

Insight as Answer

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A note on D. H. Lawrence

When convictions in a writer get among the passions and insights are equal to the convictions the result is to say the least awe-inspiring and where we have conviction passion and insight in fusion we also have courage. To say a writer lacks the courage of his insight, as we might say of John Galsworthy for example, is to cast doubt on the insight, for what the insight discovers the writer, unless he happens to be living in a police state, must perforce proclaim. Lawrence was an audacious explorer, an uncanny discoverer and, something too little emphasised, a most artistic proclaimer.

There has been too much talk, in England at least, of Lawrence as a genius *but* and the *but* factors have been allowed to diminish, even dismiss, the achievement of the genius. The chief reasons for this may be that Lawrence is one of those writers with whom it is extremely difficult to separate either the work from the man or the implicit insight from the explicit message; we are at once suspicious of egotistical writers, be they never so sublime, and we are equally suspicious of writers who seem to have a too palpable design upon us. When we find either or both these things in a writer the temptation is to deny the co-existence of art and the temptation is no doubt a healthy one for egotism and palpable designs generally are inconsistent with and damaging to

the truest canons of art; however in the case of Lawrence the charge of egotism won't carry since the self he gets into his work goes far beyond the ego and his palpable design, far from being the cold consort of his insight, is part and parcel of the insight, is the very form we could even say that the insight takes; while to deny Lawrence art is simply to confess that we have allowed some bafflement or aversion respecting the man or the message to keep us from coming at it, for the art in Lawrence is there on every page, inviolate and obvious.

The word vision is elusive of definition, but I think when we say a writer has vision we mean he has the gift of a dual focus: he sees the phenomenal world more or less accurately as it is and sees behind it or within it another world by the rhythm of whose laws the phenomenal world can be said to exist. And having some intuitive grasp of inner law or inner connectedness the world and the universe always appear to him as a mystery and never as a muddle. All things, says the hero in Lawrence's novel 'Women in Love', in the profoundest sense hang together, and so they seem to do for Lawrence.

Dostoyevsky got a good deal of the actual world into his novels and no one got more of it into art than Shakespeare but it is because they had this deep sense of inner connectedness, because they saw life as mysteriously whole that we call them writers of vision. For this reason too we never feel that we can encompass them. Dostoyevsky and Shakespeare and any other writer of vision must always stand a little beyond and apart from us: we can criticise them as they seem to betray their own vision, we

can say here they achieve supreme art and here they fall short of it but vision stands on its own mysterious feet and we can never as it were knock the ground from under it, for there is no ground under it, or to put it another way mystery is that which by definition we cannot go beyond. We do however feel we can encompass John Galsworthy or even at a stretch E. M. Forster. Forster's insights are numerous and profound, but scattered: he cannot in the last resort decide whether the world is a mystery or a muddle, as in 'A Passage to India' he is honest enough to make clear. 'Only connect' says Forster' an invaluable message; but he himself is only expert in establishing the connections between given personalities in a given social framework: the kind of *ultimate* connectedness between man and man, man and woman, man and the universe, a connectedness mysteriously in touch with some inner law, is beyond him, though perhaps only just beyond him. It is *this* kind of connectedness that we get from the writer of vision and that we find so intensely focused in Lawrence.

Vision of course implies on the one hand an understanding of the essential limitations of the intellect and on the other a profound intuition of the mystery of life and an implicit trust in that intuition. Lawrence at the outset so marvellously knew where the intellect could go and where it could not go and so marvellously knew, and of course expressed, the ways and workings of intuition. From these knowledges sprang his relentless quarrel with his age. There are for man according to Lawrence two ways of knowing, 'a knowing, in terms of apartness which is mental, rational, scientific, and knowing in terms of togetherness, which is religious

and poetic'. Our modern industrial civilisation was in Lawrence's view hell-bent, literally, upon the first way of knowing, a way which because it denigrated or neglected the world of intuition and the body, that is the world of togetherness, was a symptom of a profound psychic disorder and expressive in the long run of a frightening wish to die, since to exalt the intellect at the expense of the body is to exalt [at least for Lawrence] the lesser life at the expense of the greater, the half at the expense of the whole and even, unconsciously, death at the expense of life; for the death-wish arises out of this very imbalance, and is, Lawrence seems to suggest, the final revenge that the neglected body takes on life. Lawrence was not against the intellect; he was against the imperialism of the intellect. He was against halfness. It's true he was not much interested in the motor-car or trips to the moon or other marvels established or projected of science but then he was interested in something more important: the man behind the motor-car and the moon as a mysterious cosmic entity. For Lawrence, as for W.B. Yeats, we lost more than we gained by knowing the moon is a ball of flaming gas for we thereby deprived it of its wonder, or rather we deprived ourselves of the sense of its wonder, for the moon still *is* wonderful however scientifically we may regard it, still exerts a mysterious power over the human body and soul. For Lawrence it was not modern man but ancient man, supremely the Babylonians, who had the superior knowledge of the moon, simply because the first term of their knowing was wonder. The marvellous benefits that accrue to man from science notwithstanding, and for Lawrence they were not so marvellous

anyway, to abstract and to analyse, the method of the scientific intellect, is to kill, not necessarily and inevitably but when abstraction and analysis are assumed to be the primary means of coming at experience. For Lawrence modern western civilisation had allowed the scientific way of seeing to kill the other, deeper, intuitional way of seeing and nothing had been gained in the exchange.

He saw, as of course we all can see if we pause to think about it, that science can never as it were catch up with the moon any more than it can catch up with the curve of the swallow's flight or the gleam of life in a human eye; but it is Lawrence's lesson that by cultivating our intuition in a sense we *can* catch up.

To divide Lawrence into bits and pieces for critical purposes we can say Lawrence the man with a message taught the fullness and wonder of life lived in the intuitional world of the body, Lawrence the prophet warned of the sinister line-up of will, intellect, industry and money which he saw leading civilisation the way to death, and Lawrence the social psychologist probed with a kind of half-fascinated horror into the sicknesses that overtake emotion when the intellect neglects it. But in fact we separate Lawrence into bits at our peril for as life to Lawrence so Lawrence to the reader: in an extraordinary way he hangs together.

Lawrence described himself as a deeply religious man and so it abundantly appears from his writing; he has the respect, the sense of wonder and the faith in something beyond himself that characterise the religious will. But Lawrence experienced God in the flux of life and especially in the flux of sex; for him God and intense life made one identity and since for him it

was physical rather than mental experience wherein the intensest life is to be found he made physical experience the ground of all value. It is at this fundamental point that many of us balk at him; for surely there is another way of knowing which is neither the apart way of the head nor the togetherness way of the body, the way to which T. S. Eliot for example stood witness, that of non-attachment. But for Lawrence there was not. The admission of this third way however does not invalidate either Lawrence's attack on western civilisation for following too exclusively the way of the head, of which his own powerful display of evidence is hardly needed to convince us, nor his own body way of knowing for that has the indestructible quality of vision. It must be hurriedly said of course that the body for Lawrence was not that semi-inert lump of matter that many of us feel we propel through life at the point of our wills and whose mysterious workings we are half afraid and half conscious of; for him the body was something quick, complex, cosmically connected, indefeasible, almost with a mind of its own. The very fact that we respond—as most of us do—to his glowing account of it in these terms means that for us too it must really be so, once a Lawrence has stretched us into the proper awareness of it.

However an uncompromising vitalism gives ground for a criticism which is both obvious and radical. It is that in the last analysis a vitalist morality is inscrutable. It is subjective to a point beyond the subject and is amenable to no guarantee outside ritual or mere self-assertion; which means it is not amenable to the guarantees required by any civilised society. If it is life itself that

creates value then presumably what is destructive of life or is half-life, incapable of achieving life, is bad and since there are no objective ethical canons of judgment presumably it is only right and proper that the half-life be sacrificed to the full life if this becomes necessary for the latter's survival. In short a vitalist philosophy carried into a real social context is terrifying and in so far as it is pure indefensible. Carried out in political terms it leads to murder, where it led Lawrence in those two aberrant novels 'Kangaroo' and 'The Plumed Serpent'. For be they many or few in any society there are bound to be half-lifers and Lawrence is never more convincing than when he demonstrates how the half-lifers do in fact damage or destroy the full-lifers [as they could not, incidentally, destroy the non-attached]. What sanctions then could there be in an ideal vitalist society but those of a highly ritualised law of the jungle? In the two politically oriented novels just mentioned these are precisely the sanctions Lawrence offers. But leaving politics apart, as Lawrence did at his wisest, the locus classicus of this vitalist-morality versus ethical-morality dilemma occurs in that remarkable story 'The Fox'. For here the lover deliberately kills the half-woman who stands between him and the full woman he wishes to marry, and in a sense, the vitalist sense, the murder is utterly justified: the victim, incapable of life herself, is nevertheless wonderfully equipped to prevent the other woman, her friend, from coming into the life of which she *is* capable and Lawrence with great skill and be it said convincing realism presents the case in such a way that there can be only one possible solution, namely murder. However awed he

may be by the story's brilliance the reader receives a moral shock from this act of murder as sharp perhaps as he can receive from the whole of Lawrence, and it is made more and not less sharp by the fact that the story is so perfectly conceived and executed; it is the shock that comes from knowing Lawrence's own hand is behind the hand of the killer.

Here lies the nub of the matter in our final judgment of Lawrence. We have to decide, not of course whether we ourselves find murder morally justifiable, but whether Lawrence's justification of it in this story and the political novels represented his real or at least his final position. I think myself it did not. Lawrence was very much an explorer, an experimentalist, and it was in his nature as in his own peculiar canon of expressive art to yield to the logic of his genius even when it led him to outrageous conclusions which he might later reject. I believe that along with and usually checking the fury of the logic were other altogether different elements of humanity, tenderness and common-sense, evidence of which we find in almost everything he wrote and though submerged in the works just mentioned pre-eminent in 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', the novel I will discuss in some detail in a moment.

Nevertheless it is as well to arm oneself with this twin caution about moral vitalism, namely that it is in essence inscrutable and in practice potentially murderous, before proceeding to the major novels themselves, for it is, to use a pun, a vital issue.

The real artist, says Lawrence with fascinating simplicity, is

the one who lets us know where we are dead and where we are alive. So he does and so Lawrence does, not of course by any mere telling or pointing the finger but by the recreation of life and death experience upon the page. Lawrence's interests are distinctly of this world and not of any other; he paints no heaven beyond the bourne of mortal existence; his protagonists struggle upwards from the here and now to reach a Beyond which is its own justification and reward and from which being human they can but fall back into the here and now again. In this struggle there is death or a kind of death to be contended with for as in the Christian doctrine of the soul's journey the individual must die to the lesser life in order to be born into the greater life; but for Lawrence even heaven is organic, subject to opposition and change, is still a battleground, though mystically in touch with the cosmos and rarified to the nth degree, where is no final peace. The usual dichotomy of spirit and flesh was for Lawrence meaningless. The spirit can not be separated from the flesh; as the spirit lives or dies so the body does. It's significant that he associates 'blood' with 'soul' with the effect of making blood seem spiritual and soul physical. Life is the energetic and blessed flow from the 'deep passional places' and blood is its psychic carrier. 'Blood' and 'soul' are nodal points in Lawrence's language but we must approach them intuitively and not cognitively if they are to be meaningful to us and not jargon. How indeed *can* we press for rational definition when the gain to reason would be a loss to intuition and it is in our world of intuition, primarily, that Lawrence would strike home to us?

So Life involves a battle with, a rising from, 'death' [It's a question whether death be a metaphor at all. At what exact point does a tree begin to die and is its dying a metaphor?]; but there can be a point when, in an individual or in a society, the claim of death is stronger than the claim of life, when the 'flow' becomes dammed or divided or misdirected, involving its own doom. Lawrence equates this death-oriented life with the half-life, the over-mental way of knowing, such as he saw ratified in the civilisation around him. His main interest was always the healthy flux of life, or one might call it the natural life-and-death in life—there he carried out his most daring and original explorations—but in the early novels up to and including 'The Rainbow' the healthy flux of life is virtually the whole story while in the later novels from 'Women in Love' onwards, though the flux is still the main burthen of the story, it is forced to yield space to the unhealthy flux wherein death overtops life. It's a question basically of context. 'Flux of life' may seem a misleading expression but it didn't mislead Lawrence; for his novels are not hymns to sensation, idylls of the blood; they are in large measure and to use his own expression 'incarnate disclosures of the flux'. This indeed comes very close to describing what they are. For a Lawrence novel being founded in respect for and wonder of life doesn't try to invent, embroider or force it but rather to *disclose* it and far from rhapsodising about the flux to make it *incarnate*, that is, to reveal it in its full, which means individual, social and universal, context. The sense of context in Lawrence, the sense of actuality, of the way things actually look, feel, are

and behave, is immitigable and saving.

To come back then, what most obviously divides the early novels from the later is that in the former his heroes and heroines, his chosen vessels of the flux, find themselves struggling for wholeness of being within and in accordance with the wider context of society while in the later they find themselves struggling for this wholeness against or despite society. The watershed is that brilliant crisis novel 'Women in Love' where Lawrence with an analysis profound as it is amazingly thorough probes the morbid *nostalgie de la boue* or death-wish which he found in his own generation in England and by extension all the other industrial civilisations of the West. He also probes with characteristic fervour the theme of flux but the significant point is that his hero and heroine must now quit society in order to save themselves; for if society is a sinking ship to stay on board is to acquiesce in suicide. From this point on the tragic dilemma for Lawrence the vitalist and the man with so deeply grained a social sense was to know how the healthy individual is to be saved in a society that is gone rotten. The result was the three in several senses wandering novels 'Aaron's Rod', 'Kangaroo' and 'The Plumed Serpent' all of which are in varying degrees both maveulous and bad, but bad principally for the reason that in his despair Lawrence tried to translate his drama of the blood into a politics of the blood, with results ironically reminiscent of later European war-lords whom he would have loathed. But then fortunately there is 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' where he makes a courageous return to both the English context and his common

sense. By this time his travels had taught him that there is no getting out, except in the barest geographic sense: for on the one hand he failed to find a society that squared with his ideals and on the other he failed, naturally enough, to get England out of his mind. Besides, when a ship sinks who knows but there may be a few survivors struggling in the water?

If we like to divide the seer from the prophet I think we can say that the Lawrence up to and including 'The Rainbow' was a seer and the Lawrence from 'Women in Love' onwards was both a seer and a prophet. Nature made him a seer but he was wounded into prophecy; for about the time of the First World War [and partly because of it] he saw a doom in western civilisation and being the kind of courageous and the kind of honest he was he could neither close his eyes to it nor keep silent about it. Prophets are people who tend to get driven out into deserts and to become strident and repetitious in proportion as their voices go unheard. There is this tendency to stridency and repetitiousness in the Lawrence of the wandering period, but there is almost none of it in his best work and little of it in 'Lady Chatterley' where we would expect it most. [Repetition of a certain, artistically healthy kind is integral to his technique as a writer, but of that later.]

Much has been written about Lawrence's method of disclosing the flux in the living moment, some of the best of it by Lawrence himself. In a famous letter to his friend Garnett and in reference to 'The Rainbow' he says, 'Don't look for the development of the

novel to follow the lines of certain characters, the characters fall into the form of some other rhythmic order, as when' he goes on with a wonderful image, 'one draws a fiddle-bow across a fine tray delicately sanded, the sand takes lines unknown'. According to him the old structural concepts of the novel were out of date along with the old structural concept of character, the first because of the second—a belief incidentally prophetic of our contemporary drama. It is the other deeper rhythmic order that he is after, a rhythm that is sub character; and just as the old form of the novel has to do with the old conception of character so Lawrence's new form has to do with his new conception of character, allowing 'character' to include what lies below character, and we should judge it accordingly.

Form there certainly is in Lawrence's best novels, as much in his last good one 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' as in his first good one 'Sons and Lovers' though it is more traditional in the latter, but it is an organic form dictated from within by the drama of the flux which in any Lawrence novel constitutes the real story. And drama is the appropriate word, for the flux consists of opposition as much as change; life for Lawrence is composed of endlessly warring polarities, of which the most fundamental are love and hate, male and female; it's a war which by definition has no resolution but which can only achieve intenser and intenser expressions of itself and this, since for Lawrence it is the law of life, he would not have otherwise. The ultimate intensity can only be achieved in the love between a man and a woman; all Lawrence's heroes and heroines strive for it, some

attain it; it is a state of being that might be described as a mystical twoness, a state of perfect and trembling balance between two souls made perfect in themselves and perfect in each other yet neither separate nor fused. Only symbol has the capacity to convey meaning in this ecstatic atmosphere; Lawrence employed different symbolic terms at different times to convey the same thing: rainbow, star, flame, each of which he manages to make beautiful and adequate to the occasion.

Lawrence's lovers are almost chemically sensitive to one another; he catches them somehow at the very point where their feelings seem to start, then these feelings engage well below the level of their conscious wills and their lives and loves, across which Lawrence draws the fiddle-bow of circumstance, take lines unknown.

In the revealing letter to Garnett just quoted Lawrence describes this new conception of character of his. 'You mustn't look in my novel for the old stable ego of the character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same radically unchanged element. [Like as diamond and coal are the same pure single element of carbon. The ordinary novel would trace the history of the diamond—but I say, 'Diamond, what! This is carbon'. And my diamond might be coal or soot, and my theme is carbon.]' An extraordinary statement, not least because on the face of it Lawrence seems to be

putting himself at one stroke beyond the proper range of the novel, for surely before reading Lawrence we might have thought it *is* the ego unstable or not that makes the novel interesting to us and surely the elemental, non-human stuff of which one person is made is very much like the elemental stuff of which another person is made. Yet to those for whom the Lawrence novel works [and it is ultimately of course a personal matter] it is precisely the ability to make the allotropic states through which carbon passes fascinating that gives the measure of his genius.

As a matter of fact Lawrence's theme, in the common acceptance of the term, is not carbon. Carbon may have comprised the most vital part of his subject matter, but his main theme from 'Sons and Lovers' to 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' is salvation through living connectedness. It didn't take Lawrence perhaps to tell us that for man there are three primary relationships, those between man and the universe, man and man and man and woman, but it did take Lawrence in our time, or at least in England, to prove the value and express the beauty of relationships that are alive and to prove the harm and express the ugliness of relationships that are dead, and the proof in Lawrence is invariably along the pulse. Declamation is there in several of the novels and stories, opinion rearing its unnecessary head above the page but the curious thing is that Lawrence has invariably made his point already in the proper manner, that is in art, and the declamatory statement of it is merely an irritating excrescence. The pontifical and quite unnecessary verbal blast at the end of 'The Fox' is a good example.

It is in the depiction of living connectedness or come to that, half-living connectedness, that he achieves his greatness; it is here that he achieves the order and the shine of art. The shine is perhaps more immediately obvious than the order. What novelist of our time so triumphantly captures what Lawrence calls the magic of first apperceptions, so makes the world shine for us as though it were new or at least as though our apperception of it were new? And yet what is it that makes an object shine but the grasp of the secret rhythm underlying it? Granted the writer needs the accurate descriptive eye to make an object or a scene appear real but Somerset Maugham has that eye and yet he doesn't make the world shine. Lawrence of course was a poet and he has the poet's ability to see an object as it is in isolation and as it is in connection at one and the same time, its connectedness being both of the apparent and the hidden sort. To put it another way Lawrence sees an object not just with his eye but with his whole remarkable mind brought to bear at once. And as he saw a sunset or a fern or a lemon tree so he saw people: his sense of the spirit of people is as fine as his sense of the spirit of place for which he is justly famous; both proceed from the same remarkable way of looking. The only language fitted to give the outscape and the inscape of a thing in simultaneous conjunction is metaphor but in Lawrence, because, I think, of his visionary intuition of the way the world hangs together, metaphor always seems to be trembling on the verge of symbol or actually becomes symbol.

The pulsing lambent prose that he forged is at its best a

perfect instrument for the expression of his vision of life's inner and outer rhythms. It is you might say a prose of inspired instinct following in its quickness or its slowness, its running and its repetition the very movement of life itself. Its characteristic feature is incremental repetition, the repeating of a phrase or an image or even a single adjective, but rhythmically, each time with a slightly changed, slightly added significance, wherein it follows indeed the pattern of the story which also builds up incrementally. Such repetition is at the opposite pole from monotony.

We have to defend ourselves against men of genius and then if the genius proves too strong for our defences we are all the happier for it. In the case of a genius who has a 'palpable design upon us' as Lawrence has we defend ourselves tooth and claw—and even with the aid of injustice. One of the assertions made about Lawrence in his lifetime and after was that he was a freak, somehow different in *kind* from ordinary men and so he was said to be possessed of a 'sixth sense' or something else of the sort; but this is sly praise and at bottom a hostile charge. Freaks don't produce art and the point is of course that Lawrence didn't possess more senses than normal people but was more alive in the five senses which he did possess, especially, by contrast with most people, the sense of touch.

Touching for Lawrence was you might say the outward and visible sign of the inward and physical grace, the most poignant as the most actual proof of the living connection. Civilisation's fear of touch, to his way of thinking, gave the lie to its fear of

life.

I now wish to look at 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' simply because being something of a last will and testament it exhibits Lawrence's design at its most palpable. The book is predominantly sad; it is also beautiful and as densely realised and intricately organised as anything in Lawrence with the exception of 'Women in Love' to which, rather than to the wandering novels, it forms the proper sequel. Lawrence wrote three separate versions of it, indicative of how much he cared that his message in this final form should be understood. Like 'Women in Love' it is set in England and the message is more or less the same and what it always was, but a significant change of tone has taken place: for whereas the earlier novel is hectic, even slightly hysterical with newly acquired disillusion, in 'Lady Chatterley' the hectic quality has given way to something subdued, almost wistful.

The novel is firmly set in English society, that is to say, if we look with Lawrence's eyes, amid the ruins. There is a kind of grand marshalling of the forces of death on one side and the forces of life on the other, but the forces of death Lawrence equates with practically the whole variety and extent of English society for the banner of that society is the mental way of knowing. The forces of life of course follow the banner of the intuitional or passional way of knowing. The saddest thing of all in the book is the enormous disproportion between the territory of ruin and the territory of life; for ruin and death are everywhere and life for its very survival is forced into hiding.

It's not a perfect novel even if we adopt a pretty lenient canon of perfection. The intense *caring* that characterises all Lawrence's writing is of course here, but it is not always brought under the annealing power of art. Lawrence never created more unconvincing intellectuals than the circle of Sir Clifford's friends or put such unconvincing speeches into people's mouths. Obviously such people, as he tried to describe them here, bored Lawrence in real life and were regarded by him as pseudo-personalities, as half-men; unfortunately they also bore the reader and strike him as not only pseudo-personalities but pseudo-characters novelistically speaking, the reason for which is simply that Lawrence has not bothered to pass them through his imagination. Even Lady Charterley's father whom Lawrence likes is partly pseudo in this bad sense. Lawrence also overdoes the four-letter words. Not that he was wrong to bring them out of their salacious hiding places in the English mind, which was an integral part of his total intention, but that by using them too much, by bringing them in in season and sometimes out of season he tends to render them not just harmless but fatuous, which was not his intention. When this is said on the adverse side, and it is not a lot, what remains is almost entirely subject for praise.

With most of Lawrence's novels, 'Women in Love' being a partial exception, the structure comes from the story, is the working out in time and circumstance of the organic dialectic of human relationships; but here another structure stands apart from the story both containing and opposing it. It is in the nature of the case that it should be so for the structure is concerned with

things that are largely dead. This structure is built out of three localities: Wragby Hall, the home of Sir Clifford the industrial magnate, Wragby village where Sir Clifford's workers live and Wragby wood where Lady Chatterley and her lover meet. And these three localities are significant on three separate levels at once: they are actual, representative and symbolic. On the first level they and those who live within them are presented with rich and realistic detail so there is no doubting their actuality as places, on the second they represent the social-industrial-rural nexus of modern England and on the third they stand, in the case of the Hall and the village, as looming symbols of death and in the case of the wood as a symbol of life. Between these polarities moves the story; the story itself is the tender passionate and in a sense desperate love of Lady Chatterley for her husband's gamekeeper, which proceeds from small and unlikely beginnings through successive but each time more significant encounters of love until, like some plant grown at last firm-rooted to resist all weathers, it reaches the point where it no longer needs to cower from society but can defy it.

Moving about in a world largely dead or dying Lady Chatterley herself is the primary precipitator of the action. She is the only character who has real liberty of movement; she leaves the world of death of her own free will and enters the world of life, whereas the other characters, with the exception of Mellors, are all too far gone in death to be anything but bound to it. Without Lady Chatterley there'd be no novel as well as no hope; or at least if there were a novel it would be pure satire. Lady Chatterley and Mellors have in fact very little

of the conventional heroine and hero about them: what recommends them to Lawrence and what of course he wants to recommend them to us is that, though touched with death, chilled with fear and hopelessness by the society in which they live, they are yet vessels *capable* of life, of wholeness through living connectedness. This wholeness, through devious and difficult ways, they finally *do* attain, but Lawrence's sense of realism doesn't desert him even here for Wragby Wood, consistent with its several levels of meaning, is primarily a kind of nursery in the botanical sense where their love can grow, a place in nature and necessarily apart from society but not to be taken as a substitute for society; and when they are driven by pressure of circumstance from this Eden they return to the social world with anxiety in their hearts because they too are realists.

Lawrence's title for one of the earlier versions of the novel was 'Tenderness'. Nowhere does he so stress the word tender or is it so important to his meaning. It is not that he neglects the shimmering allotropic states of carbon or fails to make his characteristic exploration of the distant reaches of physical consciousness but that here it is the ultimately human rather than the ultimately inhuman that gets the stress. The stress is on the warm and hither side of love, on the tenderness of connection that disposes the soul to understanding and allowance, on the gateway to the ecstatic Beyond. This tenderness is no doubt a sort of protective hedge put round Lawrence's last hope, or call it the tolerance, the space for trial and error, that he permits these last of lovers; for their love cannot *afford* to fail: in the derelict world surrounding them which Lawrence has evoked with such skill and detail they alone keep alive

the flame or the flower—call it what you will—of hope. The love between Lady Chatterley and Mellors begins in tenderness and retains tenderness though it rises to passion. The scene that marks its beginning where Mellors holds a pheasant chick in his hand and Lady Chatterley weeps at the sight is, as well as being one of the most beautiful passages in Lawrence, crucial to the story; for in their tenderness for the chick they meet in tenderness for life.

‘We must love one another or die’ says W. H. Auden in a well-known poem and this, if we understand love in Lawrence’s sense of the word, is the essential message of ‘Lady Chatterley’s Lover’. And there is a sturdy, though as it were embattled, hope that we shall not die, for as Mellors with wry wistfulness observes, ‘All the bad times that ever have been, have not been able to blow the crocus out: not even the love of women.’

But is Lawrence too hasty and high-handed in his grand division of the forces of life and death? Is he in fact distorting the truth in the interests of his meaning? I think the answer must be no. For the inhabitants of Wragby Hall and Wragby village contain plenty of life *of a kind*; the point for Lawrence is that it is the wrong kind, it is life carried in the wrong places, in the head and the will, not in the heart and the secret passion places. They represent the death-in-life that follows from the mental way of knowing. It’s a world fascinating in the processes of its disease and infected beyond cure. It is also self-infecting within its parts: the industrial magnates like Clifford Chatterley have forced the proletariat who work for them to become like machines, the proletariat in machine-

like and largely unconscious revenge press against the aristocratic industrial order caring neither for them nor their fine halls nor their fine parks, and ultimately destroying them. Lawrence shows us the Wragby Halls doomed in the long run by the hand of their owners. For anyone sensitive to the beauties of pre-industrial England there are sections of the book that make almost unbearable reading. 'One England blots out another' observes Lawrence sadly, and so it does: the fine old houses, the ancient parks are being remorselessly destroyed today as they were when Lawrence wrote. The machine is the enemy in an apparent sense, but the real villain is modern man who has sacrificed his real and alive self to *serve* the machine and in so doing lost his sense of beauty along with his joy.

Yet is Lawrence after all in favour of some form of pastoral reversion? The answer again is no. He had too much common sense to think you could uninvent the machine, which he knew like the masses that feed it is here to stay. The point about that gruesome but brilliant episode in Wragby Wood where Sir Clifford's motor-chair comes stuck among the bluebells he has been so insensitively crushing is that the chair and the man are as near as can be two of a kind. Sir Clifford lives in and by his machine-like intellect and will which he intends shall carry him through life no matter how much they may crush life at the same time; but of course machines break down occasionally; they do not, even for the Sir Cliffords of the world, make adequate provision for life and when they do break down they leave those who live by them like Sir Clifford in the wood, utterly without resources. But of course men cannot be machines, not quite. The inner world of feeling, even after long

neglect, does not die away: it goes soft and at the same time cruel. Lawrence's insight into feelings gone soft like rotten apples is uncanny. There's a terrifying rightness about the way the tough industrial magnate Sir Clifford deposits his manhood in the arms of his housekeeper, become nurse-mother, Mrs Bolton. Purely as a village gossip Mrs Bolton is as fine a creation as anything in the same line in George Elliot, but she is more than a gossip since like Sir Clifford or the wood etc she is symbolic. At the bottom of her ecstatic mothering of Sir Clifford in his inner babyhood lies the revenge of the working class against the ruling class that in the industrial nexus constantly does them down [or was doing them down when Lawrence wrote.]

The putting of Sir Clifford technically hors de combat in the field of love should not be taken as a piece of spite on Lawrence's part. Sir Clifford would have been only a half-man even if he had never been to the war; nor need he, wounded as he was, have been the *kind* of half-man he was: had he been generous to his wife, seen the *woman* she was, he might have offered her a voluntary release from her marriage and she might have responded by agreeing to remain mistress of Wragby while bearing him an heir through another man, a project discussed between them. Yet it seems Lawrence wanted to show through Sir Clifford that the war had in fact been the too great shock for his generation, had actually killed something vital in the psyche; but here again this only allows a partial sympathy for Sir Clifford since the war for Lawrence had been a kind of epiphany of a deep-seated will-to-destruction. 'All things in the deepest sense hang together.'

No novelist of our time, at least no English novelist, has viewed the social-industrial-psychological matrix of modern living so profoundly or so courageously as Lawrence, few have tackled it at all. Lawrence's final answer to the industrial problem as given through the mouth of his gamekeeper is so simple as to seem almost banal: 'Train the people to be able to live and live in handsomeness'. But it is not banal for it is ultimately Lawrence's answer to all the major human problems and the whole of his writing in all its clairvoyant power stands firmly behind it.