansing" it, and a cleansed sexual awareness would, inevitably, lead to a "new Katharsis." It is the work of a conscious man who knew what he was driving at. The real point of this book, says Lawrence, is that "I want men and women to be able to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly.... Years of honest thoughts of sex, and years of struggling action in sex will bring us at last where we want to get, to our real and accomplished chastity, our completeness when our sexual act and our sexual thought are in harmony, and the one does not interfere with the other" (**Lady Chatterley's Lover,** introd., p. Xiii).

Such a view is firmly rejected by Murry. He does not trust Lawrence wherever "complete" and "harmony" are mentioned. Moreover, Lawrence's "spiritual and physical" tenderness is a sham that cannot be credited. Murry supports his point by referring to Lawrence's attitude towards Sir Clifford. In portraying him Lawrence is endowed with neither sympathy nor tenderness. Henceforth even Lawrence's use of the word "sympathy" becomes doubtful. It is true that the "sympathy of love" is manifestly proclaimed, but it is also true that the feeling of hatred is still gnawing at Lawrence's heart. He ridicules Clifford stripping him of any quality that may win admiration or compassion. He is the crippled "monster," the "mere wilful cerebral aristocrat", the industial automation, the symbol of all that Lawrence hated. By being frantically hostile to Clifford, Lawrence makes him a "fantastic figure", forgetting

the fact that Clifford is "a symbol of his own infirmity". By overstating the case against Clifford, Lawrence loses credit.

In a sense, Mellors is also a symbolic figure. He is a genuine representative of natural life, an antagonist of the intellectually mechanized society, and above all he is the male to whose virility and tenderness the woman submits. He utters Lawrence's last message : a firm belief that the regeneration of generation will never be achieved except through the tenderness of the flesh. To Connie Chatterley, a woman who believes that "the life of the body is a greater reality than the life of the mind : when the body is really wakened to life" (**Lady Chatterley's Lover,** p. 245), Mellors is the fountain of life and the source of creation. As she tells her sister, Hilda, he is a man who "really understands tenderness". It is not lust or violence or compulsion that makes her submit and give herself; it is the feeling of compassion, kindness and love, emanating from Mellor's heart that create the halo of his attraction :

> There was something, a sort of warm naive kindness, curious and sudden, that almost opened her womb to him.... And after all, he was kind to the female in her, which no man had ever been. Men were very kind to the **person** she was, but rather cruel to the female, despising her or ignoring her together. Men were awfully kind to Constance Reid or Lady Chatterley ; but to her womb they weren't kind. And he took no notice of Constance or of Lady Chatterley ; he just stroked her loins or her breasts. (**Lady Chatterley's Lover,** p. 126)

Mellors succeeds in giving her nights of passion and fulfilment which make her bloom and regain her faith in the life of the flesh .

By creating Mellors, Lawrence was giving vent to all his suppressed wishes, all his unrealized dreams. As a defeated and humiliated male he tried desperately, at the end of his life, to have a final and decisive triumph. In Mellors, Murry explicates, "Lawrence is attempting a final justification of himself, and trying to imagine a final triumph of his own defeated masculinity. He represents himself as bringing sexual salvation to a young and naive woman ; in fact, he is indulging himself with the idea of a final sexual submission of a woman to his divided man. It is a perfect triumph ; all that he demanded and did not conceive of woman in life is yielded to him. It is the supreme gratification of his male pride" (**Son of Woman**, p. 367).

Mellors, then, represents what Lawrence desired himself to be : a satisfying and satisfied male. He succeeds in shaking the woman to the roots of her existence, touching the very quick of her sensation, and creating her anew : "Suddenly, in a soft shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched the consummation was upon her, she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born : a woman" (**Lady Chatterley's Lover** p. 181).

This apparent triumph, as Murry states, contradicts what has been declared in the **Fnatasia** about the purposive urge as an indispensable factor in the man-woman relationship. The sexual urge, in **Lady Chatterley's Lover,** becomes the only urge: "sex blots the universe." The creative purpose "dwindles" and then "wholly" disappears. What is remarkable, here, is that

Murry ignores the industrial problem, which substantially forms the second theme of the book, and refers to the defeat of the purposive urge as "the second theme". Clifford's strong-willed success in the world of industry passes unheeded, and Mellors's full trust in "the flame between us" is quoted to indicate his faith in sex as the only thing in the world".

Here, one cannot help rejecting Murry's appreciation. It is true that Mellors has an unlimited belief in the sexual touch, in the "cunt-awareness," and "in fucking with a warm heart. I believe if men could fuck with warm hearts, and the women take it warm-heartedly, everything would come all right," (**Lady Chatterley's Loved**, p. 215). But Murry ignores the fact that Mellors refuses to be nothing but "my lady's fucker". He will never accept the situation, and he will not take a woman "unless my life does something and gets somewhere, inwardly at least, to keep us both fresh. A man must offer a woman some meaning in his life.... I can't be just your male concubine" (p. 289). The significance of Mellors's words is quite apparent and it proves that Murry's allegation of the defeat of the purposive urge is groundless. Mellors insists on offering Connie something more than sex, if he is to be a true man, and if she is to be a "genuine" woman. The mere use of Mellors's functional expression "unless my life does something," provides a convincing refutation of Murry's false conclusion.

In any case, **Lady Chatterley's Lover** is not one of Murry's favourites. He deprecates it as hopeless, monotonous, depressing and obscene ; it is "nonsense as well". Lawrence's use of

the four-letter words — words that are to be found only on "the wall of a privy" — is disgusting. Lawrence appears to Murry as a hopelessly weary man who rejoices in lacerating the feeling and shocking the sight by his manipulation of the unmentionable and unprintable words, though the trouble is not worth the effort exerted. To Murry, the book is a failure in the sense that it "leaves no permanent impression, as though it had been from beginning devoid of all vital energy of soul. And this curious effect, as of a neuter thing, with no real power of vital disturbance, appears on reflection to be inevitable. The great 'thought-adventure', of which Lawrence made us once partaker's is over. It has been abandoned, or rather it has collapsed. We are at the beginning of life again.... The struggle has been in vain" (**Son of Woman,** p. 369).

Such a valuation is discarded by a good number of Lawrennce's critics. Richard Hoggart believes that the novel is very far from being dirty or nonsensical ; on the contrary it is "clean and serious and beautiful" (**Lady Chatterley's Lover,** introd. p.v.). Murry's attack against the four-letter words is countered by David Gordon's appreciation of what Lawrence is driving at: a purification of man's consciousness. He avers that the "use of obrcene words in **Lady Chatterley's Lover** is essentially to purify the unconscious by driving the fears attached to these words back up into the mind, where they can be dealt with for what they are instead of returning upon us from the unconscious, looming and magnified out of all proportion, frightening

us beyond all reason." (8) This view concurs with Pritchard's conclusion which emphasises the fact that, by using the obrcene words familiarly and seriously, Lawrence is trying to purify the language itself, "not by further refinement but by a regeneration of language and feeling, uniting words and physical reality, thought and feeling" (9). It is true that the novel is saturated with phallic sensations and sexual excitement, but it is also true, Yudishtar says, that Lawrence's main aim is not a propagation of sex, but a "readjustment in consciousness to the basic physical realities". He accepts Lawrence's dictum, "I want men and women to be able to think sex, fully, cmopletely, honestly, and cleanly," as plausible to the last degree (10). Thus, Lawrence appears to be a reformer who loathes animal sensuality, and presses hard in his attempt to create a readjusted and harmonious relationship between man and woman — a relationship in which the "phallic reality" is genuinely based on tenderness. Adopting Lawrence's standpoint, G.B. Shaw believes that "**Lady Chatterley** should be on the shelves of every college for budding girls. They should be forced to read it on pain of being refused a marriage licence." (11)

But, regardless of all his bitter attack against the novel, Murry cannot help conceding that **Lady Chatterley's Lover** is "a

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(8) David Gordon, **D.H. Lawrence as a Literary Critic** (New Haven, 1966), p. 130.
(9) Pritchard, **op. cit.,** p. 189.
(10) Beal, **op. cit.,** p. 96.
(11) Yudishtar, **op. cit.,** p. 267.

book of the utmost value : for all its incompleteness and its still smouldering rage, a positive living and creative book. It glows with its own dynamic force, and in it is the courage of a new awareness" (**Reminiscences**, p. 275).

Lady Chatterley's Lover represents the final stage of Lawrence's savage pilgrimage in the wilderness of life and thought ; in it he gives the last of all his prophetic utterances : "there is a bad time coming, boys there is a bad time coming ! If things go on as they are, there's nothing lies in the future but death and destruction" (p. 315). The salvation of the human race, Lawrence puts it axiomatically, will never be achieved but through phallic tenderness : it is the only hope.

CHAPTER VI

A THOUGHT - ADVENTURER

To round out one's views, it is necessary to stress two crucial points whose importance has been implied throughout the whole work : Firstly, Lawrence's significance as a writer, in so far as Murry's views are concerned ; and secondly, the prominence of Murry's critical dictum in the field of the Lawrentian criticism.

Regarding the first point, it has been affirmed once and again that Lawrence is tremendously significant. Murry singles him out as the mightiest of his generation, the most conspicious and considerable genius "we English possess." His superiority lies in the uniqueness of his genius ; he is of a completely different order from his contemporaries. Though the "outlaw" of modern literature, he is the most exciting among his fellow men of letters : "We do not expect Mr. Kipling or Mr. Conrad or Mr. Wells or Mr. Benett to say something essentially new," but Lawrence has always something of prominence to communicate. Hence springs his great magnanimity as a writer.

Yet, Murry believes that Lawrence was not essentially an artist, neither did he care to be one : "He knew it, he declared it, his books reveal it." Lawrence's main concern was the expression of an emotional experience ; whether, or not, it was artistically expressed did not weigh much in the balance. The creation of character, the plot, the use of language, the question of form and content were of no consequence to him. This does

not mean that he was deficient in artistic capability ; it is only because the artfulness of art was not his main concern. This, Murry states must not be taken as one of Lawrence's defects :

> I hold, on the contrary, it is a proof of his eminence. He really did tower by a head and shoulders above his contemporaries by this very recognition that the necessary conditions of great "art" are lacking in our age. Unless society is an organic unity, in which the artist feels and knows himself spiritually secure, the undisturbed concentration of his artistic faculty upon the created object is impossible. The necessary condition of great art is that the artist should be able to take elemental things for granted. The artist needs to serve an authority which he acknowledges to be greater than himself.... Then, and then alone, is he free to become an artist, with all his heart and mind and all his soul.
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> (**Son of Woman,** pp. 172-3)

Lawrence perceived that these congenial "conditions" did no texist ; he was not sure of the validity of any known authority whether secular or ecclesiastical. So, he set out to find his own authority. Pure art for the sake of art was, to him, a fallacious idea that would make literature, as an expression of life, lose its meaning. Consequently, he "gave up, deliberately, the pretence of being an artist." He believed that he was a thought-adventurer and that the novel was his medium of expression. What he was forcibly driving at was not the creation of an art but the revelation of an authority that would satisfy all doubts and that could be faithfully adhered to. Here, Murry refers to the stupidity of those who attack Lawrence for not being enough of an artist, for they ask him to be what he never, intended to be : "To charge him with a lack of form, or of any other of the qualities which are supposed to be necessary to art,

is to be guilty of irrelevance. Art was not Lawrence's aim" (**Son of Woman,** p. 173).

Lawrence's prominence, as Murry believes, lies in the fact that he was a seeker, a man with a message, a prophet who never hesitated, or paused, or looked behind in fear. He expressed what he believed in, forcibly daringly, and prophetically. The essence of his message is manifest in his desire to effect a "radical change" in the world of men. This change, Lawrence declared, would never be achieved but through love and tenderness, two outsanding pillars on which a new society should be founded ; to try any alternative would lead to perdition, for, in such a case ,the only possible alternative would be a degeneration into death. Men and women, according to this thesis, must love physically and tenderly, ignoring all the whims of idealism and all the fantasies of scepticism with regard to the life of the flesh. What is essentially vital is to respond and love, tenderly. Therein, says Murry, Lawrence "was indeed a forerunner. His great revindication of the way of the flesh was an attempt to make the world innocent again" (**Reminiscences,** p. 21). This is absolutely true, and Lawrence's revealing cry at the end of **Lady Chatterley's Lover** confirms the general trend of Murry's argument, though Lawrence himself admitted, in one of his letters, that he had no general message : "You asked me once what my general message was. I haven't got any general message, because I believe a general message is a general means of side-tracking one's own personal difficulties" (**Selected Letters,** pp. 74-75). But this is a passing remark

which must not be considered as a formidable refutation of Murry's interpretation. Lawrence, Murry insists, was pre-eminently, a man with a vision, "a prophet, a psychologist, a philosopher..., the great life-adventurer of modern times" (**Son of Woman, p. 174**).

It must be pointed out that Murry's evaluation of Lawrence's life and work is highly influencial. His **Son of Woman** has been, and still is, an indespinsable authority to the Lawrence scholars. Despite all the defects of the book, it must be accorded the honour of being the first of its kind in England. It is the first most serious psychological study of Lawrence the man, the thinker, and the prophet, as reflected in his works. It is absolutely uncritical to say that such an approach is wrong, or, as Leavis puts it, fallacious. But it is judiciously sound to say that it is not the only approach. Lawrence's life and production are so intricate and vast to the extent that they can be tackled from various angles and by different means. Murry has opted for the psychological style, and, in so far as this work is concerned, his critical apparatus is, undoubtedly, illuminating. He is the first critic in the Western world who has managed successfully to shed strong gleams of light on various hidden and unknown aspects of Lawrence's life and thought. It is true that, at times, he becomes taciturn and refrains from writing explicitly, but what he has said, either directly or indirectly is more than enough.

The prominence of Murry's criticism, the second point in in question, has been felt and appreciated by succeeding critics who have confessed frankly that Murry's originality and influence ,as a literary critic in the Lawrence arena, can never be ignord. Leavis, himself, a stout adversary, acknowledges the acumen of Murry's critical appreciation. Tackling **Women in Love,** in 1930, he considers Murry the only responsible authority : "There was so far as I know, nothing more enlightened or enlightening critically than Mr. Murry's review of the book" (1) So, regardless of the fact that Leavis disagrees with Murry's critical approach, he declares that he does not find any convincing "reason for protesting" and that he does not claim any kind of "superiority." (2) This is a just and an unavoidable tribute to Murry's genuine effort as a literary critic.

But Leavis is not the only critic who refers to Murry's priority. Clarke stresses the astuteness of Murry's "superiority" when he states that "there is indeed no commentary before Murry's that helps us in defining the imaginative logic of either of the novels [**The Rainbow,** and **Women in Love**] with which we are concerned" (3). To him, the magnanimity of Murry's work is more impressive than that of the most recently published books. Analysing Vivas's standpoint concerning Birkin's

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(1) Leavis, **op. cit.,** p. 10.
(2) **Ibid.,** p. 152.
(3) Clarke, **op. cit.,** p. 13.

rejection of the "African process," Clarke affirms that "Murry had developed substantially this argument almost thirty years before ; it is not clear that the pages in Vivas' book to which Mr. Ford refers represent more than a footnote to **Son of Woman."** (4) This point of view is completely consistent with that of Anthony Bael who in depicting the triviality of "the flood of books that followed" Murry's work, emphasises the seriousness of Murry's effort : "Murry did at least try to deal seriously with Lawrence's work (although from a psychological rather than from a literary angle)"(5). This seriousness of appreciation is due, as Hough says, to "an intuitive understanding of the darker side of a very complex character." (6) As for the venomous strictures of Mrs. Carswell, it must be said that they are despicable representation of the language of spite and malignant prejudice. Her book is full of nonsensical trivialities that must not be allowed to pass for literary criticism, for they lack objectivity, judiciousness and respect. (7)

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(4) **Ibid, pp.** 14-15.

(5) Beal, **op. cit.,** p. 113.

(6) Hough, **op. cit.,** p. 15.

(7) Writing about the **Adelphi,** for example, Mrs. Garswell says : "But in the midst of these tastings and adventures there arrives by post for Lawrence a bottle of the latest London specific for souls. It is labelled **Adelphi.** Shake well. Contents to be swallowed monthly" (**The Savage Pilgrimage,** p. 177).

In the main, the above quoted and discussed views do justify and support one's final conclusion that Murry's work on Lawrence is an outstanding landmark in the field of modern criticism. It has its defects, but it also has its splendid triumphs that must be acknowledged and appreciated. The critic who has honestly admitted that "all that is impure" in **Son of Woman** is "to my everlasting discredit ; all that is pure in it... is to Lawrence's everlasting fame," must be regarded with all due sympathy, understanding, and respect.

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