

D. H. LAWRENCE: A STUDY IN NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

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PREFACE

The most annoying aspect of the bulk of criticism published about D. H. Lawrence is that it is of a biographical nature. Certainly, little value can be gained by criticizing a novel on the basis of what the author has said or done before. Although he did not follow his own advice, Lawrence in his essay, "Spirit of Place," specified a logical approach: "Trust the tale and not the author." This is the criterion that the present critical approach utilizes.

On the basis of this consideration, Lawrence is not an author whose best endeavor was the novel form. His characters never achieve believability, primarily because of a too intrusive narrator. The narrator often assumes the duties of the character by "telling" the reader rather than allowing the characters to "show" the reader. Also in his early and intermediate novels, Lawrence was unable to stabilize the position of the narrator or the implied author. Emotionally speaking, the narrator and the implied author make impossible demands upon the reader. In overburdening the reader's "willing suspension of disbelief" on an emotional level, the entire narrative structure often collapses. Lawrence never mastered the craft of the novel; however, if the reader allows him to create a mood within and follows those changes dictated by the novel with an uncritical willingness, then the rewards will be

more than sufficient for the reader to forgive the larger portion of the author's fumbling.

I would sincerely like to thank my advisor and first reader, Dr. Green D. Wyrick, and my second reader, Dr. Charles E. Walton. Their encouragement and advice have made this study possible.

August, 1968

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CHAPTER I

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE: A BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING FORM

In light of much of the criticism that has been produced about David Herbert Lawrence since 1911, any definitive study of this author must of necessity define the aspects of the approach to be used. Basically, there are two critical approaches to art: one is a study of the mechanics used in the production of a work, and the other is the level of aesthetic identification one has with the product. The paramount problem that has, and does exist in criticism is the unconscious and indiscriminate mingling of these two basic but diverse principles. Obviously, content cannot be divorced from form in the final product. However, by observing the method of arriving at the sum total and the method of presentation, a separation for the sake of criticism is possible. This approach is one that is used unhesitatingly in other art forms. Paintings are criticized on two levels; one, the type of brush stroke, spatular effect, color mixture, and balance; two, what the painting communicates to the individual. The final segment of this equation is the confusing issue. All art does not communicate the same message to each individual in the same method.

From a simple mechanical consideration of the fiction novel, there are two basic component parts: the author and the story. However, beyond this point, there is a tremendous

amount of disagreement and confusion. Terminology has become a perfected ambiguity, and critics seem to have little or no reason for attaching myriads of connotations to such words as tone, style, omniscience, form. One typical example is a rather rambling critique of Lawrence's form which concludes as follows:

These passages are typical of many in The Rainbow where narrative uses the devices of incremental repetition, striking metaphor and incantatory rhythm to cast a penumbra over every day events.¹

Working within this confusion is difficult and, at times, practically impossible. Consequently, rather than codify another set of rules or utilize a new vocabulary, the terminology of certain select critics such as W. C. Booth² and Norman Friedman³ will be referred to wherever possible. However, even these two critics do not necessarily agree.

One of the basic problems of understanding the mechanics of the novel is the role of the author. He is overemphasized, underemphasized, and quite often completely misunderstood. Within the novel, the author is not present. He exists only at the level of creation and not as a force within the finished

¹Julian Moynahan, The Deed of Life, The Novels and Tales of D. H. Lawrence, p. 53.

²Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction.

³Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," PMLA, LXX (December, 1955), 1160-1184.

work. That presence within the novel proper will, for lack of a better term, be called the "implied author."⁴ It is the duty or role of the writer to select the type of narrative technique, the style, and the content fashioning these into a work of art. Every piece of literature exists as an entity, good or bad, within itself, and within this work exists a narrator. The narrator is neither the author nor the implied author, but rather the medium through which a story is told. The only method for an author to become a narrator would be for him to be physically present and verbally relate the story to an audience.

The implied author is usually seen opaquely through the editorials, commentaries,⁵ or moral judgments of the narrator or as in some instances, such as in Fielding's Tom Jones, quite openly and apart from the story itself. However, the narrator is seldom, if ever, identical to the implied author, for, as a rule, the narrator is created by him. In Albert Camus' The Fall, the narrator is the "I" of the book; he is also the primary character and appears to be in direct relationship with the author with no intermediary. However, the

⁴The use of the term, "implied author," does not coincide exactly with Booth's definition; however, for lack of a better term, it has been utilized to define a specific concept which is explained on pages 3 and 4 of this study.

⁵Booth, op. cit., Chapter III.

narrator is not Camus. The image behind Jean-Baptiste Clamence is the literary version, not the "real world view" of the author. Thus, the implied author exists in a work of art through the author but on a literary rather than a "real" level. The author in the act of creative selection dictates the amount of omniscience with the narrator and/or any other characters will possess. Realistically, total omniscience is impossible. The author is limited by the fact that he is a human being, and, thus, his ability to know, to see, and to delegate this power is also limited. However, within these limits, the power delegated to the narrator may range from the ability to relate the thoughts of all of the other characters⁶ to a complete lack of omniscience, in which case only exterior conversations and actions are reported. Whatever method of insight is utilized, the author must maintain a congruity which allows the reader to trust the narrator. If he is not consistent, the result is a work such as Lawrence's The White Peacock in which the narrator takes on a variety of characterizations and, thus, lack credibility.

Another factor involved in criticism is that of reader omniscience. This aspect of the novel is often misunderstood by critics who are symbol hunting or attempting by any means

⁶This technique is referred to as multiple omniscience, in which case the narrator may also be completely effaced and the characters relate their own tale; e.g., As I Lay Dying.

to "show what the author meant." The reader's ability to know, see, and understand a work is limited by two factors; one, the individual's experiences and knowledge; and two, by those controls which are built into the story. The overstepping of the limits set up by the author will oftentimes lead to a gross misinterpretation of a work. These limits, as created by the author and delegated by the implied author may be either broad or narrow. In The Fall, the reader has a greater amount of omniscience than either character within the work. There are few if any, bounds set upon the interpretation. The reader may place his own meaning upon a "judge penitent" and understand it on any number of levels. However, reader omniscience is often limited by boundaries which actively exist within a work. In The White Peacock, Lawrence's first, and from the standpoint of craft, worst novel, he utilizes a variety of intimate scenes between two young men. One specifically involves George Caxton and Cyril Beardsall swimming nude in a pond:

We stood and looked at each other as we rubbed ourselves dry. He was well proportioned and naturally of handsome physique, heavily limbed. He laughed at me, telling me I was like one of Aubrey Beardsley's long, lean, examples of slenderness, declaring myself more exquisite than his grossness, which amused him. But I had to give in, and bow to him, and he took on an indulgent gentle manner. I laughed and submitted. For he knew how I admired the noble, white fruitfulness of his form. As I watched him, he stood in white relief against the mass of green. He polished his arm, holding it out straight and solid; he rubbed his hair into curls, while I watched the deep muscles of his shoulders, and the bands stand out in his

neck as he held it firm; I remembered the story of Annable. He saw I had forgotten to continue my rubbing, and laughing he took hold of me and began to rub me briskly, as if I were a child or rather, a woman he loved and did not fear. I left myself quite limply in his hands, and, to get a better grip of me, he put his arm round me and pressed me against him, and the sweetness of the touch of our naked bodies one against the other was superb.⁷

From the unenlightened reader's or critic's symbol hunting interpretation, this passage could well be construed as an overt act of homosexual expression. The voice of the narrator, even though the "I" represents Cyril, could be theorized as belonging to Lawrence himself. If a reader projects this concept into the scene, he has overstepped the bounds of omniscience delegated to him. The narrator has related to the reader what he wants him to see; the implications of "perfect love"⁸ are not those of sexual perversity, nor are they those of classical Greek imagery. If the literary shadow behind Cyril Beardsal seems to be evincing the homosexual values attributed to Lawrence,⁹ this is also a misconception. The only method of discovering if he had homosexual tendencies and promoted them in his works would be to ask him personally.¹⁰

⁷D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock, p. 222.

⁸Loc. cit.

⁹See for example, Kingsley Widmer, The Art of Perversity, pp. 115, 217.

¹⁰H. M. Daleski, The Forked Flame, p. 185.

However, even this resource is not sufficient, for the narrator functions within the bounds of the work, and the author does not. The author as critic becomes only another reader; perhaps, from an aesthetic point of view more erudite, but from a mechanical consideration no more profound than any other trained observer.

A great deal of nonsense has been published about Lawrence of a pseudo-autobiographical nature.¹¹ This type of criticism is for the most part valueless; one must, as Lawrence says: "Trust the tale and not the author."¹² It is the duty of the writer to put forth his material in such a manner so that it does not degenerate or progress into an area which only has meaning to the creator; for example, James Joyce's Finnigan's Wake, or Norman Mailer's Why We Are in Viet Nam. In general, the criteria for production of a work is "art for the sake of art." Other motives, i.e., commercial or propagandistic, seldom obtain a place in the art world. The argument as to whether a book is good art, bad art, or even art in any form depends not upon reader omniscience but upon certain rather intangible qualities that are at the same time both rigid and flexible. The author must, upon the decision

¹¹See, for example, Helen Corke, D. H. Lawrence: The Croydon Years; and Jessie Chambers, D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record.

¹²D. H. Lawrence, "Spirit of Place," Studies in Classic American Literature, p. 2.

of creation, select his narrative technique, style, and content through which he wishes to express himself. Narrative technique is the method by which the story is related to the reader. Style consists of the experiences he chooses and the type of words utilized to verbalize the images he wished to create. Content is the sum total and the ability of the work to project one or many levels of aesthetic identification. Thus, these qualities are not determined by one individual reader nor by his taste, but rather by a group of factors contained within the work itself.

Another facet of omniscience is "distance." This rather nebulous aspect covers a multitude of fine distinctions which may be made on any number of levels. It is controlled by two factors both relatively intangible. One is the author who, in creation, builds this aspect into the work; the other is reader perception or the lack of it. Distance is the area separating the implied author from the narrator, the characters, the reader, and/or any conceivable combination of space between these components. This area may be physical, such as the Dwarf in Carson McCullers' Ballad of the Sad Cafe, or Faulkner's Benjy; moral as in Sinclair Lewis' Elmer Gantry; temporal as Winston Smith in George Orwell's 1984; emotional as Cyril Beardsal in Lawrence's The White Peacock; intellectual as in Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, or any value or level of value attainable by a human being. Thus, "distance" is not a static

factor; it changes from novel to novel, as well as within the work itself as the characters, narrator, and reader move.¹³ The other aspect, reader distance, is governed by the individual and all of the factors which make him what he is. The reader who stammers will certainly react differently to a protagonist who has this speech defect than will a reader who does not.¹⁴ A Catholic will react differently to a scene in which someone of the same faith is being persecuted. Also, the reader may partially control distance by an essentially negative power or by an inability to identify. Much of Joyce's work falls into this category. He would best be understood by an Irish Catholic intellectual steeped in Gaelic lore and Dublin life. The author also builds distance into a work by the depth of character presentation, i.e., how much the reader is allowed to see and know about the character. If the reader is allowed very little knowledge, then, of consequence, the inability to identify either positively or negatively with the character becomes much greater. Lawrence in The White Peacock has a great deal of difficulty controlling distance because of a lack of consistency in his narrative presentation of character.

¹³For a more complete but controversial consideration of distance see, Caroline Gordon, How to Read a Novel.

¹⁴Robert Scholes (ed.), Approaches to the Novel, p. 280.

Chronology is the final segment of narrative technique. Within any literary work, chronology must exist since "time" is a built-in factor in any language. An author cannot eliminate time; he can only choose the manner in which it will function within his particular work. The creator of a novel may utilize "time" in a very uncomplicated manner as a direct chain of events, one following another in a logical sequence, until the end, such as Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises; or, it may exist as a highly complex structure going both forward and backward within the time span or even outside of the time span of the work. Faulkner's experiment with chronology in "The Bear" and The Sound and the Fury are difficult and, at times, impossible for the reader to comprehend without a guide or "key." There are various arguments as to what labels should be applied to the various senses of movement within fiction; however, in all cases, the understanding or psychology involved becomes a suspension of disbelief. An example is the futuristic or utopian novel in which the implied writing of the work is further in the future than is the story itself. Brave New World, for example, is written in the past tense, i.e., the involvement includes hindsight of something that has happened in the past; consequently, the author must exist further in the future than the events which have already occurred. Moreover, the reader, if the novel succeeds, makes a suspension of disbelief which allows him to progress into

the fictive future and attain a sense of participation as well as a sense of the present. This "fictive" present which allows an adjustment of the time mechanism from past tense to a sense of immediacy represents not merely one simple value of "pastness" but an agglomeration of many degrees or levels. Usually, there exists within a novel one fixed point of time or concept of an event's time which serves as a point of reference or sense of direction.¹⁵ Thus, a reader, then, translates the events that occur from this point as either past, present, future, or as any degree as indicated by the story itself. Verbally or in transcribed form, the complete story is in reality "past"; however, psychologically, time exists from the established point in the chronology of events and allows the reader a sense of identification or participation in the movement of the novel. If the author in his creative effort allows the implied author, narrator, or any character to step outside of the established chronology, he destroys or seriously impairs the reader's process of suspension of disbelief.

Lawrence in The White Peacock often creates this problem for the reader. In Chapter V, Cyril Beardsal, the "I" of the book, has just witnessed his sister's fiancé smash an auto into a stone wall. After they carry the injured man into the house,

¹⁵A. A. Mendilow, "The Position of the Present in Fiction," The Theory of the Novel, pp. 253-280.

Cyril tells the reader: "I went home to tell my mother":

When I went to bed I looked across at the lighted windows of Highclose, and the lights trailed mistily towards me across the water. The cedar stood dark guard against the house; bright the windows were, like the stars, covering their torment in brightness. The sky glittering with sharp lights--they are too far off to take trouble for us, so little, little almost to nothingness. All the great hollow vastness soars overhead, and the stars are only sparks that whirl and spin in the restless space. The earth must listen to us; she covers her face with a thin veil of mist, and is sad; she soaks up our blood tenderly, in the darkness, grieving, and in the light she soothes and reassures us. Here on our earth is sympathy and hope, the heavens have nothing but distances.¹⁶

In this paragraph Lawrence destroys the reader's sense of time and identification in a number of ways. By changing from the past tense to the present tense, he not only breaks chronology, but also departs from any point of time reference within the story itself, leaving the reader nothing to which he can relate this "non event." Lawrence also changes narrator midway through the paragraph, and the implied author attempts to carry the reader into the timeless, well moralized, and philosophized vastness of space.

Any consideration of chronology borders upon many other factors which are outside the area of narrative technique. Although there is little or no agreement among critics and rhetoricians that narrative technique is even basically composed of the role of the implied author and narrator, forms

¹⁶D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock, pp. 193-194.

of omniscience, distance and chronology, there is more confusion as to what comprises style. While this present work includes only a limited consideration of Lawrence's style, a reasonable amount must be considered for background understanding. Fundamentally, style consists of the experiences the author chooses and the type of words he uses to verbalize the images he wishes to create.¹⁷ This definition includes such terms as theme, plot, characterization, symbolism, a greater or lesser degree of chronology and types of presentation.

Theme, the pervading abstract concept which is made concrete through its representation in characterization, action, imagery,¹⁸ and plot simply conflict, or as Friedman states as a basis for his concept ". . . a group of two or more episodes effecting a completed process of change in the main character . . ."¹⁹ exist on the periphery of style; however, they cannot be completely divorced from it, for the nature of words chosen to express an image must, if a work is not incoherent, also express an idea and its development.

¹⁷See page 8 of this work.

¹⁸William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, p. 486.

¹⁹Norman Friedman, "Forms of the Plot," The Theory of the Novel, p. 150. For a more complete examination of plot, see Norman Friedman, "Criticism and the Novel," Antioch Review, XVIII (1958), 343-370, or E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel.

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Imagery is a term that is widely used by critics to describe a variety of ideas from figures of speech to symbolism. Often even Lawrence himself in his criticism of Melville's Moby Dick falls into "seeking the unconscious motivation of the author."²⁰ He begins by seeing it as a "sea yarn" but then attempts to explain the whale as a symbol, but in the light of his personal philosophy:

Melville knew. He knew his race was doomed. His white soul doomed. His great white epoch, doomed. Himself, doomed. The idealists, doomed. The spirit, doomed.

The reversion. "Not so much bound to any haven ahead, as rushing from all havens astern."

That great horror of ours! It is our civilisation rushing from all havens astern.

The last ghastly hunt. The White Whale.

What then is Moby Dick? He is the deepest blood-being of the white race; he is our deepest blood-nature.²¹

The obvious fallacy involved in this type of dictative symbol interpretation is that most symbolic imagery is interpreted in the light of personal philosophy. One does not say that the white whale is not a symbol of the "doomed white race," but that this may or may not be Melville's vision. Or, for that matter, it may not be the concept of any other erudite critic. Thus, symbolizing to the author, the implied author and the reader may be completely opposite.

²⁰ Thrall and Hibbard, op. cit., p. 233.

²¹ Anthony Beal (ed.), Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism, p. 391.

Characterization is, like imagery, an integral part of style and equally as varied. Character development depends a good deal upon the narrative technique involved. If the narrator is, for example, third person omniscient, he has the ability to allow the reader both interior (thought processes), as well as exterior actions, such as conversations. If the narrator is limited to one level or has no omniscience, he must, then, rely upon a purely dramatic type of development which allows only a report of verbalized thoughts and exterior actions. E. M. Forster has labeled characters "flat" and "round" to describe the different types of development:

The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is flat pretending to be round. It has the incalculability of life about it--life within the pages of a book. And by using it sometimes alone, more often in combination with the other kind, the novelist achieves his task of acclimatization and harmonizes the human race with the other aspects of his work.²²

Whatever label or method of characterization is utilized, the narrator must be consistent in his handling. If he is not, as Lawrence often is not, the result is a rather ragged, difficult-to-visualize, portrait.

Types of presentation, Realistic, Gothic, Romantic, as a part of style are some of the least clear and most intangible

²²E. M. Forster, "Flat and Round Characters," The Theory of the Novel, p. 231.

aspects of fiction. "The usual critical approach to the form [types of presentation] resembles that of the doctors in Brobdingnag, who after great wrangling finally pronounced Gulliver a lusus naturae."²³ Fiction may be divided into any number of arbitrary groups, but the problem still exists that as Frye states, "there are no pure forms."²⁴

Rather than make an attempt at defining or selecting critical definitions for all types of fiction and presentation, and then endeavor to find a work to fit the description, a more valuable process at this juncture is to find a coherent description applicable to Lawrence's work.

²³Northrop Frye, "The Four Forms of Fiction," The Theory of the Novel, p. 42.

²⁴Ibid., p. 33.

CHAPTER II

THE FORM OF LAWRENCE'S EARLY AND MIDDLE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

Many critics, particularly those of the twenties and thirties, contend that Lawrence is not a novelist because his works lack "plot" or "development" in the classical sense.²⁵ Others of this same general period place him in a variety of schools from sex mad, homosexual fascist to misguided genius.²⁶ However, a group of later critics, such as Dorothy Van Ghent and Mark Schorer, have been rather enthusiastic in their "new interpretation" of Lawrence's work. Van Ghent believes that

We need to approach Lawrence with a good deal of humility about "art" and a good deal of patience for the disappointments he frequently offers as an artist, for it is only thus that we shall be able to appreciate the innovations he actually made in the novel as well as the importance and profundity of his vision of modern life.²⁷

Whether it be the classical or the modern critical approach, little if any help is gained from critics in understanding the mechanical aspects of Lawrence's novels.

Although he is essentially a romantic, his works do not bear out the complete classical connotations of the word.

²⁵Eliseo Vivas, "The Substance of Women in Love," Sewanee Review, LXVI (Fall, 1958), 588.

²⁶Lawrence Lerner, The Truth-tellers, p. 177.

²⁷Mark Spilka (ed.), D. H. Lawrence, A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 16.

Throughout all of his novels, one finds a strain of nature mysticism that is primitivistic, somewhat in the tradition of Rousseau's "return to nature" concept. Tindall has provisionally classified Lawrence a primitive romantic, although he has done so more by way of proving him a theosophist "compounded of animism and the occult" than by way of a label by which one may grasp Lawrence's relative position as a novelist.²⁸ In his earlier novels, such as The White Peacock and Sons and Lovers, Lawrence is rather a blatant soap box orator preaching a "back to nature anti-industrialized" way of life.²⁹ His primary spokesman for this rather romantic philosophy is his character, the game keeper, both in his first and last novel.³⁰ This character gives a rather precise definition to life as it should be in The White Peacock. Annable (the gamekeeper) in explaining why his wife has nine children and lives a rather uncivilized existence, says:

When a man's more than nature he's a devil. Be a good animal, says I, whether it's man or woman. You, Sir, a good natural male animal; the lady there--a female un--that's proper as long as yer enjoy it. And what then? [asks Cyril Beardsall] Do as th' animals do. I watch my brats--I let 'em grow. They're beauties, they are--

²⁸William York Tindall, "D. H. Lawrence and the Primitive," Sewanee Review, XLV (April, 1937), 211.

²⁹Frederich J. Hoffman, "From Surrealism to 'The Apocalypse,'" ELH, XV (June, 1948), 155.

³⁰First novel: The White Peacock, 1911; the last novel: Lady Chatterley's Lover, 1928.

sound as a young ash pole, every one. They shan't learn to dirty themselves wi' smirking deviltry--not if I can help it. They can be like birds, or weasels, or vipers, or squirrels, so long as they ain't human rot, that's what I say.³¹

Mellors, the gamekeeper in Lady Chatterley's Lover, is a more polished and sophisticated type; however, he also says of people that ". . . their spunk is gone dead. Motor cars and cinemas and aeroplanes suck that last bit out of them."³² Lawrence's use of nature and romantic idealism place him in a category that, although not unique, is best termed romantic primitive.

From the standpoint of craftsmanship in his novels, Lawrence in an overall evaluation falls short of being a master. In fact, only one of his novels, Lady Chatterley's Lover, approaches any reasonably sustained level of dexterity involving narrative form. However, many of his short stories are veritable masterpieces of form and technique. A critical view of Lawrence's narrative technique reveals that his novels segregate themselves into three distinct categories, either with a very evident change in approach, or a progression of one or all segments of technique. The first group is composed of his early novels: The White Peacock, Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow, and Woman in Love; group two, The Lost Girl, Aaron's

³¹D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock, p. 131.

³²D. H. Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover, p. 203.

Rod, and Kangaroo; group three, The Plumed Serpent and Lady Chatterley's Lover. This division is based, not upon "message" or theme as have been some critical studies of Lawrence, but upon the observable differences in narrative technique evinced by each group.

The White Peacock, Lawrence's first novel, published in 1911, is on several levels of technique, his worst; however, it demonstrates certain facets typical of his earliest novels. There are few mitigating aspects of his early method of presentation. Written, or at least begun in the first person, the novel reveals Cyril Beardsall as the "I." However, by page nine the narrator is completely confused:

Half an hour afterwards she popped her head in the study to bid me goodbye, wishing to see if I appreciated her. . . .³³

Lettie, Cyril's sister, then leaves the house to walk over to visit her future husband. The reader finds:

Leslie sprawled on a camp-chair, under a copper beech on the lawn, his cigar glowing. He watched the ash grow strange and grey in the warm daylight, and he felt sorry for poor Nell Wycherley, whom he had driven that morning to the station, for would she not be frightfully cut up as the train whirled her farther and farther away? These girls are so daft with a fellow! But she was a nice little thing--he'd get Marie to write to her.

At this point he caught sight of a parasol fluttering along the drive, and immediately he fell in a deep sleep, with just a tiny slit in his slumber to allow him to see Lettie approach.³⁴

³³D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock, p. 9.

³⁴Loc. cit.

Narratively speaking, this situation is impossible. If the "I" as established narrator has been left in the study of the Beardsall house, he obviously could not see Leslie "sprawled on a camp-chair" some mile or so distant.

Another change manifested in this passage is that of narrator omniscience. Until this point in the novel, the "I" Cyril Beardsall has not been omniscient, but with this change, he assumes the ability to read thoughts, such as Leslie's feeling sorry for a girl whom he has apparently jilted. In changing narrator and his omniscience, Lawrence has also interrupted the chronology of the story and instituted a new point of reference. The reader has suddenly been transported over Nethemere lake and the intervening hills and trees while poor Lettie must tromp around the lake and up the hill. The new point of view, thus, created involves a different sense of time, since chronology in a novel stems from an incident relative to the story. New characters are also introduced with the change; however, since the reader has not previously met the characters, Marie or Nell Wycherly, they only serve, on at least one level, to confuse the change even further.

Throughout the rest of the novel, the narrator is a confused issue. At times, he functions as "I" narrator or the center of consciousness³⁵ and, at other times, as a

³⁵Booth, op. cit., p. 153.

non-characterized third person omniscient.³⁶ The problem is further compounded by the implied author, who occasionally interrupts the story's progress to pass moral judgment upon the characters as he does in the following passage:

Geo [Saxton] and Lettie [Beardsall] crushed the veined belles of woodsorrel and broke the silken mosses. What did it matter to them what they broke or crushed? Over the fence of the spinney was the hill-side, scattered with old thorn trees. There the little grey lichens held up ruby balls to us unnoticed. What did it matter, when all the great red apples were being shaken from the Tree to be left to rot.³⁷

Since it is the role of the third person narrator to relate to the reader the speech, thoughts, and actions of the characters, it is obvious that still another force is at work in this scene. The moral indictment of the characters, as well as society en masse for the careless lack of consideration of nature and the implications brought out by the capital "T" of tree can only be brought to bear by the implied author's interrupting the established narrative progress.

The early novels of Lawrence are quite prone to such oversights. However, even though he had difficulty identifying his narrator, he had even greater problems with characterization. For example, in Part I, Chapter IX of The White Peacock,

³⁶Non-characterized third person omniscient is an invented term equal to the narrator's existing within the story as a force which tempers, filters, and relates material to the reader, but he is not personified, nor does he have a character role within the action of the work.

³⁷D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock, p. 210.

a new character is introduced to the reader although the other characters know him well. The problem concerns the confusion as to who is the narrator and a very awkward, indirect type of character development, thus leaving the reader completely ignorant:

"Somebody coming," said I.

It was a big, burly fellow moving curiously through the bushes.

"Doesn't he walk funnily?" exclaimed Marie.

He did. When he came near enough we saw he was straddled upon Indian snowshoes. Marie peeped and laughed, and peeped, and hid again in the curtains laughing. He was very red, and looked very hot as he hauled the great meshes, shuffling over the snow; his body rolled most comically.³⁸

The reader is not shown, but told that the new character is fat, sweats profusely, wears rings gorgeous with diamonds, wears patent leather shoes, sings well, is a fop, and went to college with Lettie; however, the reader is never told the character's name. But Lawrence is not consistent in his use of this type of character presentation. Later, in the novel in Part II, Chapter IX, four new characters are introduced, instantly complete with names, dress, and features; in short, completely and succinctly characterized. However, they are never seen again after this introductory scene.

Another problem involved in character presentation in the early novels is that of dialogue. If there are more than

³⁸Ibid., p. 109.

three people present in a scene, the reader is quite likely to find himself at a complete loss in attempting to discover who is saying what to whom. Moreover, his characters are very apt to change levels of understanding quite abruptly with little regard to pre-ordained pattern or character type. Lawrence utilizes this rather foreign approach (which quite often involves the implied author) many times in his earlier novels. A case in point occurs in Sons and Lovers when the "protagonist," Paul Morel, must go to the local miner's pub to collect his father's wages: "The landlady [bar owner] looked at him de haut en bas, rather pitying and at the same time, resenting his clear, fierce morality."³⁹ This passage is more than a bit taxing for the reader. It is rather difficult to visualize a bartender in a small English mining town, looking "de haut en bas" at anyone much less a small boy. Moreover, for this same landlady to resent any child's "clear, fierce morality," whatever that might be, becomes a great strain in its demand upon the reader's willing suspension of disbelief.

Although not all of the characters of Lawrence's early novels suffer major defects, he quite often attributes depths of emotion quite impossible for the reader to follow or believe. Such a scene appears midway through Sons and Lovers. Miriam, Paul Morel's "spiritual lover" is in the family kitchen.

³⁹D. H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers, p. 73.

"Eh, my Hubert!" she sang, in a voice heavy and surcharged with love. "Eh my Hubert!" And folding him in her arms, she swayed slightly from side to side with love, her face half lifted, her eyes half closed, her voice drenched with love.

"Don't!" said the child, uneasy--"don't Mirian!"

"Yes; you love me, don't you?" she murmured deep in her throat, almost as if she were in a trance, and swaying also as if she were swooned in an ecstasy of love.⁴⁰

This scene might not be so unbelievable if the reader were not aware of the fact that Hubert is Miriam's brother of five and that Miriam is an adolescent of fifteen. Lawrence often seems incapable of creating "round characters" or, those capable of surprising in a convincing manner, or, for that matter, even being convincing. The center of the problem is the characters themselves. When they are allowed to "show" or "do" for the reader, they become quite believable. However, when, as so often occurs in Lawrence's novels, the narrator tells the reader about the actions and emotions evinced by the characters, the strain becomes too great, and the passage fails to sustain itself.

Lawrence had a good command of dialect and was able to reproduce at times very believable dialogue. But as a rule the narrator tells much more than he shows. In The Rainbow, as in most of the early novels, the characters have a difficult time presenting themselves in their own speech. In the following passage, the dialogue has been lifted out of context to

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 153.

demonstrate the amount and control over what they are allowed to do themselves. Will Brangwen and his cousin Anna are gathering sheaves of wheat in the moonlight:

"Put yours down"
 "No it's your turn"
 "My love"
 "My love"
 "Anna"
 "My love"
 "Anna"
 "My love"
 "I want to go home"⁴¹

Although this scene is highly emotional, the two characters themselves have only nine ultra short sentences between them in a page and one-half. The following is the passage in its original form. The character movement takes the form of emotion which is not exhibited or demonstrated by the characters but is related by an omniscient third person narrator who is also present in the field. The reader, however, is not present:

"Put yours down," she said.
 "No, it's your turn." His voice was twanging and insistent.

She set her sheaves against the shock. He saw her hands glisten among the spray of grain. And he dropped his sheaves and he trembled as he took her in his arms. He had overtaken her, and it was his privilege to kiss her. She was sweet and fresh with the night air, and sweet with the scent of grain. And the whole rhythm of him beat into his kisses, and still he pursued her, in his kisses, and still she was not quite overcome. He wondered over the moonlight on her nose! All the moonlight upon her, all the darkness within her! All the night in his arms,

⁴¹D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, pp. 113-114.

darkness and shine, he possessed of it all! All the night for him now, to unfold, to venture within, all the mystery to be entered, all the discovery to be made.

Trembling with keen triumph, his heart was white as a star as he drove his kisses nearer.

"My love!" she called, in a low voice, from afar. The low sound seemed to call to him from far off, under the moon, to him who was unaware. He stopped, quivered, and listened.

"My love," came again the low, plaintive call, like a bird unseen in the night.

He was afraid. His heart quivered and broke. He was stopped.

"Anna," he said, as if he answered her from a distance, unsure.

"My love."

And he drew near, and she drew near.

"Anna," he said, in wonder and birthpain of love.

"My love," she said her voice growing rapturous. And they kissed on the mouth, in rapture and surprise, long, real kisses. The kiss lasted, there among the moonlight. He kissed her again, and she kissed him. And again they were kissing together. Till something happened in him, he was strange. He wanted her. He wanted her exceedingly. She was something new. They stood there folded, suspended in the night. And his whole being quivered with surprise, as from a blow. He wanted her, and he wanted to tell her so. But the shock was too great to him. He had never realized before. He trembled with irritation and unusedness, he did not know what to do. He held her more gently, much more gently. The conflict was gone by. And he was glad, and breathless, and almost in tears. But he knew he wanted her. Something fixed in him for ever. He was hers. And he was very glad and afraid. He did not know what to do, as they stood there in the open, moonlit field. He looked through her hair at the moon, which seemed to swim liquid-bright.

She sighed, and seemed to wake up, then she kissed him again. Then she loosened herself away from him and took his hand. It hurt him when she drew away from his breast. It hurt him with a chagrin. Why did she draw away from him? But she held his hand.

"I want to go home," she said, looking at him in a way he could not understand.⁴²

⁴²Loc. cit. Italics are those of the present author.

In many instances Lawrence's characters merely get in the way of his narrative dialogue and become simple, flat cardboard reproductions which move about at the direction of the narrator or implied author with little or no interior motivation.

As a rule, a large amount of reader omniscience is involved in all of Lawrence's novels, although it is a factor that varies somewhat in its form from novel to novel and group to group. In the first group, the reader is often allowed insights into the emotions of the characters that even the character does not recognize. Often, the reader is told quite frankly that the character does not know or understand what is happening to him. At times, the narrator also breaks chronology to tell the reader what will happen to the character in the future. Typical of such passages is a philosophical soliloquy by the narrator of The Rainbow supposedly filtered through Lydia Brangwen after her husband is drowned:

And how could age save youth? Youth must go to youth. Always the storm! Could she not lie in peace, these years, in the quiet apart from life? No, always the swell must heave upon her and break against the barriers. Always she must be embroiled in the seethe and rage and passion endless, endless, going on forever.⁴³

The reader, the implied author, and the narrator are certain that this condition will be endless. However, Lydia, who is a Polish immigrant living in a small mining town, is allowed

⁴³D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, p. 238.

absolutely no voice in all this ponderous consideration of her future.

One other disconcerting aspect of reader omniscience in Lawrence's works is the occasions upon which he prefers not to tell the reader some fact involved in a scene. One of several such examples is Tom Brangwen's funeral. He has been, as was previously noted, drowned in a flood. His son arrives at home and looks at the coffin. The reader is told, "He even read the nameplate, 'Tom Brangwen, of the Marsh Farm. Born ____ Died ____.'"⁴⁴ (The punctuation, here, is that of the original author.) If young Tom Brangwen can read the name-plate, surely he can read the dates. Perhaps, he cannot, or perhaps there is no date on the coffin, and only the implied author knows. Certainly, the reader is never informed. This quirk of holding back information that is not actually of great import in itself, but obviously arouses curiosity, appears in all three groups of Lawrence's novels.

Although it is dangerous to generalize about a concept as variable as that of narrative distance, certain concrete statements can be made about Lawrence's early novels. First, there is, as a rule, a good deal of closeness between the implied author and the narrator. Secondly, there is an attempt at closeness between the narrator and the reader. And, thirdly,

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 236.

there is a false sense of nearness between narrator and character. The implied author as commentator and moral spokesman changes place on stage with the narrator literally hundreds of times throughout Lawrence's novels, but in his early works it takes a distinct form that is more often relatively subtle than open and completely visible:

Again a loud cry from the hill-top. The woman has followed thus far, the big, shapeless woman, and she cries with loud cries after the white coffin as it descends the hill, and the children that cling to her skirts weep aloud, and are not to be hushed by the other woman, who bends over them, but does not form one of the group. How the crying frightens the birds, and the rabbits; and the lambs away there run to their mothers. But the peewits are not frightened, they add their notes to the sorrow; they circle round the woman; it is they who for ever "keen" the sorrows of this world. They are like priests in their robes, more black than white, more grief than hope, driving endlessly round and round, turning, lifting, falling and crying always in mournful desolation, repeating their last syllables like broken accents of despair.⁴⁵

This passage from The White Peacock encompasses one of the most confusing issues in the novel. The "closeness" between the narrator as "I," the narrator as non-characterized third person omniscient, and the implied author allows them to change position very subtly with little difficulty. Although the "I" has been replaced by the third person omniscient narrator some paragraphs before, he is still present by implication. The implied author is also present, lending a moral imagery to the scene through the "peewits" who become priests "chanting an

⁴⁵D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock, p. 156.

endless litany." This type of distance is one of the identifying factors of Lawrence's early novels.

In his attempts to involve the reader, he places characters in emotional conditions that if followed emotionally become a rather "wring-the-reader" type of game with the narrator and the reader as the leading characters. The following often quoted wrestling scene from Women in Love is a subtle example of the narrator's attempting to involve the reader emotionally while preserving what, at first glance, appears to be a closeness with the characters Birkin and Gearld:

So they wrestled swiftly, rapturously, intent and mindless at last two essential white figures working into a tighter closer oneness of struggle, with a strange, octopus-like knotting and flashing of limbs in the subdued light of the room; a tense white knot of flesh gripped in silence between the walls of old brown books. Now and again came a sharp gasp of breath, or a sound like a sigh, then the rapid thudding of movement on the thickly-carpeted floor, then the strange sound of flesh escaping under flesh. Often, in the white interlaced knot of violent living being that swayed silently, there was no head to be seen, only the swift, tight limbs, the solid white backs, the physical junction of two bodies clinched into oneness. Then would appear the gleaming, ruffled head of Gearld, as the struggle changed, then for a moment the dun-coloured, shadow-like head of the other man would lift up from the conflict, the eyes wide and dreadful and sightless.⁴⁶

Upon closer inspection, this passage reveals a number of commonplace facets of Lawrence's narrative distance. The narrator, although seemingly close to the characters, is actually almost

⁴⁶D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love, p. 462.

as distant as is the reader. Thus, gasps and sighs are heard, not seen, by both reader and narrator. It is as if the narrator were standing in the doorway of the room between the characters and the reader. All of the emotions and actions are interpreted by the narrator who is not characterized. This type of non-characterized narrator is a definite distorting factor which stands between the majority of Lawrence's characters and the reader. Since the narrator exists as a non-visible, oftentimes interpretive force, little closeness can be obtained between the emotionally volatile narrator and the reader.

Chronology is probably the most conventional aspect of Lawrence's early narrative technique. Although there are many lapses and breaks, he uses time as a logical sequence of events, one occurring after the other. However, the most frequent breaks in chronology appear when the narrator as a prologue or an epilogue to a scene abandons the story for a rhetorical flight often involving the beauties of nature. The White Peacock is quite literally full of such time lapses. The opening paragraph of Chapter VIII, Part II, is a typical example:

Often at the end of the day the sky opened, and stately clouds hung over the horizon infinitely far away, glowing, through the yellow distance, with an amber lustre. They never came any nearer, always they remained far off, looking calmly and majestically over the shivering earth, then saddened, fearing their radiance might be dimmed, they drew away, and sank out of sight. Sometimes, towards

sunset against shield stretched dark from the west to the zenith, tangling the light along its edges. As the canopy rose higher, it broke, dispersed, and the sky was prim-rose coloured, high and pale above the crystal moon.⁴⁷

Notice that "wring-the-reader" may be played with clouds as easily as it can be with characters. Chronologically, in the above passage, the narrator with no evident justification has progressed from the indefinite past, i.e., often, sometimes, to the specific past, i.e., "as the canopy rose higher, it broke." Although there are fewer such breaks in Sons and Lovers and Women in Love than in The White Peacock and The Rainbow, they are an evident characteristic of Lawrence's early narrative technique.

In the second group of Lawrence's novels, The Lost Girl, Aaron's Rod and Kangaroo, there are a variety of changes or progressions visible in narrative presentation. Although The White Peacock is a novel-length attempt at first person narrative, the first group of novels is rather well marked by the non-characterized third person omniscient narrator who is a force but seldom shows himself openly. Usually, the emotions are attributed to one of the characters. In the second group of novels, this aspect changes. Beginning with The Lost Girl, the implied author openly assumes a rather large role in the novel. This type of technique is quite similar to that used

⁴⁷D. H. Lawrence, The White Peacock, p. 217.

by Henry Fielding in Tom Jones. Before, the implied author and the narrator were quite close, often changing positions very subtly in the same paragraph. In the intervening years between Women in Love (1916) and The Lost Girl (1920),⁴⁸ Lawrence changes his narrative approach and places the implied author in a position that is, for the most part, easily distinguishable from his narrator. In fact, in all three novels of his middle style, the implied author becomes the "I" of the work; although he assumes no character role within the action of the novel proper. In Chapter VI of The Lost Girl, one finds an easily identifiable example of this technique which often involves the implied author's stopping for a chat with the reader about the novel and among other things:

Now so far, the story of Alvina is common place enough. It is more or less the story of thousands of girls. . . . There have been enough stories about ordinary people. I should think the Duke of Clarence must even have found malmsey nauseating, when he choked and went purple and was really asphyxiated in a butt of it. And ordinary people are no malmsey.⁴⁹

By the latter portion of this novel, however, this style degenerates into a form that is tagged by lines of pure melodrama, such as "How she suffered no one can tell,"⁵⁰ or "For

⁴⁸Henry Moore, The Intelligent Heart, p. 174.

⁴⁹D. H. Lawrence, The Lost Girl, pp. 97-98.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 227.

this year of our story is the fatal year 1914."⁵¹ Aaron's Rod is, on the other hand, a reversion from this melodramatic note to the more Fielding type of technique used in the early portion of The Lost Girl. It also demonstrates some similarity to the rather clumsily concealed narrator of the early novels. However, melodrama seems to be one of the distinguishing characteristics of the three intermediate novels. In Kangaroo, Lawrence's so-called leadership novel,⁵² outside of the normal narrative fumbling, there are two very strange episodes which have very little to do with the novel, except in a very strained manner. The first involves a dialogue about an old bi-plane parked on the beach. There are two unknown characters involved. One is heard, and though the other is not, he is present in much the same manner as a one-sided telephone conversation:

Yes, he's carrying passengers. Oh, quite a fair trade. Thirty five shillings a time. Yes, it seems a lot, but he has to make his money while he can. No, I've not been up myself, but my boy has. . . .⁵³

From the standpoint of narrative technique, this dialogue is very odd. The protagonist of the novel, Richard Lovat Sommers, is not present, nor is his wife. The reader is never introduced to the character who is speaking. The apparent recipient

⁵¹Ibid., p. 291.

⁵²Moore, op. cit., p. 415.

⁵³D. H. Lawrence, Kangaroo, p. 195.

of this information asks questions, but is not identified, either. Theoretically, it is impossible for either character to be the narrator, for up until this point, and after it, the narrator has no character role. Whatever the solution, it creates a strain for the reader's willing suspension of disbelief.

The other strikingly odd feature of narrative presentation in Kangaroo is a complete chapter, Chapter XII, the longest in the entire novel, which covers the hero and his experiences as a vague pacifist in England during World War I. Narratively, it is non-characterized third person omniscient. However, the tale is told in such a sympathetic manner that, on one level, there is very little difference between the narrator and Sommers. The main problem with the chapter is that it has nothing to do with the story stylistically, or chronologically, nor does it have anything to do with the main body of the story and the political intrigue of Kangaroo. Unfortunately, this episode parallels Lawrence's own experiences with the English Army during World War I. If the reader is aware of this autobiographical fact, it seriously hampers the progress of the novel, because one constantly makes comparisons between the two episodes. And, even if he is not aware, the abrupt change of style is more than sufficient to intrude upon the narrative flow of the work.

Characterization in Lawrence's middle novels is responsible for a number of serious narrative defects that also

plagued his earlier novels. One particular problem also involves the credibility of the narrator's omniscience. In The Lost Girl, the narrator looks into the future and tells the reader quite frankly that "It was time for Miss Frost to die. It was time for that perfected flower to be gathered to immortality."⁵⁴

The narrator tells the reader on three separate times, "It was time for Miss Frost to die." However, Miss Frost does not die. In fact, she does not even get sick. She goes on and on in spite of the narrator's best efforts to get rid of her. She lives through the rest of Chapter III and almost makes it through Chapter IV, but the narrator, by a lucky stroke, manages to get her sick and into bed:

The night passed slowly. Sometimes the grey eyes of the sick woman rested dark, dilated, haggard on Alvina's face, with a heavy, almost accusing look, sinister. Then they closed again. And sometimes they looked pathetic, with a mute stricken appeal. Then again they closed--only to open again tense with pain. Alvina wiped her blood-phlegmed lips. In the morning she died. . . .⁵⁵

This type of false prophesying adds to the lack of credibility in what are already vague characters. Also, as in the earlier novels, the narrator constantly tells the reader what is happening rather than allowing the characters to show the reader. The death scene described above covers one complete page, yet in the entire passage, the two characters share only five short sentences of dialogue between them.

⁵⁴D. H. Lawrence, The Lost Girl, p. 45.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 61.

From the point of view of characterization, Aaron's Rod is, without a doubt, Lawrence's worst effort, although the situations of the protagonists in all three of his middle novels are almost incredible. Aaron of Aaron's Rod is a coal miner. However, he plays sixteenth-century Christmas melodies on a flute, as well as Bach and Beethoven. In fact, he plays so well that, when he abandons his family, he finds a job as flutist in a London orchestra with no apparent difficulty. Throughout the first half of the novel, the narrator has a great deal of trouble presenting his characters. At times, he is literally indifferent even to the protagonist; at times, he also assumes a coyness or lack of omniscience in presenting new characters that borders on idiocy. Early in the book, the narrator attempts to characterize a gathering of local people at a pub. He introduces the pub owner through the eyes of Aaron, who knows these people very well: "She was a large, stout high-coloured woman, with a fine profile, probably Jewish."⁵⁶ The narrator knows full well that she is more than probably Jewish and tells the reader so four pages later. "He [Aaron] saw the fine rich-coloured secretive face of the Hebrew woman. . . ." The narrator also uses the same type of coy introduction for the doctor: "Opposite, by the fire, sat a little greenish man--evidently an Oriental. . . ." A few

⁵⁶D. H. Lawrence, Aaron's Rod, p. 13.

sentences later on the same page, "'Well,' said the little Hindu doctor . . . ," and after a few intervening sentences, "'But what do you call wisdom?' asked Sherardy, the Hindu." The narrator, since he has assumed the role of third person omniscient, merely taxes the patience of the reader by such verbal gymnastics. By the end of the book, the characters have all but disappeared. Although Aaron and Lyly are present in name, they are not present either in action or in distinguishable dialogue. In fact, the latter part of the book reads very much like a philosophical dissertation upon the "love urge."⁵⁷

Reader omniscience in Lawrence's middle novels changes, not so much in degree, as in the method of arriving at this knowledge. The primary method used in the early novels was that of the narrator who relayed the information to the reader. This observation is based on the fact that the majority of the action and emotions of these novels comes to the reader filtered through the narrator rather than directly from the characters themselves. In the middle group, however, the reader has another aid to omniscience in the characterized implied author. Although this factor has been mentioned earlier in connection with the narrator, it also becomes one of the trade marks of Lawrence's intermediate method of

⁵⁷D. H. Lawrence, Kangaroo, Chapters XXII, XXIV.

presentation. Although it also functions in The Lost Girl and Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo provides a number of good cases in point in which the implied author stops the narration to tell the reader about the protagonist:

Now Sommers was English by blood and education, and though he had no antecedents whatsoever, yet he felt himself to be one of the responsible members of society, as contrasted with the innumerable irresponsible members. In old, cultured, ethical England this distinction is radical between the responsible. . . .⁵⁸

He further explains about the differences between England and Australia for the reader's benefit. Later in the same chapter, Sommers gets off on somewhat the wrong tangent in his ideas about Australia, and the implied author steps in to correct not the character's views but the reader's:

But Richard was wrong. Given a good temper and a genuinely tolerant nature--both of which the Australians seem to have in a high degree--you can get on for quite a long time without "rule."⁵⁹

This rather clumsy, time-worn approach has its benefits in that it requires little perception on the part of the reader. However, it also seriously hampers the movement of the novel, and, in many cases, the information or expansion of reader omniscience, thus obtained, sacrifices much more than is necessary in the realm of credibility. Also, the tendency for Lawrence to degenerate into melodrama from this type of

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

presentation lowers the effectiveness of all three of his middle novels.

Distance as it involves Lawrence's narrative technique changes noticeably in The Lost Girl, Aaron's Rod and Kangaroo. One of the primary distinctions again involves the characterized implied author. In this position, he becomes totally omniscient as versus the non-characterized third person omniscient narrator who is all-knowing, only so far as the actions and emotions of the characters in the story are concerned. However, as has been pointed out, in this type of technique, it is possible for the narrator to be wrong. Thus, since the implied author has assumed a role of omniscience superior to that of the narrator a fair amount of narrative distance is opened between them. This method contrasts rather sharply with the form of the earlier novels in which the narrator and the implied author were so close from the point of view of distance that both often existed in the same paragraph and were able to change places almost unnoticed. In developing a greater distance between his implied author and his narrator, Lawrence has also created a greater distance between the reader and the narrator and the reader and the character.

Although, of course, this technique varies a great deal, there are myriads of not so subtle examples, such as in Aaron's Rod, in which the implied author opens a rather lopsided conversation with the reader:

Don't grumble at me then, gentle reader, and swear at me that this damned fellow [Aarom Sisson] wasn't half clever enough to think all these smart things, and realise all these fine drawn-out subtleties. You are quite right, he wasn't, yet it all resolved itself in him as I say, and it is for you to prove that it didn't.⁶⁰

The implied author, then slides back to a closer contact with the narrator. However, during this paragraph and many similar to it, the narrator as he functions in the novel is temporarily dropped, and the character is objectively discussed with little closeness on any level either to the reader or the implied author.

Narrator-character distance in the middle novels is quite similar to Lawrence's earlier technique. The narrator is only reasonably close to the characters and is unable to get closer because of the "flat nature" of the characters themselves. The attributions of emotions and the lack of speech give a false sense of narrator-character closeness to the novels. Again, as in the earlier novels, the reader is quite distant from the characters because of the intrusive narrator who stands between the character and the reader relating rather than allowing them to show what is happening. This type of distance is one of the common denominators of all Lawrence's novels up to this point; however, he does change this facet of his technique in his final works.

⁶⁰D. H. Lawrence, Aaron's Rod, p. 161.

Chronology is a factor that remains quite static throughout all of Lawrence's works, although the sentence-to-sentence usage of time includes more than the normal amount of artistic fumbling. As in the earlier novels, the narrator will quite often change tense in a sentence for no apparent reason. However, The Lost Girl contains a time problem that also involves reader omniscience or rather the lack of it. Finally, on page 291, the reader is told that "It was August Bank Holiday, that forever black day of the declaration of war, when his question was put. For this year of our story is the fatal year 1914."⁶¹ If the implied author deems this date important to the progress of the story, it is rather odd that he should wait almost until the end of the novel to inform the reader since he has been very specific of his dates up to this point. Consequently, it appears to be more of an oversight on the author's account rather than a premeditated inclusion.

In looking ahead, Lawrence's narrative technique begins to show a reasonable amount of progression rather than mere change. All of his early novels and his middle novels demonstrate a lack of finesse that is often both comical and appalling for an artist of his calibre. This condition may be, as some critics have stated, due to overwork; however, it

⁶¹D. H. Lawrence, The Lost Girl, p. 291.

is more likely that his undexterious handling is simply his lack of competence and understanding of the novel form. It is in The Flumed Serpent and Lady Chatterley's Lover that Lawrence finally achieves a comparatively workable method of narrative technique.

CHAPTER III

LAWRENCE'S FINAL FORM

Lawrence's technique in its final form is demonstrated in only two novels: The Plumed Serpent, 1925; and Lady Chatterley's Lover, 1928. There are a number of marked changes in these last novels and a finesse of technique which shows both a comparative maturity and an awareness of the craft of fiction. However, as with his earlier works, critics are eager to point out the autobiographical facets of these later works. The fact that The Plumed Serpent was written in Mexico about Mexicans by an Englishman is, according to critics, one of its major faults. Tindall sees the novel as possessing some aspects of yogi mysticism.⁶² Other critics on even less solid ground simply label it a failure.⁶³ The basis for this dislike is a protest that the novel is so unlike their idea of a Lawrence novel. A fear of the new and a refusal to allow the author any experimentation have caused a narrow view to be taken of his last novels.

The Plumed Serpent, from the point of view of narrative technique, is a reasonably successful novel. Also, there is a uniqueness about this novel in which Lawrence moves somewhat

⁶²Tindall, op. cit., p. 205.

⁶³Moore, op. cit., p. 415.

outside the realm of primitive romanticism. Incorporated into the background of the novel is a dominant strain of Gothicism. Although gothic elements are present to varying degrees in the majority of his novels, but in some, these factors are present to such an extent that, even though it would not be termed a Gothic novel per se, they are such an integral factor that the story could not exist without them. The Plumed Serpent belongs to this category. Lawrence still places his characters in romantic primitivistic roles in which they live a spontaneous kind of existence. Their "place" in the world is still assured, because they are an organic, biological part of nature rather than because of their intellect. In fact, the protagonist, Kate Leslie, personifies a merging of romantic primitivism and gothicism by becoming the goddess of vegetation in Don Ramon's mystic cult.

Throughout the novel there is a sense of ponderousness and gloominess which stems from the mysterious shadowy world of Indian Mexico. This background of multi-hued designs and the revival of the pre-Colombian eagle-snake god are joined together to produce a stark, steamy, bloody, sex-laden picture topped by the ever present gothic spires of the Catholic Church. No novel possessing gothic elements would be complete without a scene involving insanity in the church, and The Plumed Serpent utilizes this theme to good advantage. Carlota,

the wife of Don Ramon, goes insane in the village church that has been pre-empted for the new religion:

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

Kate felt her blood run cold. Crouching near the altar steps, she looked round. And she knew, by the shape of the head bent in the black scarf, it was Carlota, creeping along on her knees to the altar steps.

The whole church was frozen in horror. "Saviour! Saviour! Jesus! O Holy Virgin!" Carlota was moaning to herself as she crawled along. . . .

Carlota crouched black at the altar steps and flung up the white hands and her white face in the frenzy of the old way.

"Lord! Lord!" she cried, in a strange ecstatic voice that froze Kate's bowels with horror: "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!"⁶⁴

With insanity there are also desecrated churches, brutal deaths by knife, gun, and strangling. There are blood red birds and mysterious rites accompanied by the outlandish music of huge drums and plaintive flutes. This Gothic background is sustained to the end. "Mucho te quiero," said Cipriano to Kate. "It sounded so soft, so soft tongued, of the soft, wet, hot blood, that she shivered a little."⁶⁵

As well as the incorporations of gothicism, Lawrence's narrative technique also undergoes a change. Although the narrator is non-characterized third person omniscient, and the implied author is still present, there is a very

⁶⁴D. H. Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, pp. 375-376.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 487.

concentrated effort to retain Kate as center of consciousness-- in the first half of the novel. As in the earlier novels, the implied author sees and comments on the situation, here; the comments retain a certain credibility because of their pertinence to the story itself:

Oh, if there is one thing men need to learn, but the Mexican Indians especially, it is to collect each man his own soul together deep inside him, and to abide by it. The Church, instead of helping men to this, pushes them more and more into a soft, emotional helplessness, with the unpleasant sensuous gratification of feeling themselves victims, victimised, but at the same time with the lurking sardonic consciousness that in the end a victim is stronger than the victimiser. In the end, the victims pull down their victimiser, like a pack of hyaenas on an unwary lion. They know it. Cursed are the falsely meek, for they are inheriting the earth.⁶⁶

Although it is not sustained, the narrator uses a rather unusual approach. He is omniscient in so far as the story is concerned; however, he is very careful to relate to the reader only those objects which could be seen by Kate. He also tempers the view of the movement and emotion through her feelings:

Kate had never been taken so completely by surprise in all her life. She had still cherished some idea of a gallant show. And before she knew where she was, she was watching a bull whose shoulders trickled blood goring his horns up and down inside the belly of a prostrate and feebly plunging old horse.

The shock almost overpowered her. She had come for a gallant show. This she had paid to see. Human cowardice and beastliness, a smell of blood, a nauseous whiff of bursten bowels! She turned her face away.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 303.

When she looked again, it was to see the horse feebly and dazedly walking out of the ring, with a great ball of its own entrails hanging out of its abdomen and swinging reddish against its own legs as it automatically moved.

And once more, the shock of amazement almost made her lose consciousness. She heard the confused small applause of amusement from the mob. And that Pole, to whom Owen had introduced her, leaned over and said to her, in horrible English:

"Now, Miss Leslie, you are seeing Life! Now you will have something to write about, in your letters to England."

She looked at his unwholesome face in complete repulsion, and wished Owen would not introduce her to such sordid individuals.⁶⁷

Although the narrator tells the reader "how Kate felt," the emotions are within logical bounds and are retained by the characters rather than merely attributed to them. In the first half of the novel, the narrator also seeks to retain a certain amount of objectivity in respect to other characters when Kate is not present:

Ramon went back to the house, to the upper terrace, and round to the short wing where his room was. He put a folded serape over his shoulder, and went along the terrace. At the end of this wing, projecting to the lake, was a square terrace with a low, thick wall and a tiled roof, and a coral-scarlet bigonia dangling from the massive pillars. The terrace, or loggia, was strewn with the native palm-leaf mats, petates, and there was a drum in one corner, went down an enclosed stone staircase, with an iron door at the bottom.

Ramon stood a while looking out at the lake. The clouds were dissolving again, the sheet of water gave off a whitish light. In the distance he could see the dancing speck of a boat, probably Martin with the two women.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 191-192.

This lack of subjectivity in character handling marks a distinct change from Lawrence's earlier technique. The effort that is made to curtail omniscience lends credence to the attempt at center of consciousness technique. However, he is unable to retain this unemotional objective character handling, and, by the second half of the book, he reverts to an earlier style in which the majority of emotions are attributed to all of the leading characters:

To Ramon, Carlota was still, at times a torture. She seemed to have the power still to lacerate him, inside his bowels. Not in his mind or spirit, but in his old emotional, passionate self: right in the middle of his belly, to tear him and make him feel he bled inwardly.⁶⁹

The last half of the novel utilizes much of Lawrence's earlier style; however, there are a number of differences. First, there is an increase in dialogue by the characters and, secondly, the characters are described in much more detail utilizing color of dress and background, facial and physical characteristics. Even people who are not prominent in the novel are characterized in their scene rather than separately.

The [crippled] boatman rowed short and hard upon the flimsy, soft, spermlike water, only pausing at moments swiftly to smear the sweat from his face with an old rag he kept on the bench beside him. The sweat ran from his bronze-brown skin like water, and the black hair on his high-domed, Indian head, smoked with wetness.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 227.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 96-97.

Although the narrator degenerates into "attributing emotions" later in the novel, the characterization is presented in such a vivid manner, that from this point of view, The Plumed Serpent is superior to any of Lawrence's previous works. In fact, the ease with which dialogue is handled and with which characters are introduced becomes one of the more obvious factors of this final form. The characters achieve and, for the most part, retain a "roundness" or believability which few of his earlier characters were able to attain.

Unlike Kangaroo, The Plumed Serpent has no supra-omniscient implied author. From the point of view of reader omniscience, it is both a handicap and an asset. Since the implied author no longer steps in to correct the reader and character, the responsibility rests completely on the reader to stay within the narrative bounds of the novel. However, it also assures the reader of an uninterrupted progression of the story. Another change is that the reader is not given advice, much of which is not terribly relevant to the story. Reader omniscience in The Plumed Serpent exists solely on an interior level, rather than an exterior as well as interior level. Also, the reader is able to gather a larger amount of knowledge from the characters themselves rather than having to rely upon the filtering of the narrator. The major factor involved in this change is the difference between utilizing comparatively "rounded characters." Owen, the English

socialist, for example, is able to show the reader a great deal about himself by his own conversation with Kate after the bullfight:

"Oh, good for you!" he laughed in relief. "Then you weren't too much overcome! I'm so glad. I had such awful qualms after I'd let you go. Imagined all the things that are supposed to happen in Mexico--chauffeur driving away with you into some horrible remote region, and robbing you and all that--but then I knew really you'd be all right. Oh, the time I had--the rain!--and the people throwing things at my bald patch--and those horses--wasn't that horrible?--I wonder I'm still alive." And he laughed with tired excitement, putting his hand over his stomach and rolling his eyes.

"Aren't you drenched?" she said.

"Drenched!" he replied. "Or at least I was. I've dried off quite a lot. My rain-coat is no good--I don't know why I don't buy another. Oh, but what a time! The rain streaming on my bald head, and the crowd behind throwing oranges at it. Then simply gored in my inside about letting you go alone. Yet it was the only bullfight I shall ever see. I came then before it was over. But wouldn't come. I suppose he's still there."⁷¹

Lawrence's characters, when allowed to act on their own volition, are able dramatically to project their role into the realm of reality, much more so than when their actions and dialogue are controlled by the narrator. Thus, by strengthening the role of his characters, Lawrence has also insured the reader the ability to exercise his own powers of intellect in a more uninhibited form of identification.

An integral part of this change is also discernible in the handling of "distance," particularly on the reader-

⁷¹Ibid., p. 23.

character level. In his earlier novels, Lawrence created a particularly close relationship between the implied author and the narrator. This aspect of distance remains virtually identical in The Plumed Serpent. The implied author and the narrator often exist in the same paragraph, changing roles almost imperceptibly. There is, however, a change in narrator-character, narrator-reader, and reader-character distance. The whole of the structure is more tightly knit with less distance between these three components of the novel. Since the narrator allows the characters a larger role and is not, generally speaking, as intrusive, the reader is able "to see for himself," thus allowing a closer identification. Also, since the narrator more or less assumes the role of an intermediary rather than a dictator, the reader is not forced into a secondary position but is able to assume a reasonable amount of equality with both narrator and character.

The only change in chronology in The Plumed Serpent is that there are fewer interruptions by the implied author with comments and moral judgments.

Lady Chatterley's Lover, Lawrence's "infamous" last novel, has been one of the most controversial works of the century. Originally, it was banned in England and America, and those copies which were smuggled in or reprinted were read as pornography. Today, however, there is little question as to the artistry of the work. Narratively speaking, it achieves

a merging of all of the techniques that he has used in all of his previous novels. The implied author is again characterized, but in a less prominent manner than in any of the three middle novels in which the technique was similar to that of Henry Fielding. The first paragraph of the work relatively positions and characterizes the implied author:

Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: There is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen.⁷²

Although the implied author is supra-omniscient and dictates the philosophy to be used throughout the book, he is not intrusive to a high degree. The majority of the information he supplies is relevant to the story, and, thus, the narrative stream retains a high level of consistency. However, there are examples in which he does intrude upon the story, breaking the structure without regard for his original role:

For even satire is a spirit of fine, discriminative sympathy. It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. 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.⁷³

⁷²D. H. Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover, p. 5.

⁷³Ibid., p. 94.

Although such breaks are rare in comparison either to his early or middle novels, they still detract in a very annoying manner from the main body of narrative material. This passage also embodies an aspect of Lawrence's technique which he seemed unable to improve upon. Even though the implied author has been designated a role distinct from that of the narrator, they evince a magnetism for one another that is almost undeniable. The above passage began with the narrator and Constance Chatterley. However, after three sentences, Connie is no longer present, and, by the fourth sentence the narrator's position is also usurped. This merging of narrator and implied author also leads to a number of inane colloquialisms on the narrator's part, such as, "It's an ill-wind that brings nobody good." Such comments are illogical and naive interruptions in what is otherwise a relatively sophisticated method of presentation.

The characterization in Lady Chatterley's Lover is quite successful, perhaps, because there are only four main characters within the entire novel or, perhaps, because Lawrence was finally able to allow his characters enough freedom to characterize themselves. Whatever the reason, they exist in a state of "roundness" equal to those of The Plumed Serpent. Constance Chatterley, though she passes through a number of emotional scenes that border on unreality, never strays outside of the bounds of believability established by the novel itself.

This intrusive pseudo-character action weakens the narrative structure. If Connie is looking at herself in the mirror and thinking, it would not be normal for her to describe herself in such objective terms. Perhaps, one's body does turn "greyish and sapless" without love, but Connie has given the reader no indication that this is her conclusion.

Although his early use of personified implied author carried reader omniscience outside the bounds of the novel, he is not prone to such flights in Lady Chatterley's Lover, primarily because the implied author is not displayed in such a prominent position. The reader gains the largest amount of his knowledge from the narrator and characters themselves. However, somewhat less is obtained from the characters in Lady Chatterley's Lover than from those in The Plumed Serpent, because of an increased intrusiveness by the narrator. Another factor involved is a lesser degree of direct dialogue. In Lady Chatterley's Lover, there is also a greater amount of "filtered" material than in The Plumed Serpent; however, there is much less than in any of Lawrence's early or intermediate novels. Reader omniscience, therefore, becomes comparatively restricted, since the emotions and actions of the characters contain a higher than necessary degree of narrator dictation. In the foregoing passage, the reader has learned nothing about Constance. He has only learned what the narrator sees about her body.

There are passages, however, in which the narrator assumes what has been established as a character role and attributes to a character more than he would do or show for himself. The following passage is quoted in its entirety in order to have a point of reference for several varying facets of Lawrence's characterization and narrative distance in the succeeding pages:

When Connie went up to her bedroom she did what she had not done for a long time: took off all her clothes, and looked at herself naked in the huge mirror. She did not know what she was looking for, or at, very definitely, yet she moved the lamp till it shone full on her.

She had been supposed to have rather a good figure, but now she was out of fashion: a little too female, not enough like an adolescent boy. She was not very tall, a bit Scottish and short; but she had a certain fluent, down-slipping grace that might have been beauty. Her skin was faintly tawny, her limbs had a certain stillness, her body should have had a full, down-slipping richness; but it lacked something.

Instead of ripening its firm, down-running curves, her body was flattening and going a little harsh. It was as if it had not had enough sun and warmth; it was a little greyish and sapless.

Disappointed of its real womanhood, it had not succeeded in becoming boyish, and unsubstantial, and transparent; instead it had gone opaque.

Her breasts were rather small, and dropping pear-shaped. But they were unripe, a little bitter, without meaning hanging there. And her belly had lost the fresh, round gleam it had had when she was young, in the days of her German boy, who really loved her physically. Then it was young and expectant, with a real look of its own. Now it was going slack, and a little flat, thinner, but with a slack thinness. Her thighs, too, that used to look so quick and glimpsey in their female roundness, somehow they too were going flat, slack, meaningless.⁷⁴

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 65.

One of Lawrence's annoying quirks involving reader omniscience, or lack of it, was mentioned in relation to his earlier novels. It appears, again, in Lady Chatterley's Lover. For example, Connie is asked by Sir Clifford to carry a message to the gamekeeper. When she arrives at the cottage, Mellors opens the door:

"Would you care to sit down?" he asked presuming she would not. The door stood open.

"No thanks! Sir Clifford wondered if you would . . ." and she delivered her message, looking unconsciously into his eyes again.⁷⁵

The message is obviously a narrative ruse to move Connie to a meeting with Mellors, but to make it so incredibly transparent is to make the reader seriously doubt the competence of the author. Although these aspects of the novel are not damning, they are damaging to what in some respects is Lawrence's finest work.

As has been mentioned, the implied author and the narrator are separated by very little distance on any level except in the cases of personification of the implied author in which he assumes the role of dictator of philosophy or reader enlightenment. Narrator-character distance, however, involves what are, at first glance, two contradictory factors. The first is that the narrator is quite close to Connie and Mellors; the second is that he is not. The distinguishing

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 63.

characteristic involved is level. Aesthetically and philosophically the narrator in addition to implied author combination is very sympathetic to the cause of these two characters. On the other hand, the narrator as relator and filterer does not allow the reader a closeness to the character because of his attributive nature. Thus, the dual aspect of the narrator produces a passage such as Connie's undressing before the mirror. This same scene also demonstrates the reader's inability to narrow the distance between himself and the character. However, one of the saving factors of the narrative technique is that this type of distance is not true throughout the entire work.

A method for allowing a direct character-reader relationship that Lawrence uses only twice in his novels is contained in his use of the letter. Although this method is as old as the novel form itself, it remains an effective means of transmitting information directly from a character. Lady Chatterley's Lover ends on this very private type of relationship between reader, Mellors and Connie:

Never mind about Sir Clifford. If you don't hear anything from him, never mind. He can't really do anything to you. Wait, he will want to get rid of you at last, to cast you out. And if he doesn't, we'll manage to keep clear of him. But he will. In the end he will want to spew you out as the abominable thing.

Now I can't even leave off writing to you.

But a great deal of us is together, and we can but abide by it, and steer our courses to meet soon. John

Thomas says good-night to lady Jane, a little droopingly, but with a hopeful heart.⁷⁶

In an overall consideration of the narrative technique used by Lawrence in his novels, the only conclusion that one arrives at is that, although he experimented and changed, he never achieved a truly mature method of communication between reader, character, and narrator. The short story, poetry, and at times the novella were his forte. The craft of the novel eluded him. This observation is not a condemnation, nor is it to say that Lawrence's novels are not effective. If the reader allows Lawrence to create a mood within him and follows those changes dictated, by the novel, with an uncritical willingness, the rewards will be more than sufficient for the reader to forgive the larger portion of the author's fumbling. The majority of his critics have attacked his art, not on artistic grounds, but on a biographical level. This constant critical confusion between what is art and what is history has led to many unjust and ridiculous criticism. As a novelist, he is not among those who thoroughly mastered their craft, but as a sensitive, creative artist, his works are certainly above those who would condemn him on a personal basis.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 283.

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