a new consciousness is experienced in the individual or, in the later writing, by a community.

The main opposition in *The Plumed Serpent* is the extremity of the contrast between mechanistic modern 'white' consciousness (Kate, Owen, Villiers) and the Men of Quetzalcoatl. Lawrence may be in search of an alternative, a more impersonal, 'unconscious' mode of being in his evocation of a pre-Columbian culture. When he reinvents the Mexican myths, and represents them, however, he heightens their violence. 'Blood' has finally superseded 'psychology' in Lawrence's fiction.

(iii) *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

Lawrence supervised the private publication of his last novel in Florence in 1928 once it became obvious that his publishers would not take the risk. It was quickly banned in England and America. In England, when an unexpurgated version was finally published thirty years after his death, it resulted in the prosecution of Penguin Books (1960) under the Obscene Publications Act of 1959. The publisher was acquitted **[27; 131]**. 'Pornography and Obscenity' (1929) and 'A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*' (1930) constitute further statements about the disastrous effects of sexual fear, and the latter gives some account of the difficulties experienced in self-publishing.

Lady Chatterley's Lover returns to the Midlands, where the newly married Lady Constance ('Connie') Chatterley lives with her husband, Sir Clifford, at Wragby Hall. Months after their marriage he is confined to a wheelchair by injuries received on the battlefield and paralysed from the waist down. As the marriage stagnates, she deceives him by having an unsatisfactory affair with his friend, Michaelis, a playwright, but finds this, and her other friendships, empty. She then falls in love with Oliver Mellors, Clifford's gamekeeper, and the novel concentrates on her 're-birth' as a result of their sexual experience. A child is conceived and, scandalously, Connie abandons Clifford to the good offices of his motherly housekeeper, Mrs Bolton, while the lovers, in temporary separation until the scandal dies down, plan to build a new life together abroad. The theme of committed love between members of different social classes is not new in Lawrence, and neither is the theory of self-renewal through positive sexual experience. The novella, *The Virgin and the Gipsy* (1925; published 1930), for instance, rehearses the main themes which Lawrence develops in the earlier versions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, called *The First Lady Chatterley* and *John Thomas and Lady Jane*.

In an essay called 'The State of Funk' written in 1929, Lawrence states, in very simple terms, his criticism of the 'Victorian' prudishness about sex which oppressed him as a boy and young man:

> Accept the sexual, physical being of yourself, and of every other creature. Don't be afraid of it. Don't be afraid of the physical functions. Don't be afraid of the so-called obscene words. There is nothing wrong with the words. It is your fear that makes them bad, your needless fear.
>
> (*Phoenix II* 570)

These sentiments, and the assertion of 'the natural warm flow of common sympathy between man and man, man and woman' (569) underpin much of Lawrence's later writing on sex, and the essay usefully concentrates on some terms which help to clarify Lawrence's concerns, at least towards the end of his life. In particular it underlines the reasons for Mellors' persistent reference to sex using the 'common' words. 'Desire', in this essay, is a negative term (it is 'rampant', 'lurid') alongside the more positive 'sympathy' (569). 'Warm-heartedness' and 'compassionateness' resonate positively, reminiscent of 'tenderness', the single word which was the projected title of what became *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. 'Warm-heartedness' finds its way into Mellors' vocabulary as he lectures Lady Chatterley ('It's all this cold-hearted fucking that is death and idiocy' [LCL 206]), and voices Lawrence's theme that an ignorance of self in relation to sexuality contributes to cultural, as well as personal, 'dissolution'.

At first glance the principal paradox about *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is that in it Lawrence, by setting out to talk about sex, does precisely the thing he apparently most despises. In the first half of the book, he sets up a series of sterile conversations which take place between Clifford and his forward-thinking friends on men, women and sex. It is part of Lawrence's point to contrast the painful self-consciousness of these conversations with the discussions between Mellors and Connie. However, one of the risks to the novel's seriousness must surely lie in Mellors' remarks to his penis, 'John Thomas', conducted in the dialect that Lady Chatterley more often than not finds ridiculous: 'Tell lady Jane tha wants cunt. John Thomas, an' th' cunt o' lady Jane! –' (210). For some readers this extensive verbalization is awkward in part because of all Lawrence's protestations against having 'sex in the head', his phrase for describing an over-conscious concentration on sex (F&P 129: for the most extensive discussion of this see Williams 1993). To what extent does the gamekeeper, the 'natural man', have 'sex in the head'

despite Lawrence's best efforts to make it otherwise, and to what extent is he the antidote to the problem? In other words, is this the book where Lawrence, against his best intentions, submits to his own version of 'sex in the head', or does the novel in fact constitute a complex critique of the 'modern' tendency, as Lawrence sees it, to reduce sex to a level where it is merely the scratching of some libidinal 'itch'? This is a complicated question which has to do, in the first instance, with the relation in Lawrence's writing between sex and language.

The focus is, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, on the regenerative aspects of sex (Connie, with Mellors, is 'reborn, woman'). The emphasis is still on phallic power as transformative, last explored by Lawrence in novel-form in *The Plumed Serpent*. As in that book, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* subscribes to a fantasy of female orgasm and its effects – for Lawrence, the potential of sex to revivify the self is manifested only where modern 'mental consciousness' (F&P 68) is shed (in women) for something more unconscious. The little 'deaths' of orgasm are central to the process of Connie's rebirth. A language of violence is developed – 'It might come with the thrust of a sword in her softly-opened body, and that would be death' (173) – but the brutality of *Women in Love*, for instance, where the languages of sex and death are often interchangeable, is displaced by the enactment of regeneration which dominates descriptions of sex in the later book.

Lawrence had written his essays on the novel genre by the time of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In Chapter 9, however, he allows himself to give the reader a small reminder of its real value:

> And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life: for it is in the *passional* secret places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and freshening.
>
> (LCL 101)

It is the higher form of the novel which is properly revelatory, he now argues. With 'proper handling' it deals in and with the deepest experiences of the spirit and psyche. This passage on the promise of his chosen form occurs in a context where Lawrence underlines his particular distance from a novelistic tradition. Lady Chatterley finds herself absorbed in listening to Mrs Bolton's gossip about Tevershall, the village, and its inhabitants. Clifford, too, shows himself to have an

appetite for the details of people and their lives which Mrs Bolton with relish imparts. However, '[i]t was more than gossip. It was Mrs Gaskell and George Eliot and Miss Mitford all rolled in one, with a great deal more, that these women left out' (100). Mrs Bolton's gossip, which runs to 'volumes', proves to be masturbatory according to Lawrence's lexicon: it 'excite[s] spurious sympathies', is 'mechanical' and 'deadening to the psyche' (101). It constitutes a kind of pornography, akin to that provided by popular fiction which is 'humiliating' and appeals to the public's vices (101). Gaskell, Eliot and Mitford perhaps constitute an over-conscious aesthetic. It is fascinating that Lawrence evokes, in this instance, women writers, and then prepares the ground to develop the distance between his use of the novel and their practice.

There are many other references in this novel to the status and value of the work of art which are often made obliquely through a criticism of the 'maker'. The focus is not so much on the artist figure who occasionally succeeds, unsupervised and untutored (this is, on occasion, the experience of Will Brangwen or Paul Morel), but more on a stifling self-consciousness manifested in Michaelis as dramatist or Clifford Chatterley who also writes. They are the mediocre players. Lawrence's spat with high modernism is evident in the occasional side-swipes at his eminent contemporaries: Connie's dismissal of the French writer Marcel Proust (*A la recherche du temps perdu*, 1913–27) in a tone which is reminiscent of Lawrence's discursive style, is a case in point, 'He doesn't have feelings, he only has streams of words about feelings. I'm tired of self-important mentalities' (LCL 194). These are the poles of fictional practice which Lawrence as maker must transcend: the mediocrity, or 'pornography', of popular fiction versus the 'self-important mentality' (to Lawrence, no less pornographic) of high modernism. As it is, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* bravely (some might say disastrously) plays with the seriousness of form. At the end of the novel, for example, Mellors is unexpectedly located in epistolary mode. The book ends with the text of a letter which he writes to Connie, in which Mellors alternates between a kind of folk wisdom ('A man has to fend and fettle for the best') and the emancipatory discourse which characterizes some of Lawrence's essays: 'Whereas the mass of people oughtn't even to try to think – because they *can't*. They should be alive and frisky, and acknowledge the great god Pan' (300). Finally, the sex-language debate is evoked – 'so many words, because I can't touch you' (301) – a privileging of the tangible which has dominated since the book's beginning.

Implicated in the rebirth of the self in this novel is the regeneration of England, and the engine of that regeneration is 'phallic-conscious-

ness', evolved in Lawrence's terms out of 'blood-consciousness'(F&P 183). The impotence of Clifford Chatterley as a member of the ruling class is symbolic of the impotence of his culture. Its salvation lies in the 'natural' man. Some of the last essays, 'A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*' and 'Pornography and Obscenity', take up the arguments of the novel proposing that only revolutionary changes in attitudes to sex can make possible any kind of positive revolution in the culture.

Further Reading

Selected reading relevant to the whole body of novels has been indicated in previous 'Further reading' sections, to which can be added Humma (1990) on the later novels. Monographs dedicated to single novels are less common than critical surveys. There is relatively little published on *The Boy in the Bush* although Partlow and Moore (eds, 1980) includes an essay by Charles Rossman. For a detailed discussion of *Kangaroo* and its contexts the most extensive study is Darroch (1981). Worthen discusses its form (1979). Rick Rylance considers it in the context of Lawrence's political fiction in Brown (ed., 1990). Heywood (ed., 1987) includes an essay on allusion in *Kangaroo* by Peek. The first full-length study of *The Plumed Serpent* is Clark (1964). Torgovnick examines Lawrence's primitivist aesthetic in *The Plumed Serpent* in her comparative study (1990). Chong-wha Chung discusses dualism with reference to *The Plumed Serpent* and, briefly, *The Boy in the Bush*, alongside the other novels in Preston and Hoare (eds, 1989). L.D. Clark, in the same volume, includes *The Boy in the Bush* and *The Plumed Serpent* in his discussion of the 'pilgrimage novels'. Rossman (1985) examines the contexts for the New Mexico and Mexico writing, and Kinkead-Weekes discusses the 'decolonising imagination' in *The Plumed Serpent* and other New Mexico texts in Fernihough (ed., 2001). Some critics compare and contrast the three versions of the Lady Chatterley novel (Sanders 1974), as does Worthen (1991b). Squires (1983) and Britton (1988) are also interested in its origins. Squires and Jackson (eds, 1985) brings together a range of essays and different approaches to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The first extended feminist critique is from Millett (1969) with a 'reply' from MacLeod (1985). Smith (ed., 1978) includes an essay by Spilka. Book-length studies with discussions of this novel and others include Moynahan (1963), Daleski (1965), Williams (1997), Bell (1992).

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