Returning to the Roots: Lawrence and Lady Chatterley

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I

For D. H. Lawrence, the period in which he wrote *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) was the time of "returning to his roots." He uses folklore and myth to renew the familiar tale of adultery, drawing upon the anthropology and comparative religion of his day for sources and methods: these "roots" of culture contain deeper truths, expressing collective attitudes to fundamental issues of life, death, divinity, and existence. The landscape of the novel is the Sherwood Forest of his childhood and young manhood, and the worn-out language of postwar England is also renewed and revitalized by returning to its roots in dialect and in the forbidden language of sex. The aim of the whole endeavour was to sweep away hypocrisy and find sources of a new life in the cynical and disillusioned landscape of the modern world. In order to do this, Lawrence had to redefine the sexual relationship between men and women in terms of what he called "the phallic." What he means by this has been interpreted variously by critics, some of whom find him naive, some find him tentative, and some condemn him as a male chauvinist. Conspicuous among the last is Kate Millett who raised the contention that Lawrence celebrated the phallic at the expense of woman's reality and being. Recently, however, such women critics as Anne Smith, Carol Dix and Hilary Simpson have taken a more positive view of what Lawrence tells us about Lady Chatterley's experience of sexual awakening. Simpson argues that Lawrence develops "the concept of the phallus as something which links, and thereby comes to include

in itself, both male and female qualities" (136), in that the phallus includes some characteristics such as "rhythmic cycles" (134) usually defined as feminine. It is important to realise that the word "phallic" meant for Lawrence the "glow" of desire in men and women, and to consider it as celebrating fertility, not celebrating masculine power.

The present essay explores some connections in the novel between personal factors in Lawrence and the large cultural and linguistic questions he addresses in connection with them. To begin with, I would like to have a look at his personal returning to the roots, and then, Connie's and Mellors' returning to their roots, and finally, the returning of the language to its roots, asserting that the returning to the roots makes for a renewed life, by means of the renewed language with rich associations.

Searching for dark gods, Lawrence moved away from his home in the midst of western Christian civilisation and modernity to Italy, Australia and Mexico. The "mythic" journey takes us back to an intuitive mode of cosmic understanding and a consciousness of the "body" in writing. His "thought-adventure" came home to a cyclical process like the journey of the sun god.[1]

The essay called "Return to Bestwood" (1926), which was written when he returned to Eastwood on his last visit in 1926, shows his ambivalent feelings, "an infinite repulsion" and "a devouring nostalgia." He could certainly see very little of that "old England" because of the change caused by industrialism. He is writing about loss and change, presenting himself as a person who has lived through the period of change, and who has suffered from the sense of loss, as it were, the loss of "a strange power of life... something wild and urgent" (154). At the same time, he remembers "the homeward-trooping of the colliers when he was a boy, the ringing of the feet, the red mouths and the quick whites of the eyes, the swinging pit bottles, and the strange voices of men from the underworld" (154). Whereas he hates the industrial landscape of England, he has an acute nostalgia for coal miners of a

bygone age, feeling himself connected with them in a deep destiny: "It is they who are, in some peculiar way, "home" to me ... the miners at home are men very much like me, and I am very much like them: ultimately, we want the same thing ... life" (155).

I would like to explain what causes "an infinite repulsion" and what causes "a devouring nostalgia" to Lawrence. I would like to begin by considering the former. England was in the cynical, disillusioned and turbulent years of political unrest and social change after the war, and also experiencing the aftereffects of the Victorian age. The following two quotations show the twin evils which brought about that change and loss. One is about the history of England:

> One England blots out another. The mines had made the halls wealthy. Now they were blotting them out, as they had already blotted out the cottages. The industrial England blots out the agricultural England. ... And the continuity is not organic, but mechanical. (156)

The other is Lawrence's hostile criticism of the Victorian age for lots of "ugliness," "ugly ideas, ugly religion, ugly hope, ugly love, ugly clothes, ugly furniture, ugly houses, ugly relationships" ("Nottingham" 109). It is clear that the twin evils are industrialism and intellectualism, which induced the destruction of man's vitality and the numbing of his creative spontaneity and sensual awareness. "Society" is a hypocritical institution, having a repressive moral attitude. Christianity conceals and strongly represses sexuality, which, as a result, fosters prostitution and pornography. Lawrence protests against the defilement and debasement of physical love by Puritanism or prurience, maintaining that the tragedy of the mind's precedence over the body was formed by these twin evils. Life is now helplessly confronted with a crisis, and so is Connie.

In the beginning of the novel, Lawrence professes that

> 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 little hopes. (5)

The question then arises as to how he builds up a new "habitat" in this "fallen" age. There are two conceivable worlds on which Lawrence may possibly rely: his father's world and the Sherwood Forest of his childhood. These two reconstituted worlds on his last visit weave the myth of resurrection in the novel. For the moment, I would like to look closely at these worlds, which cause "a devouring nostalgia" to Lawrence. Working-class men have been considered by him as embodying primitive qualities. The essay, "Nottingham and the Mining Countryside" (1926) positively appreciates the "physical contact" and "physical awareness" of his father and fellow miners working below ground in the dark mines. They had "a lustrous sort of inner darkness," "real being," and "a peculiar sense of beauty" (108), though "they had no daytime ambition, and no daytime intellect" (107).

However, the working-class men also disappoint Lawrence in their lack of articulation and sophistication, so he has to make the gamekeeper in the novel "almost like a gentleman" (68), while also retaining primitive qualities of body-awareness. Anyway, he rediscovered his roots in his father, though Eastwood was depressing, and "the old England" was no longer in existence.

Sherwood Forest was alive with memory and myths, through the romantic idea of the old law living close to nature. Birkin and Ursula made love there in *Women in Love* (1920). It is a magical place of rebirth through memory and desire, and Lawrence "becomes" his father by assimilation to the gamekeeper-protagonist Mellors, a comparable figure. The woods, in the novel, have association with the fabulous Sherwood Forest, outlawry, Robin Hood and freedom from repressive laws, possessing the unfallen simplicity and purity of nature. The woods, where the life of the body and intuition interpenetrate, are often contrasted with Wragby Hall, where the life of the mind and reason are paramount, and also contrasted with industrial

Tevershall. To restore the life of the body to the awfully fallen world, Connie is given a function as a Sleeping Beauty, poised on the brink of awakening, waiting to be rescued and released into life by the awakening agent, her future prince. As she looks at herself naked in the mirror, she observes that "her body was going meaningless, going dull and opaque, so much insignificant substance" (70). She is hopelessly fading before her time, and the woods come to be her habitual refuge, as they become the place for growth, mystery, and above all, bodily awareness in harmony with her.

The novel, according to Lawrence, aims "to be able to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly" (*A Propos* 308), and to get back the sexual experience close to the sources of our religious sense of mystery and of life, since "nearly all modern sex is a pure matter of nerves, cold and bloodless" (*A Propos* 326). The human race is vitally dying, so to overcome the tragedy we must "plant ourselves again in the universe" (*A Propos* 330). The fixed theme of the novel is how to *fuck* "a flame into being" (301), and that flame means the new life made by sex. The warm sex establishes "the living and re-vitalising connection between man and woman" through immediate contact, and "the bridge to the future is the phallus" (*A Propos* 327). A variety of forbidden words and dialect are used in the hope that they will be made available for immediate experience, re-creating the primitive religion of wonder along with the sexual act.

The novel is heavily dependent on Golden Bough type folklore and mythology, which forms the death and resurrection archetype. A return to the ancient mythic phase, when there is no split between body and mind, and when the life of man is in continuity with nature, is indispensible to Lawrence, in order to redress the stubborn modern emphasis on the mind. In Mexico and America, Lawrence saw clearly that the native Americans had no way of returning to an uncompromised "authentic" lifestyle, but that the "dark gods" were still active. And he finds the gods in the working-class gamekeeper

who places the centre of feeling in the body, and his roots in the senses. The ancient mythic materials regenerate Connie and Mellors, revitalizing postwar England, renewing the whole modern world. Connie is starved of contact and touch. Mellors has a kind of castration-anxiety, though he is given the ability to celebrate the body. Lawrence says about the regeneration as follows:

> It will be a phallic... regeneration. For the phallus is only the great old symbol of godly vitality in man, and of immediate contact.
>
> It will also be a renewal of marriage: the true phallic marriage. And still further, it will be marriage set again in relationship to the rhythmic cosmos. The rhythm of the cosmos is something we cannot get away from, without bitterly impoverishing our lives. (*A Propos* 328)

In the next section, I would like to search for Connie's and Mellors' roots "in the sensual, instinctive and intuitive body" ("Introduction" 418) through the prototypical fertility myth used by Lawrence.

II

The rich suggestions of the ancient folklore and myth play an active part in the novel through materials for anthropology and comparative religion. Lawrence renews the familiar tale of adultery, making his lovers, Connie and Mellors, form a pattern of mythic regeneration in that they experience such archetypes as those of the underworld descent, the dying-reviving gods, the restoration of fertility power, closed in the rhythm of nature's cycle of the seasons. Dennis Jackson reports that Lawrence's knowledge of such mythic patterns stems from "his reading, first in 1915 and again 1922, of Sir James Frazer's anthropological classic, *The Golden Bough*" (129). Lawrence, as well as other modernist writers like T. S. Eliot, was profoundly affected by Frazer's "primitive" religion, and as a result, became a major writer with a profound interest in comparative religion. Therefore his stories are practically or symbolically equipped with such anthropological leading roles from

Frazer's drama of the dying and reviving gods as Persephone, Isis, Osiris, Adonis, Attis, Dionysus, Pan, Cybele and such.

The vegetative cults "to promote the fruitfulness of the earth, of animals, and of mankind" (Frazer 141) appealed to Lawrence, for they celebrated the vital phallic relation of man and woman, that is, "phallic marriage," according to him. Many actions of his two main characters have apparent resemblance to ancient myth and its seasonal rituals. In this section, I would like to pay special attention to Connie's flight from an "underworld" to plant flowers and to experience rebirth, her regeneration through phallic awareness, her role of restorer to Mellors' psychic and physical renewal, and then the wedding of their genital parts.

It is clear that Lawrence constructs the novel as a binary opposition between body and mind, life and death, nature and culture, feminine and masculine dispensations, so Connie is contrasted with Clifford. Connie was obliged to live a chaste life with her husband Clifford, who had returned from the war with the lower half of his body paralysed. He takes up writing, and they come to live in a world of ideas, words and books. Clifford starts to make a name for himself as a successful writer, but he is a man, as Lawrence characterizes him in *A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover"*:

> who is purely a personality, having lost entirely all connections with his fellow-men and women, except those of usage. All warmth is gone entirely, the heart is cold, the heart does not humanly exist. He is a pure product of our civilisation, but he is the death of the great humility of the world. (333)

Connie, accordingly, grows aware of a dissatisfaction with her way of life. Her predicament is well expressed in the following passage.

> And thus far, it was a life in the void. For the rest, it was non-existence. Wragby was there... but spectral, not really existing. Connie went for walks ...in the woods...and enjoyed the solitude and the mystery, kicked the brown leaves of autumn and picked the primroses of spring. But it was all

> like a dream: or rather, it was like the simulacrum of reality. The oak-leaves to her were like oak-leaves seen ruffling in a mirror, she herself was a figure somebody had read about, picking primroses that were only shadows, or memories, or words. No substance to her or anything – no touch, no contact. (18)

What the passage makes clear at once is that the season is spring, when the woods are a riot of colour, and mythological creatures revive from the underworld. Connie's life, however, seems a "void," a "non-existence," and she becomes aware of increasing restlessness at the lack of vitality. Fuller discussion of her parallel with Persephone will be presented later, but she has not touched "the spirit of the wood" (20) yet. The surrounding nature in the woods has been reduced to a second-hand dream, a "simulacrum" of reality. In her walks oak-leaves have been only like oak-leaves seen ruffling in a "mirror," and primroses have been reduced to approximations, "shadows," "memories" or "words." By living with Clifford, she is caught up, captured, in a web of words, his words as weapons: "All that talk! All that writing! All that wild struggling to shove himself forwards! It was just insanity. And it was getting worse, really mechanical" (97). It is a thought-dominated world without real meaning: there is "no touch, no contact."

Let us now look at Connie's depression from a different view-point. There is a desultory and unfortunate sort of affair with Michaelis, a young Irish playwright with a mannerism of "working his hands furiously in his trousers pockets" (53). His disposition is represented in one sentence with terse accuracy: "he was finished almost before he had begun" (54). In spite of his masturbation-type solipsistic sexual intercourse, he complains about Connie seeking her own pleasure. He is an insignificant man, compared with Mellors, who tells Connie that sex is a cosmic and natural rhythm, not a power game or personal pleasure. Stunned by Michaelis' cruel blame, she becomes thinner and more forlorn.

Here we enter the realm of Connie's potential as Persephone, who belongs both to death and to life, to the fallen world and to what lies beyond it. The beginning of a gradual process of fuller reawakening, a reawakening to the wonder of the natural world and the wonder of her own natural physical desire, is deprived from her witnessing Mellors washing himself, stripped to the waist. The "visionary experience," an epiphany of "the warm white flame" of life shocks her. She receives "the shock of vision in her womb" (66). In the opening of Chapter 8, Connie is paralleled with "Persephone... out of hell, on a cold morning" (86). The air at Wragby, in which Clifford dominates through the life of the mind, reason, and exclusiveness, always smells "of something under-earth," and she feels she is "living underground" (13). Moreover, Tommy Dukes, who speaks up for a free and vigorous sex life, equates Wragby Hall with Pluto's underworld realm, complaining that people in the Hall are not "alive in all the parts," and "can only talk! another torture added to Hades!" (39). Connie's predicament which is derived from her unease at life's emptiness and lack of substance, no less than an uncanny, industrial Tevershall designated by the author as another "underworld" in Chapter 11, symbolizes a descent and an underground.

The underground descent/rebirth pattern parallels the myth of the Greek vegetative corn goddess Persephone. Pluto, the god of the underworld, carried her off to be his consort, causing her mother Demeter, the corn goddess, to allow the earth to grow barren out of grief. Because of her mother's grief, Zeus permitted Persephone to spend six months above and six months below ground. In her absence, according to Frazer,

> The barley seed is hidden in the earth and the fields lie bare and fallow; on whose return in spring to the upper world the corn shoots up from the clods and the earth is heavy with leaves and blossoms. (395)

This goddess "can surely be nothing else than a mythical embodiment of the

vegetation" (395).[2] It is remarkable that Persephone's emergence from the underworld parallels Connie's escape from the industrial underworld, which brings a newly budding life to the woods.

The novel starts in spring, in which such flowers as primroses, anemones and daffodils develop from a bud, and ends in Mellors' September 29 letter to Connie. This period is obviously that of rebirth, growth and fruition in the natural cycle, and even the flowers have to be set free from alien words. It should be strongly emphasized that the rebirth not only of Connie but also of Mellors is like a two-way process, relying on each other's restoration. What is associated with the vegetative spirit could be inherent in both of them. As to Connie, the abundant descriptions of landscapes, plants and grasses bring to her silence, mystery, growth and, above all, bodily awareness. She and the woods move through the seasons together, and her physical reawakening is in sympathetic accord with the woods. Lawrence never writes of nature without developing Connie into a more completely integrated being. As to Mellors, like the king of the Wood at Nemi, he guards oak trees whose vegetative fertility is the most important thing for ancient European paganism. According to *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, the oak trees, a symbol of strength, have been greatly revered both for historical and mythological associations. Their worship is the basis of Druidic religion. Mellors is often associated with fruition, for the forest and the birds he protects thrive, and Connie, who is loved by him, becomes pregnant. We can safely state that the lovers bear a strong likeness to the fertility deities, the dying-reviving year gods of the ancient world, placing a special emphasis on vegetative fertility. When they undertake the ritualistic decoration of each other's bodies with an abundance of flowers, bodies merge with landscape and blossoms in flower-poetry.[3]

Connie, who emerged from the underworld to plant flowers, feels acutely "the agony of her own female forlorness" (114). We should not overlook the fact that when she sees the hens "eyeing the cosmos" (114), she is made to

want to have a baby like the hatching chicks. Because the new life could be equated with a child, as sexual intercourse in myth promotes the growth of the crop, her life will not make sense to her until she has a child, and thus Lawrence represents her liaison with Mellors leading to pregnancy. Freud thought the woman's "incompleteness" was a desire both for "penis" and a child, and the baby will be a symbolic substitute for the missed penis (of the father).

The opening paragraph of Chapter 12 with lots of flower references represents that the woods are warmly welcoming a vegetation goddess, Connie returning there.

> Connie went to the wood.... It was really a lovely day, the first dandelions making suns, the first daisies so white. The hazel-thicket was a lace-work of half-open leaves.... Yellow celandines now were in crowds.... And primroses were broad and full of pale abandon, thick-clustered primroses no longer shy. The lush dark green of hyacinths was a sea, with buds rising like pale corn, while in the riding the forget-me-nots were fluffing up, and columbines were unfolding their ink-purple ruches.... Everywhere the bud-knots and the leap of life. (165)

It is in this chapter that she experiences symbolic rebirth during lovemaking with Mellors, and moans with a bliss as a "new-born thing" (174), who was given "the resurrection of the body" (75). She knows the reality of the phallus as "[t]he roots, root of all that is lovely, the primeval root of all full beauty" (75). Flowers grow from her body.

Let us consider the subject from the fact that Connie, like Persephone, has two aspects of "Harvest Maiden" and "Mother of the Corn." She looks for her lover like a daughter, and also becomes his mother, the fertile Earth Mother. As his lover-mother, she in turn leads Mellors to his resurrection, playing the role of restorer, like Isis in the Osiris myth. The sun god, Osiris was murdered and cut up by the god of darkness, his brother Set. In a

novella, *The Man Who Died* (1929), Osiris' lover, Isis wishes that Osiris "could embrace her, and could fecundate her womb" (25). This is also the wish of Connie, as Mellors' lover. Isis gathers the fragments of Osiris' body and buries them where she found them, creating shrines to the sun god, but one part was missing, the phallus of the god. So she makes a number of phalloi and put them in or on the shrines. One story goes that Osiris' penis had been eaten by fish in the River Nile, and this idea is linked to the fertility of the lands around the Nile. The roots of the "penis" are in nature's generative forces.

This legend involves the fear of castration. In the stories of Attis, Adonis and Osiris, the year gods die by castration or dismemberment, and the healing powers of goddesses restore their phallic power which is not irredeemably lost. The same holds for Mellors, for he has experienced awful sexual failure through his former wife, Bertha. Her "low kind of self-will... a raving sort of self-will" tears at him down there, "as if it was beak tearing at" (202) him, which made him feel that he "wanted to have nothing to do with any woman any more" (203). The "beak" image reminds us of Harpy-women like vultures with beaks or Prometheus who was punished by Zeus, because he gave man fire. A vulture tore out his liver with its beak. It is useful to quote from Dennis Jackson's explanation of the "beak" image.

> Images of destructive – of tearing, rubbing, grinding – fill his description of his wife's genitals, and the "beak" image he uses is a variant of the vagina dentata or "toothed vagina" image which in myth and folklore symbolizes men's universal fear of castration and impotence. (134)

Bertha is described as a type of the mythic castrating goddess, Cybele. We remember Birkin blames Hermione-type women for their bloodthirsty violence in *Women in Love*. The women with Cybele tendencies dominate their male worshippers, and demand that they castrate themselves. Mellors' sexual

immolation by Bertha's "beakishness" induced his phallic mistrust of women, anxiety about orgasm, and phallic impotence. While Bertha's "tearing" vagina had meant "the death of all desire, the death of all love" to his genitals, Connie's body has had a curative effect on his wounded phallic nature. "It heals it all up, that I can go into thee" (176), says Mellors to her, though Michaelis complained against Connie that she tried to "get off on him."

In a sense, Clifford also parallels the resurrection story with Mrs. Bolton who is described as the Magna Mater. It is significant that he returns to mother, desiring the mother's body, though his phallic power has no hope for restoration.

Lastly, I would like to consider the phallic marriage, the fruitful union of the powers of fertility. Lawrence's identification of Mellors with the sun, more specifically, his risen phallus, helps account for the outcome. The daybreak sunshine lights up "the erect phallus rising darkish and hot-looking from the little cloud of vivid gold-red hair" (209). It is worth pointing out, in passing, that the risen Christ is equated with the sun, with its embodyment of cosmic desire in *Apocalypse* (1931). Connie, as Persephone, Earth Mother, is equated through mythical metaphor with botanical images in need of sun, and also with earth. When she becomes pregnant, she feels "a quiver in her womb... as if the sunshine" (192) touched it. In Mellors' letter at the end of the novel, his union with Connie is related to that "between sun and earth" (301). In thinking of sexual intercourse, which has to do with the restoration of the fertilizing power of nature, Lawrence emphasizes the sun-like, earth-like attributes of man and woman;

> marriage is no marriage that is not basically and permanently phallic, and that is not linked up with the sun and the earth... in the rhythm of days, in the rhythm of months, in the rhythm of quarters, of years. (324)

It should be concluded that Connie and Mellors return to their roots, the

vital phallic relation, through the mythic interrelation of vegetative and human fertility. The roots, undoubtedly, are identified with the author's personal roots: what is descended from the "physical" contact and awareness which resided in his father and fellow miners, and "the spirit of the wood." John B. Vickery regards mythic functions for Lawrence as follows:

> a...device...offering not only a contact between the mythico-ritualistic life of ancient man and that of contemporary man...but also a sense of the continuity between the two worlds that shows how the one may be both a degeneration and an adaptation of the other. (234)

In addition to his opinion, I would like to emphasize its function as an intermediate to the future, a reborn world. Mellors writes "I believe in the little flame between us" (300), and "the little flame" could be the new life made by the phallic truth. The style of the novel depends on a natural cycle, offering us a vision of transformative promise, as symbolized in Connie's pregnancy. Lawrence clearly saw, in the ancient vegetative myth, the possibility for the revival of the fallen world: the natural balance between the mind and the body, the natural respect of each for the other, and a sense of "togetherness" with the external world.

III

This section concerns the question of a renewal of language from the roots, for the critique of the form of discourse (language and narrative) runs through the whole book. *Kangaroo* (1923) has a chapter called "Bits" in which the impact of the War is so explicit that the inner sense of loss, lack and meaninglessness is documented in collage-like clippings: "bits, bits, bits... There was no consecutive thread" (272). A frustrating shell shock pervades the novel, and men and their languages are reduced to "bits" by the propaganda in the world. It seems to Connie that all the great words, "love,

joy, happiness, home, mother, father, husband... were half-dead now, and dying from day to day," and "home" was "a warm word to use for that great weary warren" (62). Not only people but also the words are "half dead now, and dying from day to day." "Home" was a word that came up frequently in the propaganda (the idea to defend and return to "keep the home fires burning").[4]

Lawrence seems to choose a language close to nature or close to the hidden roots of his childhood. He, repeatedly and intentionally, made use of dialect and the forbidden language of sex, in other words, the "four letter words" such as "cunt," "fuck," "shit," "arse," "cock," and "piss," in order to stress the spontaneity and earthiness of the gamekeeper's speech, and to get back an exuberant account of life, which he connects with chance. This exertion was made in the hope that Connie and the worn-out language of postwar England should be rescued from the hypocritical dictates of good manners.

Let us start with the blasphemy on life in our time, which is created by the villain who "causes harm or injury to a member of a family" (Propp 30). It is notable that the novel has a folktale archetype, which V. Propp analyzes in *Morphology of the Folktale*, depending on the transformation of the functions of dramatis personae. The actual movement of the tale is supposed by the fact that Clifford and fellow intellectuals, all subordinate "the life of the body" to "the life of the mind," believing in "the integrity of the mind" (31). Possessed of a real vitality, Connie is deeply depressed that her body is neglected and denied, and comes to think the life with Clifford to be what has "lost touch with the substantial and vital world" (20). What is worse, her affair with Michaelis is only a relationship that can be easily dismissed as "little acts and little connection," "occasional excitements" or "spasm" (44). Compromised by the affair, which is exactly the kind of relationship that Clifford assumes all sexual feeling to be, she is just in a state of atrophied

feeling. She also comes to hate his writings, for he has an enthusiasm for only becoming "a first-class modern writer," and getting "kudos" (21). Clifford's mental life and literature, in which there are no substantiality and vitality, are no more than "void" (20), "just insanity" (97) and "just so many words" (50), for Connie.

> [I]t was the fear of nothingness in her life that affected her. Clifford's mental life, and hers – gradually it began to feel like nothingness ... there were days when it all became utterly bland and nothing. It was words, just so many words. The only reality was nothingness, and over it, a hypocrisy of words. (50)

Intentionally and urgently repeated "nothingness" discloses "a hypocrisy of words" of modernity as well as people there. She "lacks something or desires to have something," and "is allowed to go or ... dispatched" (Propp 36), in the mythic, folk-lore scheme.

Here is the historical correlation of words and people, and their mythic and metaphorical transformation. A partiality toward mind must soon become irritating to Connie. "Ravished by dead words become obscene, and dead ideas become obsession" (94), remarks Lawrence about how words destroy or distort feelings. The novel directly addresses the problem of the "death of language" as well as the death of civilisation.

We shall concentrate on the resurrection of the "body" of language, sustained by rich varieties of vernacular and the taboo words. Mellors has received a grammar school education, has been an office clerk, and during the war, an officer, but he has refused his middle-class identity and reverted deliberately to the working-class life and ways of his blacksmith father. He can, therefore, modulate his accent to project himself as either a gentleman or a peasant, switching codes like Lawrence.[5] His dialect is elusive, and close to the language of Lawrence's childhood, in brief, close to nature, and it prepares the way for Connie's "receiving either a magical agent or helper"

(Propp 39). Mellors makes her a symbolic and magical gift of language with a special connection with nature. She has hated "the excess of vernacular in his speech" (94), but comes to acknowledge and enjoy it. The following quotation shows one of the significant scenes in the novel, in which Mellors seduces Connie in an idiom which amuses her. Following her rebirth "as a woman," they exchange laughter as Connie imitates his language.

> "Tha mun come one naight ter th' cottage, afore tha goos – sholl ter?" he asked, lifting his eyebrows as he looked at her, his hands dangling between his knees.
>
> "Sholl ter?" she echoed, teasing.
>
> He smiled.
>
> "Ay, sholl ter?" he repeated.
>
> "Ay!" she said, imitating the dialect sound.
>
> "Yi!" he said.
>
> "Yi!" she repeated.
>
> "An'slaip wi'me," he said. "It needs that. When sholt come?"
>
> "When sholl I?" she said.
>
> "Nay," he said, "tha canna do't. – When sholt come then?"

He swiftly intervenes to restore his own control when she seems to be in danger of learning too fast.

> " 'Appen Sunday," she said.
>
> " 'Appen a' Sunday! Ay!"
>
> "Ay!" she said.
>
> He laughed at her quickly.
>
> "Nay, tha canna," he protested.
>
> "Why canna I?" she said.
>
> He laughed. Her attempts at the dialect were so ludicrous, somehow.
>
> "Coom then, tha mun goo!" he said.
>
> "Mun I?" she said.
>
> "Maun Ah!" he corrected.
>
> "Why should I say maun when you said mun," she protested. (177)

As she ran home "the world seemed a dream," and the trees "seemed bulging

and surging," and "the heave of the slope to the house was alive" (178), as if the earth was inspired by the dark gods hidden in Mellors' language of seduction. The "body" of language has resurrected the "body" of the world.

I would like to attempt to expand the topic of resurrection of the "body" of language a little more fully, relying on the impersonate name of Connie, and the re-naming of the "mythic" parts of "Connie." "Connie" is a form of "coney" or "cony" in etymology, so I focus on the historical transformation of the word "coney" here. According to OED, the word has changed many times in spelling and pronunciation, and in English, although the form *cunyng, cunning* came down to the sixteenth century, from the twelfth century onward it alternated also with *cunig, conig, connyg.* Common spellings from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century were *cunnie, cunney, cunny*, and the word regularly rimed with *honey, money*, as indicated also by the spelling *coney*; and during the nineteenth century the spelling and pronunciation *coney* has gradually crept in. It is possible that the desire to avoid certain vulger associations with the word in the *cunny* form, may have contributed to the preference for *coney.* In addition, Coneys (rabbits) are famous for their sexual activity as in the phrase "fucking like bunnies."

Judging from the above and the semantic research of "gn" and "gen" by Joseph T. Shipley in *The Origin of English Words*, we can state that the word "coney" is derived from the "knowing" sense and the "begetting" sense. From the cognitively "knowing" sense came the word *cunning*, whereas from the physically "knowing" sense came the words *cunny, cunt, cunnilingus.* Here, we need to remind ourselves of the truth that the story of the Fall is about a woman who knew too much ("cognition"), and the physical meanings were dominant in the prelapsarian world. The point I want to specially emphasize is that Connie became a victim of "cognition" in the metaphoric transformations of her roots "cunt," the female pudenda. Mellors, the natural agency that lies in the "roots" of words as if lies at the roots of trees, flowers and plants,

leads Connie to her "roots." The resurrection transforms "cognitive" Connie into "cunty" Connie, in short, a physically knowing existence. Lawrence invests the four letter word "cunt" with its original potency in that it is a place of creativity. It seems that the four letter words are like the poems of Connie's body as nature goddess, and they represent a poetic reality of memory and desire. It is through the regression to the roots of experience that Connie retreats from the concept into a regressive world of creative possibility. She regains her unfallen "figs" [6] which is the centre of life, the centre of the cosmos and the earth, and the origin of continuous cycle of generation, through the language's returning to its roots.

I would like to extend the observation of the resurrection of the "body" of language into Freud's idea of matriarchal social order. Freud, in his work *Moses and Monotheism*, says in the course of a masterly application of individual psychology to the analysis of a national group and its religion, as follows:

> the matriarchal social order was succeeded by the patriarchal one... this turning from the mother to the father points... to a victory of intellectuality over sensuality – that is, an advance in civilization, since maternity is proved by the evidence of the senses while paternity is a hypothesis, based on an inference and a premiss." (360-61)

It will be clear from this idea that the large variety of dialect and the "four letter words" are the characteristic of the matriarchal social order, while Clifford is a representative of the patriarchal social order. The "matrix" of language is closer to the roots, the world of maternal sexual pleasure which is polymorphous and perverse. Mellors is close to this "matrix," and in this sense Lawrence had come to feel that his father, too, working at the coal-face, "knew" the "bodily rhythms" and "erotic energy" of life's matrix. We see Lawrence is rediscovering the matriarchal order in his modern days, because returning to dialect and the forbidden words means getting back the lost

experience and linking the small personal existence to a larger cosmic experience.

Lawrence set out to write The Song of Songs of physical love,[7] for it was necessary for him to revive the "physical" awareness and contact, and redress the wrong-headed emphasis on the mind. As a resource, he returned to the early mythic phase, when there was no split between body and mind and there was the relationship to the rhythmic cosmos, and he is still able to imagine that a man from working-class like Mellors might have the potency to transgress codes, rules and boundaries in the modern day. This quest novel, which always searches for the lost totality of experience, shows us the fact that the functions of language are associative, metaphoric, rhythmic and rhetorical, and not just literal. The "myth-making" properties of language are central to culture. It should be concluded that it is through acts of transgression or crossing boundaries that the author and Lady Chatterley return to their roots.

Notes

1 Lawrence uses the phrase "thought-adventure" in his novel *Kangaroo* (1923).

2 One story says that Persephone was identified with vegetation, being regarded as a goddess of death during her annual sojourn in the underworld and of abundance during her term in the upper regions. Pluto is a rich man as a lord of death, as Clifford's "culture" is the wealth of the land of death. This is a slightly unusual view of Persephone and Pluto (a plutocran). For Lawrence, she takes her place among the symbols of transformation borrowed mainly from Frazer (or from various world mythologies, examined in the manner of Frazer). Metaphoric transformation (a kind of re-naming) is at the heart of literature, and this re-naming is also a way of giving a true name to things (an archetypal meaning). To "rename" the world is to give it a new life.

3 The French artist Courbet did a painting in 1866 called *The Origin of the World* which is simply nothing but what Lawrence represented in the novel sixty years later, a sort of demystification of a myth. The still transgressive painting assimilates a female body to a landscape, with pubic hair like a forest, and the pudenda suggesting secret tunnels and passages. Hamlet also shows this assimilation:

Hamlet Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

Ophelia No my lord.
Hamlet I mean, my head upon your lap?
Ophelia Ay my lord.
Hamlet Do you think I meant country matters?
Ophelia I think nothing my lord.
Hamlet That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
Ophelia What is, my lord?
Hamlet Nothing. (3. 2. 99-107)

"Country matters" is the sort of thing that goes on among rustics in the country, and "thing" is used to refer to the sexual organ of either sex. We notice the sexual pun in "country."

4 Posters to the women of Britain encouraged them to persuade their menfolk to go to war.

You have read what the Germans have done in Belgium. Have you thought what they would do if they invaded this country?

Do you realise that the safety of your home and children depends on our getting more men Now?

Do you realise that the one word "Go" from you may send another man to fight for our King and Country?

When the war is over and someone asks your husband or your son what he did in the great War, is he to hang his head because you would not let him go?

5 From the previous two versions, *The First Lady Chatterley* and *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, Lawrence learned that he can juxtapose two models of speech within a single character, but the "roots" idea does not seem to occur in them.

6 There is a richly ambivalent poem about female sexuality entitled "Figs" (1923). In Elizabethan English, "fig" is a euphemism for "fuck."

7 The dramatic and lyric poems of the lover and the beloved in the Old Testament.

I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. (Song Sol. 2. 1-6)

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