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D.H. LAWRENCE AND ALAN SILLITOE: FROM CRITIQUE TO CRITICAL DESPAIR

by

Patricia Kilsby Graham

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1977

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D. H. Lawrence and Alan Sillitoe:
From Critique to Critical Despair

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study of D.H. Lawrence and Alan Sillitoe begins with the claim that radical alterations in the human condition throughout this century have made it necessary to formulate an approach to the modern novel which is appropriate to the novel and our time. Traditional critical categories which corresponded to conditions of life in the nineteenth century no longer reflect life in post-war industrial and democratic societies. The aim is toward a critical method which will illuminate the subversive content of the modern novel. Employing Wayne Burns' contextualist approach, as I understand it, the study comprises a close comparative reading of five novels. The novels allow for an exploration of the effects of cultural and technological developments on life and on literature.

Chapter one establishes the principal views upon which the study rests, situates the novel in social and historical context and outlines the primary components of Georg Lukacs' study of the ideology of modernism. A preliminary focus for the study is thereby constructed. Chapter two gives a close reading of D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers, laying the foundation for discussion of later novels, while also developing the critical approach. Chapter three examines Lawrence's The Rainbow and Women in Love and Alan Sillitoe's The Death of William Posters,

A Tree on Fire and The Flame of Life. The comparative discussion focuses upon four central topics: 1) the absorption of private life into the public realm; 2) creative articulation in the context of the cultural domination of language; 3) critical perspectives on democracy, technology, materialism and class; 4) sexuality in the context of cultural domination and commodification.

A comparative study of the Lawrence and Sillitoe novels reveals compatible visions and critiques, but most significantly the contrasts between them open up insight into the intensification of technologically proficient forms which dominate human nature. Finally, the modern novel cannot envision beyond these forms.

"People fascinated by the idea of progress never suspect that every step forward is also a step on the way to the end and that behind all the "onward and upward" slogans lurks the lascivious voice of death urging us to make haste."[1]

Milan Kundera, The Book of Laughter and Forgetting

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CHAPTER 1

A THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION: D.H. LAWRENCE AND ALAN SILLITOE IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNISM

The twentieth century novel has been the primary focus of my studies. Central to these studies has been a concern with the conditions of human consciousness and experience in contemporary western society. I began my work with the belief that an understanding of the specific qualities of the modern novel depended on a comprehensive knowledge of modern culture, an awareness of historical developments in consciousness and in literature, and, finally, that an informed treatment of the novel required a perspective which incorporated within its scope a critique of political, technological and social forces.

My approach owes its formulation in particular to the work of Herbert Marcuse. The implications of Marcuse's critical evaluations of our culture and of the present human condition led me to feel that in order to illuminate rather than invalidate the subversive, radical insights of literary expression, an open and contextualist approach to the novel needed to be developed.[1] In order to follow the radical insights of the modern novel, we not only need to be sensitively open to the subversive elements of modern fiction, but we also need a critical compre-

hension of the conditions of contemporary life which form our and the novelist's experiential context. The more critically informed our understanding, the more capable we are of meeting and realizing the visions of the best of twentieth century fiction. To be responsively open to the modern novel, to follow its direction, is the initial step. But to fully realize a work of fiction and its radical potentiality we need to go further. Wayne Burns wrote, in "The Critical Relevance of Freudianism," that the serious critic "uses the stimulus afforded by Freud to realize (i.e. recreate) what the artist has created."[2] The essential point here, and in Burns' essay, is that critical theory and knowledge, in this case the insight provided through Freud's work, need not result in dogmatically determined readings if our first fidelity is always to literature. It is my contention that we need the help of critical knowledge derived from extra-literary sources if we are to develop our sensitivity toward the novel to its fullest potential. Arthur Efron wrote, now more than twenty years ago:

> One of the great benefits of one-dimensional existence is that a person can live inside it for decades at a time and never have to face any challenge to his assumptions. This is an emotional security that cannot be underestimated. It is provided by a society that "delivers the goods," but as Marcuse reminds us, the goods include "our own" aspirations, emotions, and personalities. To comfort oneself with the observation that all historical epochs have comparable evils is

> thus to accept what is neither relevant nor true. For no previous periods possessed the massive conditioning mechanisms of our own; their technologics [sic] could not have implemented such total invasion of consciousness.[3]

Given the technologically determined world of our experience, we need to be involved in our own ways--as is some of the best of modern literature--in the struggle to come to critical awareness of ourselves and of the dominating forces which penetrate and direct our lives. If literature is to be explored seriously, we begin by listening carefully to its "voice," following its direction, and then extending the insight it brings us to the total context in which we live. The critical activity is one of developing reciprocity between novel, reader, and the reader's critical awareness.

Out of a variety of literary achievements of this century, I have chosen to direct my attention to the work of D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930) and Alan Sillitoe (b. 1928). My reasons for this choice are various, but are primarily based on the quality and scope of their achievements and by their obvious similarities in situation and temperament. Both novelists developed their work out of the background of the mines, factories and industrial complex of Nottingham, England. Sillitoe's essay, "Lawrence and District," published in 1975 in a collection of his selected essays entitled Mountains and Caverns, reflects his extensive and sensitive reading of Lawrence. That

Lawrence's writing has had a powerful influence on Sillitoe's own work and understanding is unquestionable. In the following study of their novels I will be concerned with the ways in which Alan Sillitoe's novels move in a direction very much in sympathy with Lawrence's critical insight and also with the ways in which they clearly differ. Because they come to experience and to understand the world with more than forty years between them, their novels allow for a comparative study which can illuminate the effects of cultural and technological developments on human experience and consciousness. The world Lawrence gives us is the world of the first quarter of this century. His early and radical insights into the repressive and mechanistically destructive forces underlying historical progress, as well as his recognition of the totalitarian tendencies inherent in progress, make his work particularly relevant to an understanding of our own time. Reaching toward adulthood at the turn of the century, Lawrence was able to see, and later come to intensely oppose, historical developments in culture and consciousness which have, to a large extent, become invisible to us. Sillitoe, living and writing in the present (Saturday Night and Sunday Morning appears in 1958), reaches his adulthood in the years following World War II. The world he awakens to is one of increasingly sophisticated forms of administering and organizing human life in the interests

of production--a world that Lawrence did not live to see so fully accomplished. Sillitoe creatively explores the battleground of the modern devastated psyche and attempts to discover a "space" in which the buried embryonic self can gain the potential for growth. The work of both Lawrence and Sillitoe provides the favourable conditions for a study of literary development seen in relation to cultural development. Through a comparative study, beginning with the work of D.H. Lawrence, it becomes possible to trace radical developments in literary expression, cultural and technological dominance, consciousness and experience.

Herbert Marcuse maintained that the organization of the technological base of industrial society was totalitarian. In his view, technology itself is not the inherent enemy. His opposition was directed toward a technological system which was developed in the interests of accomplishing the domination of nature and human nature. The present contains the potentiality of life lived with more freedom from necessity than ever before historically possible. We have reached a stage of technological development which makes much of the repression and social control, once validated by the struggle against scarcity, no longer necessary. However, in spite of these new possibilities for human freedom given technological advancements, we have maintained, in fact increased,

the mechanisms of social control as these new possibilities have become realizable. Herbert Marcuse writes in Five Lectures:

> As productivity increases, the taboos and instinctual prohibitions on which productivity rests have to be guarded with ever greater anxiety. Might we say, going beyond Freud, that this is so because the temptation to enjoy this increasing productivity in freedom and happiness becomes increasingly strong and increasingly rational? . . . To the extent that the emancipation of Eros can be more and more clearly envisaged as social wealth increases, its repression becomes harsher and harsher.[4]

The productive forces of our society determine not only what are to be the necessary skills and occupations we will pursue, but also the content of our personal needs, feelings and experience. In Marcuse's perspective, such a situation marks an advanced stage in a historically rooted process:

> As a technological universe, advanced industrial society is a political universe, the latest stage in the realization of a specific historical project--namely, the experience, transformation, and organization of nature as the mere stuff of domination.
>
> As the project unfolds, it shapes the entire universe of discourse and action, intellectual and material culture. In the medium of technology, culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows up or repulses all alternatives.[5]

Where can we find the space for human development when the "self" is so quickly and completely made the object of a system of domination based on the co-ordination of cultural, social, political and technological forces?

How are we to discover alternatives and how are we to extend insight into the realm of concrete and effective forms of negation and opposition before these insights are robbed of their potency? These questions, I would argue, are implicitly and explicitly at the centre of both Lawrence and Sillitoe's novels.

Lawrence believed that the seeds of radical insight, opposition and alternatives were to be found nowhere else but within ourselves, in the life that lies within and often buried. Life itself, in his terms, posed the deepest challenge to technological domination. And it was his claim that the novel, more than any other art form, could help us realize, help us rediscover, what we have lost and are continuing to lose of ourselves.
While it is often the fatalistically accepted position of many critics and artists that modern art can do little but symptomatically reflect the life-denying characteristics of our time, images of gratification and life which have not been culturally absorbed and rendered impotent are still evident in the highest achievements of modern literature--they are evident in the aesthetic vision of Lawrence. Cries of negation and of the painful struggle to comprehend the components of repression are also evident--they are evident in the world of Sillitoe's novels. The portrayal of images of an "absent" reality and of negation involves giving form to experiences

which are not validated or recognized by conventional systematized modes of communication and consciousness. This the novel and novelist can do. The struggle with language to articulate experience becomes imperative in a technological age which insists that only that which is officially named, only that which is the case at the present time, is rational, is in fact, real. The critical point here is that, because we live in a society which has the capacity to absorb and assimilate antagonistic elements, and because the situation is such that contradictions can co-exist without resulting in disturbance, the subversive potential of literary expression will be lost unless we can approach the modern novel with an openness and with an informed critical understanding which will allow us to realize and then illuminate and elucidate its radical intent.

Such an approach also leads toward a method of evaluation. Given the perspective formulated here, the greatest achievements of modern literature are dependent on two not unrelated accomplishments: 1) a creative expression which makes recognizable our society as it is, beneath the rationalizations of official ideology. Such an accomplishment involves revealing the price of submission to the dominating features of our culture; 2) a creative expression of that which is "absent," that which has been lost in our feeling, experience and compre-

hension: images of gratification, vision and relationship --potentialities as yet unrealized. We can approach the modern novel with the capacity of making evaluative distinctions between literature which is symptomatic of technological society, and literature which presents a critical illumination of it (and of distinguishing between these two expressions within any one work).

The novel, as we know it, is a form of literary expression which is particular to Western industrial society, and its development reflects the formation of a new kind of consciousness. It is ordinarily assumed that the novel as a literary form begins, in England, with the work of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. It reflects a break with the traditional form and a re-orientation in thinking, which Ian Watt in The Rise of the Novel sees originating with the Renaissance. In the earlier literary work of Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare, human experience had been viewed as shared and encompassed within boundaries determined by human nature. The philosophic realism of Descartes and the psychological approaches of Locke and Hobbes mark a transition from the universal and general perspective of neo-classicism, to an emphasis on the particulars of human experience. Individual experience replaces the collective tradition as the judge of reality, and it is within the context of this cultural transition that Watt sees the novel first

emerging.[6] Similarly, Georg Lukacs in The Theory of the Novel writes that:

> The epic and the novel, these two major forms of great epic literature, differ from one another not by their authors' fundamental intentions but by the given historico-philosophical realities with which the authors were confronted. The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality.[7]

The novel reflects a transition in perspective, manifested by a new formation of plot, which becomes determined by character, the problematic individual, by experience, rather than by tradition, and by a rejection of known general and universal types in favour of an emphasis on individual particulars. Alongside the individuation and particularization of characters, the novel encompasses an increasingly detailed portrayal of environment. The attempt is not only to individualize literary character, but to create literature which comes closer to life, literature which more "realistically" portrays lived experience.

The transition from a perspective which assumed universality and shared moral experience to a social view of life which emphasized the individual and the particular as that which was authentic, has its roots and correspondences in the development of industrial capitalism, in the ascendancy of the commercial and

industrial classes as an economic and political power, and in categories of thought and value which become increasingly economic and individualistic and secular; people are at the centre of all things. As the administrative and production processes of nineteenth-century capitalism became increasingly complex and specialized, the ability to perceive and influence public life began to erode. Society became more and more homogeneous and was experienced as autonomous and distinct from the more private self. People turned inward, away from a social world which they had no influence upon, and centred themselves on private, intimate concerns and relations. "The epic individual, the hero of the novel, is the product of estrangement from the outside world," writes Lukacs in The Theory of the Novel (p. 66).

Speaking of France in 1830, Arnold Hauser in The Social History of Art writes: "The basic tendencies of modern capitalism, which had been becoming increasingly apparent ever since the Renaissance, now emerge in all their blatant clarity, unmitigated by any tradition."[8] Effective influence is withdrawn from the competitive system, which becomes increasingly mechanized; the system itself begins to rule. Economic specialization, increasing divisions of labour, and a stratified social system lead to a social environment so complex that it cannot be comprehended or experienced in its totality, but only

in fragments. What is shown in the nineteenth century novel is a profound split in consciousness, a perspective which draws clear distinctions between the personal and the political, the individual and the social, the private and the public, and a consistent attempt to establish in creative form a sense of "totality" (Lukacs), a sense of what Raymond Williams refers to as "community", which is felt to be lacking.[9]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the struggle to achieve a sense of totality through the creative form of the novel meets with mounting difficulties as the world becomes increasingly mechanized, stratified and specialized, and can no longer be contained within the consciousness of any single writer. Looking ahead for a moment to the twentieth century, we can see that the struggle for the establishment of a sense of totality and vision continues in Lawrence's work, although his later novels begin to manifest what Williams refers to as "literature of developed individualism" (p. 143). It is a literature which expresses a pronounced separation, where the only insoluble reality is oneself. The expression of this crisis is seen in more highly developed form in the work of Alan Sillitoe, where the hero of his novels follows his own sense of estrangement until it leads him to complete isolation and deprivation (The Death of William Posters, A Tree on Fire and The Flame

of Life).

The roots of twentieth century modernism are already evident and reflected in a tendency toward introversion in the psychological perspective of the latter part of the nineteenth century (as in the psychological novels of George Eliot, for example). A tendency toward the psychological and toward a replacement of external events by internal reality continues throughout the nineteenth century and eventually becomes the predominant perspective by the end of the century: "all the important thinkers of the century recognized the lack of a sense of reality as the curse of modern culture," writes Hauser (p. 214).

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century in France the laws of capitalist economy were developing into an increasingly fixed, complex and organized system. The period reflected feelings of insecurity and crisis, while the pace of production and technological development intensified. Hauser points to the development of a new perspective on life and on the object world which is the result of such development:

> The continual and increasingly rapid replacement of old articles in everyday use by new ones leads . . . to a diminished affection for material and soon also for intellectual possessions too. . . . Modern technology thus introduces an unprecedented dynamism in the whole attitude to life. (p. 168)

This new dynamic reaches deeply into life, altering feeling and consciousness. Under the impact of rapid

change and development during the nineteenth century, objects and ideas take on the quality of arbitrariness. Material and ideational possessions begin to lose their value and are seen as interchangeable. This attitude is clearly reflected in the modernist writing of the twentieth century which is to follow.[10] What distinguishes Lawrence's work from many of his modernist contemporaries is that this new attitude is not yet incorporated into his world view. Lawrence maintained an attitude of reverence toward the material, ideational and experiential world. While production and innovation had been developing at an unprecedented pace for at least two generations before him, replaceable and duplicate products and the attitude of mind that their introduction into the market place led to had not reached far into the living reality of working class life, where wages could not meet the pace of technological advancement and production, and where literacy was still not extensive. Both material and ideational possessions are still seen to be highly valuable in the working class environment from which Lawrence's early experiences have their source. This reverent attitude is maintained throughout Lawrence's work, but is particularly evident in Sons and Lovers where his early experiences of family and adolescent life are narrated. While this may appear on first consideration to be of only minor significance when looking

at a novelist, it in fact has wide and significant ramifications. A perspective on the world which maintains that objects and ideas are arbitrary and of inconsequential value, a perspective which is overwhelmingly pervasive in our present world, and which characterizes so much of the modernist writing examined by Lukacs, has significant personal, social and literary implications. In the context of this "unprecedented dynamism" introduced by the modern technology of which Hauser speaks, meaning and significance in life and in literature begin to dissolve altogether.

Similar literary developments occur in the late nineteenth century in England as did in France. Economic crises during the 1870s and 1880s disrupt the security of the middle class (it is interesting to note that Lawrence's grandfather, on his mother's side, lost his lace business during this crisis, which undercut the family's economic and class status irrevocably). In literature (Oscar Wilde, Henry James, George Meredith) the perspective is individualistic, progressive, anti-traditional and anti-utilitarian (no longer the reactionary, traditional yearning of the literature of the mid-century). It is also however a perspective which is anti-social and unpolitical. Revolt is directed not toward capitalism, but toward the dull thinking and life of the bourgeoisie. Hauser describes the dominant literature of the period

as a "literature of decadence" reflecting a "movement of modernism" (pp. 199-205).

In Hauser's terms the break with the nineteenth century tradition is finally accomplished during the first world war with dadaism. What characterizes dadaism in particular, as far as our discussion here is concerned, is its nihilistic philosophy. Everything is now in doubt with dadaism: not only is the value of art questionable, but of life itself (Hauser, p. 233). The first world war hurt Lawrence terribly, as the often nihilistic mood of Women in Love shows. But such a mood never crystallizes into a philosophy determining and shaping his creative vision. What survives and surfaces in Lawrence's work, even during the war and afterward, is his committment to the belief in the inherent value of life and literary creation. Lawrence's novels continued to develop along the artistic lines rooted in Hardy, Eliot and Tolstoy, rather than in the predominant directions of twentieth century modernism. Hauser writes that "Joyce's Ulysses and T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land appear simultaneously in the year 1922, and strike the two keynotes of the new literature; the one moves in an expressionistic and surrealistic, the other in a symbolistic and formalistic direction" (p. 233). Lawrence's work was to stand outside of these two dominant modernist directions. There is neither the time nor

the need to discuss here the antithetical relationship between the work of Joyce, for example, and that of Lawrence. Suffice to say that while Joyce places exclusive emphasis on the process and product of conscious thought, Lawrence's world view is focused on the primary roots of human experience and feeling and in their relationship to consciousness and the external world. We can draw sharp distinctions between the psychology of Joyce and that of Lawrence, between the subjective world as eventually explored in much modernist writing, typified perhaps best by Beckett, and subjectivity as it is understood and explored in Lawrence's fiction.

Lawrence's experimentation with character (which he sees as constituting a break with the nineteenth century tradition) explored in The Rainbow and in Women in Love follows in a vein similar to the work of Freud, and shares common pyschological assumptions with it. Lawrence's work explores the dynamic relationship between conscious thought, desire and unconscious forces, and his fiction proceeds from what Hauser refers to as a "psychology of exposure": a psychological perspective developing out of a period of crisis, a period in which the content of life is perceived as ambivalent, multi-dimensional and contradictory (pp. 218-219). Of the crisis of the psychological novel in the literature of the twentieth century, Hauser writes:

> [S]ince the whole of existence has become merely the content of consciousness and things acquire their significance purely and simply through the spiritual medium by which they are experienced, there can no longer be any question here of psychology as understood by Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, George Eliot, Tolstoy, or Dostoevsky. In the novel of the nineteenth century, the soul and character of man are seen as the opposite pole to the world of physical reality, and psychology as the conflict between the subject and the object, the self and the non-self, the human spirit and the external world. (p. 238)

Hauser's critical tone here appears similar to Lukacs' critical appraisal of the ideology of modernism as expressed in The Meaning of Contemporary Realism. Much like Lukacs, Hauser maintains that with the literature of modernism the external world is excluded and is replaced by an exploration of subjectivity cut off from relationship and conflict. Yet Lawrence's work departs from the predominant alienated subjectivism of the twentieth century and continues along a line of development traceable to the psychological perspective of the nineteenth century novel. Psychology, as understood by Lawrence, has far more in common with Freud and psychoanalysis than it does with the psychological perspective manifested in the modernist work of Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Beckett and Pirandello, for example. Similarly, while Lawrence's work is clearly distinguishable from typical modernist writing, as it is examined by both Hauser and Lukacs, neither can it be made to fit into Lukacs' antithesis to modernism: "critical realism." One cannot

view either Lawrence's or Sillitoe's novels in the context of Lukacs' perspective because Lukacs' antithetical categories cannot account for their works. These categories tend toward exclusion and rigidity and are not expansive enough to take either novelist into credible account.

In The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, Lukacs argues that the dominant attitude of our era, an attitude which underlies the ideology of modernism, is fatalistic and nihilistic. It is an attitude which embraces human impotence, an attitude which denies the possibilities for change, and an attitude which accepts the ineffectuality of human action and the incapacity for human relationship. It is anti-humanistic, anti-revolutionary and ahistorical. The dominant attitude of our era sees life as aimless, static, without history or meaning. What concerns Lukacs in his study are the literary and political manifestations and ramifications of the ideology of modernism. In literature these attitudes make themselves felt in various forms: an exclusive exploration of subjective states cut off from the external world; the portrayal of reality as inexplicable; an arbitrary "naturalistic" selection of material without any real principle of selectivity to govern or shape content; a glorification of perversity and distortion--the omission of a cultural norm in literature through which the abnormal may be seen and identified as such; and a depiction

of life as static and people as asocial, isolated and without a context or a history. Lukacs' work is an important study of contemporary consciousness and its literary manifestations. The great dialectic between people and their environment that formed the central dynamic of nineteenth century literature and which comprised the psychology of the previous century has disintegrated in modernist literature and life. Lukacs' central opposition is to an exclusive and impoverished subjectivism in literature which begins with the disintegration of personality (or self). Once the unity between the subjective and objective world is destroyed, so finally are we. Sillitoe, in his trilogy, while intentionally struggling toward a form of recovery of self nonetheless very nearly leads his primary character to the point of utter disintegration.

Novelists who have made their own despair, their own process of disintegration, the sole subject of their work, and who confuse despair with the whole of reality, have resigned themselves to their own ability to comprehend and realize the world in which we live. Following Lukacs further, literary "flights into psychopathology," "glorifications of perversion," "reduction of reality to a nightmare," "escapes into neurosis," "obsessions with morbidity" and nihilism clearly fail to constitute concrete protests against the conditions of our lives.

Rather, they are symptomatic and incomplete reactions; symptomatic and incomplete because they do not possess the awareness of what is being responded to.[11] Any concrete protest against the conditions that make up modern life must incorporate a portrayal of what those conditions are. The subjectivization of outer reality automatically rules this out. If a novelist begins with the assumption that external reality is impenetrable, if material reality is treated as arbitrary and nothing has its own identity and value, the novelist's work will remain static, a closed creation, comprised of an abstracted consciousness which has ironically detached itself from the necessity of comprehension and from the possibility of discovering a subjectivity in relationship with external reality--a subjectivity not wholly dominated by cultural ideology. The modern writer needs to reject attitudes which are resigned to the inevitability of conditions as they are, if he/she wishes his/her work to reach beyond mere reflections of our world. Much modernist writing appears to postulate a view of inevitability; and such thinking is in immediate accordance with the self-validating and repressive nature of modern culture.

We can see the critical difficulty of writing fiction which explores the inter-relationship between the subjective and the objective world, the internal and the external, when we examine cultural, social and political developments

and their consequences since the nineteenth century. The opposition and the distinction between spheres of life previously considered as intimate and private as opposed to public, have given way to a condition of identification, or mimesis. While the historical epoch which gave rise to the epic was an age in which life was lived and thought of in terms of totality, the modernist age of the twentieth century is an age in which life is lived and consciousness defined by identification with reality as ideology, i.e., under the conditions of ideological totalitarianism. While our ability to comprehend the workings of our society has continuously been eroded, so too has our ability to understand ourselves outside of external forms and references. The dialectical relationship between the individual and society, characterizing life as lived during the nineteenth century, was a historically conditioned situation in direct association with the development of progress and capitalism. As production increased, the entire apparatus needed to support and reinforce it expanded, engulfing social relations and systems, economics, politics, education and culture--engulfing finally even the most hitherto intimate areas of life. The dialectical relationship between the private and the public dissipates finally when we are left with nothing of ourselves to defend. A condition of "secure" stasis is maintained through the

vehicle of an advanced technology, operating in the service of production, which is effectively and efficiently capable of determining the content and structure of our unconscious and conscious lives; thus, as Marcuse articulates, we move beyond the Freudian model which once characterized the dynamics of pyschic operations. Marcuse asserts that we need to formulate a theoretical view which can account for radical and historically unprecedented alterations in the human condition which make the previous confrontations and "negotiations" between unconscious drives, the arbitrating ego and the superego, problematic. Following and expanding upon Freud's theory of the instincts, Marcuse maintained that the contemporary situation is such that the ego's responses to both the external world and to the inner, instinctual drives, have become increasingly automatic; the space within which confrontation between these two opposing forces could be worked out, where the ego was the final arbiter, appears to have been narrowed down. The reified ego acts automatically in the interests and under the direction of external repressive forces. "[I]t is no longer possible for something like an individual psyche with its own demands and decisions to develop; the space is occupied by public, social forces," writes Marcuse in Five Lectures (p. 14). And further:

> The socially necessary repressions and the socially necessary behaviour are no longer

> learned--and internalized--in the long struggle with the father*--the ego ideal is rather brought to bear on the ego directly and "from outside," before the ego is actually formed as the personal and (relatively) autonomous subject of mediation between him-self and others.
>
> These changes reduce the "living space" and the autonomy of the ego and prepare the ground for the formation of masses. The mediation between the self and the other gives way to immediate identification. (p. 47)[12]

It may well be that the best of modern literature is going to be primarily engaged in the process of discovering a subjectivity, a self, with some autonomy and distance from external determinants. I will argue that the works of both D.H. Lawrence and Alan Sillitoe are involved in such a process. While maintaining the validity of much of Lukacs' argument against the ideology of modernism, we lose something essential in literature if we simply reject, as Lukacs does, literature which at first glance appears to "eliminate the social" when this elimination (in no way ever complete in their work) is part of a process of radical re-discovery of a self which is capable of comprehension, confrontation and relationship with the external world. We need to make distinctions between twentieth century literary achievements which are radically predisposed and humanly committed and those which succumb to the inevitability of things as they are, and which symptomatically reflect or even glorify alienated and narcissistic subjectivity.

I think it is fair to say that throughout Lawrence's

work, and even in his most nihilistically predisposed of times, he believes he can know the truth from a lie, the authentic from the manufactured production. This assumption alone, I would argue, distinguishes him radically from the world views of traditional modernism, which so often begins with the assumption of an inexplicable world. Lawrence holds that not only can we know, but that we must know the real from the false if we are to re-establish a relationship with the totality of life. Lawrence sees all life to be an integral part of a larger and greater totality, in which humanity is intended to have its place. Our modern illness in his terms is that we have broken away from the living totality and have fallen into a devastating and crippling narcissistic isolation. Lawrence, not unlike Lukacs, sees the crisis of modern life to be the crisis of modernism.

Nonetheless, in Lukacs' judgement, Lawrence's work eliminates social significance and reduces "erotic relations to phallic sexuality" (Contemporary Realism, p. 74). Lukacs therefore places his fiction among other modernist writers who distort and reduce reality. It is my view that Lawrence's apolitical politics (his refusal or inability to identify his own beliefs with any established political ideology) present more of a challenge to Lukacs' own ideological and literary categories than Lukacs is prepared to confront. A

serious examination of Lawrence's work needs to confront his refusal to accept socialism as a perspective through which to view the world and his anti-materialistic philosophy which maintained that all real and liberating change begins with us ourselves in our primary relationships and not with instituted economic and political alterations. We also need to address the ways in which Lawrence's work departs from the ideology of modernism. This involves an examination of his insights into twentieth century conditions of life: his critique of production and commodification, his awareness of technological domination and of the totalitarian features of his society evident in their earlier formations, as well as his unfailing belief that the political struggles of his contemporaries often perpetuated the desire for false and destructive material and intellectual needs, and that most political ideologies are inherently authoritarian and oppressive. In Lawrence's intellectual framework, given the present organization of our world, freedom had to mean freedom from culture, society and politics, as he knew them.

In the following comparative study of Lawrence and Sillitoe's work, I begin with a reading of Sons and Lovers. A close and extensive examination of this first major novel allows for insight into the primary perspectives and feelings which are the foundations

of Lawrence's later writing. Most particularly, we are able to see the early struggles with class, upon which so much of Lawrence's later thinking was to rest. Paralleling British class antagonisms as they were played out politically and economically, Sons and Lovers explores class as an internal dynamic within the characters themselves. Class in this early novel is a potent, historically carried force, conscious and unconscious, which directs and develops character and relationship. The novel, it could be argued, is Lawrence's struggle to be free from class: free from the power of history to write one's fate.

Chapter three is the comparative study itself, comprised of an examination of The Rainbow and Women in Love and three of Sillitoe's novels which form a trilogy: The Death of William Posters, A Tree on Fire and The Flame of Life. Sillitoe takes up the literary legacy of Lawrence, but he faces a human crisis that has reached a far more advanced and critical stage than anything Lawrence was to know. Sillitoe and his characters live and struggle in the shadow of Lawrence's revelations and critique (Lawrence is directly discussed in the novels). The people in Sillitoe's trilogy often appear almost paralysed by what they know of themselves and the world. The crisis is a crisis of a subject without a self, a subject who has become the object

of his society through a technological mechanics of repression and control that has become so penetrating and encompassing that it has eradicated much of the space needed for the development of a self with some autonomy. The crisis explored throughout the trilogy reaches a complexity and quality of such thorough mystification that we are able to recognize just how far beyond Lawrence's situation, where there is still felt to be the very real potential of knowing and living according to one's needs, we have advanced as we move with Sillitoe toward the ever nearer present of our own lives. In the world of the Sillitoe trilogy the ego has all but disappeared; defensive psychic reactions are in constant readiness to immediately replace one another once threatened by any instinctual breakthrough, while erotic energy surfaces primarily in distorted forms of displaced aggression.

While there clearly is a depiction of external reality in Sillitoe's work, his novels reveal that we have become the impotent objects of external forces which cannot be viewed as anything other than monopolistic and fatally anti-human. The central character, developed throughout the three novels, consistently maintains the painful awareness of intense discontent and struggles with the unanswered need to discover experience and insight which he can recognize as his own. The novels

explore the attempts ~~of~~ an English factory worker who feels himself caught in a domestic and repetitive routine, as well as in ideological abstractions, to break free of the oppressive structures which determine his living and thinking. While walking away from the immediate confines imposed by work and family comes relatively easy, he cannot create the distance he needs from the internal structure of his consciousness. In his attempts to retreat from the external forms of oppression which he recognizes as such, he only solidifies his estranged and already isolated condition. This is partially so because, unlike Lawrence, Sillitoe's world view is formulated out of an ideological perspective which often blocks vision and limits insight into the broader context of the human condition in post-war western societies. However, while his adherence to a collective, often reductionist, logic may be crippling, the novels do frequently break out of the limitations imposed by this logic, to reveal the hysteria, the sterility, the rage, which are the vestiges of our humanness--the price of progress. At the same time, the novels are committed to the ongoing search to discover the means toward radical change in the interests of human life. A belief in the potentialities of change, a belief that has its source in an unquestionable sense of human value as a primary value above all else, is what distinguishes

Sillitoe's novels from the dominant ideology of modernism. The trilogy maintains and reveals a critical opposition between an external political, cultural and social superstructure which acts against human feeling and need while subsuming, redefining and replacing feeling and need. The trilogy's main character searches for the voice of his own experience--a voice that can re-establish his relation to the living world. The novels make clear that there is nothing natural nor inevitable about this solitary, disintegrated, figure. His isolation is an affliction, an affliction he must discover the way out of, as he rummages amongst the remains of his humanness, crushed beneath the weight of a decaying mind and body. His struggle and the burden he carries with him is the novelist's fight for his life, and by implication, our own, if we accept the terms of the critique out of which the works of both D.H. Lawrence and Alan Sillitoe have originated.

CHAPTER TWO

SONS AND LOVERS:
A SEARCH INTO PERSONAL HISTORY AND THE WAY TOWARD LIBERATION

Sons and Lovers explores how the configurations of class are ideologically alive within character, how class based perspectives are historically rooted and carried through to a new generation, and how class-bound ideology and experience affect the psychological development of character and the dynamics of relationship. The novel takes Lawrence into a struggle to comprehend the inner dynamism of class in particular; through this struggle is revealed Lawrence's resistance to class ideology, a tutelage his characters are often not fully aware of, and perhaps most significantly, a deep critique of civilization and what he felt to be its imminent collapse. Sons and Lovers is the first substantial literary basis and early formulation of this critique, more fully developed in The Rainbow and Women in Love.

PART 1. THE ESTABLISHING OF RELATIONSHIP

Born in 1885 in the rapidly developing mining town of Eastwood, England, a midlands town of Nottinghamshire which had largely been the creation of the coal mining industry during the nineteenth century, Lawrence

lived as a child at the apex of radical change--change as it affected the very roots of life in all its dimensions. It was here that the economic and technological developments, industrial expansion, the struggles of the industrial working classes, and the women's movement gave rise to new forms of life and categories of thinking. The autobiographical Sons and Lovers, Lawrence's third but first major, novel, he began writing in the fall of 1910 and published, in revised form, three years later. The novel opens with a description of the economic developments of the nineteenth century in the midlands and the changes which take place upon the Nottingham countryside, and then develops and explores the more intimate, experiential lives of the Morel family within this context during the turn of the century.

Raymond Williams, in Culture and Society, writes:

> In the early stages of the imposition of the industrial system, an observer could see adult men and women, grown to another way of life, being "beaten down" into the new functions and the new feelings. But once industrialism was established, an observer could hardly see this.[1]

In spite of the advanced stage which industrial development and expansion had already reached at the turn of the century, the process of being "beaten down" is still recognizable and observable in Sons and Lovers, particularly as this process is explored through the characters

of Gertrude and Walter Morel. Lawrence had witnessed his own parents being defeated by conditions of poverty and meanness which they felt powerless to alter or fully escape; and he experienced along with them their false hopes, their bitterness and their anger. Referring to Lawrence, Williams goes on to say that

> his main energy went, and had to go, to the business of personal liberation from the system. Because he understood the issue in its actual depth, he knew that this liberation was not merely a matter of escaping a routine industrial job, or of getting an education, or of moving into the middle class. These things, in Lawrence's terms, were more of an evasion than what he actually came to. . . . His business was the recovery of other purposes, to which the human energy might be directed. (Culture and Society, pp. 203-204)

Lawrence came to see that developing capitalism, rapid rates of production and of technological expansion had led to the situation where all human energy was being forced into and directed by "a competition of mere acquisition."[2] He sought to discover his own means and form of living apart from this tide of historical forces which had already penetrated into psychic life. Even in his first significant novel, he is already involved in a resistance against the dominant forces of his time. In Sons and Lovers Lawrence is both implicated in and struggling to break away from the deep confusions and impotencies embodied in the novel's characters. While the novel is a significant work

on its own, apart from the work which follows it, it is also important in that it reveals some of the primary sources of thinking and their rudimentary forms.

Lawrence's own father, Arthur Lawrence, was a coalminer since boyhood; his mother, Lydia Beardsall, the daughter of George Beardsall, an engineer and preacher, was an educated woman who had been a school teacher for a short term before her marriage. Within the novel the specific histories of Lawrence's parents are faithfully maintained and portrayed through the fictional characters of Gertrude and Walter Morel (although their class differences may have been exaggerated somewhat). In the context of the novel, Eastwood becomes "Bestwood," and the promoters and financiers of the coalmines, Barber and Walker, become "Carson and Waite."

Referring to Sons and Lovers, Scott Sanders writes that society, in the minds of the working people of the community, has become reified: "it seems to be a substantially independent world, inhabited by irrational, unpredictable and uncontrollable forces which determine people's lives while remaining oblivious to their desires."[3] "Society", as Scott Sanders employs the term, is primarily portrayed through the working life of Walter Morel. Workers are seen as impotent victims at the mercy of the financiers who do not always guarantee even subsistence wages; layoffs, shut-downs and accidents are a common

occurence, helplessly endured by the dependent miners and their dependent families. Mrs. Morel, who relentlessly aspires toward some form of active participation in the world outside of the immediate, is tied to the domestic conditions of coalmining life. Her only community relationships are those she establishes with the church and with co-operative groups; but these associations appear socially ineffectual, detached from the conditions of labour and economics as they are.

The only real escape from the conditions of working class life that the novel presents is accomplished through relationship with the natural world of the countryside which had not yet been expropriated through expansion and housing developments (far less of this countryside remains today of course, for while many of the mines have ceased operation, suburban and highway developments have replaced much of the agricultural land). Williams makes an important point when he writes that Lawrence "lived on a kind of frontier, within sight of both industrial and agricultural England" (Culture and Society, p. 206). The agricultural countryside is not simply a background in the novel. It provides for the potentiality of relationship between people and a larger world outside of their immediate circumstances and lives. It is a relationship which has important experiential and psychological dimensions which are seriously considered

and explored in the novel. The countryside in the novel should not be assumed to be a decorative backdrop to the predominant plot; neither should it be likened to, as Scott Sanders does, the reified social world which is detached and independent of the characters' power. Sanders writes that

> the natural process, like the social, becomes reified, appearing as an autonomous realm of irrational and impersonal forces. Just as unpredictable and uncontrollable social forces rule the lives of common people, so natural forces govern the course of personal relationships. The one realm of impersonal forces is no more hospitable than the other. And just as economic forces reduce human beings to instruments of production, so instinctual forces reduce human beings to instruments of gratification. (Five Major Novels, p. 56)

Such an interpretation of the natural, and of the relationship between people and the natural world, cannot be substantiated by the novel. The natural process is of course impersonal, for it is not to be in any complete way identifiable or reducible to the human. It is neither "rational" nor "irrational," for these terms have no meaning outside of the purely human realm, as Lawrence well knew. Neither is there anything hostile or inhospitable about the natural world of the novel; nature does not "govern the course of human relationships," but personal relationships and human experience are not divorced from the natural world which often provides their context in the novel. People are not "reduced" by

instinctual forces. Characters in Sons and Lovers are presented as different from the natural world, and yet connected to it through the fact of life itself. "Instinct" in Sons and Lovers is not synonymous with "nature;" instinct refers to the force of life which is part of both the natural and the human world. Instinct allows for the presence of relationship and commonality between us and nature. In Sanders' view, the more independent society seemed to be, the more Lawrence needed to believe in the autonomous character of nature. But is is important in our understanding of Lawrence's work that we see the distinction between the characters' perception of and relationship with the natural world, and their perception of and relationship to society, as it is initially explored in this early novel.[4]

Lawrence clearly had a far more intimate relationship with the natural world of the countryside than he did with the workings of his society; and the emphasis in the novel is primarily on this first relationship. Social and political insight does not come easily; it involves painful struggles and resistances which are played out first in the most intimate and personal spheres of life, as in the relationship between Gertrude and Walter Morel, where insight fails, and as it is in the relationship between Gertrude and Paul, where insight is yet possible. The significant point is that while

society is portrayed as a source of authority which masters and exploits life, the natural world is portrayed as a realm wherein there exists a living force potentially uniting human life with a larger totality of life. It is through relationship with nature that the characters often come to realize their own lives and the living world beyond them. It is through this relationship that some of the characters are prevented from becoming completely isolated, cut off from all life outside the immediate boundaries of the self. Socially, the characters have in large part been cut away. But they are capable of maintaining a knowledge and immediate experience of themselves as part of a larger totality when they allow for responsive relationship to occur between themselves and the natural world. For Miriam Leivers, for example, the natural world is almost all that lives for her outside of her very private and detached thinking and feeling. So detached is she from social intercourse and participation, that the countryside becomes one of the few externals she recognizes and is in real association with. Nature is distinct from her, yet shares commonality and communion with her. Paul too sees himself as distinct from and yet connected to a larger world through his relationship to the natural. He experiences himself as part of a larger totality most intensely through sexual union with Clara Dawes, where the natural world

is integrated into their experiential context. Their sexual passion carries them beyond the ordinary boundaries of consciousness, and unites their lives with the life of the non-human world:

> As a rule, when he started lovemaking, the emotion was strong enough to carry with it everything--reason, soul, blood--in a great sweep, like the Trent carries bodily its back-swirls and intertwinings, noiselessly. . . . Just as he was, so it seemed the vigorous, wintry stars were strong also with life. He and they struck with the same pulse of fire, and the same joy of strength which held the braken-frond stiff near his eyes held his own body firm. It was as if he, and the stars, and the dark herbage, and Clara were licked up in an immense tongue of flame, which tore onwards and upwards. Everything rushed along in living beside him; everything was still, perfect in itself, along with him.[5]

The natural world of the novel enters human experience, becoming part of, and yet recognized as other than, the person who knows it. The novel contains various passages which illuminate this relationship, but here, in the following episode where Paul picks berries at the Leivers' farm, we can see it most explicitly portrayed:

> Paul and Edgar were gathering the fruit one evening. It had been a hot day, and now the clouds were rolling in the sky, dark and warm. Paul climbed high in the tree, above the scarlet roofs of the buildings. The wind, moaning steadily, made the whole tree rock with a subtle, thrilling motion that stirred the blood. The young man, perched insecurely in the slender branches, rocked till he felt slightly drunk, reached down the boughs where the scarlet beady cherries hung thick underneath, and tore off handful after handful of the sleek, cool-fleshed fruit. Cherries touched his ears and his neck as he stretched forward,

> their chill finger-tips sending a flash down his blood. All shades of red, from a golden vermilion to a rich crimson, glowed and met his eyes under a darkness of leaves.
>
> The sun, going down, suddenly caught the broken clouds. Immense piles of gold flared out of the south-east, heaped in soft, glowing yellow right up the sky. The world, till now dusk and grey, reflected the gold glow, astonished. Everywhere the trees, and the grass, and the far-off water, seemed roused from the twilight and shining. (pp. 347-348)

This kind of responsive relationship with the natural world is possible only so long as anxiety or anguish do not dominate and master the characters' experience. When Gertrude Morel dies, everything beyond Paul's immediate pain ceases to live or have meaning for him. The bitter struggle between Paul and Miriam, the anxious state that her mere presence can throw him into, often has the effect of cutting him away from his external context or of transforming the external world into an image of his own suffering, as he folds in upon his own pain. When this is the situation, the external world becomes an extension and reflection of inner disturbance; it is denied its own reality. Shortly after Paul has picked the berries with Edgar, he looks down to see Miriam, at which point the world is transformed in accordance with the anxiety she rouses:

> Beside her, on the rhubarb leaves, were four dead birds, thieves that had been shot. Paul saw some cherry stones hanging quite bleached, like skeletons, picked clear of flesh. (p. 348)

Just as Scott Sanders is critical of Lawrence's

conception and portrayal of the natural world, he is similarly critical of the relationship with exists between the characters (particularly the women), their material world, and their living conditions. Sanders refers to Mrs. Morel's and Mrs. Leivers' tendency to bring dignity and beauty to their often cruel and brutal situations as "the tendency of Christianity to rationalize a painful social existence or to compensate for poverty of life." He goes on:

> The Congregationalism of Lawrence's mother, like most Nonconformist sects of the industrial north of England, had the effect, because it was so puritanical, of transforming straitened circumstances into the conditions of virtue. Paul never recognizes this compensatory function which religion serves for the Leivers women, nor is it fully acknowledged by Lawrence. (p. 44)

The interesting problem with Sanders' observations here is that while he is critical of this Christian tendency to give meaning to menial tasks and trivial objects and events, he simultaneously praises Lawrence for his artistic ability to vividly portray and make significant the elements of daily life and the object world, without recognizing the important association between the two. Lawrence's ability to make vivid so much that is ordinarily seen as mundane and unnoteworthy, is clearly rooted in his own history and in his mother's religious spirit and tendency to elevate the commonplace. The "Christian tendency" which Sanders refers to is Lawrence's tendency

as well. Lawrence's own reverent attitude toward the routines of daily life and toward the object world is quite evident in his depiction of external reality and in his narration of moment by moment domestic life. However, it is not enough for us to stop here. We need to look further into this "Christian tendency" and examine whether or not the relationship we are referring to can be understood fully in these religious and moral terms alone.

It is important to keep in mind that Lawrence writes of life lived before mass production had fully entered into and altered working class life. Cheap, duplicate objects readily available to the working public had not yet made their way into the homes of the working class. Objects, and the object world, are perceived and portrayed as rare, precious and unique within the novel, because they still were. The reverent significance given to the object world by Lawrence and by his characters must been seen within the context of developing production and commodification, a situation difficult for us, who inhabit a world of such advanced production, to conceptualize. The characters' attitudes do not reflect attempts to compensate or to acquiesce to oppressive conditions through "transforming straitened circumstances into the conditions of virtue;" rather, their attitudes are in direct relation to their historical situation. Whether

the object is a dish with cornflower design, purchased as a wild extravagance by Mrs. Morel at market, or an umbrella purchased by William in London, or simply the smallest bit of lace added to a bonnet, the attitude toward the article is the same: it reflects the rarity and significance of these articles within the world explored.

Similarly, meaning and significance are given to menial tasks by the women in novel, by Paul Morel and by Lawrence as novelist, not simply in an attempt to compensate for cruel conditions, but also because work and activity, even when it is menial, has particular significance when seen in its full experiential context. Furthermore, domestic labour is seen as significant only when a character's feelings are extended into this activity: only when the character and the activity form a totality. For example, when Mrs. Morel feels detached from her work it is portrayed as repetitious, automatically performed and meaningless. It is important to note that when Gertrude Morel feels that she is simply going through the motions of living, there is no attempt to revere her labour, no attempt at what Sanders refers to as a puritanical transformation of the poor conditions of life:

> "I wait," Mrs Morel said to herself - "I wait, and what I wait for can never come."
> Then she straightened the kitchen, lit the lamp, mended the fire, looked out the washing for the next day, and put it to soak.

> After which she sat down to her sewing. Through the long hours her needle flashed regularly through the stuff. Occasionally she sighed, moving to relieve herself. And all the time she was thinking how to make the most of what she had, for the children's sakes. (p. 13)

Labour is portrayed in the novel in terms of its human context: it is given a significance that is appropriate and particular to the situation. When we look at the family preparations for William's return from London at Christmas, we can see the direct relationship between a reverential attitude and the exhilaration that provides the experiential context for the scene. Every activity and its product partakes of this context:

> He was coming at Christmas for five days. There had never been such preparations. Paul and Arthur scoured the land for holly and evergreens. Annie made the pretty paper hoops in the old-fashioned way. And there was unheard-of-extravagance in the larder. Mrs Morel made a big and magnificent cake. Then, feeling queenly, she showed Paul how to blanch almonds. He skinned the long nuts reverently, counting them all, to see not one was lost. It was said that eggs whisked better in a cold place. So the boy stood in the scullery, where the temperature was nearly at freezing-point, and whisked and whisked, and flew in excitement to his mother as the white of egg grew stiffer and more snowy.
>
> "Just look, mother! Isn't it lovely?"
>
> And he balanced a bit on his nose, then blew it in the air.
>
> "Now, don't waste it," said the mother.
>
> Everybody was mad with excitement. William was coming on Christmas Eve. Mrs Morel surveyed the pantry. There was a big plum cake, and a rice cake, jam tarts, lemon tarts, and mince-pies--two enormous dishes. She was finishing cooking--Spanish tarts and cheese-cakes. Everywhere was decorated. The kissing bunch

> of berried holly hung with bright and glittering things, spun slowly over Mrs Morel's head as she trimmed her little tarts in the kitchen. A great fire roared. There was a scent of cooked pastry. He was due at seven o'clock, but he would be late. The three children had gone to meet him. She was alone. But at a quarter to seven Morel came in again. Neither wife nor husband spoke. He sat in his armchair, quite awkward with excitement, and she quietly went on with her baking. Only by the careful way in which she did things could it be told how much moved she was. The clock ticked on. (pp. 101-102)

Exhilaration, nervous expectancy, apprehension and impatience provide some of the experiential context of this scene. All activity, and every object, is infused with and perceived through these feelings. Everything in the world created here achieves its significance in relation to these feelings.

Paul (and Lawrence) tries to make an important social and psychological distinction between Mrs. Leivers' and Miriam's tendency to exalt activity, and Mrs. Morel's more practical relationship to things. Paul is astonished when Miriam and her mother are seriously disturbed when the potatoes for their family supper are burned. Paul feels that the situation is intensfied well beyond its "real" importance. Yet much later in the novel Paul burns a loaf of bread through similar carelessness, and it is Miriam's turn to be surprised at Paul's anxious concern, which to her appears inappropriate to the situation. The point here is that while the novel tries to

distinguish the Leivers' religious spirit from Mrs. Morel's and Paul's reverent attitude, the distinction does not hold up in the novel. Their differences are reflected primarily in what they elevate, rather than in the tendency itself. Miriam's focus is on the natural and ideational world, while Mrs. Morel reveres far more the material and cultural world beyond her grasp.

The novel ties this reverential attitude most closely to the women's lives; it is foreign to the masculine environment of farm-labouring and coal-mining. The Leivers women in particular establish a distance from masculine labour through this attitude, a distance that enrages the Leivers men:

> The mother exalted everything--even a bit of housework--to the plane of religious trust. The sons resented this; they felt themselves cut away underneath, and they answered with brutality and also with a sneering superciliousness. (p. 182)

The antagonism between Gertrude's attitude and Walter Morel's to labour is much the same: the women of both families often experience their own activities as inherently meaningful, while undermining the significance of masculine labour. However, while the Leivers men react much as Walter Morel reacts to his wife's elevation of her own world and responsibilities while demeaning his (through exaggerating his brutality and independence), the novel distinguishes between the labour involved in

coal-mining and that of independent farming. It does so through allowing Paul, who is most intimately and primarily bound to the domestic life of the women, to also establish close relationship with the Leivers men and to share in their labour. The world of the Leivers men is much closer to the lives of the women than it is to the exclusively masculine domain of Walter Morel. We read that the Leivers family, men and women alike, are

> so cut off from the world actually. They seemed, somehow, like "les derniers fils d'une race épuisée". Though the lads were strong and healthy, yet they all had that over-sensitiveness and hanging back which made them so lonely, yet also such close, delicate friends once their intimacy was won. Paul loved them dearly, and they him. (pp. 185-186)

Only in terms of coal-mining does the novel omit the potential for meaningful work. While it may be obvious that mining is far more alienating labour than either the domestic or farming activity portrayed in the novel (the only product of his long week's work that Morel receives are his fluctuating minimal wages), it is important to note that Paul/Lawrence never enters the world of the mines. While as a child Paul witnesses Gertrude's every gesture and movement, and while he is intimately attached to the daily routines of her life, and similarly attached to activities on the Leivers farm and within their home, his father's life is carried out beyond Paul's

perception, remaining an anomaly throughout the novel. As readers we see Walter Morel's peaceful preparations for work, his slow and exhausted return across the fields at the end of the day, and the steady progress of physical disintegration as he ages. What we do not see is the activity of work itself and Morel's attitude toward and experience of it. Only with Walter Morel does Lawrence omit the experiential context of character (necessarily, I think, given the distance between Lawrence and his own father and the coal-mining labourers of Eastwood). The novel assumes that Morel's labour is empty; but it does not explore how and why.

Lawrence attempts in Sons and Lovers to reach beyond the surface of activity and give expression to the underlying experience of life. He can do this most effectively when he has intimately witnessed or directly known that experience as his own. Paul speaks with Miriam about the pictures he has painted, and discusses why she might like one of them in particular:

> "It's because--it's because there is scarcely any shadow in it; it's more shimmery, as if I'd painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not the stiffness of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real living. The shape is a dead crust. The shimmer is inside really." (p. 189)

This is an important early passage in Lawrence's writing. We can already see here the seeds of Lawrence's aesthetic

and psychological viewpoint as it was to be explored and developed later in his writing of The Rainbow; we can see also an early formulation of his relation to the material world and his view of art as it was to be reflected in his essay "Introduction to These Paintings" where he speaks of Cézanne's work:

> Van Gogh's earth was still subjective earth, himself projected into the earth. But Cézanne's apples are a real attempt to let the apple exist in its own separate entity, without transfusing it with personal emotion. Cézanne's great effort was, as it were, to shove the apple away from him, and let it live of itself. It seems a small thing to do: yet it is the first real sign that man has made for several thousands of years that he is willing to admit that matter actually exists. Strange as it may seem, for thousands of years, in short, ever since the mythological "Fall," man has been preoccupied with the constant preoccupation of the denial of the existence of matter, and the proof that matter is only a form of spirit.
> . . .
> Cézanne felt it in paint, when he felt for the apple. Suddenly he felt the tyranny of mind, the white, worn-out arrogance of the spirit, the mental consciousness, the enclosed ego in its sky-blue prison. And a great conflict started in him. He was dominated by his old mental consciousness, but he wanted terribly to escape the domination. He wanted to express what he suddenly, convulsedly knew! the existence of matter.[6]

Lawrence's emphasis, already evident in Sons and Lovers, is on the life that reigns at the centre of all living reality. His emphasis is not to be on giving expression to conscious thinking and behaviour alone. Thought and activity, the outward form of things, in his terms

pointed toward something else that needed to be rediscovered and given artistic expression. It is in these terms that his work can be seen in association with some of Freud's essential psychological assumptions, and seen to diverge from the psychological perspective most notably reflected in the modernism of Joyce.

Not only is Lawrence's focus directed away from the exclusive concern with the content of conscious thought; Sons and Lovers assumes that an intrinsic relationship exists, or perhaps more accurately, can or should exist, between people and the larger non-human world. It exists between people and the animate world by virtue of the life that radiates from within and unites all living reality into a totality of existence--the human and the non-human. It exists between people and the inanimate world because objects are both entities apart from human consciousness and related to the human through the human experiential context. These relationships are shown to break down in the novel when characters are intensely disturbed. Such is the situation I referred to earlier, when Paul wanders aimlessly, locked within his own detached and suffering consciousness, following his mother's death. However, this situation reflects a far different artistic perception and experience of the world than does a novel like Virginia Woolf's To a Lighthouse, for example, where

human consciousness alone, cut away from relationship with the world outside the self, is essentially the only subject which constitutes reality and the world of the novel. When reading Woolf, it feels as though one has fallen into a kind of sickness from which it is impossible to recover, for there is nothing concretely present to grasp hold of in order to pull oneself out. Why has the concrete, the external, the world of "matter" in Lawrence's terms, receded beyond our grasp? Why, in Lukacs' terms, has external reality disintegrated altogether? Sons and Lovers indicates that a detached, self-pivoting consciousness, which defines all of reality while denying the external and concrete, is rooted in deep psychic disturbances which eventually dominate and radically reduce the potentialities of human experience. The world outside of the self, which at one time seemed to Paul Morel to have an inherent significance, appears empty, arbitrary, mechanical and meaningless once his own inner anguish fully dominates and shuts him in on himself:

> It hurt him so, that things had lost their reality. The first snowdrops came. He saw the tiny drop-pearls among the grey. They would have given him the liveliest emotion at one time. Now they were there, but they did not seem to mean anything. In a few moments they would cease to occupy that place, and just a space would be, where they had been. Tall, brilliant tram-cars ran along the street at night. It seemed a wonder they should trouble to rustle backwards

> and forwards. "Why trouble to go tilting down to Trent Bridges?" he asked of the big trams. It seemed they just as well might not be as be. (p. 498)

Just as Lawrence's work can be distinguished from the ideology of modernism as Lukacs examines it, in terms of how Lawrence views the external world of matter and our relationship to it, so too can Sons and Lovers be distinguished from modernism's tendency toward the arbitrary selection of material. The creative process of selection which determines the novel's shape and development is clearly grounded upon Lawrence's presupposition of the intrinsic relationship between the human and the non-human. While full expression is given to the rituals and routines of daily life within a coal-mining community, the novel neither reflects a naturalistic nor an arbitrary depiction of life. Incidents, manners, gestures, activity, are all selected in accordance with their experiential relevance and in accordance with how much they tell us about the characters and the quality of their lives. The shape of the novel is determined primarily by character development and experience, rather than by the traditional emphasis on plot. Lawrence often does not even attempt to fill in gaps in time sequence, as we move through the novel. We shift from an episode where Walter Morel flings a drawer toward Gertrude Morel

which catches and cuts her brow, to a situation where Morel steals money from her purse for drink, and then to a scene where Morel is ill and in need of nursing, without being told how much time has elapsed between events. These episodes are selected according to their appropriateness in showing how specific experiences influence character and relationship (in this case the growing antagonisms and isolation between Gertrude and Walter Morel), while the continuity of the novel is maintained on the same basis.

PART 11. GERTRUDE AND WALTER MOREL: CLASS ORIGINS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIP

Part One of Sons and Lovers is concerned with portraying the development and experiential roots of the psychological characteristics of Gertrude and Walter Morel in relationship. Their particular personal histories ti e them to repressive categories of thinking and feeling--categories which prevent them from achieving insight into the conditions which have mastered their lives. Beyond the repressive forms of thinking which they have inherited from their ancestors flows the historical movement of capitalistic expansion. In a very late essay, entitled "Nottingham and the Mining

Countryside," Lawrence was to write that it was not only poverty that the financial developers of the coal-mines condemned the working class to:

> The great crime which the moneyed classes and promoters of industry committed in the palmy Victorian days was the condemning of the workers to ugliness, ugliness, ugliness: meanness and formless and ugly surroundings, ugly ideas, ugly religion, ugly hope, ugly love, ugly clothes, ugly furniture, ugly houses, ugly relationship between workers and employers. (Phoenix, p. 138)

While Lawrence refers to no specific dates in the novel, we know, given the close autobiographical basis of the work, that the Morel marriage takes place somewhere around the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Lawrence's own parents were married in December, 1875). The commercial mining developments which take place in the midlands occur primarily during the middle of the century in the novel. However, the firm of Barber, Walker and Co. was officially established as early as 1800 in Eastwood. According to Harry T. Moore's biographical study of Lawrence, there were no more than twenty-eight inhabited homes in Eastwood, before the company took over and expanded, drawing in labourers to work the mines. By 1881 there were 3,566 inhabitants.[7] Of these developments we read in Sons and Lovers:

> The gin-pits were elbowed aside by the large mines of the financiers. The coal and iron field of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire was

> discovered. Carston, Waite and Co appeared. . . . Carston, Waite and Co found they had struck on a good thing, so, down the valleys of the brooks from Selby and Nuttall, new mines were sunk, until soon there were six pits working. From Nuttall, high up on the sandstone among the woods, the railway ran, past the ruined priory of the Carthusians and past Robin Hood's Well, down to Spinney Park, then on to Minton, a large mine among corn-fields; from Minton across the farm-lands of the valleyside to Bunker's Hill, branching off there, and running north to Beggarlee and Selby, that looks over at Crich and the hills of Derbyshire; six mines like black studs on the countryside, linked by a loop of fine chain, the railway. (pp. 7-8)

The meanness of their environment and the anxious worry of poverty and unpredictable wages and monotonous labour, in large measure determine the nature of the relationships between the working men and women of the novel. While the men, trapped in the darkness and dirt of the pit, desperately feel the need to lose consciousness of their situation and the weight of their overburdened bodies in drink and male revelry, their evenings of carefree oblivion eat up what little money has been left over for their families after wages have been spent on basic necessities. Their wives and children inhabit a world apart from the men. Women, themselves overworked, live with the insistent anxiety of not even being able to maintain the already cruel conditons of their lives. For Gertrude Morel there are few outlets, few spaces, wherein she can discover even momentary release; pleasure is to be found predominantly through

relationship with her children. Her own sense of self-righteous, middle class superiority and the class-rooted shame of her social position isolate her from the other working class women who are her neighbours and with whom she could potentially share something of herself. Material possessions which might make her immediate world more attractive and give her isolated life more dignity in appearance, are largely unaffordable. The quality of life, and the experiential lives of Gertrude and Walter Morel, as they are presented in the first part of the novel, reveal some of the repressive and oppressive forces at the centre of working class life in the industrial north of England--forces which had become powerful enough to carry most under their sway. While this is a class situation, it extends beyond class boundaries, reflecting a state of extensive human impotence (William Morel, for example, having broken away from the immediate confines of his class history, is no less an object of an all-encompassing system of relationships, than is his coal-mining father).

"Sometimes life takes hold of one, carries the body along, accomplishes one's history, and yet is not real, but leaves oneself as it were slurred over" (p. 13). Feeling herself crushed beneath the mean conditions of her environment, this is Gertrude Morel's realization of her captivity and inability to determine

the direction and content of her life. This is no facile observation on the part of a middle class woman caught within the misery of working class life through marriage; what she expresses here is a feeling of impotence and futility that extends beyond her own individual experience and class to include the lives of men and women throughout the new rapidly advancing industrial era in its more formative stages before the turn of the century. The critical problem that the novel places with the reader, is that Gertrude's feeling of her life being "accomplished for her" stops at this point of awareness: needing to ascertain a source of blame for her entrapment, she looks no further than her husband.

While Gertrude and Walter Morel are obviously distinguishable in terms of their class histories and consequent values, the intense antagonism which develops between them is more complex than their class differences alone warrant. Gertrude is acutely and painfully aware of her own dissatisfactions; she is strong with a sense of not yet having lived her life in accordance with her own nature. Walter Morel, on the other hand, particularly when we first see him as a young man, has discovered his joy within the immediate conditions of his life as it is. Gertrude not only inherits from her father his puritan self-righteousness and high-minded spirituality, but also, and perhaps more importantly, she inherits

his sense of personal failure. Her father's family, we are told, endured financial ruin and descended into poverty with the collapse of the lace market. It was a ruin which left her father "bitterly galled" (p. 15). From early on in her life Gertrude has held firm to the conviction that if one really has intrinsic pride and worth, particularly if one is a man (p. 16), one need not be beaten by the sway and power of external pressures. Of her own intrinsic worth she feels assured. What remains is for her to reclaim her and her father's peoples' rightful place in the world. The conflict that slowly unfolds and eventually destroys the relationship between Gertrude and Walter Morel, then, is rooted not simply in their class differences, but in their uncompromising fidelity to the values and attitudes of their respective classes and histories. For each, their sense of self and of self-worth is inextricably bound to their class and past.

When Gertrude's sense of her own worth is threatened by life at the Bottoms, she tortures Walter Morel, for it is he who brought her to disillusionment, he who disturbs her fervent belief in individual aspiration and the potential for class mobility. She needs Walter to believe in and to share in her desire to rise above their immediate circumstances. She needs him to conspire with her in her reserved and deprecating attitude toward

the miserable life of the coal-mining labourers. But the life of the mines and of the miners which has been Walter Morel's world since boyhood has far more meaning for him than do her foreign, refined manners and spiritual detachment, which he is only superficially attracted to. She would like to have him deny his life and his labour, but this is just what he will not do. He knows of no way of claiming his own self-worth, or of fighting against her ridicule of him and her attempts to shame him, except by grounding himself absolutely within the conditions of his class and labour, aggressively asserting himself from this position.

When Walter Morel arrives home from the mines to discover Mr. Heaton, the local minister, taking tea with his wife, it is the fact of his labour that Walter uses to defend himself against the minister and the threat that Heaton represents to him. He directly challenges him--his sensitivity, spirituality, refined manners and demeanour--with his own sweat-covered, labouring body, and bullies him into timid subjection:

> "Are you tired?" asked the clergyman.
> "Tired? I ham that," replied Morel. "You don't know what it is to be tired, as I'm tired."
> "No," replied the clergyman.
> "Why, look yer' ere," said the miner, showing the shoulders of his singlet. "It's a bit dry now, but it's wet as a clout with sweat even yet. Feel it." (p. 47)

The narration throughout this episode carries an implicit

sympathy for Gertrude's perception of the situation. Walter Morel is represented as a disturbing and loud influence, while somewhat comic. However, it is interesting to notice that Heaton is portrayed, even before Morel enters the scene, as terribly frail, unsure and naive. Mrs. Morel is clearly far more self-assured than he, and appears to understand him better than he does himself. Walter Morel's bravado is displayed within this context. He is the more significant of the two men and poses a real challenge to the gentle minister who has the time and leisure to take an afternoon to tea with a collier's wife, while the collier works in the pit. Lawrence's sympathies are not so clear nor one-sided as they may at first appear (neither are they always quite conscious). Scott Sanders writes that "Mrs. Morel speaks the language of the narrator" (p. 29). While this is true, we must be careful not to make direct and absolute indentification between Gertrude Morel's or Paul Morel's attitudes and those of Lawrence himself. While Lawrence shares Mrs. Morel's language (which is often a kind of inner language or process of thought and feeling), the novel does not likewise always or immediately reflect her limited perceptions. The novel reveals meanings which extend well beyond Mrs. Morel's consciousness.

Walter Morel's lack of social and cultural awareness,

his lack of reserve and dignity of manner, are not always treated one-dimensionally in the novel. While his underdeveloped social consciousness is shown to lead him toward blind captivity, it also allows for a real freedom from particular forms of repression:

> 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 [Gertrude's] life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her. (p. 18)

Walter Morel will not succumb to his wife's demands that he acquire her middle class values, manners and detachment from the milieu of working class life; but because her will to have him as he refuses to be is stronger than him, she finally cuts his world out from under him, through deprecating it, and him, altogether. Because she has the strongest determination to maintain her own worth and perspective on the world, she destroys his human dignity. She never loses her grip on life as she see it. "She injured and hurt and scared herself, but she lost none of her worth," writes Lawrence (pp. 25-26). She drives Morel so hard in his struggle to claim the significance of his life and his being, that eventually he is driven to self-shame. He is pushed to terrible extremes of performance, vulgarity, brutality and pathetic idiocy. He does this in order to keep hold of himself, but his struggle leads him finally to self-loathing,

for there is certainly nothing brutal or slovenly about Walter Morel when he is initially presented to us in his youth. He becomes so when he is beaten by labour and ineffectuality and by Gertrude, who, while being drawn toward his apparent freedom from the tyrannies of a puritanical spirituality, comes to despise him when he refuses to acquire the outer veneer of the middle class by establishing familiarity with the intellectual and spiritual values of that class and thereby gain the social status and acquisitions which could have distinguished them from the working class. While Gertrude is drawn toward Morel in resistance against the puritanism of her father, she is nonetheless bound to her father's bitter failure and need to reclaim the class status that she feels his, and now her, human worth warrant.

Walter Morel has discovered his pleasures where he could until he loses his fight against Gertrude. We watch him at peace during the early morning moments before work, alone. We are told that he finds an intimacy and a satisfaction in the darkness of the mines, and perhaps more predominantly, in the comradery of drink and warmth which follows the days in the pit:

> The Palmerston would be cozier. He hastened forward in anticipation. All the slate roofs of the Bottoms shone black with wet. The roads, always dark with coal-dust, were full of blackish mud. . . . The men made a seat

> for him, and took him in warmly. He was glad. In a minute or two they had thawed all responsibility out of him, all shame, all trouble, and he was clear as a bell for a jolly night. (p. 57)

Lawrence was to feel, almost twenty years after writing Sons and Lovers, that there was something deeply fulfilling about the intimacy of the colliers down in the mine pits and in the pubs at night:

> The people lived almost by instinct, men of my father's age could not really read. And the pit did not mechanize men. On the contrary. Under the butty system, the miners worked underground as a sort of intimate community, they knew each other practically naked, and with curious close intimacy. . . . My father loved the pit. He was hurt badly, more than once, but he would never stay away. He loved the contact, the intimacy. . . . Now the colliers had also an instinct for beauty. The colliers' wives had not. The colliers were deeply alive, instinctively. But they had no daytime ambition, and no daytime intellect. They avoided, really, the rational aspect of life. They preferred to take life instinctively and intuitively. They didn't even care very profoundly about wages. It was the woman, naturally, who nagged on that score. . . . The great fallacy is, to pity the man. He didn't dream of pitying himself, till agitators and sentimentalists taught him to. He was happy! or more than happy, he was fulfilled. Or he was fulfilled on the receptive side, not on the expressive. The collier went to the pub and drank in order to continue his intimacy with his mates. They talked endlessly, but it was rather the wonders and marvels, even in politics, than of facts. It was hard facts, in the shape of wife, money, and nagging home necessities, which they fled from, out of the house to the pub and out of the house to the pit.
>
> The collier fled out of the house, as soon as he could, away from the nagging materialism of the woman. (Phoenix, pp. 135-136)

Lawrence's sympathetic and somewhat idealistic

comprehension of the colliers' lives is much different in this essay which he was to write in 1929, than is his understanding as it is reflected in the character of Morel and the other colliers in Sons and Lovers. Lawrence wrote in this same late essay: "if I think of my childhood, it is always as if there was a lustrous sort of inner darkness, like the gloss of coal, in which we moved and had our real being," ("Nottingham and Mining Countryside," Phoenix, p. 136). While this "lustrous inner darkness" is rooted in his deepest feelings, Lawrence's conscious understanding of his youth is, in this novel, still tied much more closely to his mother's and to Gertrude Morel's, to the women's suffering and focus on "hard facts" and responsibilities. However, the novel does allow us to see that as a young man, before and even during the early part of his marriage, Walter Morel felt that he was living out his life fully and with pleasure. While his pleasures may negate political and economic awareness of his situation, he experiences no apparent sense of deep dissatisfaction. But Gertrude will not allow him to remain blind to the "nagging necessities" which the conditions of poverty force upon the lives of the family. She forces him to recognize that his pleasures amount to blind submission and a refusal to reach beyond his own limited vision and the cruel conditions of their lives. But knowing this,

he is paralyzed and trapped within the misery her challenge and criticisms bring him to. For Gertrude's "way out" of their situation provides him with no direction or real alternative. He rejects her aspirations toward the middle class, intuitively sensing that the world of the middle class can bring him no fulfillment. This is no "way out" for him.

Gertrude maintains her vision of class ascendance throughout the novel. She joins the local Women's Guild which allows her some distance from the immediate, and through this club we see the potential for critical observation developing. The novel does not tell us, however, what the women of the Guild actually discuss, what the content of their observations and criticisms is: "The women were supposed to discuss the benefits to be derived from co-operation, and other social questions," (p. 68). We are left to assume that, while the women may achieve some immediate feelings of independence and power, their meetings effect little in terms of providing them with the capacity to make concrete changes which would effect their living situations.

We read in Sons and Lovers that Walter Morel becomes "merely part of [Gertrude's] circumstances" (p. 62). We are told that she ceases to battle with him once the crisis is over and he has been beaten by her. Nonetheless, the novel continues to develop a narration of their

conflicts and relationship, indicating that Gertrude never really does detach herself from her husband. She continues throughout most of the novel to rage against him, to torment him, and to gather their children up in antagonism against him. We read that she keeps up her battle with him because she and their children are financially dependent on him. We read that "[s]he knew that the man who stops on the way home from work is on a quick way to ruining himself and his home. The children were yet young, and depended on the bread-winner" (p. 80). But this is clearly no more than a blinder to the underlying content of their antagonism toward each other. The Morel family, like all the colliers' families, have always existed at the level of subsistence and will continue to do so, whether Morel drinks at the pub or not. We also know that at this point in the novel, William is sending money home, so anxiety over the family income is not at the root of Gertrude's unrelenting battle against her husband. Lawrence leaves the reader to discover what lies at the bottom of their continuing conflict, given what we have of their characters, for financial necessity as the essential source of battle rings hollow in the context of the novel.

In her puritanical consciousness Gertrude hates her husband with a bitter sense of her own victimization, for which she holds him accountable. In her terms she doesn't

deserve either this life or this man. He, what he is, denies her inherent worth; he reinstates and reinforces all the injustices she and her ancestors have endured. She has held the hope of another life and of a man, who, given his own inherent dignity, would have been capable of acknowledging hers and of leading the way toward the recovery of lost social, cultural and economic rights that once belonged to her family. Walter Morel's blind and consuming pleasures take no account of her spiritual and intellectual being. He makes a mockery of her refinement by simply being who he is. He has mocked and shamed her, just as she has him. They hate each other for what the other illuminates about themselves. She forces him to recognize his weakness and social impotence--that which he had never recognized as such. In the world of culture, society and politics, Morel is insignificant; he had not known it before; he had never looked upon himself in this way, but she forces him toward recognition. Having recognized, he has no way to go, no way out, excepting a frantic rush into intensified bouts of drinking and comradery which act as soothing anesthetics to consciousness and "the nagging materialism" which is the fact of working class life. He, in his turn, not always conscious of what he is doing, makes her see the emptiness and the lie of her pretensions and aspirations. He forces her to feel the real condi-

tions of his life which she would wish to deny: he places his sweat and coal-covered body before her, just as he did before Heaton, and parades sloth and vulgarity as though they were signs of victory, cutting deeply into her in ridicule and mockery. While we are told that he is defeated by Gertrude, he never surrenders: in a form of complete negation that is absolute, he abandons responsibility, as do many of the colliers, for the heavy burden that working life places on human endurance. He leaves the weight of family concerns to his wife, and in so doing he leads the way toward their rejection of him.

The source of their continual battle against each other lies in the way their class origins have provided them with the ability to live and to perceive their social situation. Mrs. Morel would rise above these conditions through the ethics of a puritan spirituality and middle class culture which could assure her her difference and detachment from the working class. Morel, on the other hand, would maintain his immediate gratification, which, the novel indicates, can mean real fulfillment for him, and restrict his vision to his own class.

Morel is not only helpless and confused in the social and intellectual world that exists beyond the mines, he is also anxious and displaced within the more immediate life of his family. Eventually he lives in a darkness both inside and outside of the pit. In his

consciousness he becomes a dark mass of confusion: a disintegrating man, beaten down by labour and isolation. Clearly, Lawrence gives us far more of Gertrude Morel than he does of Walter Morel. This is his method of writing the history of Paul's consciousness and experience. Lawrence can speak from within Gertrude Morel, can give her experience, her feeling and her thoughts a voice which he cannot give to Walter Morel. While there are a few moments of intimate portrayal of Morel, he is most often seen from a judgemental distance. There is a point at which we cease to know him really. He becomes all darkness, a sore point of anxiety, of fear and of repulsion in the feelings of his children and wife. We see him most clearly when he can be gotten near to: when he can be loved, rather than when he is feared or hated by his family. When he is drunk, or sour, or cruel, or buffoonish, we do not see what goes on at the back of him. He becomes a sharp point of dread in the lives of others. Lawrence cannot get near enough to Morel at these times. It is not simply that Lawrence identified too closely with his own mother in order to comprehend his father and explore his fictional correspondent, Walter Morel; rather, and more accurately, what is revealed in the portrayal of Walter Morel is that the anxiety and pain caused Lawrence by his father would not allow him to fully explore Morel's deeper

experience. Lawrence is repulsed by his own creation come too close to the truth of pain. We read early in the novel that the Morel children, due to the ongoing battle between their parents and the terrible threat that their father represented to them, held "one tight place of anxiety in their hearts, one darkness in their eyes, which showed all their lives" (p. 78). It is a "darkness" which makes its way into the portrayal of Morel, holding him at a distance when he is too terrifying or too repulsive to reach toward in penetrating exploration.

The emphasis in the novel, which has always been centered more closely on Gertrude than on Walter Morel, is eventually given over to her entirely, and then later in the novel it is finally taken up by narration of Paul's character. Scott Sanders concludes that Lawrence shared Mrs. Morel's class-bound judgements (p. 38) and that as a result Lawrence judges Walter Morel as responsible for his own fate and ruin (p. 36). While it is true that Lawrence does not explicitly question or condemn Mrs. Morel's values or judgements of her husband, what is critical here is that in this novel Lawrence is struggling to come to some kind of comprehensive understanding of his own history that goes beyond Mrs. Morel's limited perceptions. The novel reveals an ambivalence about Walter Morel and about the class values expressed by him and by Gertrude Morel. That

Lawrence consciously accepts the essence of Mrs. Morel's position and categories of thought is obvious; but what is also evident, but less obvious, is that the novel reveals insight into both of their characters--insight which reaches beyond Gertrude's confined vision. No receptive reader of Sons and Lovers can unequivocally accept Mrs. Morel's righteousness without criticism, nor Walter Morel's fate as his sole responsibility. Given the total context provided by the novel, he is no more nor less "responsible" than is Gertrude. While exploration of Morel's character stops short, we are given enough of him and of his context to question Gertrude's judgements, knowledge and understanding of him. The novel does not allow for any complete identification with Gertrude Morel because it reveals the puritanical dogmatism of her self-righteous martyrdom and unwavering will, and because it reveals the destructive and cruel consequences of her unthinking substitution of her sons for the husband she feels she does not have.

While Sanders devotes an entire section of his essay on Sons and Lovers to a discussion of class, he avoids these ambivalent qualities of the novel, which I have stressed, as they relate to this issue and he makes no mention of Paul and his mother's important discussion of class in the novel:

"You know," he said to his mother, "I don't

> want to belong to the well-to-do middle classes. I like my common people best. I belong to the common people."
>
> "But if anyone else said so, my son, wouldn't you be in a tear. You know you consider yourself equal to any gentleman."
>
> "In myself," he answered, "not in my class or my education or my manners. But in myself I am."

Here Paul unquestionably refuses to identify himself with the middle class in order to claim his own worth. Such identification has been absolutely essential in Mrs. Morel's understanding. In Paul's terms, worth, or lack of it, is not be be equated with class.

> "Very well then. Then why talk about the common people?"
>
> "Because--the difference between people isn't in their class, but in themselves. Only from the middle classes one gets ideas, and from the common people--life itself, warmth. You feel their hates and loves."
>
> "It's all very well, my boy. But then why don't you go and talk to your father's pals?"
>
> "But they're rather different."
>
> "Not at all. They're the common people. After all, whom do you mix with now--among the common people? Those that exchange ideas, like the middle classes. The rest don't interest you." (p. 313)

Mrs. Morel attempts to force Paul into the position of making a choice between identification with one class or another. While their conversation reveals his confusion, it also reveals that this is a choice that he is reluctant to make, sees no rationale for making, because he is not sure that he can conceive of or define himself in class terms (as both Gertrude and Walter Morel have done). Lawrence never did make this absolute

identification; he claimed to belong to no class, and this I think is at the base of much criticism of his representation and attitude toward class. The son of an illiterate collier and an educated school teacher who aspired toward the middle class, he refused to conceive of himself in the class terms that each represented and dogmatically lived by. Similarly, and this is the central problem for Scott Sanders, Lawrence rejected the tendency to explore character exclusively in terms of social identity. He was far more concerned with exploring the psychological consequences of class-bound thinking and social history, i.e., class unconsciousness. Much of Sanders' critique of Lawrence's writing is centered on the psychological focus Lawrence takes in Sons and Lovers: "Social categories are transformed into psychological categories which harden into a metaphysic," he writes (pp. 23-24). And further:

> Lawrence's exaggerated sense of individual autonomy led him to distort his representation of reality . . . by isolating personal existence partly or wholly from social existence. Although Sons and Lovers abounds in references to social conditions and historical movements, these are not used to account for the quality, the changes and the crises of individual lives. That is to say, Lawrence explains the problems of characters psychologically rather than historically, in terms of a personal rather than a collective past. (p. 39)

This issue is far more complex than Sanders' perspective here will allow for. Lawrence's sense of "individual

autonomy" was not so exaggerated that it prevented him from revealing the historical determinants of Gertrude and Walter Morel's characters. They are not only implicitly revealed through the exploration of their characters, they are also explicitly referred to in the novel. We know, for example, that Gertrude has "inherited from generations of Puritans" a moral sense which eventually becomes "a religious instinct" (p. 25). The Morels' ties to history and class are shown to lie at the very centre of their lives and of their conflict with one another. The novel shows how, once class-bound consciousness becomes part of character development and becomes unconscious, character becomes rigidified and fixed within these boundaries. The novel goes on to explore the destructive and limiting consequences. When both Walter and Gertrude Morel are tied so tightly to their classes and their histories in ways they are not fully aware of, their lives are brought into the orbit of a fixed cycle. I doubt that any reader of this novel is capable of considering these characters apart from their classes. However, the explorative focus in the novel is on the psychological and inter-relational consequences of their inability to break free of their histories. What Sanders sees as Lawrence's tendency to reject social explanations is more a matter of focus than of rejection. Sanders is too quick to assume an unequivocal identity

between Lawrence's conscious viewpoint, the novel's vision (which reflects unconscious insights gained through the creative exploration of inter-relationship in context), and Mrs. Morel's individualistic perspective. While Gertrude Morel may indeed have an "exaggerated sense of autonomy" which allows her to judge her husband responsible for his situation given his inherent "nature," the novel unmistakably opposes her judgement, and Lawrence is not completely at one with her, even in conscious intention. Lawrence's exploration of their lives takes us, and him, well beyond Gertrude Morel's values.

PART 111. CHILDREN: THE INHERITORS OF CONFLICT, ANXIETY, AND THE NEED TO REDIRECT HISTORY

The destructive consequences of the Morels' immobile characters are suffered not only by themselves but by their children. The cruel and bitter battle between the parents creates a dark anguish and fear in their children: a fear which, we are told, lives on in them throughout their lives, and is held within the memory of black, potentially violent nights beyond the children's understanding and power. When Gertrude Morel gathers her children up and intimately binds her life with theirs, she creates a situation of terrible vulnerability. She is their source, the centre of their lives, so that each

violent explosion between husband and wife opens the children up to the horror of their entire world being cut out from beneath them. The memory of childhood joy and terror is reflected in the novel through the images of small fragments and flickers of light amidst a larger and greater darkness:

> So they were happy in the morning--happy, very happy playing, dancing at night round the lonely lamp-post in the midst of the darkness. . . . Paul went out to play with the rest. Down in the great trough of twilight, tiny clusters of lights burned where the pits were. A few last colliers struggled up the dim field-path. The lamplighter came along. No more colliers came. Darkness shut down over the valley; work was gone. It was night.
>
> Then Paul ran anxiously into the kitchen. The one candle still burned on the table, the big fire glowed red. Mrs Morel sat alone. On the hob the saucepan steamed; the dinner-plate waiting, waiting for the man who was sitting in his pit-dirt, dinnerless, some mile away from home, across the darkness, drinking himself drunk. Paul stood in the doorway.
>
> "Has my dad come?" he asked. (pp. 78-79)

Through their exclusive intimacy with their mother, the children come to feel their lives anchored solely in her anxious living. They soon grow to share in her rage against Morel in order to protect themselves against their vulnerability and fear of losing the source through which their lives are experienced. Their united exclusion of the father secures their lives in intimate connection with the mother. Walter Morel, his hands gnarled from work, his stature progressively stooped and his flesh

scarred blue from labour and accident, reacts to his own lonely exclusion by asserting his difference, which only solidifies his childrens' detachment from him:

> When the children were growing up and in the critical stage of adolescence, the father was like some ugly irritant in their souls. His manners in the house were the same as he used among the colliers down pit. . . . He seemed to take a kind of satisfaction in disgusting them, and driving them nearly mad, while they were so irritably sensitive at the age of fourteen or fifteen. . . . As it was, the battle now went on nearly all between father and children, he persisting in his dirty and disgusting ways, just to assert his independence. They loathed him. (p. 143)

The Morel children are capable of a terrible cruelty toward Morel through their close fidelity to their mother. Their insensitivity toward Morel is shared somewhat by Lawrence; nonetheless, the reader recognizes Morel's pain through the brutal responses of his children and through the representation of his physical scars and awful aloneness within the family.

William Morel is the first to take up and live out his mother's battle against Morel. William, the eldest child, unquestionably identifies himself with the middle class and with his mother's aspirations:

> All the things that men do--the decent things --William did. He could run like the wind. . . . He gave all his money to his mother. . . . he never drank. . . . He went about with the bourgeois of Bestwood. The townlet contained nothing higher than the clergyman. Then came the bank manager, then the doctors, then the tradespeople, and after that the hosts of colliers. William began to consort with the

> sons of the chemist, the schoolmaster, and the tradesmen. (p. 69)

Moving far beyond his social roots in Bestwood, William is clearly a success in the business and social world of London. In Mrs. Morel's view "he was like her knight who wore her favour in the battle" (p. 101). William becomes Gertrude's middle class gentleman as he rises quickly in social status. But even early on in his attempts to live in accordance with his mother's unfulfilled dreams, there is a point of confusion, of crisis, in William:

> He was unsettled by all the change, he did not stand firm on his own feet, but seemed to spin rather giddily on the quick current of the new life. His mother was anxious for him. She could feel him losing himself. He had danced and gone to the theatre, boated on the river, been out with friends; and she knew he sat up afterwards in his cold bedroom grinding away at Latin, because he intended to get on in his office, and in the law as much as he could. (p. 115)

When William goes to London he breaks away somewhat from his family and the small mining community of his boyhood. But his ties to his mother are firmly maintained: he almost fanatically pursues the pleasures of the middle class and he progressively rises in the world of business; the woman he establishes intimate relations with is quite distinct from his mother's principled puritanism, thus the relationship poses no real threat to his primary attachment to Gertrude. William's "gypsy" is, in his

own terms, a lady, a lady who shows herself well beyond the social status of most of the people of Bestwood as far as manners and appearances are concerned. While Gertrude is distressed and resists Gipsy's "grand ways," it is clearly she who is responsible for having passed on to William his blind idealizations of those who appear distinct in status from the working situation of the colliers. Finally it is William himself who cannot reconcile Gypsy's appearance and manners with her superficiality and coquetishness. He cannot envision beyond his mother's ideals, but he comes to hate Gypsy for exposing the fraudulent nature of those ideals. Within the rapidly changing social and commercial sphere of London, status has little to do with accomplishment or education. Lily does not need to be principled, intelligent or serious minded in order to be considered a lady. She only needs familiarity with the manners of the middle class and enough income to purchase the necessary refinements. And the latter she receives through men like William. William is lost and frightened when, having followed his mother's direction, he finds himself driven into a corner. Working daily in business (work which does not appear to have any inherent meaning for him), fervently pursuing the social life of the city, having made an attachment to a woman of elegant appearance who nonetheless leaves him enraged, unsatisfied,

and undoubtedly poorer, and working long hours into the night on serious study, William has clearly become a financial and social "success;" but in his impossible attempts to make real his mother's dreams and to compensate for the failures her history contains, he is led to his own destruction.

His mother's desires are embedded deeply in his character and they have a powerful grip on his development. She passes on to him both her lack of fulfillment, her terrible bitterness at having been cheated of life, and her false pursuits, false modes of achieving fulfillment, just as her own father passed on his bitterness, while providing her with no real means of gaining control over the direction of her life. Paul is given far more possibility of discovering his own forms of living and of rebellion than is William. While early on in his life Paul appears to be following a pattern much like William's, his relationship to his mother takes on more complex dimensions and is far more intense than is William's relationship to her. William's relationship to his mother is depicted primarily as one of identification, rather than of absorption and conflict. While Paul inherits and internalizes Gertrude's spirit, he is also committed to resistance against her domination.[8]

William has rushed unconsciously and unaware into a social and financial world which takes control of

his direction and leaves him powerless, ineffectual and disillusioned. His death in London comes after a slow process of psychic disturbance and finally physical illness. Mrs. Morel has yearned for active participation, for a place, in the larger world beyond the restricted possibilities of the midlands mining community. But William's fate reveals that active participation which leads to fulfillment is not possible within the framework she constructs. William is destroyed in his attempts to discover meaning and purpose through social and economic success. In the context of the novel, these aspirations do not constitute the means of liberation. It is toward the recovery of "other purposes," as Raymond Williams pointed out, that Paul/Lawrence are necessarily committed. However, we must be careful to see that this commitment is neither consistently expressed nor absolute. There are various episodes and passages within the novel where Mrs. Morel's perspectives dominate without contradiction.

As a child, Paul is so close to and aware of Gertrude's feeling, that he experiences his living through her. He is sensitive to her every gesture, motion and manner and he feels her feeling as though it were his own:

> he opened his eyes to see his mother standing on the hearthrug with the hot iron near her cheek, listening, as it were, to the heat.

> Her still face, with the mouth closed tight from suffering and disillusion and self-denial, and her nose, the smallest bit on one side, and her blue eyes so young, quick and warm, made his heart contract with love. When she was quiet, so, she looked brave and rich with life, but as if she had been done out of her rights. . . . Paul loved the way she crouched and put her head on one side. Her movements were light and quick. It was always a pleasure to watch her. Nothing she ever did, no movement she ever made, could have been found fault with by her children. The room was warm and full of the scent of hot linen. Later on the clergyman came and talked softly with her. (pp. 85-86)

Lawrence makes no attempt here, and in other scenes much like this one, to distinguish between the way Paul sees his mother, and the way Gertrude Morel simply <u>is</u>. Later in the novel we read: "Mrs Morel was one of those naturally exquisite people who can walk in mud without dirtying her shoes" (p. 152). What is interesting about this statement (outside of its being comically idealistic) is that we have no way of distinguishing between the narrative voice and Paul's feeling. We do not know whose perception this is.

There are various other points within the novel where Gertrude Morel, Paul and the narrator merge into one dominant voice which excludes the possibility of contradiction or ambivalence. When Paul is forced into obtaining work in Nottingham with Jordan's Manufacturing he finds that Mr. Jordan, in spite of his position within the company, is not really so very different

from the pit managers who humiliate and bully their employees. Paul is shocked and confused to discover that a man of such position, prestige and wealth, should be so "common" :

> "But wasn't Mr Jordan common, mother? Does he own it all?"
>
> "I suppose he was a workman who has got on," she said. "You mustn't mind people so much. They're not being disagreeable to <u>you</u> --it's their way. . . . " (pp. 121-122)

The assumptions reflected here of course are that only those of the working class treat others with derogatory arrogance and authoritarian brutality when they are in a position which will allow it, and also perhaps that the ruling classes have obtained their social and financial status and power by virtue of inherent qualities of character which are beyond such dehumanizing tendencies. Therefore, because Mr. Jordan is an arrogant authoritarian he must have originally been a workman. The illusory perception of business, financial and social status, the idealization of the ruling class, the tendency to equate inherent character traits with class--the ideas here reflected--are left unchallenged in the novel at this point.

Gertrude Morel clearly perceives class divisions as a natural order reflecting inherent worth. Pride, integrity, reverence toward others, and wholeness of being are character traits she associates with the ruling

classes. But fate is capable of error and there is no guarantee that one will fall into their "rightful" position within the hierarchy; she believes that there are a few, like herself and her immediate ancestors, who have been shifted aside by unforeseeable circumstances and deprived of their proper place and of the ability to live in accordance with their true natures. It is only through her children, most particularly her sons, that she feels she can reclaim social and personal justice.

The children learn quickly to respond warmly and with pleasure to the refined and reserved manners of their mother, while they share her distaste for and apprehension of the more gruff and boisterous manners of the colliers. Like their mother, they begin early on to consider themselves as distinct from the working class. Even when Walter Morel attempts to approach Paul with gentleness, he disturbs and irritates his son's terrible sensitivity (pp. 86-87). Paul suffers so much anguish and self-consciousness when he is forced into relations with colliers and the managers of the pits that he is rendered speechless with terror in their presence. While he shares with the colliers and their families the humiliation they endure as they are bullied and mocked by the pit managers when they come to collect the week's earnings, Paul is in anguish as much on account of the colliers as he is in relation to the bullying

managers:

> His relief, when he got outside, and was walking along the Mansfield Road, was infinite. On the park wall the mosses were green. There were some gold and some white fowls pecking under the apple-trees of an orchard. The colliers were walking home in a stream. The boy went near the wall, self-consciously. He knew many of the men, but he could not recognize them in their dirt. And this was a new torture to him. (p. 92)

Given Gertrude Morel's detachment from the colliers and her scornful, deprecating, attitude toward their speech, their manners, their gestures, their pleasures--toward all that they are and toward all that constitutes life for them--it is not surprising that Paul should feel vulnerable and awkward in their company.

In spite of Paul's young desire to reclaim the world for his mother, he comes to realize that he is powerless to effect change and give new direction to her life. Hers is a life that has not yet been lived, and he cannot give life to her without denying his own. When he ties himself in fidelity to her, he ceases to develop, having fixed himself to her arrested life. He finally sees the inevitability of her existence and knows that He has come to a terrible end, pivoting around the same fixed point:

> He looked at his mother. Her blue eyes were watching the cathedral quietly. She seemed again to be beyond him. Something in the eternal repose of the uplifted cathedral, blue and noble against the sky, was reflected in her, something of the fatality. What was,

> was. With all his young will he could not alter it. He saw her face, the skin still fresh and pink and downy, but crow's feet near her eyes, her eyelids steady, sinking a little, her mouth always closed with disillusion; and there was on her the same eternal look, as if she knew fate at last. He beat against it with all the strength of his soul. (p. 294)

When his intense attachment to Gertrude threatens to arrest his life with hers, he cannot so easily, without a struggle, give himself up to her. He realizes that she can never be his young warm lover. His desire reaches out beyond and away from her: "home was for him beside his mother. And still there was something else, something outside, something he wanted" (p. 305). In reaching beyond his mother he discovers relationship first with Miriam and then with Clara.

PART IV. MIRIAM, CLARA, AND GERTRUDE MOREL: INSIGHT INTO HISTORY AND THE "VOICES" OF CIVILIZATION

The relationships and struggles that develop among Gertrude Morel, Paul, Miriam and Clara are fraught with elements of puritanism, mysticism, romanticism, vulnerability and restraint, sexual repression and desire, and reactionary tendencies and opposition to the living conditions of working class life. All of these elements combine to create a tangled and chaotic force which reaches into the deepest levels of character and results in painful struggles that none are fully aware of or

capable of escaping.

Initially, the novel draws sharp distinctions between Gertrude Morel and Miriam. While Miriam, much like Gertrude, considers herself "something of a princess turned into a swine girl" (p. 177), she differs from Gertrude in that she does not reject association with the working classes through identification with and aspiration toward the middle class. Her detachment from labour and labouring is achieved through spiritual, romantic and literary associations --associations which are private and secretive. Worldly values, appearances, manners, social position-- these Miriam ignores. Miriam lacks Mrs. Morel's social capacities: she cannot extend herself outward with assurance into social interaction, but tends rather toward introversion and distrust of most others, attempting to protect her own lonely and religious private world from being disturbed by outside forces. Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly, Miriam displays an open responsiveness and vulnerability which is in sharp contrast to Gertrude's characteristic reserve and restraint.

The novel's exploration of the relationship between Paul and Miriam reveals, however, that the similarities as much as the distinctions between Miriam and Gertrude are at the root of the most violent

struggles which comprise this section of the novel. Lawrence's conscious intention is most often to emphasize where they differ, but these distinctions on their own do not account for the intense conflicts which develop.

In the very early pages of the novel Lawrence has written that Gertrude Morel "baffled and gripped" her life "into incandescence by thought and spirit" (p. 18). We read much later in the novel in reference to Miriam that "there was no looseness or abandon about her. Everything was gripped stiff with intensity, and her effort, overcharged, closed in on itself" (p. 191). Both Mrs. Morel and Miriam, in their repressive attempts to detach themselves from the vulgar and yet sensuous life of labour and labourers, have either strangled their own sensual impulses or redirected them inward. Whether it be Mrs. Morel's strict adherence to the ethics of puritanism or Miriam's retreat into romantic mysticism and worship of the spirit, the result in terms of defensive character structures is the same. Both tendencies deprecate and cut off the sensual body and sexual desire.

Paul almost always sees Miriam's mysticism to be at the source of their sexual struggle, and he draws sharp distinctions between her behaviour and his mother's "wholesome" restraint. But it is clearly

not simply Miriam's spirituality he battles against, for their sexual conflicts are most intense when she is sexually vulnerable. We read that Miriam's

> intensity, which would leave no emotion on a normal plane, irritated the youth into a frenzy. And this fearful, naked contact of her on small occasions shocked him. He was used to his mother's reserve. On such occasions he was thankful in his heart and soul that he had his mother, so sane and wholesome. (p. 190)

Paul draws away from Miriam and denies the sexual potentialities of their relationship when he identifies with his mother's "sane and wholesome" reserve. He focuses on the distinctions between his mother and Miriam and identifies most adamantly with Mrs. Morel in criticism against Miriam when Miriam is most sexually open. Paul's struggle against Miriam is not simply comprised of a battle against her religious introversion, as he most often believes; he is the most comfortable with Miriam when she is not sexually vulnerable, when she does not touch him (literally), and when her sexual and sensual body is the most completely "gripped stiff" by her mystical spirit. At chapel:

> Mrs Morel, like a little champion, sat at the head of her pew, Paul at the other end; and at first Miriam sat next to him. Then the chapel was like home. It was a pretty place, with dark pews and slim, elegant pillars, and flowers. And the same people had sat in the same places ever since he was a boy. It was wonderfully sweet

> and soothing to sit there for an hour and a half, under the spell of the place of worship. Then he felt warm and happy and religious at once. (p. 236)

Paul rages so against Miriam not simply because she is intensely spiritual and hence unapproachable sexually, but rather because she is both religious and sexual; because she is both like his mother in her sensually repressive spirituality, while so unlike his mother in her sexual vulnerability and beauty.

When Paul is with Miriam in church, all his "latent mysticism quiver[s] into life" (p. 207). It is this mysticism, at the very basis of their relationship (which so effectively transforms and transcends sexual desire and their sensual bodies) when it is experienced in conjunction with immediate felt desire, that accounts for the bitterness and anger they arouse in each other. Miriam is far too much like Gertrude Morel for Paul to accept her as a sexual mate. Referring to Paul and to other young men like him, Lawrence writes:

> Being the sons of mothers whose husbands had blundered rather brutally through their feminine sanctities, they were themselves too diffident and shy. They could easier deny themselves than incur any reproach from a woman; for the woman was like their mother, and they were full of the sense of their mother. They preferred themselves to suffer the misery of celibacy, rather than risk the other person. (p. 341)

Such "blundering," while never before explicitly referred to in the novel, is nonetheless implicitly evident

through the dynamics of the relationship between Walter and Gertrude Morel. However, Paul does not "suffer the misery of celibacy" simply in order to protect Miriam's "feminine sanctities" as indicated in this passage, but rather he suffers celibacy in order to protect the desexualized image he has of his mother. Sexual intimacy with Miriam is too closely associated with sexual violation of his mother.

Jessie Chambers, in her memoir on Lawrence, expresses that, in her view, Lawrence betrayed the truth of her and Lawrence's relationship in this novel. She had hoped that by sticking close to the actual events of his early life Lawrence would have freed himself from his mother's domination: that he would have come to see his mother and his relationship with her with more clarity and detachment. Instead, Jessie Chambers concludes, his mother was elevated and his attachment to her made supreme:

> the domination that had ruled his life hitherto, . . . he refused to know. So instead of release and deliverance from bondage, the bondage was glorified and made absolute. His mother conquered indeed, but the vanquished one was her son. In Sons and Lovers Lawrence handed his mother the laurels of victory.[9]

While it is obvious that Lawrence consciously intends that Mrs. Morel be supreme in the novel, and that he shares Paul Morel's critical judgements of Miriam,

the novel reveals that Paul's judgements are distorted, just as Mrs. Morel's understanding and judgements of Walter Morel are distorted. The novel tells us far more about the "truth" than Jessie Chambers (or Lawrence) realized. I will not make the usual criticism against Jessie Chambers' view of the novel by claiming that she did not recognize the difference between art and life, for this argument contains its own fallacies, I think. Suffice to say that perhaps her expectations of where Lawrence's work would take him were too high; she had hoped that his work would achieve him his freedom, which it could not. But the novel, in spite of Lawrence's intentions, does not simply elevate Gertrude Morel without a challenge. We do not see Miriam as Paul and Mrs. Morel do. We cannot, because the novel reveals too much of the forces at play through interrelationship. Paul's sexual anxiety and desire permeate many of his encounters with Miriam, and the novel demonstrates his attempts to displace his own fear and anxiety by assuming it as hers, thereby making her solely responsible for their anguish and failure. Paul writes in a letter to Miriam: "In all our relations no body enters" (p. 307) but the novel reveals this as a lie. They are both often painfully aware of each other's sexual body. Jessie Chambers misreads and misjudges the novel not so much because she failed to see the distinctions

between art and life, but rather, because she was too intimately associated with Lawrence to see beyond his conscious intent in the novel. As far as intent is concerned (and it is likely that his intentions were what mattered most to her) she was quite right in her reading.

Paul protects himself from taking the risks that a relationship with Miriam will necessarily involve him in when he reaches toward Clara. Not only has Clara been married, her "feminine sanctities" long since violated by Baxter Dawes, but she clearly lacks all real association with Gertrude Morel. The only connection she bears to Mrs. Morel is in her determined detachment from the working class (this is a determination that all three central female figures in the novel share; given his mother's detachment, it appears as a prerequisite for Paul's establishing relationship with a woman). But in Clara, Paul discovers a woman whose particular means of detachment from her class arises not out of the sexually repressive Puritan spirituality of his mother or the introverted mysticism of Miriam, but out of the feminist developments and activities of her time. We read that Clara "considered herself as a woman apart, and particularly apart, from her class" (p. 323). Clara has the same repulsion and reaction to her conditions of poverty in Nottingham

as does Gertrude to life amidst the colliers, and as Miriam does to the sloppy farmyard she feels herself captive within. But while Clara's attitudes present Paul with a challenge, they in no way lead to transcendence or denial of the sexual and the sensual body.

The sources of the breakdown of Paul and Clara's relationship are evident even in Paul's initial drawing toward her. Their relationship is initiated and sustained by their consistent intentions, presented as only partially conscious on Paul's part, to withhold themselves from each other; while simultaneously allowing for passionate relationship. Clara, unlike Miriam, who implicitly demanded a complete relationship with Paul, allows that Paul maintain a primary fidelity to the relationship between him and his mother. She allows it simply by virtue of her difference from Gertrude, but also because she too lives a great part of her life in detachment from Paul (she maintaining fidelity to her husband). Their relationship ends when their sexual desire, detached and bounded as it is, can develop no further:

> Their loving grew mechanical, without the marvelous glamour. Gradually they began to introduce novelties, to get back some of the feeling of satisfaction. They would be very near, almost dangerously near to the river, so that the black water ran not far from his face, and it gave a little thrill; or they loved sometimes in a little hollow below the fence of the path where people were passing occasionally, on the edge of the town, and they heard footsteps coming,

> almost felt the vibration of the tread, and they heard what the passers-by said--strange little things that were never intended to be heard. And afterwards each of them was rather ashamed, and these things caused a distance between the two of them. He began to despise her a little, as if she had merited it! (p. 443)

Nonetheless, when Paul discovers a relationship with Clara, he effects at least a partial detachment from the orbit of his mother. When his sexual being is most fully alive, as it is when he is with Clara, Gertrude is no longer the great and absolute source of life to him. It is an incomplete liberation, somewhat safe and compromising, which carries with it feelings of shame, humiliation and bitterness when his mother does assert her own presence into Paul's world. To have known such sexual relationship with Miriam would have necessitated a more complete separation from his mother, which each would have felt as abandonment, given that Paul is so closely tied to Miriam in his developing thought and feeling. When he severs himself from Miriam, he gives himself back to this mother, but in knowing sexual life with Clara, he again opposes Gertrude's need for complete absorption of him.

Responsive relationship with the natural world and sexual experience with Clara allow Paul a freedom from manipulation and domination. What appears here in its initial formulation was to become an important

element in Lawrence's future thinking and writing. Lawrence is already here attempting to develop his views on sexual life and the repressive forces that the conscious mind may comprise. While the novel makes it clear that Paul's tendency to withhold so much of himself from Clara and to take so little of her into account is a defensive maneuver which arises out of his mother's hold on him, Lawrence/Paul is not completely clear about the defensive quality of this tendency. Paul laboriously questions and fights against his awareness that he does not really take Clara into account. He repeats to himself that is is not her that he cares for, but rather, something that happens <u>because of her</u>. Unwilling to fully recognize the sources of his denial of her and its repressive nature, he tries to rationalize the alienated relationship between them, attempting to view it as the natural form that a relationship <u>should</u> take. We will see Birkin, in <u>Women in Love</u>, arguing, far more elaborately and explicitly, much the same position with Ursula. What <u>Sons and Lovers</u> reveals, however, given the context which it provides for the development of this argument, is that Paul/Birkin/Lawrence's attempt to turn into positive philosophy a defensive and repressive gesture, arises out of the struggle toward freedom from repressive and authoritarian forces and categories of thinking

and feeling, including freedom from bondage to class determinants, ideology and identification. In his sexual life with Clara, Paul discovers experience which is uniquely his own, experience which is not dominated, manipulated or controlled by the needs of his mother. In the context of the novel, only the sensual life he experiences in relation with the natural world and the sexual passion he knows with Clara is particularly his own: it is not derivative, or reactionary, or bound to Gertrude. Paul has been so completely dominated by his mother's consciousness (in the development of his thinking and sentiments he rarely breaks free of her), that it is only when he is completely carried away along a tide of embodied feeling that he is able to experience his life as his own. Only within this experience does he know his life unmediated by his mother's desire, drive, thought and direction. Lawrence has often and repeatedly been criticized for this tendency to see women deprived of their human feeling and personalities, much as Paul sees and responds to Clara--not as a human personality, but as an elemental force that can give him his freedom. Similarly, Lawrence is criticized (or exalted), for seeing the sexual body as the potential source of liberation, while deprecating and admonishing conscious will and thinking as destructive and repressive forces which deny the sexual and sensual

body. He is likewise criticized or acclaimed for maintaining that there has evolved a terrible antagonism between the body and the mind. But regardless of whether we see his views as insights or distortions, it is important that we recognize their sources and context. While Paul's desire to transform Clara into an impersonal force, his desire to give himself up to a kind of passion without person, is shown in the novel to be a defensive gesture which prevents him from establishing a genuinely whole relationship with her that could threaten his ties to Gertrude, it is not only or simply revealed as this. The novel also tells us that it comprises a struggle against Gertrude and against the fetters of his own consciousness. Paul, Birkin and Lawrence's tendency to depersonalize or abstract women does not simply reflect a fear of becoming too closely bound to a woman if she is taken into full account; it also reflects the quite rational fear of, and refusal to be sexually, bodily, paralyzed by a consciousness which dominates and thwarts life--the consciousness that loves, recognizes and responds to the personality of the other. Given the tight hold that Lawrence's own mother had over him, and that his feeling toward her had over him, he was more than normally aware of the crippling effects that particular forms of thinking and feeling can have on the sexual body.

Reflecting back again to our earlier discussion of Lawrence's portrayal of the natural world and his conception of human life as part of a larger totality, we discover another aspect of this issue which warrants brief mention. Lawrence considered that conscious thought had developed around the notion of individuality and personality, in isolation from the larger world. Individuality meant alienated life. The same consciousness which frustrated and thwarted the sexual body, also cut people away from sensual relationship with the larger living world by centering all life within the limitations of the human mind and spirit. Through his responsive relationship with the natural world of the Nottingham countryside and through sexual passion which unites the human with the non-human world--unites Paul to the "wintry stars" which are "strong also with life" (p. 442)--Lawrence was able to feel that experience can reach well beyond the limitations of "personality" and consciousness. He felt that potent forces of life reign within human life--spheres of experience, freedom and fulfillment beyond and outside of even our deepest "feelings," beyond even the intense love and intimacy which held him so closely and often painfully to his mother.

CHAPTER THREE

D.H. LAWRENCE AND ALAN SILLITOE: A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS ON EXPERIENCE, CONSCIOUSNESS AND LITERARY EXPRESSION

PART 1. D.H. LAWRENCE: SOCIAL DOMINATION AND ATTEMPTS TO RECOVER IN THE RAINBOW AND WOMEN IN LOVE

The central dynamic of The Rainbow does not rest upon the premise of economic scarcity, as did Sons and Lovers. The Brangwens, we read from the onset, work and live "without fear of necessity," [1] which sets the inner dynamic of the Brangwen relationships apart from those which constituted Sons and Lovers. However, the thread that continues to run through the novels holds the idea of social participation and social advancement intact. The first Brangwen women in the novel share with Mrs. Morel the pervasive drive toward social recognition and participation, both for themselves and for their children, while the drive is not so much toward social mobility, as it was for Mrs. Morel, as it is toward participation and knowledge that appear almost forbidden, secretive, seductive, from where the Brangwen women sit on the Marsh farm.

With The Rainbow Lawrence was to venture into

something quite new: its writing would mark a break with his previous work, just as he had similarly secured a break from England, teaching, and family ties. The Brangwen Marsh farm is modelled on an environment very close to home in Eastwood, but Lawrence's distance from Nottinghamshire and his emotional break from most associations of the past, allow for a presentation that is less ambiguous in that it is less autobiographical and more ideal. The relationships between people, work, and the natural world form a nucleus of experience that is portrayed as a continuous, unbroken condition. There is no indication of any kind of fragmentation in activity or thinking, as we saw in Sons and Lovers; the early Brangwen world of The Rainbow is a complete world that appears to contain no contradictions until the women sound an alarm of discontent:

> The women were different. . . . She faced outwards to where men moved dominant and creative, having turned their back on the pulsing heat of creation, and with this behind them, were set out to discover what was beyond, to enlarge their scope and range and freedom. (pp. 8-9)

These early Brangwens would have been chronologically situated at the time of Lawrence's or Paul Morel's or Ursula Brangwen's great grandparents. Industrial developments were only just being initiated in the midlands of England. The world that lies beyond the Marsh farm is for the first time seen as something

distinct, alien, mysterious, and potentially satisfying. "The far off," we read in the novel, has "come near and imminent" (p. 13). This outer world, where real power is held, is also potentially destructive, invading, expropriating. But the women see that freedom and power in this world are discoverable through knowledge and participation that are attainable beyond the Marsh farm. The women are made to feel uneasy by the recognition that their position is not one of dominance, or social ease, or control. Purposive life is felt to be unattainable through the secluded life of farming; purposive life is accomplished only through socially active and socially aware consciousness. What distinguishes the Mr. and Mrs. Hardys of the district from the Brangwens is consciousness: a broad consciousness that holds knowledge and comprehension of social and political dynamics; and through this consciousness is secured social dignity (in somewhat crude terms, the desire here reflected appears to be a kind of composite drawing of Gertrude Morel's aspirations and those of Miriam Leivers in Sons and Lovers).[2]

It is in the context of this tearing in the nucleus of hitherto unbroken experience in relationship that the novel outlines the industrial expansion into the agricultural district of the Marsh, with Ilkeston, at the top of the hill, and always in clear perspective

from the farm, becoming a centre of industry and commerce. The expansion leaves the Brangwens astonished, disconnected, strangers on their own land; we read that "the rhythmic run of the winding engines, startling at first," afterwards becomes "a narcotic to the brain" (p. 13).

The first Brangwen woman of the novel that we come to know plants the seeds of her own discontent in her children; this is particularly so for Tom, her youngest, but for all her aspirations Tom fails and suffers bitterly because of it. However, in spite of his inability to distinguish himself intellectually, new feelings arise in the Brangwen male history. The world beyond the valley becomes a source of mystery and fulfillment. Tom Brangwen marks a new consciousness that is focussed outward in apprehension, curiosity and reverence, accompanied by a new sense of personal limitations and self-doubt:

> What was it all? There was life so different from what he knew it. What was there outside his knowledge, how much? What was this that he had touched? What was he in this new influence? What did everything mean? Where was life, in that which he knew, or all outside him? (p. 25, my italics)

The indications in the novel are that never before have such questions entered consciousness in the Brangwen family history; life was assumed as it was lived. The issue of where life really is is an issue, I would argue, that becomes central to both The Rainbow and to Women

in Love. The critical question and all that it implies begins here with Tom, is carried over with Anna, and is then most fully developed with Ursula and all the principal characters in Women in Love. Life, as it is actually lived, becomes illusory, vicarious, mediated by fantasy. After coming into brief contact with two "foreigners" in Matlock, Tom is bitter that he must return to farm life: "he knew that the idea of life among such people as the foreigner was ridiculous. Yet he dreamed of it, and stuck to his dreams, and would not have the reality of Cossethay and Ilkeston" (p. 26, my italics). The relationship between the individual--the private and the local which comprises immediate experience--and the social --the public and the external which holds the promise of another kind of human fulfillment--becomes an issue that alters and directs life as it has never before done. Upon Tom's first perception of Lydia Lensky we are reminded of the male foreigner in Matlock, for Lydia, like this foreigner, is "dark," small and absorbed. "She had passed by. He felt as if he were walking again in a far world, not Cossethay, a far world, the fragile reality" (p. 29, my italics). The fragile reality that she awakens in him is in stark contrast to the "barren" and "unreal" quality of his actual experience. His existence becomes real through his perception of her; she becomes the way into reality: "He was nothing,

But with her, he would be real" (p. 41). The chasm that he feels between his actual experience and his vague desires focused outward can be bridged by her: by her foreignness and by her aristocratic heritage (the two are in fact linked, which I will look at further on in this discussion).

Tom's discontent points to the great social changes that take place in England during the mid-nineteenth century. National and international influences are entering into lives which have been essentially secluded and local. With Tom Brangwen's generation something new enters human consciousness sparked by parental influence and by the expansion of industry and education. The "far off come near and imminent" takes on many forms and meanings throughout the novel as it enters into and radically alters human experience. To some it means knowledge, to some it means socially purposeful work, military involvement, personal sacrifice to publicly upheld ideals and to ideas of nationhood. But whatever it comes to mean, its penetration into conscious and unconscious drives, the way in which it is transmitted and developed from one generation to the next, lies at the very centre of The Rainbow and of Lawrence's artistic vision in this novel. As such, the novel is concerned with the historical development of the relationship between the social and the personal, and with

the growing diminishment of the individual as the social takes the place of the private in the human psyche. The dreams of the first Brangwen women of the novel and the women of her generation become the inescapable unconscious needs of Ursula Brangwen, three generations later. The novel explores the growing need for social participation, as society expands its influence and begins to dominate areas of private experience previously left untouched; the novel explores the development of homogeneous social consciousness and it reflects the intensification of repression, as each generation of people struggle with their own desires in the context of social domination.

Tom's need to reach out beyond the world of Cossethay in order to feel real is for the most part answered by Lydia. It surfaces again later in the novel when he feels cut away by Lydia's periods of abstract absorption in her past. At one point he turns to Mrs. Forbes, his brother Alfred's lover, and here he meets a somewhat different manifestation of the world beyond from that which he has previously known. It is a "visionary polite world" of culture and knowledge that once again leaves him feeling inadequate (p. 91). It is not Mrs. Forbes herself that he desires (he even comes to feel that there is something "cold, something alien, as if she were not a woman") but rather something she suggests

to him (p. 91). Nonetheless, stronger than any feelings of inadequacy and discontent is the relationship that holds between Tom and Lydia throughout this first section of the novel. With Lydia, Tom can leave the world beyond the Marsh Farm out of account: "They were a curious family, a law to themselves, separate from the world, isolated, a small republic set in invisible bounds" (p. 103). What their relationship accomplishes is a kind of stalling of the inevitable process of direct participation in the social and cultural world beyond immediate family life. Tom "existed with her entirely indifferent to the general values of the world" (p. 104). Their exclusive relationship reaches through to Anna so that she too is reluctant to move beyond the orbit of the intimate world she has come to experience through them:

> So Anna was only easy at home, where the common sense and the supreme relation between her parents produced a freer standard of being than she could find outside. Where, outside the Marsh, could she find the tolerant dignity she had been brought up in? Her parents stood undiminished and unaware of criticism. The people she met outside seemed to begrudge her her very existence. (p. 101)

When Anna marries Will she discovers the means of retaining the insular Brangwen world yet moving out of the orbit of her parents. When she marries a Brangwen she imposes rigid limitations on her move outward into association with the world beyond. Will Brangwen, like

her own parents, stands apart from everyday reality, in spite of his experience with the practical, social, side of life. Will is self-contained and mystical, living in a kind of mindless intensity, reflective of the Brangwen male character.

The Rainbow draws sharp distinctions between social experience and private experience through depiction of the first moments of their marriage:

> One day, he was a bachelor, living with the world. The next day, he was with her, as remote from the world as if the two of them were buried like a seed in darkness. Suddenly, like a chestnut falling out of a burr, he was shed naked and glistening on to a soft, fecund earth, leaving behind him the hard rind of worldly knowledge and experience. He heard it in the hucksters' cries, the noise of the carts, the calling of children. And it was all like the hard, shed rind, discarded. Inside, in the softness and stillness of the room, was the naked kernel, that palpitated in silent activity, absorbed in reality.
>
> . . . it was as if they were at the very centre of all the slow wheeling of space and the rapid agitation of life, deep, deep inside them all, at the centre where there is utter radiance, and eternal being, and the silence absorbed in praise: the steady core of all movements, the unawakened sleep of all wakefulness. . . . for their moment they were at the heart of eternity, whilst time roared far off, forever far off, towards the rim. (p. 145)

In the context of such experience through relationship the public world loses its power and influence: it is discarded without being willed--discarded by virtue of intimate experience which is intense enough to negate attachments to anything existing outside of it. This

negation, as I shall discuss more fully later on, and the dinstinction between the social and the private self, will become far more difficult to accomplish as we move through The Rainbow and into Women in Love. With Sillitoe and the more modern post-war world, the penetration of social reality into the inner sources of personal life will make the potential of knowing and articulating intimate experience as distinct from social experience highly questionable.

The conflicts that develop between Will and Anna reach much deeper than those which characterized the marriage of Tom and Lydia. The strong antagonisms between them are manifested after only a short honeymoon period. Will, having lived his life in a continuous cycle of work and activity, cuts off his ties to social activity and external forms only after a painful struggle; and because it has been painful to him to accept fully the "stillness that was beyond time," to recognize his experience with Anna in its negation of all that has previously meant reality to him, he is reluctant to step out into the world again, even when she is ready to do so:

> She was less hampered than he, so she came more quickly to her fullness, and was sooner ready to enjoy again a return to the outside world. . . . He wanted to have done with the outside world, to declare it finished for ever. . . . But no, he could not keep her. She wanted the dead world again--she wanted

> to walk on the outside. . . . Now he must be disposed, his joy must be destroyed, he must put on the vulgar, shallow death of an outward existence. (pp. 150-151)

Lawrence depicts Will Brangwen as unformed, uncreated, a man who has been so thoroughly directed by social influences that he lacks individual self. Until, that is, he marries. With Anna he discovers intense experience that is uniquely his own; he is understandably overwrought with anxiety when she threatens to deny him his newly discovered reality by herself returning to social and superficial contacts. Of course for Anna to do so is perfectly natural in the context of the novel: these social associations mean little to her and the outer world of activity and work has never claimed her as it has Will. This public world is not a threat to her relationship with Will because it has had little influence over her experiential development, which has been almost exclusively lived out in the context of family life with Tom and Lydia. The fierce antagonisms between Anna and Will begin at this point. The novel reveals that the unformed character of Will, developmentally determined as he has been by social forces, rather than by personal and immediate interrelationship which allows for private experience, leads to a kind of vicious psychic illness:

> The dark storms rose in him, his eyes glowed black and evil, he was fiendish in his thwarted

> soul. . . .
>
> His condition now became complete, the darkness of his soul was thorough. Everything had gone: he remained complete in his own tense, black will. He was now unaware of her. She did not exist. His dark, passionate soul had recoiled upon itself, and now, clinched and coiled round a centre of hatred, existed in its own power. (p. 152)

Of course Will's "illness" only manifests itself because, after having awakened Will to a new reality within himself, Anna then appears to deny him this reality by her own return to that other "dead" "outward existence." Conceivably, if we follow the logic of the novel, Will could well have lived his life out in complete compliance with work and social activity, without conscious awareness of any such potential for experience, and of course without the immediate feelings of rage and hatred that rise to the surface when he is denied. In short, he could have lived his life out without his illness revealing itself as it does. Ill he still would have been, for his illness lies primarily in the fact of his emotionally unformed, undeveloped, self. Herein lies the essential distinction between Tom Brangwen, the first male character of the novel, and Will Brangwen. Tom, we are told, while intellectually undeveloped, is nonetheless highly developed emotionally, instinctually, and in this rests his psychic health.

When Will's soul "recoils upon itself" he redirects his desire: turning away from Anna, he turns toward religious symbols and church architecture (an attachment

he had relied upon before her) in an exclusive and passionate absorption that negates and thus maddens Anna. He tells Anna, without needing the words to do so, that if she will not come with him to the "heart of eternity," he will find eternity elsewhere; hence his greatest satisfaction will not be in relationship with her. He asks the church to give him "the emotion of all great mysteries of passion" (p. 158).

The conflict between Anna and Will comprises the ongoing struggle between the drive toward knowledge and expansive consciousness and the countering drive arising out of passionate impulses pushing toward intimate experience in relationships that exist outside of language, consciousness and society. The novel sees Anna as a woman of a new generation who carries the desire of her ancestral grandmother (Tom's mother, whom she never knew), to live out life in articulated comprehension and social participation. Anna, like her step-father Tom, does come to "relinquish the adventure into the unknown" (p. 196), but she does so, not because she discovers her fulfillment through relationship in marriage, but because she accomplishes her satisfaction through the process of giving birth and nurturing. Will, given his intense, almost "infantile" character is not the man who can allow her to discover her greatest satisfaction in marriage; he is not the

whole person she has seen in Tom.

Will appears to hold the impulses of the Brangwen line of men who have lived their lives outside of conscious comprehension of their experience and existence. However, with Will there is a new context: his early formative years have not allowed him to know the kind of felt relationships that the Brangwen men of the Marsh once knew. He was cast off by his family and given to the nation's education system to rear. Lawrence gives us enough of Will's parents for us to recognize that the kind of mutual fulfillment that characterized Tom and Lydia's relationship is in no way accomplished within Will's early family life. With Will, Lawrence develops a man of a new kind: neither synonymous with the old line of Brangwen men in their totality of experience, nor an active social participant, conscious and aware of his place within the larger social scheme. Will is caught somewhere in between and he clearly suffers because of it: "like a man thrown overboard to sea, to swim till he sinks, because there is no hold, only a wide, weltering sea" (p. 188). While Will appears to have nowhere else to go for his satisfaction, the novel clearly reveals that Will's mystical absorption in the church is a perverse substitute for felt relationship with the world and with Anna, just as Anna's dependency on giving birth and nursing is a perversion of her

sexual instincts (the way in which the novel illustrates her casting her children away as they reach beyond the nursing stage reveals the novel's judgement of her).

Eventually, while never accomplishing the kind of complete fulfillment that we see with Tom and Lydia, Will comes to feel himself anchored in marriage to Anna through their mutual pleasure and attachment to sensuality. When Will reaches this point of certainty with Anna he is then able to reach outward in purposeful activity in a meaningful way. We read:

> For the first time, he began to take real interest in a public affair. He had at length from his profound sensual activity, developed a real purposive self.
>
> . . .
>
> The house by the yew trees was in connexion with the great human endeavour at last. (pp. 238-239, my italics)

Woodwork, which has long given him great personal satisfaction, he can now take out into the world with him.

Establishing "connexion with the great human endeavour" will be Ursula's deepest motivation in the last sections of The Rainbow. The sharp distinctions drawn between the inner "eternity" accomplished through sexual relationship in the honeymoon period of Will and Anna, and the "hard rind" of the active outer world which they discard, is intensified in its antagonistic qualities with Ursula's generation. Ursula's push outward is thwarted by an environment which is felt to be powerfully

begrudging in its homogeneity. In the context of what she has known--tolerance, indifference to pettiness, assumed dignity of person--the world Ursula discovers is hostile. Moving out into the vast world promising so much (and elevated in its promises through her intense romantic ideals), Ursula meets cruelty, stupidity, group mindedness, and brute power and authority, which in the novel's terms are the essential constituents of public life. Ursula's perspective is not only subjective; it is the objective reality in Lawrence's view. However, regardless of her repulsion, Ursula's motivation remains undaunted: the novel gives her no choice but to struggle within the public world on its own terms; the connexion between the private and the public has been established; the alternatives that existed for her mother and her grandmother are no longer real.

When we are introduced to Anton Skrebensky, the son of a Polish aristocrat who had connections with Lydia Lensky, the thematic thread of the novel re-emerges. We learn that the outside world is Skrebensky's home. Will's situation of being cast out of the family appears to have been taken one step further with Skrebensky. Anton is the first person of the novel who is completely identifiable with his society: he is a fully politicized, public man. Through exploration of Anton and Ursula's

relationship the novel continues to develop a history of character alterations directly associated with the expansion and influence of technological and commercial development. With Tom and Lydia we saw the accomplishment of a completed self through union with each other; with Anna and Will we saw change, awakening, and a sense of sexual fulfillment that was liberating in its consequences. But with Ursula and Anton, relationship produces a crystallization and affirmation of separation and divided gratification which is destructive at its source:

> It was a magnificent self-assertion on the part of both of them, he asserted himself before her, he felt himself infinitely male and infinitely irresistible, she asserted herself before him, she knew herself infinitely desirable, and hence infinitely strong. And after all, what could either of them get from such a passion but a sense of his or her own maximum self in contradistinction to all the rest of life? (p. 303)

It is destructive because each negates the life of the other and because it bounds their experience within the limits of self-assertion, denying the potential of reciprocity. The novel goes on to say that what they could get, what their ancestors got, was "a sense of the infinite" (p. 303), something that even Will was able to feel; but this Ursula and Anton cannot know.

Just as Ursula's sexual relationship with Anton is limited by her needs for self-assertion, so too is her broader relationship to her environment. Her tendency is to expropriate her environment in an effort

to construct a romantic mystique and vision which will allow her to shroud herself in protective guise within a world which she intuits to be threatening, demeaning and reductionist. She is initially unable to see Anton apart from this mystique, both blinding and protective as it is, but her illusory vision does not run so deep as to prevent breaks in consciousness and sparks of unconscious recognition. In the scene where Ursula madly runs toward the darkness and later reaches toward communion with the moon, she struggles and beats upon the boundaries of her own consciousness, and, perhaps equally as critically, against the limits that Anton imposes on her sexual potential in relationship:

> Waves of delirious darkness ran through her soul. She wanted to let go. She wanted to reach and be amongst the flashing stars, she wanted to race with her feet and be beyond the confines of this earth. She was mad to be gone. It was as if a hound were straining on the leash, ready to hurl itself after a nameless quarry, and she was the quarry, and she was also the hound. The darkness was passionate and breathing with immense, unperceived heaving. It was waiting to receive her in her flight. And how could she start--and how could she let go? She must leap from the known into the unknown. Her feet and hands beat like a madness, her breast strained as if in bonds. (pp. 317-318)

This scene follows the conversation between Ursula and Anton where Anton identifies his needs with the needs of the nation, and it also follows Ursula's contact with the barge man (who, we read, is "impudent" in his "directness and his worship of the woman in Ursula,

a worship of body and soul together . . . with a desire that knew the inaccessibility of its object") and his family (p. 316). Combined, the two situations are powerful enough to scatter and dissipate Ursula's mystical vision and to awaken her to her own sexual needs. She is driven outward toward the night for the consummation of her desire, Anton, but a shadow of a man, behind her. But the novel does not leave things here: when Ursula looks toward Anton and sees an existence without substance, without form, a man perhaps much like her father in his lack of development, "a sudden lust seize[s] upon her to lay hold of him and tear him and make him into nothing" (p. 321). While Ursula does not have the same intensity of psychic energy invested in her need to maintain power over men as does Gudrun in Women in Love, this scene clearly reflects a form of sexual viciousness Lawrence has in mind when he develops the relationship between Gerald and Gudrun. In the battle of sexual assertion here, Ursula wins: Anton unwillingly yields to her and is left feeling "annihilated."

Ursula's relationship with Anton, her not quite conscious recognition of the threat they pose to each other, combined with her need to break free of her father, likely provide much of the stimulus driving her outward toward social achievement:

> An all-containing will in her for complete

> independence, complete social independence, complete independence from any personal authority, kept her dullishly at her studies. . . .
>
> There was the mysterious man's world to be adventured upon, the world of daily work and duty, and existence as a working member of the community. Against this she had a subtle grudge. She wanted to make her conquest also of this man's world. (p. 334)

While Ursula cannot as readily as Anton identify her own fulfillment with the movement of humanity, she nonetheless feels driven out to take her place amongst "the great task." It is with a "cold, dreary satisfaction" (p. 358), that she enters teaching. The "vulgar authority" of Brinsley street school necessitates that she become the "nothing" that Anton has become through his service to and identification with "the great task;" while Tom Brangwen once asked the question of where reality lay, outside of himself in the world beyond him, or inside of himself in the world that he knew, Ursula discovers that with her generation the question has already been answered for her:

> It was queer to feel that one ought to alter one's personality. She was a nobody, there was no reality in herself, the reality was all outside of her, and she must apply herself to it. (p. 373)

This human adaptation in the interests of "reality" as it is, is a process that goes almost completely unquestioned in our even more modern era. Lawrence reactivates the critical question we have forgotten: in whose interest does public "reality" function? The novel

illuminates a situation where social reality is becoming absolute. In Brinsley Street school Ursula recognizes that the only reality that presides is the reality that exists within the school system itself, which excludes the interests of teachers and students alike. The school system accomplishes human adaptability in the interests of social stasis, and productivity. The school's task is the successful reduction of individuals to subservience through identification with a collective logic propagated through the school. What is required by this system is the reduction of difference, a streamlining of experience, and becoming anesthetisized to sensitivity. This is the "great task" with which Ursula has joined forces. Her push toward independence leads her to service for an intensely powerful authority which demands her own "abnegation" (p. 383) and the "obliteration" of the chidren she teaches as well (p. 391). Of course the novel opposes such adaptation and abnegation through its revelation and its tone and through the horror that is Ursula's experience at this school. Birkin, in Women in Love, will state Lawrence's position more directly when he says to Gerald, who is defending compliance in the interests of social purpose and the efficient running of public systems: "'Instead of chopping yourself down to fit the world, chop the world down to fit yourself. . . .'" [3]

Through her teaching experience Ursula recognizes for the first time the real "horror of humanity, that would destroy her, and with which she was at war;" yet we read further that "it had to be so. . . . She was in the hands of some bigger, stronger, coarser will" (p. 401). In spite of her recognition, she cannot pull away: "She felt that somewhere, in something, she was not free. . . . There remained always the want she could put no name to" (p. 106). However the novel has put a name to it, and her great grandmother's dreams of social participation have become her inescapable; deep needs.

Ursula's days at college leave her no less bitter than did her teaching, partly because she enters it with similar illusions. She initially perceives the university as a kind of retreat, lying beyond the mechanistic service to productivity, but she soon discovers that no social construction is free from the great human purpose toward which everything and everyone need be directed. The university is "a little apprentice-shop where one was further equipped for making money. The college itself was a little, slovenly laboratory for the factory. . . . the religious virtue of knowledge was become a flunkey to the god of material success" (pp. 434-435). "Everywhere," writes Lawrence, and these are clearly Lawrence's views as well as Ursula's, "every-

thing was debased to the same service. Everything went to produce vulgar things, to encumber material life" (p. 435).

Lawrence's critique in this section of the novel reawakens our awareness of the totality of this service to productivity and of the reduction of human life and potential made necessary by it. In the vast social, political, technological, and cultural organization of our time, given the extremely subtle and insidious forms of achieving a state of homogeneity of character (i.e., children no longer need to be beaten in schools in order to secure their submission and acquisition of collective consciousness, and teachers may not even feel that they are being negated when they work in the interests of the school) it is too easy for us, or perhaps too hard for us not, to lose sight of the processes of human adaptation that Lawrence could creatively develop, explore, and finally deplore. Lawrence could imaginatively conceive of and give credible life to people who experienced themselves and each other with some independence. In the more modern world of the present, co-ordinated forces, outside of our immediate, concrete, intimate existence, are woven together to create the public fabric of our lives. The public sphere of life reaches into the deepest centers of experience and conceptualization, directing, adapting, and manipulating

human life toward public ends (now becoming increasingly synonymous with the interests of capitalist expansion and the market). In the context of such extensive and intense bombardment, not yet accomplished in Lawrence's world, the world of the first quarter of this century, our ability to imagine, to conceive and to remember what has been lost of our humanness, is being eroded. Lawrence was caught on an apex of change in the twentieth century, and he was able to tell us something critical about the direction of human history and something critical about what was being left behind of ourselves.

What emerges and dominates at the close of The Rainbow is a growing antagonism between the private life of individuals and the vast purpose of the public world in which people must live. Ursula's most powerful desire at the end of the novel is to be monumental, absolute, free, beyond the human, because the task of humanity has been reduced to repressive service in the interests of material productivity, which, as it develops, is becoming opposed to life itself.

Birkin says to Gerald in Women in Love: "'I should like [people] to like the purely individual thing in themselves, which makes them act in singleness. And they only like to do the collective thing'" (p. 28), to which Gerald responds that he "'shouldn't like to be in a world of people who acted individually and spon-

taneously, as you call it. We should have everybody cutting everybody else's throat in five minutes.'" Women in Love confronts the fear which provides the social rationale and the psychological stimulus necessary to fix collective cohesion. Gerald's fear of "everybody cutting everybody else's throat" is justified, not in the terms he expresses, but rather, as the novel reveals, because he recognizes his own violent tendencies which are traced back to his childhood, his killing of his brother, the relationship between him and his father, and the relationship between his mother and father (which is also fraught with repressed violence). The clear conviction of the novel, surfacing repeatedly throughout, is that the social "compound" into which people have been "corralled" denies the space required to live with psychic health; it thwarts and suffocates, and thus creates the violence it then needs to restrain. Such a conviction expresses itself most particularly through Hermione, Gerald and Gudrun. What all three characters share is a crippled, underdeveloped, instinctual and sensitive self, much like both Will Brangwen and Anton Skrebensky in The Rainbow. In the vacuum that such a lack of development leaves, we see the powerfully developed consciousness and rigid control over body movements, gestures and responses that all three characters exemplify. Each is fearful, and terribly so,

of what they sense to be their own emptiness. Each is tied to defensive patterns of response that uphold control and repress felt fear, and thus each is in urgent need of attaining power over others in order to ensure the terms of their own existence. Within the psychic dimension that constitutes life for each of these characters, there is the perpetual need to violate life in the interests of self preservation.

In Birkin's terms, the old ideals--ideals of nationhood, duty, social responsibility, God--no longer speak to the real needs of people. Life, for both Gerald and Birkin, feels artificially held together through mechanistic processes without a center. For Birkin (and for Lawrence) there is a belief that this center can be discovered through relationship with a woman; Birkin's feelings are not much different than Tom Brangwen's were in anticipation of Lydia. We are pushed back two generations and back to the earliest passages of The Rainbow with Birkin's position. While the first Brangwen women sent their sons out into the world to discover their appropriate places in the social fabric of mankind, these men found the world empty of the substance that could answer their needs. We come full circle as three generations after the push outward, the two primary characters of Women in Love (for Ursula Brangwen will make the same decision as Birkin) turn their backs

not on the "pulsing heat of creation" as their ancestors did, but on the great human social purpose toward which their great grandmothers urged them go and which they held in such high esteem.

When Ursula and Birkin leave England they attempt to create a new life for themselves, a life that arises out of and is in accordance with the peace that has been generated in relationship with each other. Their relationship forms the center of living to each of them. The now "unreal" world (the world that Ursula once saw as the primary reality) continues to confront them in its dreariness and despair, but, bringing something new in themselves to bear on this world, the world is somewhat altered. Ursula's past continues to haunt her; she carries the heavy burden of experiences that have marked her (as we were told they would do in The Rainbow) and injured her: "She wanted to have no past. She wanted to have come down from the slopes of heaven to this place, with Birkin, not to have toiled out of murk of her childhood and her upbringing, slowly, all soiled" (p. 419: we are reminded here of her father's claims on her, even as a young child).

Ursula, as Women in Love comes to a close, has developed a new perspective, a perspective which is presented as an outgrowth of her personal liberation. As she says to Gudrun: "'I do think that one can't

have anything new whilst one cares for the old--do you know what I mean?--even fighting the old is belonging to it. . . . '" (pp. 449-450). Ursula gives up the battle against the great human purpose and extricates herself from the dominant tide of human development. The novel upholds the belief that such complete extrication is both sadly necessary and possible to accomplish.

ALAN SILLITOE: POST-WAR DOMINATION AND ATTEMPTS TO RECOVER

This kind of full extrication from the dominant objectives of our time or even its conception cannot be so fully articulated nor developed in Sillitoe's trilogy beginning with The Death of William Posters. An overwhelming sense of cultural suffocation drives the novel's main character, Frank Dawley, out of England with a woman; but, unable or unwilling to center his life in relationship with her, he leaves her behind and goes into the Algerian desert to fight a guerrilla war alongside the Algerian rebels against the French imperialists. The struggle for freedom from culture, and an attempt to discover alternatives that will allow for the recovery of human needs and purpose in accordance with these needs, forms the primary focus of the trilogy. Throughout the exploration of this struggle (culture is presented as antagonistically related to human needs, much as it

was in Women in Love) Sillitoe exposes the dilemmas and illnesses of the modern era, saturated and dominated as we are in a culturally dominated world. What his work also shows is a new, more highly developed stage in the historical process of the creation of the socialized being, not yet come to life in Lawrence's work. In Women in Love, Ursula and Birkin's feelings of opposition and their real need to break free from the general movement of their fellow people was enough to make it possible for them to do so; but what was conceivable in the novel for Lawrence can no longer be incorporated into novelistic vision when we read Sillitoe, writing forty years after Women in Love. While Ursula and Birkin have a sense of their own deepest needs and experience, distinct and irreconcilable with their culture as they are, Frank Dawley recognizes his own deep discontent, but he does not know what his needs are. He goes to Algeria, partly in an attempt to find out, and partly because he feels that participating in the fight against the oppression of the Algerian people answers to a real need. Trying to distinguish the real from the false becomes a painful struggle often beyond human capacity. New life and experience created out of intimate relationship between people becomes far more problematic than it was with Lawrence, because Sillitoe's characters are so completely meshed within their culture that

relationships between men and women do not appear to lead to experiences outside of that culture's frame of reference and influence.

The stepping stones of English culture, which he blindly follows throughout his youth, lead Frank Dawley into a cultural "tomb" that he is finally awakened to, feeling that if he doesn't get out he'll "choke to death." [4] Frank is a factory worker, whose culture has supplied him with patterns of life and forms of fulfillment. English culture, the novel testifies, reaches deeply into the centre of working class lives, propagandizing an image of those lives which has systematically gained ascendance and power over actual experience. It is an authoritative image propounded repeatedly and consistently through all possible modern forms of communication, the scope of which yet unrealized in Lawrence's lifetime; while people had already clearly begun to appear as an indistinguishable "mass," their individuality in question, there was, nonetheless, far more space within which the individual could develop and live apart from his or her culture and society. It is a culturally transmitted image of life and humanness that tells working people that their experience is not what it seems to be, not what it feels and tastes like (p. 37). Frank Dawley is locked within cultural imagery from which his only means of escape begins with breaking out of the familiar

and lifelong contraints of Nottingham, factory work and family. Yet in the world beyond, the familiar presents itself to him as a vast and terrifying wilderness holding the potential of both personal salvation and self-destruction. After only a short time in separation from home, and still within the protection of England, he wonders "how long he [can] go on living through various days and black nights before being drawn into the pit of another job, bed, and life even more null and commonplace than the one that he didn't know in any respectable language why he'd left" (p.12). Life lived outside of the familiar cultural ties is frightening enough to send him back into a temporary retreat when the situation presents itself. He settles into domestic comfort with Pat Shipley, a community nurse, in Lincolnshire after only a few weeks away from Nottingham.

For Pat Shipley, work is "the rails, the mainstay, the only valid reason for being alive" (p. 23). She has restricted her living to her work since separating from her husband, and through her community function she accomplishes some satisfaction in knowing that she has secured a public place. Beyond her work she sits in waiting, containing desires that reach further until a situation presents itself which will allow for change and fulfillment to become potentialities. In these respects we see her much like Ursula in the opening pages

of Women in Love: alone after Anton has gone to India, teaching, expectant and waiting for something she is not sure of. But the similarities between these two characters stop here.

If we are trying to come to a full comprehension of how Sillitoe's characters confront their culture, of how they are related to the society in which they live in Sillitoe's world, our initial recognition is that the novel is involved in a struggle to create a credible sense of "person" that can be viewed in relationship to his or her cultural milieu. The novel may be seen to fail in this struggle in its delineation of Pat Shipley because her experience is almost exclusively consumed by anxiety, and through anxiety she is fixed to a culturally determined consciousness from which she can gain no distance.

Pat Shipley's detachment from Frank Dawley needs, of course, to be viewed in correspondence with Frank's impenetrable and abstracted exterior. She may also be aware that Frank's self-proclamations and denouncements are often in direct contradiction to all the indicators of his feelings. While the need to break away from Pat frequently makes itself felt to him, he is nonetheless consistent in overriding and negating this feeling through maintaining that he is "fixed" where he is. While he cannot help but ask himself "What am I doing here? This can't be my home. I was never meant to land up here"

(pp. 61-62), only a few moments later we read that he asks Pat to marry him, claiming that he's "in love for the first time" in his life. He then continues:

> He found it impossible to say why he loved her, had been so busy in his life that she was the first woman he had thought to ask this question about. . . . Such a thing proved how completely she had altered his life, and you could only be in love with a woman who had done that to you. (pp. 67-68)

But we know that she has not altered his life: she has reinstated the protective confines that he ran away from when he left Nottingham. While his immediate response is to wonder why he is with Pat at all, his distance from his own feelings prevents insight. His responses and conscious self-awareness are powerfully mediated by culturally sanctioned constructs that mystify and distort his feeings, preventing their full reflection. What Sillitoe's work illuminates here, particularly when viewed in relation to The Rainbow and Women in Love, is that our ability to comprehend our own needs, feelings and experience is being eroded by a growing dependency on cultural constructs and culturally created experiences that make avoidance of our deep fears too easy (I have identified fear as the feeling being avoided since it is the source of much of Frank's mystifications and of many of Lawrence's characters as well). Gerald Crich could not so easily nor so completely escape the fact of his terrible fears; nor could Gudrun, nor Hermione. Anxiety and fear make themselves felt in

Women in Love in ways that are observable and unavoidable (recall that Gudrun cannot prevent herself from shaking in fear of Gerald seeing her weakness). The ability to rationalize feelings out of existence and to defend against felt recognition in shown in Sillitoe's work to be at a far more advanced stage than anything we read of in The Rainbow and Women in Love. Gudrun recognizes, physically, emotionally, and even intellectually, that her attraction toward Gerald is based primarily on his capacity for violence, his subjugation of things and people to his own power. Lawrence gives no indication that there are any mediating or defensive processes in operation in her appraisal of Gerald. Gudrun, Gerald, Ursula, Birkin and Hermione concretely recognize a good deal about their own deepest impulses. Felt recognition is not the primary problem for Lawrence's characters: living with their feelings is. But with Sillitoe's world we step one step further into the process of the dissolution of human individuality: we discover characters whose personal lives have been devastated; characters who live out their lives almost completely cut away from the centres of response within them; characters who are unable to recognize, unable to actually feel, what they want or need, unable finally to experience themselves as living human beings.

Just as fear is circumvented by rationalizing

manouevers that translate it into something else, so too is pleasure mediated by intellectual postures that function as defenses against potential pain and loss. For Pat, the potential of loss dominates and forms the nucleus of her relationship with Frank. She takes the modern "liberal" attitude toward the relationship, never allowing herself to be too sure of him, and never allowing herself pleasure that is uncontrolled when she is with him: "In that way, if there was a let down it would be gradual and not from very far up" (p. 59). She sees her pleasure with Frank as "mature," thereby gaining control over it, and preventing pleasure from overwhelming her or from leading her toward a loss which she intuits as inevitable and terrifying. Stronger than her feelings while with Frank, are her anxieties over losing him. Sillitoe centers the magnitude of this fear in the futurelessness of the modern world, where human violence and destruction have been rendered acceptable through modern forms of communicating information (p. 45). The quality of futurelessness has been incorporated into character structure; homes are built and filled and sanctified in the attempt to create a sense of permanency and to oppose our sense of imminent loss and a problematic future in the context of global violence. While both Pat and Frank need to feel a sense of permanency, a sense of indestructible foundations, in their lives, it is nonetheless a sense

of the temporary which so forcefully determines their experience and limits it within the boundaries of their culture.

Anxiety over potential loss was not a primary issue for most of the characters in Lawrence's novels. We see something of this briefly with Will, and with Anton, but there are critical differences. With Lawrence's characters this anxiety usually arises out of relationship with another where character differences and antagonisms develop over time. With Sillitoe's characters, fear of loss and an anxiety which mutilates pleasure is there as an absolute from the onset of interaction. Hermione, in Women in Love, may be the only character in Lawrence's novels who points us toward a situation where experience is formed upon a base of anxiety.

Self-containment and complex strategies for defense against feeling and anger characterize most people in Sillitoe's work, and this holds true for Frank Dawley as well. Ordinarily held in check by a rigid exterior of defense, Frank's rage and violent potentialities surface in confrontation with Pat Shipley's returned husband Keith. All of Frank's accumulated anger is directed against Keith as he becomes for Frank the enemy in a class war. Frank judges his confrontation with Keith as a "surrender to barbarity," but once his rage has been spent, processes of rationalization, arising

out of shame, set into operation and he soon loses awareness of his own violent tendencies and their source. When Keith exposes feelings of repugnance toward the working class, he arouses Frank's feelings of political and sexual impotence. Frank's violence against Keith serves to exhibit his own potency, even while it leaves him finally in despair. He will come to claim that "all he'd wanted was to protect" Pat, but the novel reveals that this is a falsification of the situation which buries Frank's acute, intense and repressed feelings of inadequacy and consequent rage.

When Frank posits himself as Pat's victim he leads the way toward further mystifications that will prevent him from recognizing his own desires. He is able to deny that he ever wanted to leave Pat through the victimhood he claims for himself: "It was impossible not to leave, even in the middle of the deepest love he'd known, for that's how she wanted it, for her own good" (p. 129). Beyond the fact that this feels false because the novel has not rendered his love believable, what is expressed here is Frank's twisting and reordering of reality to fit with defensive manouevers which maintain a conception of himself as the persecuted at the mercy of the powerful--a conception which arises out of his past and which reinforces his working class guise. What this self-conception denies is his power to violate others; it also

prevents him from seeing how detached he is from life and from others.

When he learns later from a friend that Pat has returned to her husband, we read:

> Through fire and dead soil, the pain unearthed itself out of his guts, tried to pull his eyes backward into the depths of his head, then to ram the back of his head into his eyes. (p. 156)

This is the first indication in the novel of an immediate, felt, response to that which has occurred between him and Pat. However, he subsequently goes on to interpret:

> The only person she loved was her kid, and the one way she could go on loving him was by living with Keith, and I was dead right when I left her after she left me. (p. 156)

Aside from whether or not this is supportable by the novel, it doesn't speak to his response on discovering her return to Keith; it only represses it and serves to alleviate any sense of his own responsibility in bringing the relationship to an end.

Frank leaves Lincolnshire and goes to London, where he meets another woman, apparently not very different than Pat in external situation. Myra is an efficient homemaker in a home "become a factory that produced a good living." She has been married for six years to a husband who has become "neat, manical, and tight." Like Pat, Myra has married an educated, middle class man who desires stable, ordered, domesticity. Both

George and Keith are consistent, fixed, and completely identifiable with their culture. The "purpose of civilization," says George, "is to merge the undercurrents and the surface into one clear comprehensible mirror to life. To try to get behind such a mirror would mean wielding your fist to smash it, and that was the action of a madman" (p. 175). The "mirror" is his protection from the chaotic, the contradictory, and the ambivalent within himself. George imposes a system of order upon his experience, a system readily "borrowed" from his culture, and thereby shields himself from what he assumes to be his own and every one's madness. His needs and attachment to his culture are directly contrasted to Frank's most prominent feelings of opposition, as the England with soothes George, smothers Frank.

Marriage, as the novel presents it, i.e., domestic harmony, veils the frightened and unformed self, allowing people to feel comfortable with their own psychic sickness. Marriage reinforces our illness by perpetuating and solidifying the sad human condition while keeping it a secret. In short, domestic order and sexual security mask anxiety while simultaneously fixing it. The distinction to be made here between Sillitoe's work and Lawrence's, is that while marriage in The Rainbow leads to an awakening of self, a rebirth and recovery of selfhood, even in the unformed character of Will Brangwen, in Sillitoe's novels

marriage has become another form of submersion in cultural material. Marriage in The Rainbow was not directly tied to the culture as a whole. We have some indications of a development in this direction in Women in Love, where Birkin and Ursula, unlike their parents and grandparents, sense a potential danger in staying fixed somewhere in domestic encumbrance and continual acquisition (a danger full-blown and actual in Sillitoe's works) so they reject it outright. Following the indicators of all the novels, marriage--once seen to hold the potential for private experience which excluded cultural influences--increasingly becomes the property of culture, having been transformed into an effective instrument for ensuring the cycle of production and consumption, and ensuring adaptability to a culture based predominantly on production and consumption.

When Frank rejects marriage as he's known it, his tendency is to throw everything away, all the potentials in sexual relationship, because his experience has taught him that it all leads to the same thing: his own confinement and adaptability to a culture that makes him feel wretched. In Women in Love, Birkin and Ursula, in relationship with each other, could establish something that they felt to be their own, something not surrenderable to culture. But Frank cannot trust a relationship with another to bring him this because it never has, and

given the defenses against it that he and the women the novel presents bring to relationships, it becomes clear why this is so. After reducing everything down, the only thing Frank is left with that he trusts is work. "'Love's not much more than a holiday in life. I think everything should be put in its place. The most important thing is work--to do something that means something. . . . '" (p. 201), Frank tells us. Desire for a woman becomes a threat in The Death of William Posters because such desire leads one, albeit alluringly and gently, into cultural suffocation--desire for a woman becomes a cultural snare. Frank is afraid that through desire he will be swept along a tide of mass obliteration: "He had often seen the river in his dreams, water clipping his feet and wanting him to be sucked in and swept away--as if he hadn't been in it all his life" (p. 183). In his view, relationship with a woman can bring him nothing new, nothing his own in feeling or experience. It can only reinstate the old forms of oppression he is already well acquainted with and has just run from. In the context of the novel, the potentialities of relationship have been destroyed by broad cultural systems that absorb and twist that potential into their own saleable form. In the process of exploiting our sexual selves and allowing our culture to sell our sex back to us we have become impotent. In the novel's terms, relationships between men

and women cannot help but be mutually destructive because our culture has created the condition whereby love and passion are part of a greater sickness of people who are self-obsessed and cut away from each other:

> ". . . as soon as two people start thinking about hapiness then they're finished. . . . people are chewed up by a dog-rat inside them called passion. . . . Everything is geared to making you eat yourself--the way this society works. Look around, talk to anybody about their job or their life, switch on the wireless or telly, and it says: 'Eat yourself. Go on, eat yourself--crunch--crunch.' . . . " (p. 167)

Frank believes that work, particularly work with machinery, is somehow pure, apart from the cycle of self-obsession and self-consumption, because the machine claims a rational existence apart from his consciousness. What the novel does not speak to is the mechanized quality of the man behind the machine: the man becoming an object all the more subservient and amenable to culturally sanctioned forms of coercion.

Frank is unsure about just how implicated he is in a sick society: at one point he is among the diseased, carrying the sickness within himself, while at the next, he sees himself fighting to stay balanced above it (see p. 190). That he should feel unsure about this is comprehensible enough, for of course he is both part of a sick society, and outside of it, for the act of recognition of his own illness and of the illness of

a whole society of people position him on the outside: in order to see he must possess some distance.

And, distance is his first goal--distance from England to begin with--and beyond this the novel presents us with various possibilities: a socialist revolutionary holding to self-sacrifice and cosmic love in rejection of a passion that reflects self-obsession; an idolisation of a machine ethic which is anti-human and repressive while oppositional in intention; or consciousness as a human being aware of the totalitarian quality of his culture. All of these potentials lie within Frank's capacity and within the two novels that are to follow The Death of William Posters.

When Myra decides to leave England with Frank, the old forms of repression that have taught George how to live collapse; the culture to which he is in complete allegiance leaves him unequipped in coping with the loss. The desolation at the core of George makes itself felt in the form of a terror that is unreponsive to all his futile attempts at ordering. But more difficult to comprehend than George's terror and consequent suicide/death, are Myra and Frank's responses to it. Here the novel feels rushed and contrived; Sillitoe is perhaps too impatient in having his two central characters leave England with an appropriate feeling of detachment from the old and commitment toward the new. At any rate, he

doesn't take the time here to follow the incident through with his characters. While Myra appears to obliterate George from consciousness almost completely and immediately, Frank idealizes his death and heroizes George. Of Myra we read: "The departure hadn't been as bad as she'd imagined. . . . but now, as Frank said, it was over, and she couldn't think of anything except the freedom and emptiness ahead" (p. 209). Frank's having "greater respect for George than if they had simply caught the bus that night and forgotten all about him" (p. 215) reflects a particular ideal of manhood and human behaviour which is an horrendous abstraction, having nothing to do with life as felt, life as lived. Frank "respects" George for trying to run them down with his car and killing himself instead! Perhaps what Frank reveals through this attitude is his surprise that a smug and snug middle class man like George can so lose his grip on life. Frank "respects" the collapse of defenses against feeling, but futhermore he respects the violent responses that erupt as a result because they touch Frank's own repressed violent tendencies. The trilogy as a whole certainly does reflect, through Frank but through others as well, intense repressed violence and even "respect" for this violence.

While Frank's attitude to the situation, based predominantly in his class attitude, allows him to idealize

George's death out of existence, it also allows him to repress the recognition that his actions have consequences in the world of others. While he is extremely sensitive to the power of others, his consciousness positions him so clearly on the receiving end, the working class man who is the victim of the power of others, that he does not see his own power to create, to destroy or to alter the lives of others. Yet with every human interaction--with Pat, Keith, George, and Myra, so far--his power is manifested and played out in the lives of others.

The novel works toward completion with Frank Dawley throwing everything away, except his ability to act. It is a "world to build" that Frank is in search of. His soul is to be emptied of everything, because everything it holds is false and destructive--the property of his culture. All the old ties and feelings must go; with full recognition of a problematic future, the new world of human experience is to be constructed out of human activity in the interests of human purpose. Frank enters the Algerian desert, and here he believes lies the potential of forming himself anew, out of his own roots, out of his own emptiness.

In both Lawrence's Women in Love and in Sillitoe's The Death of William Posters the entire "human purpose"--the direction of human history--is opposed and turned away from because it is felt to be antagonistic to real human needs.

In Women in Love we saw that this opposition turned Ursula and Birkin away from England and away from social participation through work, toward relationship with each other. In Sillitoe's A Tree on Fire,[5] the second book in his trilogy, Frank Dawley's opposition turns him away from England and work and family, away also from relationship with a woman, toward a new social purpose in Algeria. The indications are that Frank hopes he can liberate the forms of his own oppression through helping the Algerians liberate themselves from the French.

The drive behind Frank's participation in Algeria is multiple: it allows him to fight a battle against oppression that he cannot fight in England (for here the forms of imprisonment and terror are too close, too insidious, to conquer), thereby permitting a release of the intense violence that constitutes so much of his character; it allows him a situation where he is essentially alone and deprived of all customary stimulants to consciousness (the desert, Frank tells us, is not a means of escape because it pushes him "deeper into the prison" of himself [p. 133]); and lastly, coming to Algeria answers to his need for participation in a human purpose--his need to fit his life into a pattern greater than himself. It allows his philosophy of "action" to be played out: "A true answer should contain within it a decision and the seeds of action. One such answer--whether true or false--had

brought him here" (p. 190). Further on we read: "To comprehend perfectly all details of a complex plan, and at the same time to know that he was taking part in it, filled him with a transcendental joy and gave meaning to his existence" (p. 192). Frank believes that he can be reborn in the fight against oppression. "To kill," Frank tells us, "meant to empty yourself of all that was good; to go into the desert meant emptying oneself of all that was bad in order that what should have been there in the first place could then enter" (p. 148). However, the death that Frank is implicated in, the fact of his "blowing the guts from his fellow men" (p. 147), is a reality that will confront him more forcefully later on when he returns to England. At a distance from this guerrilla war he will find it more difficult to rationalize his own violence in the name of liberty and peace. But for now, he can accomplish these justifications.

The novel suggests an intense gratification in the deprivation imposed by being a guerrilla fighter in the Algerian desert. All cultural accoutrements, comforts, stimulants and distracting concerns that serve to pacify and stupefy are absent; nothing is left except a strategic aim and the body in continual response to the physical world. Speech is almost forgotten altogether. Frank appears alone, even when among fellow fighters, with sun, heat, sky and rock by day, and moon, cold, dark and

sky by night. We read that "He ate live scorpions, scooped mud, went back to the beginning of creation" (p. 199). In the effort to rediscover humanness, he is driven back to the pre-human; but his pre-human condition in the desert, promising in his own terms a rediscovery of stolen human potentialities, is determined within a mechanistic and technological framework that is the war. Frank perceives and experiences his body and mind as an efficient machine; he has given himself, whole, to war, and in doing so he has re-enacted the processes of his own culture: he has turned himself into an instrument of a larger "complex plan." The "cause" may be different, but the process of dehumanization is the same. Frank recognizes some of the dangers inherent in the kind of "machine consciousness" he's adopted when he says: "How can a person be in love, and fight, and still be sane? . . . Still, maybe you don't have to believe that love is dead to draw enough strength to fight for a cause you believe in" (p. 339). The novel suggests that perhaps he has to do just that.

The issue here in Sillitoe's work is an ongoing and complex one; we see it first in The Death of William Posters when Frank turns away from the love he feels for one woman, seeing it as potentially oppressive, toward a cosmic love of humanity. The war in Algeria temporarily answers this issue for him:

> You could not love only one person in the desert, because if you did you and everyone would perish.

> There was a love in which the phallus dominated all else, the boss and operating member tyrannizing over everything you did or wanted to do. The other love was controlled by the hands that helped, taught, built and if necessary fought. (p. 307)

Drawing sharp distinctions between love that allows one to help, teach, build and fight, and sexual love which "tyrannizes," Frank initially determines that he is finished with all such phallically dominated relationships. Nonetheless, he has a lover and a child, and a wife and two more children waiting for him in England, facts which he has difficulty reconciling with his apprehensions and new found belief in a socially purposive love. Recognizing that wholeness of his own person, his humanity, is at stake, he declares: "'I can get out of here for a while to see Myra, and then come back quite easily if I want to, or go to another war like this. There'll be plenty in my lifetime'" (p. 339). Myra expresses her own premonitions on the destructive potential of Frank's new allegiance when she says "going out to forge and prove helped no one but hurt many. You split open the body and mind . . . and in the end the damage was greater to yourself than even to the one you love. . . . If he came back he would be crippled" (p. 284).

The modern new man in Sillitoe's trilogy rejects the tenants of his own culture and is driven out toward discovery of socially purposeful action: the mind and body are to be divested of their history in culture

until they achieve the efficiency of the machine. Violence is the key to action: "The one infallible answer was always violence, violence, and still more violence. In Algeria it was already succeeding in what it set out to do. It couldn't fail, provided it was prolonged and violent enough" (pp. 368-369). Belief in the purposiveness of violent revolution provides Frank with the spiritual drive he needs to act; it also leads him to a belief in the human potential for creative and compassionate life in a world where humanness appears to be destroyed. But John Handley's suicide in the final novel reveals the dangers hidden in Frank's revolutionary ideals and rationalizations for killing. John's letter is the trilogy's protest against the machine/war consciousness of Frank:

> "Revolution and War have absorbed and obsessed you. . . . Revolution means War, and we are <u>living</u> people, all of us at this table, so how can we speak the words War and Life in the same breath? . . .
>
> "If War were a means of preserving life there would be no justification for this letter. But War is a method of acquiring more property, and killing in order to get that property. It is only another way of greed and death. . . .
>
> "Show me a patriot, and I will show you a monster of the human race. Patriotism is akin to sex in the head, a sort of spiritual pornography. A patriot ends by killing children, and lives to an honourable old age. . . .
>
> " . . . . By regarding Revolution as religious more than political you can never be robbed of your faith by the shallow world. There is no such thing as a God that failed. Only you fail. The transient world lives in a dream. It lies on the edge of nightmare yet rarely tips into it--though this century of tears isn't over yet. Only good can negate evil.

> "In order to attain and pursue these necessary qualities, Revolution must become the salvation of the individual. There is no contradiction [my italics]. Revolution is not the normal enslavement of people which we have seen so far. It must mean liberation into mututal good. It must begin in peace and end in peace. . . . A revolution that is brought about by War and Civil War is likely to destroy freedom. . . .
>
> " . . . The one virtue is to know oneself as a man or woman of the world, and not of one country. . . .
>
> " . . . If everyone followed the precept--Know thyself--there would surely be no greater Revolution. . . . "[6]

"There is no contradiction," John Handley writes; yet the trilogy's development has been driven by Frank Dawley's belief in the inherent contradictions between sexual love and cosmic love, and between the recovery of individuality and the accomplishment of himself as a socially responsible activist. These apparent contradictions lead him to a guerrilla war when he feels forced to make a choice. Handley's letter reveals that the only real or absolute contradiction is between life and death: when Dawley becomes an instrument of death in war he kills his own humanity. He must, in his own terms, become a machine.

Yet Frank never does come to reconcile his revolutionary principles with the peace he comes to know in relationship with Myra. The trilogy's final novel implies that in the modern world as it is, there can be no such complete peace, no complete reconciliation. Frank and Myra are not the Birkin and Ursula of Women in Love,

though they are certainly driven by some of the same needs. In the context of the trilogy and by implication in the context of the more modern world, they cannot be. But the "flame of life" lives on in them yet, and as long as it does, human life and change remain possible:

> This end of life was the fire of life, in which the flame was often invisible, nonexistent. How could one live without this flame? You didn't have to see it to believe it was there. If it was in your heart you could see it spring up in all different places. As long as it stayed in your heart your revolutionary principles were not at variance with the way you lived.
>
> He could wait, and warm himself at his own flame, and let others share it when they needed it. Waiting and guarding your own flame with the faith of your life was justification enough. Because when the call came, when he had waited until he knew what to do, when it was necessary to go out to a cause and do something, then he would do so--but always finally remembering, and being troubled by, the words of Handley's brother John. (p. 318)

PART 11. D.H. LAWRENCE: CONFRONTATIONS WITH LANGUAGE AND ARTICULATION OF AN "ABSENT" REALITY

We know far more about the characters in Lawrence's novels than we do the characters in Sillitoe's trilogy; or perhaps it is more accurate to say that we know and understand character differently with each of these novelists. Lawrences assumes an understanding of unconscious and conscious motivation; narrating from an omniscient position within the human psyche, he ventures into

areas of human feeling and response left untouched in Sillitoe's narrative.

In the early sections of The Rainbow concerning Tom and Lydia, Lawrence gives expression to a struggle for relationship where the elements of confrontation lie below the level of consciousness. In Sons and Lovers Gertrude and Paul Morel verbalized and conceptualized their feelings, and Lawrence himself was clearly centered within their thinking. But in the early section of The Rainbow there is a distance between the novelist and his characters' consciousness. Here, only the novelist has consciousness--Tom and Lydia do not; the novel assumes that their consciousness is not significantly influential to give utterance to. Here, there is not the kind of ambivalence between author and character that we saw in Sons and Lovers, where Lawrence was so close to his main character, although that ambivalence returns later in the novel with Ursula and again more fully with Ursula and Birkin in Women in Love.

The reader weaves through the early sections of The Rainbow in a kind of spell, caught deeply within the internal processes of receptivity and retraction, openness and hostility, in continual movement; human interaction at its experiential but unspoken level is revealed to be the primary subject of this early section of the novel. Events recede in significance as nothing that happens

outside of the relationship between Tom and Lydia alters the quality of fluidity in their experience with each other.

The foreignness of Lydia Lensky's past experience, her long periods of unresponsive abstraction, serve to constitute some of the central sources of antagonism between Tom and Lydia. On Tom's part, it is his fear of her strangeness, her difference, and his consequent inability to be openly responsive to her that often leads toward a hostile separation between them. Always we read of the giving and receiving between them, the apprehension, drawing away, hostility, and then reaching out again, and this forms the novel's direction and movement in the Tom/Lydia/Anna section of the novel. Lawrence draws his reader toward comprehension of the continual movement of life below the surface of external events, conceptualizations and language. While there are few events or alterations to mark the plot or to propel the novel forward, nothing is ever static in the world narrated here. As Tom will come to realize at Anna's wedding, one is never fully established as a person: life is a movement with no fixed finish, no arrival point.

In Lawrence's vision, significant life lies outside of the spoken word, beyond external events, beyond conscious comprehension even. It can only be alluded to, suggested, as Tom comes to know through marriage with Lydia:

> He did not know her any better, any more

> precisely, now that he knew her altogether. Poland, her husband, the war--he understood no more of this in her. He did not understand her foreign nature, half German, half Polish, nor her foreign speech. But he knew her, he knew her meaning, without understanding. What she said, what she spoke, this was a blind gesture on her part. In herself she walked strong and clear, he knew her, he saluted her, was with her. (p. 96)

This is not Lydia's subjective self that Tom has come to know. Lawrence is not terribly interested in his characters' subjective being; rather, he is interested in exploring and developing a recognition of unconscious centres of human response. His focus is directed beyond his characters' ideas, beliefs, proclamations, beyond even their "feelings" as they understand them. He is reaching toward articulation of something in human life much more primary, much more distanced from conscious apprehension.

The world created through the relationship Tom and Lydia share is a very silent one by all indications. Anna eventually reacts against the intense unarticulated world of intimate relations in her family. She yearns for discussion; she wants to bring her experiential world into consciousness but she is always blocked by her parents' reluctance and mistrust of language (pp. 104-105). We read that the "spoken word" falls "sterile on Lydia," and that Tom does "not want to have things dragged into consciousness" (p. 105); even Anna, in spite of her

opposition to their lack of articulation, "hated to hear things expressed, put into words" (p. 106).

The issue of human consciousness was not one-dimensional for Lawrence. He shares Anna's drive toward articulation (his novels are, after all, a means of answering that drive) while his impulse is to pull away in mistrust, much as Tom and Lydia do. He is able to directly confront the conflict that this duality in his feeling creates by writing a novel which gives utterance and significance to an otherwise absent reality. Lawrence recognized the direction human development was taking: life was becoming synonymous with thought, with language. The recognition of such development is expressed through the characters in The Rainbow and Women in Love and these novels chronicle a situation where the distinction between experience and language is being absorbed, forgotten and finally lost. The tendency in human development that the novels fearfully speak of has become a predominant reality in the "modern present," where language and images have taken the place of experience.[7] The first two generations of The Rainbow, whose context is that of intimacy and an almost wordless "language" of feelings and gesture, know the falsity of the spoken word and the lies inherent in the claims that culture's transcendent language makes to articulating truth. In The Rainbow, when Lawrence gives expression to centres of human response which had not yet been

novelistically developed, he was making an attempt to name something before it went out of existence, because he knew that at this stage of human history, that which is not named, is doomed to extinction.

The struggle toward articulation of the unknown in life, of an "absent" reality, carries within it the struggle with a language that kills and distorts life as soon as it approaches it, and hence this struggle leads toward the recognition that human experience can never be fully apprehended in consciousness. Of Lydia Lensky we read: "It was as if she worshipped God as a mystery, never seeking in the least to define what He was. And inside her, the subtle sense of the Great Absolute wherein she felt her being was very strong" (pp. 103-104). Lawrence, much like Lydia as she is represented here, seeks to illuminate, seeks to point us toward, the "Great Absolute" of human life through a language religious in origin but made his own. Such a language allows for illumination without definition; the unknown in life remains incomprehensible in the novel while it is nonetheless the novel's subject.

In The Rainbow characters are seen to "know" a good deal about the undercurrents of experience and needs that direct and propel their lives. While they seldom verbalize such knowledge, the indications are that at least as far as Tom, Lydia, Will and Anna are concerned, such

knowledge is not brought into conscious conceptualization. But they do nonetheless "know." We read that Anna "realized" that Will was trying to devour her, bear down on her: "She realized it all. . . . " (p. 185). A little further on in the novel, referring to Anna and Will, Lawrence writes: "What was really between them ~~they~~ could not utter. Their words were only accidents in the mutual silence" (p. 215). While language is the novel's only means of revelation and illumination, the novel warns us again and again that words can only point toward reality at best, they can never be a direct representation, and that human experience and consciousness are not synonymous.

The short section in The Rainbow where Will is entangled with Jenny, whom he meets at the Empire music hall, reveals not only some significant aspects of Will's character, but also the extreme impotence and potential for distortion in the dominant culturally saturated language generally accepted. While the episode between Will and Jenny reveals a complex conflict of power and fascinating twists of mututal response, the words they use when speaking to each other shockingly reduce the situation between them to current cliché and assumptions of sexual acquisition. The novelist's exploration into the undercurrents of motive and feeling, juxtaposed as it is to the reductionist, vulgarized version that Will and Jenny give to their own feelings through the words they use

with each other, forcefully reveals the antithesis that has developed between experience and the spoken word. In the context of such an antithesis, the novel seems to be telling us, it would be better if we just kept quiet.

While there is obviously considerably more verbalization between characters in Women in Love than in The Rainbow, and language has become more prominent in life and in relationship, words are not any more significant or indicative. While Birkin relentlessly explicates to Gerald, we are told that Gerald doesn't really listen. What draws the two men together has little to do with what they say to each other:

> Gerald was held unconsciously by the other man. He wanted to be near him, he wanted to be within his sphere of influence. There was something very congenial to him in Birkin. But yet, beyond this, he did not take much notice. He felt that he, himself, Gerald, had harder and more durable truths than any the other man knew. He felt himself older, more knowing. It was the quick-changing warmth and vitality and brilliant warm utterance he loved in his friend. It was the rich play of words and quick interchange of feelings he enjoyed. The real content of the words he never really considered; he himself knew better. (p. 53)

The complexities of feeling between people are not generated by what they say, but by aspects of character more fundamental than the spurious words they utter. Minette Darington is not interested in what Gerald says to her, but she is absorbed by his talk. She is absorbed "by him, she wanted the secret of him, the experience of his male being" (p. 61). Clearly, as well, the pull Gudrun and

Gerald feel toward each other is not generated through the words they exchange with each other; they are drawn toward each other through their fundamental attachments to power and violence.

"'The point about love,'" Birkin says to Ursula, "'is that we hate the word because we have vulgarized it. It ought to be . . . tabooed from utterance for many years, till we get a new, better idea'" (p. 126). But what the novel reveals through the lack of real significance that language has for its characters, is that all ideas and experiences are robbed of their meaning at the moment of utterance in the present era of human development. All language is vulgarized language potentially because all language is adaptable or amenable to the processes of commodification. The silence of the early sections of The Rainbow develops into intense and extensive distortions in Women in Love. Here language is directly confronted as an issue. In the context of a systematized and vulgarized language, the struggle toward articulation reaches new intensity in Lawrence and is embodied most fully in Birkin; but in the final stages of the struggle, Birkin abandons it. The last chapters of Women in Love, situated outside of England, bring a return of silence between characters. The spoken word recedes but we still have the novelist, just as we did in The Rainbow, and the indications are that if the characters cannot make their

meaning felt to us and to each other, the novelist feels that he still can, through his own explorative and creative articulation.

With the recognition of how Lawrence conceived of his own powers to give utterance to what his characters could not say in mind, a significant distinction between Lawrence's novels and Sillitoe's trilogy becomes apparent. I wrote earlier that Lawrence ventured into areas of experience that remained untouched in Sillitoe's work. In The Rainbow Lawrence indicates that reality exists in that which is unspoken, and even in Women in Love the spoken word eventually gives way to a narration of inter-relationship that is largely nonverbalized by the characters themselves. Lawrence gives a voice to an inner reality which his characters cannot speak of. Sillitoe also directs his focus toward an inner reality, but the reality he exposes beneath the level of consciousness is radically different than the world we come to see in The Rainbow and Women in Love. Sillitoe reveals an inner reality composed primarily of fear and anger leading toward destructive and violent expression. Social reality has become so absolute in its power and scope in the context of the novels that the instincts (by which I mean the unconscious drives and felt responses apparent in Lawrence's characters) have become overwhelmed. The result is either a complete repressive acquiesence to and identification with

social reality (exemplified by Nancy Dawley, Keith and George) or a complete enraged opposition (expressed most fully by Frank Dawley and perhaps Albert Handley). Characters who are neither completely acquiescent nor completely opposed are vague, lost, and confused. There appears to be no "space" left in the unconscious for the kind of motivating forces and experiences explored in Lawrence's fiction. The most powerful impulses of Sillitoe's characters are fear and anger directed against each other and against various forms of social control, manipulation and power.

ALAN SILLITOE: THE DEFEAT OF AN AUTHORIAL VOICE

While Lawrence's tendency, in The Rainbow and even in Women in Love, was to speak while his characters kept silent, Sillitoe allows his characters to speak and think exclusively for themselves. Sillitoe's own voice, distinct from his characters, is absent. The result is that the novels are contained within a culturally bound language, much of the writing being in the form of platitudes, maxims, and clichés. The novels contain no authorial comprehension or vision beyond that which the characters themselves know and envision. The motivation behind the novels, as I view them, is negation, and beyond this the struggle is toward discovery of self and humanness:

toward the discovery and recovery of the fundamental motivating centres of human life. But Sillitoe cannot speak for his characters; he does not assume to know or be capable of articulating beyond what they know and can articulate. The characters themselves lack particularity beyond the various forms that their opposition, or lack of it, take; finding effective forms of negation becomes the novels' task as we move through the trilogy: John, Richard and Adam Handley play at civil war from their bedrooms; Enid Handley, mother of seven, runs away with a teenage dope smuggler; Mandy Handley roars along the freeway in a mini for days on end in a kind of suicide/murder mission; Frank Dawley runs all the way to Algeria to escape the violence of his own culture and then kills strangers in order to express his opposition; while Nancy Dawley, presumably because the seeds of discontent in her pale next to her fear of not adapting, gives the whole venture of life up and takes the safe way out, quietly merging in with the rest of civilized British society. What needs to be made clear is that the lack of individuality in Sillitoe's characters (an individuality Sillitoe has not been able to successfully create) points toward particular qualities of modern life that were still in their developmental stages in Lawrence's novels and lifetime. While Sillitoe cannot give a voice to his characters beyond their various forms of negation or

adaptation, his work does however reflect the illnesses of the modern era and illuminate cultural forms of persuasion that stunt human development in its infantile stages. In this respect, all of Sillitoe's characters are young Will Brangwens, undeveloped in feeling, but--and this is the critical distinction--without the same potential for awakening.

Early in The Death of William Posters Frank Dawley attempts to answer for some of the feelings of violent opposition endured and expressed by both himself and his working friends. People, in Frank's terms, know that they are being robbed: robbed not only of the large profits made through their labour, but robbed also of their own desire and ability to make real choices--the ability to know and feel themselves as vital living beings. Culture, in the modern era of film, reaches deeper into the heart of life than ever before, propagandizing a constructed image of life and patterns of fulfillment that gain ascendance and power over life. Frank, speaking to a friend about the potential of global warfare says: "'I wondered why everybody was dead at a time when they should be alive. And I thought: maybe it's because everybody's talking about it on the telly and reading about it in the papers, and while this goes on they think it's a game and can't happen. . . . '" (p. 45). As some of the most insightful journalists, researchers and

documentarians know, the form and format of film can and often does eliminate the most potent aspects of its subject. Television news productions in particular give clarity and order to terror and disaster, thereby anesthetizing viewers from recognition of their own terror in response. Repeatedly confronted with images of horror and human devastation, television viewers are desensitized by and fixed on the clean, clear order of the one hour news slot, divided nicely into and abstracted by subsections, broken off by the jargonistic gloss of advertisements steeped in cultural anesthetics on commercial networks, and of course reassured by the absoluteness of the fact that the "News Hour" will return the following day at the same time with the same order within the same context, <u>regardless</u>. As long as the television "package" retains order, clarity, stability, <u>rationality</u>, the irrationality and inhumanity in the way we live our lives can be and is repressed. "'You don't have a bleeding future while you've got the telly on, and that's a fact'", Frank tells us (p. 45). Frank's proclamations on a lack of a future are an expression of his intuitive awareness that people are being destroyed at the roots of their humanness through a technologically advancing culture, sophisticated yet incomparably stupid and totalitarian in the context of human history. There are no human experiences too intimate, too private, or even too horrendous to be suitable for public consump-

tion. Sillitoe is writing in an age where everything is public; all is given up to scrutiny, discussion, debate, and finally, the market where it can be turned to profit. Simply put, Sillitoe's characters lack credibility because in this present place in human history we all do.

When we look closely at the interrelationships between people in the Sillitoe novels we can see further into the complexities of experience in modern life. While Lawrence's characters often respond toward each other in powerful attraction or repulsion which is irrepressible, Sillitoe's characters tend most fundamentally to be impenetrable, self-obsessed and self-contained. If we look at Frank Dawley in particular, his relationship to the world and to others is predominantly expropriative. In absorbing situations and people into his own system of perception he obliterates others as they are, apart from himself (see Frank with Pat Shipley for example, D.W.P. pp. 36-39). We can distinguish Sillitoe's characters from Lawrence's by their detachment and lack of felt unmediated responses. John Handley, a World War 11 concentration camp veteran, is representative of the impenetrable condition of the trilogy's characters. He literally closes the door on human interaction, living in seclusion within his bedroom for more than a decade, desperately trying to "make contact" through his radio. Here he hopes to discover a solution to the world's humanity or lack of it. If there is a

dominant consciousness which surfaces in the novels, his voice is it.

Albert Handley, "an artist with a machine gun waiting for the end of the world" (Tree on Fire, p. 31), expresses his opposition and discontent primarily through painting. His relationship to others is usually volatile and manipulative, providing him with the stimulus he needs to work, for his painting is dependent on anger and disruption. Handley speaks most often with the intention to disturb and shock in order to secure a sense of power over others. He makes a point of breaking all of the small rules in acts of self-assertion, because he is acutely aware that as far as the fundamental laws upon which his society rests are concerned he is powerless.

While Frank Dawley and the Handley family all appear to be driven toward destruction and violence, each too has an argument, a rationale, for their behaviour and feelings. All arguments are developed by Sillitoe, all given play, wielding their way through the novels, repressively determining experience, behaviour and interrelationship. The direction of the novels appears to be grounded upon the struggle to unravel the false consciousness and repressive strategy of each thinker and to come to a resting place of clarity and revelation. Myra asks: "Why were all arguments good, even the bad ones?" (Flame of Life, p. 214). The question is Sillitoe's as well, for in a world bom-

barded by arguments and the most effective means of persuasion hitherto imaginable, it becomes imperative that the novelist get beyond the arguments, beyond his culture's mystifications, beyond ideology. The trilogy pushes a body of arguments to their limits in an attempt to reach some irreducable insights into human life. The novels abound in doctrines and universals that the characters cling to as though life itself were dependant on the shrouds they wind round themselves. While Lawrence begins with a focus on the unique human qualities of each of his characters, Sillitoe leads the reader through a series of doctrines and disturbed lives. The ability to get beyond all the arguments can only be achieved when all the arguments have been delivered and lived out by the characters themselves. When the final novel of the trilogy comes to a close, there are no dogmas left, none that the novel can support. Even John Handley's letter of spiritual revolution serves more as a warning against ideology than it does as a treatise on its own terms. There is however, Frank Dawley's claim to the commitment to his own "flame of life." The trilogy struggles to discover, by means of its journey through a mass of mystifications and devastated feelings, a belief in the power of life itself. This is where Lawrence <u>begins</u> his writing in <u>The Rainbow</u>. Sillitoe's novels testify to and exemplify the frightening fact that we, or more particularly, the novelist

can no longer begin with life as the subject of exploration and articulation; we must first struggle to recover it. When Frank Dawley attains some distance from his revolutionary ideology he is in a position where the process of personal recovery can begin. We do not see this in the novels: none of Sillitoe's characters reach full human stature. We only read of the suggestion of potentiality as the trilogy draws to a close.

PART 111. DEMOCRACY, SOCIALISM AND MATERIALISM: QUESTIONS ON IDEOLOGY AND EMPATHY

Lawrence's views on democracy, his ambivalent attraction toward the aristocratic class, and his intentional separation from his working class origins and locale, have been the focus of numerous critiques of his work. I do not intend any such critique or defense of his political positions here. I wish rather, to look at both The Rainbow and Women in Love in an effort to illuminate the source of some of the views in question, and then to see how his opposition toward industrial and commercial developments relate to these views. Following this, I would then like to turn again to Sillitoe's trilogy in order to develop a comparative discussion which will focus on the novels' exploration into attitudes towards class distinctions, socialism, technological advancements and

the values of market capitalism.

For Tom Brangwen in The Rainbow, and for Lawrence himself, a sense of the "aristocratic" is tied to the fulfillment of sexual desire. Tom's reverence for the foreign "monkey like" man he meets at the Matlock Hotel is much the same as his mother's reverent attitude toward the squire's lady, Mrs. Hardy, and the vicar. The aristocrat, as presented in the early sections of The Rainbow, exudes mystery and vision beyond the commonplace reality of labouring lives. The aristocrat commands attention and envy through a manner and gesture which indicate broad comprehension of the world and hence power. For Tom's mother, the aristocrat provides "the living dream of her life" (p. 11). Because Tom holds his mother's dream in the form of his own desire, his drive is to move outward beyond Cossethay, but he is too rooted, too fixed and apprehensive to make the move. Unable to direct his sexual desire toward any of the common women of Cossethay, he is miserable and scarcely aware of his immediate world which has become unreal to him.

After Tom's encounter with the girl and the foreigner at the Matlock Hotel we read:

> The result of the encounters was, that he dreamed day and night, absorbedly, of a voluptuous woman and of the meeting with a small, withered foreigner of ancient breeding. No sooner was his mind free, no sooner had he left his own companions, than he began to imagine an intimacy with fine-textured, subtle-

> mannered people such as the foreigner at Matlock, and amidst this subtle intimacy was always the satisfaction of a voluptuous woman. (p. 25)

The aristocratic, the lure of the unknown world beyond the immediate and the common, and the desirable woman, are all bound up in Tom's feelings. The mysterious quality of Lydia's past, coupled with her aristocratic heritage, answer to Tom's sexual feelings. Through relationship with her he moves beyond the common and thereby opens the way to his own sexual potency.

If we look further into the novel in order to see what the aristocratic represents, we move beyond manners and subtleties. Tom, Anna, and Will all acquire aristocratic stature through Lydia and through what is achieved in the relationship between Tom and Lydia, and this stature is carried into the next generation of Brangwen children. The ideal of life lived free of economic anxiety, free of public authority and influence, is fully actualized in the novel with Will and Anna's family. The Brangwens have established themselves as distinct from their fellow labouring neighbours; they have accomplished the first Brangwen woman's dream:

> The Brangwens were rich. They had free access to the Marsh farm. The school teachers were almost respectful to the girls, the vicar spoke to them on equal terms. The Brangwen girls presumed, they tossed their heads. . . . . . The Brangwen girls had all a curious blind dignity, even a kind of nobility in their bearing. By some result of breed and upbringing, they seemed to rush along their own lives without

> caring that they existed to other people. . . . [Ursula] suffered bitterly if she were forced to have a low opinion of any person, and she never forgave that person.
>
> . . . All their lives the Brangwens were meeting folk who tried to pull them down, to make them seem little. . . .
>
> . . . [Ursula] had an instinctive fear of petty people, as a deer is afraid of dogs. . . .
>
> She measured by the standard of her own people: her father and mother, her grandmother, her uncles. Her beloved father, so utterly simple in his demeanour, yet with his strong dark soul . . . : her grandmother, who had come from so far and was centred in so wide an horizon: people must come up to these standards before they could be Ursula's people. (pp. 263-264)

The Brangwens achieve aristocratic stature when they accomplish independence from and indifference toward the values of the public world. The yearning toward the aristocratic, exemplified as it is in The Rainbow, contains within it the yearning toward independence from economic concerns, pettiness, group consciousness, and the influences of outside authorities. The aristocratic Brangwen family in The Rainbow is free in ways that Lawrence's own family obviously never was, in ways that Lawrence himself clearly wished for.

For Lawrence, independence also meant independence from the mining class and working people of his childhood. That Lawrence suffered deeply within the milieu of the mining classes of Eastwood is undoubtable; we need only to look at Paul Morel in Sons and Lovers and Ursula in The Rainbow for testimonies to this.

We read in The Rainbow that fear of authority, brutality, mob resentment and power "formed one of the deepest influences of [Ursula's] life" (pp. 270-271). Ursula feels that her most vulnerable and intimate self is being violated through each public contact. Her family home becomes a kind of sanctuary, often chaotic and stifling, but a sanctuary nonetheless where she feels that her deepest experiences and feelings are safe.

The aristocratic, within the context of The Rainbow, also comes to mean independence of person: the ability to remain oneself in an environment that demands surrender of individuality. The novel expresses a sense of repulsion toward the quality of passivity that would allow one to become the subject of another. Ursula's identification with the lion in her struggle to comprehend Christianity, exemplifies this feeling of repulsion quite clearly:

> Ursula could not help dreaming of Moloch. Her god was not mild and gentle, neither Lamb nor Dove. He was the lion and the eagle. Not because the lion and the eagle had power, but because they were proud and strong; they were themselves they were not passive subjects of some shepherd, or pets of some loving woman, or sacrifices of some priest. She was weary to death of mild, passive lambs and monotonous doves. If the lamb might lie down with the lion, it would be great honour to the lamb, but the lion's powerful heart would suffer no diminishing. She loved the dignity and self-possession of lions.
>
> She did not see how lambs could love. Lambs could only be loved. They could only be afraid, and tremblingly submit to fear, and become sacrificial; or they could submit to

> love, and become beloveds. In both they were passive. (p. 342)

The novel's expression of Ursula's fear of the "mob" lying in wait to destroy her, and her identification with the lion as opposed to the lamb, are not equatable with any antagonistic feelings Lawrence may have felt toward the working class people who comprised his own early history (one may of course have led to the other, but they are not synonymous). Such expressions do however reveal the powerful need to protect the most intimate self from processes of homogeneity, reduction and humiliation that Lawrence was anxiously and deeply aware of. Lawrence's wish for independence from the mining people of his childhood can only be fully understood when we recognize that the fear he felt within the world of the working class in Eastwood is a fear he would feel and did feel throughout his life whenever he was confronted with a body of people who appeared homogeneous in feeling and thinking: people who, in Ursula's terms, had surrendered their own personal dignity, their own pride, through identification with self-sacrifice.

Within the novel's framework, democracy and Christianity unite to impose an authoritative power that drags all of life down to the level of the mundane, the suburban, the average--all is reduced; conversely, the

aristocratic is tied to the vision of the unknown, the remote, the mysterious. Only the aristocratic vision recognizes the great mysteries of life that are both human and beyond the human, and only the aristocratic vision denies the basic tenets on which democracy and conservative Christianity are based.

Within The Rainbow, democracy is seen to have led to a social system which has as its goal human adaptability and reduction of individual difference in the interests of production. The "common good" of the community as it stands does not equal the highest good of any individual because the good of the community has come to mean nothing other than material prosperity. Democracy then rests on materialism at its lowest level (The Rainbow, p. 329).

Lawrence recognized that material production, consumption, and accumulation were becoming absolute and inconquerable as a single driving force and value system directing human life in western domocracies. The marketplace was already entering into and absorbing areas of life hitherto considered sanctuaries beyond commercial, materialistic interests. It is not surprising then that Ursula, after having given her services to teaching, should then discover when she enters university in Notingham another "apprentice shop," another "laboratory for the factory" (p. 435). Ursula sees human energy, creativity, aspiration, experience, and thought being funnelled into

and then directed toward material production. Ursula's revelation when she enters the university clearly expresses the novel's opposition to the new twentieth century "God" of materialism:

> A harsh and ugly disillusion came over her again, the same darkness and bitter gloom from which she was never safe now, the realization of the permanent substratum of ugliness under everything. . . .
>
> . . . inside the college, she knew she must enter the sham workshop. All the while, it was a sham store, a sham warehouse, with a single motive of material gain. . . . It pretended to exist by the religious virtue of knowledge. But the religious virtue of knowledge was become a flunkey to the god of material success. . . .
>
> . . . She was sick with this long service at the inner commercial shrine. Yet what else was there? Was life all this, and this only? Everywhere, everything was debased to the same service. Everything went to produce vulgar things, to encumber material life. (p. 435)

The opposition here expressed becomes imperative in the more modern era, as Ursula's questions work their way toward extinction and incomprehensibility.

When we read of Wiggiston in The Rainbow, the colliers are seen to suffer far less from poor wages than from something else, something more difficult to name, something far more insidious:

> The streets were like visions of pure ugliness. a grey-black macadamized road, asphalt causeways, held in between a flat succession of wall, window, and door, a new brick channel that began nowhere, and ended nowhere. Everything was amorphous, yet everything repeated itself endlessly. . . .
>
> The place had the strange desolation of a ruin. Colliers hanging about in gangs and

> groups, or passing along the asphalt pavements heavily to work, seemed not like living people, but like spectres. The rigidity of the blank streets, the homogeneous amorphous sterily of the whole suggested death rather than life. There was no meeting place, no centre, no artery, no organic formation. There it lay, like the new foundations of a red-brick confusion rapidly spreading, like a skin disease. (p. 345)

The colliers suffer, not simply from poor wages, but from the sterile horror that is the result of the subjugation of human endeavour and human value to the interests of market capitalism. Communities are developed rapidly through the direction of market forces that recognize no interests, no value, beyond those of efficient production and profit. Workers are tied to the system of production through their labour, dependency on wages, and through the crippling environment that has been created to support it. Employers, managers, administrators, and employees co-ordinate their energies in order to develop the most efficient mechanized production that will yield maximum profit.

Such co-ordination, the novel implies, replaces the struggle toward self-development and fulfillment that Tom, Lydia, Anna, Will and Ursula (eventually) pursue. Once tied to the system of production, people are "freed" from personal responsibility and pursuit, which is what accounts for the fascination toward this system exemplified by Winnifred and Uncle Tom Brangwen. We read that: Tom "knew what he was doing. He had the instinct of a

growing inertia, of a thing that chooses its place of rest in which to lapse into apathy, complete, profound, indifference. He would let the machinery carry him" (p. 352). While Ursula refuses to be lulled into subjection, "No more would she subscribe to the great colliery, to the great machine which has taken us all captive" (p. 350), she does however discover that complete rejection is not possible when she confronts the "great machine" directly within the walls of the primary school system. Her success here, which she feels she must attain at all costs, requires her identification with the system as it is. While the system achieves her subjugation and she is rendered powerless to live out the rejection she feels while at Wiggiston, the pain her acquiesence brings her remains the sign of vulnerable humanness within a mechanized and invulnerable tyranny.

I think it fair to say that while Lawrence's most prominent tendency was to draw away from the oppressed working people of his childhood and away from those who appeared weak and passive, Sillitoe feels united with the oppressed and feels compelled to work toward a constructive endeavour that will lead toward the recovery of dignity and power for those that have been robbed of both. The distinctions between Lawrence and Sillitoe in these terms can be more fully viewed when we consider the very different expressions they give to the early experiences

in the lives of their characters.

Paul Morel, in Sons and Lovers, does not share the consciousness of his fellow townspeople; experientially, his is a different and antagonistic reality. Given the articulation of the experiential content and quality of Paul Morel's early life, the aversion, expressed by Ursula in The Rainbow, toward the impulse to succumb to the forces of public authority, and the aversion felt toward those people who do succumb, naturally follows. The novels express intense resentment and anger directed against working people's capacity to do injury and to humiliate those who are not among them. Lawrence felt vulnerable and targeted in the mining milieu which was his early home, and given this context he was not always capable of human empathy and identification with working people. He felt at odds, and the only empathy and identification he could feel was with others who were also at odds, experientially and intellectually, with the group to which they ostensibly belonged.

Empathy and identification with working people comes easily to Sillitoe's Frank Dawley because it is the basis on which his history rests. His history, as we are given it, indicates that intellectually and experientially he has felt at one with his working class community. Frank Dawley has known a kind of complete identification with his class environment and through such identification he

escapes the painful and often isolating struggles that characterize Paul and Ursula's experience, particularly in their adolescence. While Dawley attempts to extricate himself from the limits imposed by a working class ideology, he nonetheless maintains throughout the trilogy an identification with all working and oppressed peoples that allows him to feel that it is his social and personal responsibility to work with people in their fight for human worth and dignity.

Frank Dawley's identification with his community and the absorption of his needs, without apparent contradiction, into the cultural stream of his environment, is clearly related in The Death of William Posters:

> After the landmarks of birth, school, work, you get more handy with the girls. Then at eighteen you're called up, and so look forward to getting out. While you had something ahead of you it was fine. When you got out you went after the women, earned your money and drank your fill. This went on for a couple of years, then there was nothing left, just a fifty mile wall dead in front, starting from your shining shoes and going as far as you could see, right up to the sky. . . . Then your eyes opened, or you thought they did, and in this wall you saw a hole at the bottom, surrounded by rubble and dust as if you'd used the handgrenade of your life so far to blast that hole just big enough to crawl through. So you got married, and it all looked rosy on the other side. (pp. 29-30)

The significant point here is that the content of Frank Dawley's early experiences appear to be wholly provided and directed by external determinants, without the presence

of inner, painful, contradictions that typify the characters in Lawrence's novels. The "wall", which is the first evidence of contradiction, is experienced when the inactive and nebulous self is exposed to consciousness, and this only occurs when there is a fissure in the flow of the culture's goal directed promises. Marriage is revealed as one of the final landmarks of culture, a significant cultural acquisition because it fits neatly into the "stepping stone" cultural machinery that facilitates adaptation. With marriage there will be "a house and home to buy and pay for week by week, and the first kid to wait for month by month and his machine to work at day by day." It is when he arrives here that Frank Dawley's feelings of deep dissatisfaction and entrapment are revealed to him as such; the culture's promises thin out after marriage and he recognizes the dead end he has been consistently moving toward. Dawley is initially locked within the mechanics of culture in a complete way that Lawrence could not conceive of for Paul Morel or Ursula Brangwen. Out of cultural entrapment and class indentification evolves the struggle toward revolutionary socialism in Sillitoe's work. The trilogy's expression of a commitment toward social responsiblity and political action, and an empathy with the oppressed upon which this commitment rests, needs to be viewed within this complete framework. The feeling of being "at odds" and at some critical distance from

public consciousness and authority which we see in Lawrence's work, gives way in the Sillitoe novels and in the more modern world, to a condition of mutual and all-encompassing enslavement. Empathy with the oppressed is achieved by virtue of our mutual, inescapable oppression; the only oppositional recourse in the novels must be socially responsible and active, for this action has become the testimony to what remains of our humanness.

The identification in the Sillitoe novels is with the "wretched of the earth," not with the aristocratic ideal as we saw it in Lawrence; or, put another way, the reiterated belief in the novels is that the meek shall one day become the aristocratic, i.e., achieve their independence, with the return of human dignity. Lawrence's fear, expressed both by Ursula and Birkin in Women in Love, was that the weak already ruled, as they were, without dignity, through a democracy presently directed by an ideology of vulgar materialism. Lawrence saw no fundamental distinction between the materialist authority figure and the materialist worker who was his class subordinate, because each shared an ideology that had usurped and replaced their human potentialities. In the Sillitoe novels, on the other hand, class distinctions are given deeper significance and consideration. Frank Dawley, for instance, sees the world to be controlled by "genocidal maniacs" (Tree on Fire, p. 167) who are

themselves responsible for the defeat of the humanity of the oppressed. Here the responsibility clearly lies with the oppressors themselves, not in a shared ideology or consciousness. Frank Dawley, in the Algerian desert, tells us:

> Evil is no mystifying concept. . . . It is being slothful among bad conditions of life, and preaching that the acceptance of present suffering makes the adventure of change unnecessary, thereby implying that suffering is sufficient adventure for the soul. One must prove that it is not--by making it possible for the weak to inherit the earth and become strong, and to use their newly-won strength in order to help those still weak in the world, which is no less than the fight for eternal justice, a uniting of mankind to give everyone equality and food and dignity that will enable them to become inidividuals in a universal sense. (Tree on Fire, pp. 166-167)

The common perspective in Sillitoe's fictional world is a perspective which tries to draw clear distinctions between "good" and "bad," "ruler" and "ruled," "them" and "us." The battle-grounds are marked. From John Handley we hear:

> "Here's my toast, to the war, the great hundred years war against imperialism and the established order, class war, civil war, dark and light war, the eternal conflict of them against us and us against them, whether it's taking place underground as at the moment (except in a few choice spots of the world) or whether it's breaking around us now in this twilight haven of peace. May such a war go on to the victory and hope of the bitter end." (Tree on Fire, pp. 273-274)

However, in spite of the underground civil war that the Handleys play at, in spite of Dawley's guerrilla struggle

in Algeria, in spite of all the violent antagonisms explored in the trilogy, the novels cannot maintain the strict class lines they are set out on. Frank Dawley recognizes some critical problems when his own political ideology becomes too absolute, and he struggles through his thinking to come to some clarity of insight which can answer to these problems. Speaking of his previous twelve years of factory work, Frank outlines the contradictions inherent in his workers' union:

> ". . . I fostered discontent whenever I thought it had a chance. But I was inconsistent, because while believing in Revolution, I worked hard on peace work. Though the gaffers were glad to get rid of me when I left, they also knew they'd lost a good worker. . . . Agitation for better conditions and a few extra bob now and again, is the oil that keeps the machine running, and the more enlightened bosses knew this, and didn't panic. But I saw the split more and more clearly til I was falling apart, and had to get out before I went off my head. . . ." (Flame of Life, p. 153)

While Lawrence refused to associate himself with the workers' struggle for better wages and working conditions because he felt that the struggle, based as it was on the fight for property, had acquiesced to the materialistic flow of history, Sillitoe here expresses a similar refusal with Frank Dawley's recognition of the absorption of the workers' struggle into the mainstream of historical progress that make it impotent to effect concrete and decisive change. The present, easy forms that workers' discontent take feed into the system that is being opposed.

Frank continues:

> "So I joined up with a guerrilla army which, when it's got the country it's fighting for, will begin building the same industrial society which I was forced to escape from after twelve years. . . . " (p. 153)

The lines of the battleground are beginning to fade, as Frank Dawley intuits that something much deeper and far-reaching lies beneath the surface of the recognizable antagonisms of class difference.

But the trilogy at this point in The Flame of Life hesitates to reveal where the lines of this battleground may go. As if he is overwhelmed by the lack of fixed answers in his thinking, Frank retreats, and reasserts his old line of thought, justifying the rigid lines of battle he has always known:

> "Yet working in a factory, in a country that has no manufactured goods--and assuming that socialism is the system by which the goods would be shared out . . . would be different to sweating in a capitalist state whereby you support an entire class of idle bastards on your back." (p. 153)

While Lawrence was unable to put his faith in socialism, as socialism was currently representing and expressing itself in England, Europe, and Russia, because he felt that underpinning the movement was a consciousness consistent with the destructive and totalitarian qualities of marketplace capitalism and democracy, Sillitoe's vision holds to a committed belief that human needs can be addressed by socialism; this commitment is

however accompanied by a sense of caution and hesitation expressed principally through Frank Dawley's questions and John Handley's letter, and further, through Frank's response to the letter. When John Handley writes: "'If everyone followed the precept--Know thyself--there would be no greater Revolution. Don't let the easiest road pull you along it'", we are able to recognize the implicit critique of Frank Dawley's escape into Algeria. When he marries Myra, and leaves violent opposition behind him, he takes the more difficult road toward his own humanness. Frank's journey from England to Algeria and back again has revealed the repressive and destructive potentials of identification with dogma, while the trilogy has worked through a critique of cultural forces that act against full human development. The novels develop a strong critique of the employment of technological systems in the interests of domination, while they do not oppose technological advancement per se: the machine is almost idolized, and man efficiently mechanized, without dispute, by Frank Dawley. Materialism, as a doctrine, is not directly undercut in the novels as it was with Lawrence, but the novels do express the recognition that human slavery reaches beyond class lines when slavery becomes bondage to an ideology of production and consumption. When Dawley recognizes the contradictions inherent in class conflicts over property, a chink in his "working

man" exterior and ideology appears. When The Flame of Life comes to a close the feelings intimated are softer than anything that has preceded; the voice is unsure, open, questioning, and hesitant. Frank Dawley never loses his empathy with the oppressed and with his knowledge of shared suffering; he is uneasy in the peace he has won for himself. It is a knowledge he cannot forsake; but then, Lawrence too, could never really forsake those whom the world was already casting out. In the faces and gestures of the miners he was able to see himself--able to see us all:

> In everything she saw she grasped and groped to find the creation of the living God, instead of the old, hard barren form of bygone living. Sometimes great terror possessed her. Sometimes she lost touch, she lost her feeling, she could only know the old horror of the husk which bound in her and all mankind. They were all in prison, they were all going mad.
>
> She saw the stiffened bodies of the colliers, which seemed already enclosed in a coffin, she saw their unchanging eyes, the eyes of those who are buried alive: she saw the hard, cutting edges of the new houses, which seemed to spread over the hillside in their insentient triumph, a triumph of horrible, amorphous angles and straight lines, the expression of corruption triumphant and unopposed, corruption so pure that it is hard and brittle . . . a dry, brittle, terrible corruption spreading over the face of the land, and she was sick with a nausea so deep that she perished as she sat. And then, in the blowing clouds, she saw a band of faint iridescence colouring in faint colours a portion of the hill. . . .
>
> And the rainbow stood on the earth. She knew that the sordid people who crept hard-scaled and separate on the face of the world's coruption were living still, that the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to

> life in their spirit, that they would cast off their horny covering of disintegration, that new, clean, naked bodies would issue to a new germination, to a new growth, rising to the light and the wind and the clean rain of heaven. (The Rainbow, pp. 495-496)

PART IV. THE "BUSINESS OF SEX"

Tom Brangwen, we read, had an "innate desire to find in a woman the embodiment of all his inarticulate, powerful religious impulses. . . ." (p. 20). Women, in Lawrence's novels, potentially answer to the deepest needs of men. Like Mrs. Morel, the Brangwen women of each generation are "the centre of resolution in the house;" they are "the anchor and the security" (p. 15). With both Tom and later Will Brangwen, life is deeply centred within their relationships with women. For Birkin, three generations after the opening of The Rainbow, a relationship with a woman promises to form the centre of life for him (Women in Love, p. 52). Anton Skrebensky is the only man within The Rainbow who cannot centre his life upon a woman; he belongs too completely to the world of men and armies. Ursula is said to destroy him. And Gerald in Women in Love, who reveals that he can never really love a woman (pp. 52-53) because he cannot relinquish his deeper need for mastery and power, is destroyed by Gudrun. The men who cannot anchor their lives securely in relationship with

a woman fare poorly in Lawrence's work. In the world of the novels their inability to do so arises out of psychic disturbances from which they suffer deeply.

The women in Sillitoe's novels are far more ambiguously presented and responded to. Our view of relationships is dominated primarily by a male perspective which is mistrustful of attraction toward women and which sees direct association between sexuality and social oppression. Frank Dawley's fear of where relationships with women will take him is shared by Albert Handley in his relations with women. The first two chapters of The Flame of Life focus on Albert Handley's sexual pursuit of Lady Daphne Maria Fitzgerald Ritmeester. The novel does not indicate what motivates them toward each other. It does however expose a bitter indifference, an emptiness and a powerfully mediating self-consciousness which permeates sexual experience. What comes clearly into focus as The Flame of Life progresses is that Handley's sexual desire and need of women is always tied to feelings of resentment toward that need:

> Love is a form of self-destruction, a kind of slow suicide, a full-time occupation that pulls you away from your central self--though I wouldn't mind a bit of it right now, because it can be useful in hauling you clear when your middle starts to eat you up. (p. 166)

The activity of the "central self" Albert here identifies, appears throughout the novels as a consumptive, self-absorption in exclusive and abstracted activity that

rejects and resents "intrusion," unless or until that activity (ordinarily his art or the dynamics within his family where he plays a dominant role) becomes so obsessive and all-consuming that it begins to make him feel sick. He then needs a temporary diversion and release through sexual encounters, but he is consistently cautious about the potential danger of the diversion drawing him away from his "central," productive self in too complete a way. Sex is seen to be antagonistically opposed to creative and essential production in these novels, and both Frank and Albert identify work, as distinct from relationship, as the primary urge of the "central self." The fear, even at the close of The Flame of Life which tries to affirm the value of sexual and familial relationship and pleasure in the interests of human development and sanity, is that intimate fulfillment will ultimately lead to bourgeois passivity and socially anesthetized existence. But while Lawrence's and Sillitoe's works are clearly distinguisable in terms of the attitudes they imply about relationships between men and women, we need to look a little closer at the relationships which are developed and explored in their novels.

Sexual experience in Lawrence's work has an intensity of response that is notably absent in the world of the Sillitoe novels. We read in The Rainbow that Tom Brangwen was nineteen when he slept with a prostitute. The experi-

ence, which his "common sense" tells him "did not matter so very much," nonetheless opens him to feelings he has never before known in relation to sex; he is ashamed, afraid, and finally angry and resentful of sexual desires that become tormenting. We read that "the business of love was, at the bottom of his soul, the most serious and terrifying of all to him" (p. 20). The details of Lawrence's own early sexual life are well known to all readers of his biography, and Paul Morel's adolescent sexual struggles reflect enough of Lawrence's experiential history to indicate that sex and love were indeed very serious "business" to Lawrence. What is significant here is that Tom Brangwen, given his view of and relationship with women, generated particularly by his mother and her place within the family, expects and needs sexual experience to be a profound, deeply felt and altering experience. For Tom Brangwen, sexual fulfillment is in no way equatable with physical gratification:

> But what really prevented his returning to a loose woman, over and above the natural squeamishness, was the recollection of the paucity of the last experience. It had been so nothing, so dribbling and functional, that he was ashamed to expose himself to the risk of a repetition of it. . . .
>
> . . . Again he learnt his lesson: if he took her it was a paucity which he was forced to despise. He did not despise himself nor the girl. But he despised the net result in him of the experience--he despised it deeply and bitterly. (pp. 20-21)

Sexual experience that answers to physical drive alone

leaves Tom feeling ashamed, empty and fearful of further intimacies with women.

The first touch between Tom Brangwen and Lydia Lensky is said to "obliterate" the consciousness of both of them; such obliteration is an "agony," but when Tom returns to himself he is "newly created" upon an altered world: "Like a dawn the newness and the bliss filled in. And she sat utterly still with him, as if in the same" (p. 46). The potential that sexual contact has to break the limits of consciousness, to alter people and their experiential reality, is a potential mutually inherent in all forms of life and relationship, human and non-human, within the vision of The Rainbow. Lydia has been abstracted and detached from life, restricted to her own automatic and mechanistic functioning, since the death of her first two children, but when she goes to the Yorkshire Coast, the landscape, we read, forces memory and feeling to return to her; she is painfully awakened to visions that break the spell of her blurry and repressive abstraction. The process of awakening, begun in Yorkshire, continues and is pushed further through relationship with Tom Brangwen. The intimate experience they share develops out of her potential for reponse and out of Tom's receptivity toward the world's "meaning"; just as the landscape and sea command her awakening, so too does the world reveal its indefin-

able meaning to Tom as he feels it: "The swift, unseen threshing of the night upon him silenced him and he was overcome. He turned away indoors, humbly. There was the infinite world, the eternal, unchanging, as well as the world of life" (p. 81). In the "threshing of the night" and in relationship with Lydia, Tom comprehends the same mystery. He has discovered the "unknown" through intimate touch with a woman who can embody his most "powerful religious impulses," and this discovery has been made dependent upon their mututal sensitive receptivity to the world. In the sensual and sexual body of the responsive other they discover the mystery that is the centre of life itself--the mystery of which the Yorkshire sea and the night have spoken: "There on the farm with her he lived through a mystery of life and death and creation, strange profound ecstasies and incommunicable satisfactions of which the rest of the world knew nothing" (p. 104).

When we look toward Will and Anna, it is clear that Will's relationship with Anna and his ties with the church spring from the same need: the need for passionate libidinal experience beyond the flux and flow of time and activity. When he can live this out with Anna, the church naturally recedes in significance. But when Anna withdraws from him, seeking her satisfaction elsewhere, Will turns his desire directly toward the church in a quest for fulfillment that becomes a kind of perversion

within the novel's framework.

A sense of the "infinite" is what Ursula unconsciously reaches toward but cannot discover with Anton. Ursula and Anton suffer badly in the hands of each other; we read that Ursula's adolescent sexuality becomes baffled and twisted by shame (p. 333) through their sexual warfare. We understand that Anton's desire for Ursula is restricting and possessive, with him working toward her submission while he remains intact and sexually manipulative in order to secure power over her. She reacts in a similar assertion, against him, using her sexuality as a weapon to defeat him:

> And still he had not got her, she was hard and bright as ever, intact. But he must weave himself round her, enclose her, enclose her in a net of shadow, of darkness, so she would be like a bright creature gleaming in a net of shadows, caught. (p. 320)

She is unwavering and immutable in her own power, so that he fails to gain her submission and his own triumph: "Looking at him, at his shadowy, unreal, wavering presence, a sudden lust seized upon her, to lay hold of him and tear him and make him into nothing". (p. 321). Whether they conceive of it as so or not, love is a serious and terrifying experience not only for Tom Brangwen, but for all of the characters in The Rainbow and Women in Love. When Anton is "annihilated" by Ursula, she then turns toward the night once more, asking for the fulfillment

and freedom that he has denied her. Ursula's unconscious yearning toward something other than what Anton represents or can allow to happen (the novel usually refers to this as the "absolute," the "eternal," the "infinite") given his "politicized" character, stems from her dim recognition that life is not defined wholly by human consciousness:

> This lighted area, lit up by man's completest consciousness, she thought was all the world: that here all was disclosed forever. Yet all the time, within the darkness she had been aware of points of light, like the eyes of wild beasts, gleaming, penetrating, vanishing.
> . . .
> . . . she could see the glimmer of dark movement just outside of range. . . .
> . . . the angels in the darkness were lordly and not to be denied. (pp. 437-438)

When Anton rejects the "angels of darkness," he betrays Ursula in her own terms. While they appear to reach some kind of temporary fulfillment--we read that Anton discovers "the clue to himself, he had escaped from the show, like a wild beast escaped straight back into its jungle" (p. 449)--Ursula soon begins to move away from him again, aware of a yearning, a need, she had almost forgotten (p. 456). She leaves him "like a corpse" (p. 457), frightened of her and her sexual body.

Toward the closing of The Rainbow, Ursula realizes that she cannot create a mate as she has tried to form Anton into the embodiment of her own needs. Her mate is to "come from the Infinite. . . . The man would come

out of Eternity to which she herself belonged" (p. 494). Birkin, of Women in Love, is of course to be this man. Just as relationships become more fraught with conflict as we move through The Rainbow with each new generation, so too will these conflicts be intensified throughout Women in Love as we move further into the twentieth century and into the context of World War 1 Britain.

The destructive elements in sexual relationship become more prominent in Lawrence's fiction as character becomes increasingly dominated from without. Ursula and Birkin struggle throughout Women in Love to come to a relationship that Tom and Lydia Brangwen were able to establish silently in a few moments in a vicarage kitchen in the early evening. While Tom naturally turned to Lydia as one who could embody all of his deepest impulses, Birkin makes the novel's critical fear apparent when he tells Gerald that "Humanity doesn't embody the utterance of the incomprehensible anymore" (p. 53). While Birkin repeatedly claims that the promise of his future lies in relationship with a woman, the novel expresses the anxiety of doubt about whether a woman, any woman, or a man, any man, can potentially embody the deepest impules, which are creative and mysterious, in the more modern era of the early twentieth century.

The association between sexual arousal and violence is quickly established and consistently expressed through-

out Women in Love. Gerald is roused most intensely by the sense Minette gives him of her need to be violated and kept at the mercy of another (p. 74), or conversely, of her need to have complete power over another, as she has with Halliday. And again, when Gerald overpowers his mare at a railway crossing, Ursula is repulsed, while Gudrun is roused and drawn toward him in a scene where sexual desire and violence are implied as interdependent. Ursula is immediately distinguished as being outside of this sexual-social illness by her response to Gerald and by the association and empathy Lawrence draws between her "sensitive expectancy" (p. 2) and the mare's "delicate quivering" (p. 105).[8] She alone, we read, understood Gerald "perfectly, in pure opposition" (p. 107).

While we read that Gudrun "won't [my italics] give herself away" (p. 90), we also know that Hermione cannot give herself away (p. 88). The issue is one of bondage to self-consciousness and self-image, which is a situation defining both women; this imprisonment, the novel goes on to imply, leads toward the need for destructive power over others. Gudrun, in the scene with the highland cattle (p. 165), re-enacts the scene of Gerald's overpowering of the mare.[9] Gunrun's challenge toward the cattle, in the form of a dance, is a grotesque test and affirmation of her own power over life. Such affirmation and mastery conquers her fear of life and redefines her to herself.

What exists between Gerald and Gudrun and attracts each toward the other, is a recognition of mutual cruelty (p. 245) and an imprisonment in self-consciousness which gives rise to it. Similarly, Hermione will define her power and her self, which is dependent on power, when she strikes Birkin. Gudrun, Gerald, and Hermione need to destroy or reduce what frightens them, while Ursula and Birkin appear not to (although this was not true for Ursula in relationship with Anton in The Rainbow).

Birkin's struggle to understand his own sexuality and desire for relationship with a woman is clearly associated with Ursula's drive toward the "infinite" in The Rainbow. When Birkin reacts against Ursula's passion, when we read that he sees sex as a functional process, rather than as a fulfillment (p. 199), and when he reacts against the desire for unification through sexual relationship, we recognize that all are indications of a desire very much like Ursula's in The Rainbow. Neither Ursula nor Birkin can fully and clearly articulate what they most deeply want--Birkin is left feeling "a small lament in the darkness" for something that is not physical passion (p. 187)--but their continual striving toward articulation is Lawrence's attempt to bring his deepest feelings into comprehensive clarity. We should recall that for Tom and Lydia Brangwen in The Rainbow such direct articulation was largely unnecessary, even shunned; this was true for

the characters in the novel and for the narrator. In this earlier novel Lawrence was satisfied with suggestive, almost religious, indirect articulation of his characters' needs and experiences. But in the more modern context of Women in Love we sense a growing need, almost a desperation, on the part of Lawrence to give direct, full articulation to a feeling simply defined as a "yearning toward the infinite" in The Rainbow. We read that Birkin "wanted only gentle communion, no other, no passion now." And that

> Perhaps he had been wrong to go to her with an idea of what he wanted. Was it only an idea, or was it the interpretation of a profound yearning? If the latter, how was it he was always talking about sensual fulfillment? The two did not agree very well.
> . . . he knew he did not want a further sensual experience--something deeper, darker, than ordinary life could give. (p. 256)

Caught within the experiential orbit of "ordinary life" and ordinary language, Birkin (and Lawrence) often feels helpless to give expression to, or even to fully interpret, what is at the bottom of his deepest needs. As Birkin's and Ursula's sexual relationship develops, Birkin, we are told, reaches beyond the personal and emotional level of interaction and comes to a place of "still," "quiet," "soft," "frail" touch, that is as yet frightening and unknown, yet blissful to Ursula (p. 316). Each will, as the novel develops, come to know what it is "to be awake and potent in that other basic mind, the deepest physical mind" (p. 324), and it is this knowledge, never fully

communicable, that is an answer to their long-felt desires. It is also a partial answer to the novel's powerful and often anxious need to reach full, clear, articulation.

The "stillness beyond passion" that Ursula and Birkin come to know is directly contrasted with the "unacknowledged frenzy of licentiousness" that Gerald and Gudrun share with each other (p. 292). Throughout the novel Gerald's character is in the process of disintegration. The will to subjugate all living matter to his own control comes to be the sole remaining directional force of all his activity, and it is with terror that he recognizes the potential of losing this direction:

> His eyes were blue and keen as ever, and as firm in their sockets. Yet he was not sure that they were not false bubbles that would burst in a moment and leave clear annihilation. He could see the darkness in them, as if they were only bubbles of darkness. He was afraid that one day he would break down and be a purely meaningless babble lapping round a darkness. (p. 234)

When Gerald is overwhelmed by the fear ordinarily held in check by his will, and overwhelmed also by a fear of death that his father's death sharpens in him, his "instinct" leads him to Gudrun. He comes to feel whole again, reconstructed, through the warmth and life of her body. But Gudrun's feelings continue to run along a different, independent line; she has been "thrilled" by the "danger" she has sensed in him: "He was such an unutterable enemy, yet glistening with uncanny white fire" (p. 339). While

her desire for Gerald arises out of and is dependent on his impulses toward destruction and subjugation of life, Gudrun despises the desire he arouses in her because her desire robs her of her power. Their sexual interaction does not release her from her bondage to "superconsciousness;" rather, the longer he remains in her bed, buried in heavy sleep, the more tense and nauseated she feels. Her satisfaction comes only after he leaves her.

In Innsbruck the full destructive potentials between Gerald and Gudrun are played out. The issue of power, which drew them together in sexual desire, becomes an issue of life or death to each. Gerald dreams of strangling her and so possessing her completely and finally. His desire for her and his need to conquer her combine and develop into a fixed obsession. For her part, Gudrun cannot leave him because she has not proven absolutely that she is impervious to his power (p. 476). The battle between them is not finished until Gerald dies. In the terms given by the novel, Gerald "wants" the death that finally comes to him. He is unconsciousnly driven toward Gudrun as a means toward his own annihilation.

Women in Love leaves us with Ursula and Birkin's relationship and their mutual recognition of the "deepest mind" of the body, the deepest centres of human feeling. Theirs is a small victory in the context of the novel as a whole, given the intensity of human devastation illumi-

nated and developed throughout. But Ursula's and Birkin's achievement needs to be seen within the larger context of which their relationship is only a part. They have come to know something about the mystery of life itself. And this mystery, which informs the vision of both The Rainbow and Women in Love, is inconquerable, is beyond the powers of human destruction:

> God can do without man. . . .
> . . . The game was never up. The mystery of creation was fathomless, infallible, inexhaustible, for ever. Faces came and went, species passed away, but ever new species arose, more lovely, or equally lovely, always surpassing wonder. The fountain-head was incorruptible and unsearchable. It had no limits. It could bring forth miracles, create utter new races and new species in its own hour, new forms of consciousness, new forms of body, new units of being. To be a man was as nothing compared to the possibilities of the creative mystery. To have one's pulse beating direct from the mystery, this was perfection, unutterable satisfaction. Human or inhuman mattered nothing. The perfect pulse throbbed with indescribable being, miraculous unborn species. (p. 493)

Sex, as Tom Brangwen revels, is the most serious and terrifying experience of all within the illuminated world of Lawrence's novels--more serious and more focused upon than either Lawrence's first readers or his present day readers were accustomed to confronting. And this is so because Lawrence's vision maintained that through the physical "mind," through touch, the creative source of all life could be awakened, could be discovered; and through discovery we would grasp, wholly, a "sense of the infinite,"

a sense of what "the human soul at its maximum wants."

Recognition of the "creative mystery of life" is, I believe, reflected through "the flame of life," still present within the more contemporary world of Sillitoe's novels. While I have no doubt that this is so, it is also true that the trilogy cannot bring this recognition to the sharp point of illumination and development that is achieved in The Rainbow and Women in Love. The "flame," if I can use the metaphor, stifles and suffocates under the heavey burden of oppressive forces in modern life as the novels depict it; and this happens most particularly where relationships between men and women are concerned. The most serious and terrifying issue within the trilogy is not sex, but rather the annihilation of the self in the context of an all-consuming, all-absorbing, culture. The responsive centres of feeling are not given utterance in the novels because they are absent, buried, cut off in their early developmental stages. Given the advanced stage of emotional and experiential deformity that the novels reflect, it is not surprising that relationships between men and women should similarly reflect anesthetic and sterile interaction. If we look again at the delineation of Frank Dawley's adolescent and early adult history, some revealing aspects about life in the post war world of the Sillitoe novels becomes apparent.

After the landmarks of birth, school, work,

> you get more handy with the girls. Then at eighteen you're called up, and so look forward to getting out. While you had something ahead of you it was fine. When you got out you went after women, earned your money and drank your fill. . . . Then your eyes opened, or you thought they did. . . . So you got married. (D.W.P., pp. 29-30, my italics)

Frank's sexuality, clearly, is not his own. The "you" pronoun here refers to a collective experience. The deepest and most intimate and individual spheres of human feeling have been absorbed by and become the property of culture. We are given back ourselves--mutated, distorted, reduced--through preconstructed "landmarks," "stepping-stones," which take the place of life itself. Our sex, our bodies, our minds, do not belong to us. This is what the novels try to tell us in the character of Frank Dawley and others.

Sillitoe's novels, then, cannot have the kind of focus on sexuality and relationships that we saw in Lawrence's work, where, I have argued, the collectivization of human experience had not yet become nearly so complete. The most serious and terrifying issue that must be focused on in the world the trilogy illuminates as our own, is loss, loss of ourselves: loss of our minds, our bodies, our sex.

This loss is nowhere more apparent than it is in the relationships between men and women presented in the novels. The motivational sources of feeling which draw men and women toward each other are notably lacking in the novels.

Sexual interaction appears almost "accidental," convenient to the moment, inevitable, while partners are easily transferable, replaceable. Sexual drive is intense but primarily undirected. Sexual interactions have all the qualities of Tom Brangwen's interactions with prostitutes and "loose" women, without the subsequent emptiness of feeling or distaste that comes from disappointed expectations. The "nullity" of the sexual encounter between Lady Daphne and Albert Handley (the situation appears to be emasculating and humiliating for Handley as well) is more than obvious, yet much later in the novel, after Lady Daphne has long been forgotten, when a reason to go back to London presents itself, Albert recalls her and feels "impelled" "by the compass pull of his loins" to see her again (The Flame of Life, p. 286). But the "compass pull of his loins" cannot possibly arise out of any real memory of their interaction or of Lady Daphne herself; rather it arises out of his sexually frustrated and anxious situation within his family at the moment. Another meeting with Lady Daphne offers the possibility of distraction and sexual release which satisfies Handley because he doesn't expect sexual relationship with a woman to give him anything else.

The novels reveal an underlying push toward sexual relationship even when responsive motivations are lacking. The result is a deliberateness in sexual behaviour which

leads to impotence--as we see with Frank and Pat in The Death of William Posters. The emphasis here is on their being able to go through the motions. What is undoubtedly evident in their relationship is that, while Frank and Pat desire sex, their desires are not particularly for each other. Conscious determination, spurred on by sexual drive, directs sexual behaviour. Deeper centres of reciprocal, felt, response remain inactive.

Given what I would like to call the "collective" quality of sexual experience and behaviour in the novels, the mistrust exhibited toward the desire women evoke in men takes on larger meaning. Sexual relationship is tied to cultural acquiescense through marriage within the context of the novels. Frank Dawley's fear of his desire for Myra "drowning" him in a cultural flood, is justified by his own history. The novels preclude the possibility of "the flame of life" being awakened through intimate relationship between men and women, because the novels fail to give complete and credible expression to a relationship that breaks out of the restrictions critically illuminated. Because Sillitoe's characters do not regain what has been lost of themselves, relationships between men and women in the novels cannot take people beyond their culture's barren "promises." In this respect, the "flame of life" proclaimed at the trilogy's completion is more of a wish and a recognition than a creative accomplishment.

The dissolving of contradictions that is proclaimed to have been achieved also rings false in the context of the trilogy as a whole. Sillitoe has attempted to unite social and sexual drives into one purpose; and this single purpose is to be directed, inspired and rooted in "the flame of life." However the contradictions between love for one human being and love for the many (revolutionary purpose) remain. They remain because Sillitoe's quest for a new man of the future who discovers an equilibrium between his sexual and social instincts is dependent upon an individuality and wholeness of person that the novels cannot creatively develop in the context of the ideological forms of domination they reflect, explore, and often oppose, but are nonetheless finally defeated by. I have said that Sillitoe takes up the literary legacy Lawrence left behind him. But, burdened by the heavy weight of a class ideology which maps out its own limitations on vision, while simultaneously both embodying and confronting the human crisis of the post war era, the millstones Sillitoe needs to lift in order to reveal the "flame of life" at the centre of our humanity, retain their weight and apparent invulnerability so that that which the novels seek and consistently struggle to reveal--a whole man or woman--remains only a yearning: the trilogy's deepest yearning that has not been fulfilled.

CONCLUSION

WHERE VISIONS COLLIDE

It has been my purpose in the preceding comparative study, and in the second chapter which looks at Sons and Lovers, to explore and illuminate the world views of both D.H. Lawrence and Alan Sillitoe, particularly in terms of the cultural critique they articulate, as their novels develop and envision the world. Through this exploration I have reached toward greater understanding of the nature of our present as their works lead us to see and feel it. The critical method employed in this comparative study is one which seeks first to reach a comprehensive appreciation of their works in the terms the novels themselves provide. This means allowing ourselves to realize the novels' vision through a close study which seeks to encompass all the varieties of expression within the works in their relation to each other. For example, I have tried to show that D.H. Lawrence's views on democracy, on Socialism, on class, and on the "aristocratic" can be comprehended fully only when we closely study what these terms come to mean in their dynamic context in the novels. Similarly, while Sillitoe has commonly been labeled a "working class writer," his ideological adherence to the working class and his depiction of working class life and character need to be seen in relation to the trilogy's negation of

a working class consciousness and the dogmas of revolution, as these negations are manifested and played out in various forms throughout the novels, i.e., the barbaric reality of Frank Dawley's revolutionary action in Algeria, the novels' recognition of the murderous consequences of class-based hatred, and the crippling results of ideological dogma become absolute.

The method I have employed begins with the assumption that the reader's first loyalty is to the literature itself: the novel is to be allowed as much power as we are capable of giving it--the power to direct, explore, reveal, to interconnect and to develop in the terms it creates and articulates. I introduced my comparative study by saying that, given the quality of life in post-war democratic societies, we needed the help of critical extra-literary knowledge in order to realize serious works of fiction and that this knowledge need not result in dogmatic or reductionist readings. The critical method has been a method of enriching reciprocity: while the writings of Herbert Marcuse and Georg Lukacs in particular have illuminated my understanding in significant ways which help me to read the modern novel, Alan Sillitoe and D.H. Lawrence's creative works have shed new light on Marcuse's and Lukacs' critique where their visions collide and awaken us to insight. My approach seeks to avoid the pitfalls of critical methods which either attempt to fit

elements of the novel into an ideological framework which exists outside of the novel and which the novel does not sustain, or, the other side of that process, critical methods which seek out and develop a critique from the ideological material within the novel itself, or, put more correctly, material which has been determined as ideological by the critic, without examining that material in its full aesthetic context. The articulation of ideals and of ideological material within the novel cannot be examined apart from the ongoing struggle within the novel to confront these ideals and ideology. To employ this extractionist method of critical study is to deny the novel its dynamic nature and to prohibit its radical potential to reveal insight and vision.

Because I believe that Georg Lukacs' study of the ideology of modernism is an important study of our literature and of our time, in spite of its tendency towards prescriptive rigidity and exclusion of much serious modern fiction, I have attempted to show throughout the comparative discussion how Lawrence's first three major novels and Sillitoe's trilogy relate to the ideology of modernism as Lukacs articulates it. Lawrence shared with Lukacs a sense of life as an inherent totality: as dynamic, vital, inter-relatedness. Each saw dissolution at the core of modern humanity, and each opposed, in their own ways, the dominant ideology of their time. Sillitoe's

work is a testimony to the struggle to recreate humanness out of dissolution in the post-war world. Allan Sillitoe stands apart from the dominant ideological direction of post-war life when he is willing to confront the most serious issues of our time and to "play out" these issues in the arena of his own ideals.

Much of my study has involved an exploration into the often ambivalent and complex manifestations of class feeling and perspectives in Lawrence and Sillitoe's work. In Lawrence's terms it was a particular form of consciousness and domination through consciousness that usurped and replaced vital being. The colliers in his novels suffer most deeply from the environmental and experiential horror that results from the subjection of all human endeavour, value and imagination in the interests of "progress"--profit through domination of people and nature. The ruling class die the same death, as we see with Uncle Tom Brangwen and Gerald Crich for example, as do the poor, but they die far more comfortably. The aristocrat in Lawrence's novels is not synonymous with the ruling class. Tom, Anna and Ursula Brangwen all reach "aristocratic" stature in The Rainbow when they gain independence from the public world: when they become "classless," when they achieve the critical distance from the "great human purpose" toward which all life has become directed.

Sillitoe places far greater significance on class

distinctions than did Lawrence. The novels hold to a perspective which sees the ruling class to share an ideology of its own, in contradiction from the working class--a ruling ideology which defeats the humanity of the oppressed. The trilogy also maintains throughout a sense of personal and social responsibility toward the oppressed and toward the struggle for recovery of lost dignity and worth. The trilogy explicitly draws sharp divisions between the ideology of the ruling and working classes, but the novels cannot maintain the rigid battle-grounds they establish. They reveal the limitations on vision that such a perspective imposes, achieving this because, while Sillitoe's clear identification is with those who have been most intensely victimized by western societies bent on "progress", he opens his ideology and ideals up to the risk of being defeated in the process of allowing them to be activated in the context of the work. His novels creatively extend outwards beyond class lines into the most serious question of what it means to be alive; his purpose is not limited to the representation of class conflict: his purpose is the discovery of lost humanness, lost life. Because his critique reaches beyond a critique of a class society to include a critique of post-war forms of dominating human experience and human consciousness, the pitfalls of a close adherence to class ideology and of a conception of our condition as a problem

of class conflict alone are revealed. Modern democratic and industrialized nations do not need to rely on overtly oppressive methods in order to maintain themselves: the forms of our domination are not as visible as are the manifestations of class division. Lawrence felt that the ideologies of the ruling and working classes held more in common than might be immediately apparent, which is in part what accounts for the stasis of the class system in democratic industrialized nations. Radical change which can redirect the march of "progress" cannot come from a struggle originating out of class interests alone. Lawrence's work reveals that, even in the first quarter of this century, it was possible to see production, consumption and accumulation becoming absolute and unconquerable as an overwhelming force and value system directing and forming human life at the deepest psychic levels. He saw market interests entering into and absorbing areas of life not long before considered sanctuaries beyond public manipulation. His works are a precursor to Herbert Marcuse's critical evaluations of the totalitarian quality of social, political and cultural co-ordination. Marcuse wrote in Five Lectures that the modern technological society of our present has accomplished the repression of the repressed: a form of "desublimation" which has effected increased social control by diminishing the conflict between people and their society.

Lawrence was referring to the same process when he gave expression to his clear conviction that human life was becoming synonymous with a dominated (from without) and dominating (from within) consciousness which cut off human vitality and feeling at its deepest source.

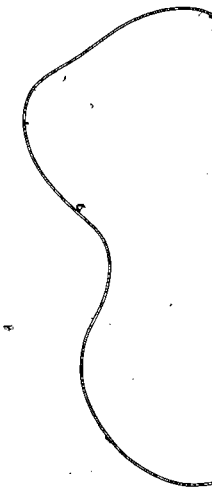
"How dated Lawrence seems," Milan Kundera, whose words preface this study, remarks casually in a conversation with Philip Roth, recorded at the end of The Book of Laughter and Forgetting.[10] If I understand him correctly, Kundera means that the conditions of sexual repression that characterized Lawrence's era no longer hold in the present, and that therefore, sexuality as Lawrence gave expression to it has lost its relevance to our time. Kundera is certainly not the first or the only reader of Lawrence to make such a claim; his casual comment represents a commonly held feeling about Lawrence's work and it reflects the contemporary tolerant attitude of many readers. But what Kundera's statement also reflects is our failure to apprehend Lawrence's critical and creative vision, and it is this failure in understanding that is the most sadly profound reflection of the intensity of our devastation and our loss.

This historical conflict which The Rainbow follows through the lives of its characters--the conflict between the individual and the public--has been absorbed by co-ordinated systems, themselves absorbed by an all-encompassing

ideology of profit through domination, which renders the individual obsolete by denying him or her an identity other than a public identity. The apparent relaxing of sexual repressions to which Kundera refers, is a socially encouraged and controlled liberation that accomplishes our social tolerance and obedience at the same time that it secures profit through the absorption of sexual material into the market. Lawrence apprehended the processes and effects of commodification in its more rudimentary forms, while Marcuse gives the process critical illumination and Sillitoe's novels (and Kundera's) sadly portray its accomplishment.

I have attempted to elucidate Sillitoe's novels in terms of what they tell us about the human condition in the context of the post war cultural forms of domination that his novels construct. Culturally controlled liberation of sex, which ensures our tolerant adherence to life as we find it, is domination and expropriation; it means loss: loss of our own experience, our bodies and our understanding. The loneliness of loss is the constant cry shaping Sillitoe's world. It can be heard most poignantly in the intimate relations between his people if we listen carefully to the novels. Lawrence is "dated" not for the reason Kundera implies, but rather because we are further even than his contemporaries were from realizing his meaning. It is the contention of this

thesis that Lawrence's voice, as it struggles toward meaning in Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow and Women in Love, makes the same claim for a whole humanness as do the muffled voices struggling under the weight of cultural suffocation in Sillitoe's novels, and, finally, perhaps, the voices of our own silenced loneliness.



NOTES: QUOTATION

[1]Milan Kundera, The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, trans. Michael Henry Hein (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1980, rpt. Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1987), p. 179.

NOTES: CHAPTER 1

[1]For a contextualist approach to the modern novel see Wayne Burns, Towards a Contextualist Aesthetic of the Novel, ed., James Flynn, Gerald Butler, and Evelyn Butler (Seattle: Genitron Books, Inc., 1968).

[2]Burns, "The Critical Relevance of Freudianism," Contextualist Aesthetic of the Novel, p. 48.

[3]Arthur Efron, "Criticism and Literature in the One-Dimensional Age," Minnesota Review, No. 8 (1968), p. 49.

[4]Herbert Marcuse, "Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts," Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 17-18. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[5]Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. xvi. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[6]Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in

Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1970), pp. 12-18.

[7]Georg Lukacs, The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Mit Press, 1975), p. 56. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[8]Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art: Naturalism Impressionism The Film Age, trans. Stanley Godman (New York: Vintage Books, 1951), IV, p.11. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[9]Raymond Williams, The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence, 2nd edition (St. Albans, Herts: Paladin, 1974), p. 11. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[10]Georg Lukacs, "The Ideology of Modernism," The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1979), pp. 17-46. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[11]For a more complete discussion on this issue, see Alex Comfort, Art and Social Responsibility: Lectures on the Ideology of Romanticism, intro. R.D. Callahan (London, 1946, rpt. Vancouver, B.C.: Pendejo Press, 1971), pp. 25-46.

[12]The asterisk which appears in this quoted passage points to a footnote in Five Lectures which reads: "To be sure, the father continues to enforce the primary diversion of sexuality from the mother, but his authority is no longer fortified and perpetuated by his subsequent educational and economic power," p. 47.

NOTES: CHAPTER 11

[1]Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1850 (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1963), pp. 202-203. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[2]D.H. Lawrence, "Nottingham and Mining Countryside," Phoenix The Posthumous Papers, 1936, ed. and intro., Edward D. McDonald (New York: Viking, 1972, rpt. Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1978), p. 138.

[3]Scott Sanders, D.H. Lawrence: The World of the Five Major Novels (New York: Viking, 1974), p. 54. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[4]Sanders' moralistic conceptions of society, nature and instinct prevent him from understanding these components of human and non-human life and their inter-relatedness in the novel's (and Lawrence's) terms.

[5]D.H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers (1913, rpt.

Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1980), pp. 442-443. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[6]Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings," Phoenix, pp. 567-568. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[7]H.T. Moore, The Intelligent Heart: The Story of D.H. Lawrence (New York: Grove, 1962), pp. 24-25.

[8]There existed an equally complex and ambivalent relationship between Lawrence and his mother. While Lawrence rejected complete identification with his mother's middle class aspirations, it was certainly no accident (as Jessie Chambers somewhat bitterly was to point out in her memoir of Lawrence) that Lawrence was to choose Frieda Weekly, the daughter of the aristocrat Friedrich von Richtofen, as his wife.

[9]E. T. (Jessie Chambers), D.H. Lawrence: A Personal Record, 2nd ed., ed. J.D. Chambers (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1965), p. 202.

NOTES: CHAPTER 111

[1]D.H. Lawrence, The Rainbow (1915, rpt. Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1974), p.7. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[2]While the novel gives us no source to the women's

response to the "call from beyond," it appears natural that it should be so. The novel does give us a full enough account of daily life to show that while the men are drawn together through their labour, while they partake of social interaction through exchange and trading, the women are primarily excluded from such interchange, confined to the immediate within the family and the farm. In this context the world beyond the Marsh would hold more appeal and mystery for the women than it would for the men.

[3]D.H. Lawrence, Women in Love (1920, rpt. New York: Bantam, 1969), p. 205. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[4]Alan Sillitoe, The Death of William Posters (rpt. London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1979), p. 31. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[5]Alan Sillitoe, A Tree on Fire (1967, rpt. London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1979), p. 5. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[6]Alan Sillitoe, The Flame of Life (1974, rpt. London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1978), pp. 277-282. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the thesis.

[7]See Ernest Schachtel, "On Memory and Childhood Amnesia," Metamorphosis; on the Development of Affect,

Perception, Attention, and Memory (New York: Basic Books, 1959).

[8]We may at this point recall that Ursula, in The Rainbow, flees from the group of horses that pursue her; their power is undefeated (pp. 487-489). Ursula is not "reduced" by her fear, as Gudrun is, because her life is not dependent upon a need to define herself by acquiring power over others.

[9]Horses possess a sensitivity and a power that is interesting in the context of the novels as a whole. The novels present some creatures as pure and fully created, while others are destined for extinction. In Women in Love alone, we read that baboons and monkeys are half-created creatures, neither canaries nor rabbits can be respected, cats and horses are "aristocratic" in their independence, while dogs are subservient by instinct.

[10]Milan Kundera, The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, p. 236.

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