

# A HUMAN TORTOISE CRUCIFIED INTO SEX AND RESURRECTION? D.H. LAWRENCE'S COSMOPOETIC EROTICISM

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## ABSTRACT

From a combined aesthetic and psychobiographical perspective, this article mainly focuses on what I have called the cosmopoetics of D.H. Lawrence's "sex-love" poems from *Love Poems and Others* (1913) through *Look! We Have Come Through* (1917) to *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), especially the cosmopoetic trajectory from the adolescent Lawrence as the sex-crucified tortoise smarting under the 'stunting bonds' of enforced chastity to the Lawrence that, as Frieda's sexually fulfilled lover and husband, has become the "risen lord" and full-blown rose "with the wonder mellow/ Full of fine warmth." The tortoise of sex-crucifixion will, however, still rear its Medusa head because Lawrence is acutely aware of the contingency and fragility of his masculine prowess, which is so utterly dependent upon Frieda's love. In the increasing shadow of his tubercular condition, I argue, Lawrence's cosmopoetic eroticism tends to become more cosmic than erotic, and his ultimate cosmopoetic apotheosis will be articulated in the sublime epitaph of *Apocalypse* (1931), which I describe as a "fusion of the human body and death into some kind of cosmic *Liebestod*."

KEY WORDS: D.H. Lawrence, sexuality, cosmopoetics.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo se centra principalmente en lo que he llamado la cosmopoética en los poemas "de amor y sexo" de D.H. Lawrence desde *Love Poems and Others* (1913) pasando por *Look! We Have Come Through* (1917) hasta *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), desde una perspectiva estética y psicobiográfica combinada; especialmente la trayectoria cosmopoética que observo desde el Lawrence adolescente presentado en forma de tortuga sexualmente crucificada, resentida por los "lazos atrofiados" de la castidad impuesta, al Lawrence que se ha convertido en el amante y marido de Frieda sexualmente realizado, el "señor elevado" o la rosa completamente florecida "con dulce asombro/ rebotante de calor sutil". La tortuga sexualmente crucificada, sin embargo, alzará aún su cabeza de Medusa porque Lawrence es sumamente consciente de la contingencia y fragilidad de su voluntad masculina, absolutamente dependiente del amor de Frieda. A la sombra creciente de su condición de tuberculoso, sostengo que el erotismo cosmopoético de Lawrence tiende más a ser cósmico que erótico, y su apoteosis cosmopoética final se verá articulada en el sublime epitafio de *Apocalypse* (1931), el cual describo como una "fusión del cuerpo humano y la muerte en una especie de *Liebestod* cósmico".

PALABRAS CLAVE: D.H. Lawrence, sexualidad, cosmopoética.



Tortoise *in extremis*.  
Why were we crucified into sex?  
Why were we not left rounded off, and finished in ourselves,  
As we began,  
As he certainly began, so perfectly alone?

D.H. Lawrence, 'tortoise Shout'<sup>1</sup>

[Mr Noon aka Lucky Noon] had found his soul's affinity, and his body's mate: a she-cat who would give him claw for claw, a bitch who would give him snarl for snarl, a falcon who would demand an eye for an eye... The love of two splendid opposites. My dear —I mean you, gentle reader— all life is made up out of the union of indomitable opposites. We live, all of us balanced delicately on the rainbow, which is born of pure light and pure water. Think, gentle reader: out of the perfect consummating of sun and rain leaps the all-promising rainbow: leap also the yellow-and-white daisies, pink-and-gold roses, good green cabbages, caterpillars, serpents and all the rest.

D.H. Lawrence, *Mr Noon*

"Crucified into sex." It was Lawrence's apostate friend John Middleton Murry who, in *Son of Woman: The Story of D.H. Lawrence* (1931), appropriated this Lawrentian phrase for his notorious diagnosis of Lawrence as a "sex-crucified man" (21), the tragic victim of his mother and the Oedipus complex. In this strangely Judas-like stigmatization of his former friend as a psychopathological case, Murry's petty-bourgeois conventionalism, complete with what Lawrence would have termed his modern lovey-dovey conception of human sexuality, failed to appreciate Lawrence's rumbustious, claw-for-claw relationship with Frieda as lover and wife. As my title suggests, one way of reading Lawrence's own version of his "sex-life" story could be in terms of a cosmopoetic apotheosis.

"Cosmopoetic(s)." Well, I suppose I would have better apologize for and explain my use of this neologism in my reading of Lawrence. It is, of course, an incontrovertible fact that Lawrence's post-romantic imagination is embedded in a radically and idiosyncratically pantheistic-holistic philosophy, the "pollyanalytics" of *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (15). This philosophy may be said to be cosmocentric as distinct from anthropocentric and logocentric, witness, for instance, the famous "non-cogito-ergo-sum" message of his manifesto-like poem "Climb Down, O Lordly Mind" (473-74). I prefer the term "cosmocentric" to, say, "biocentric" or "ecocentric" because, unlike, for instance, Del Ivan Janek,<sup>2</sup> I refuse to assimilate Lawrence's thinking into current "ecocriticism," which, I believe, is often obfuscated by more or less

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<sup>1</sup> All references to Lawrence's poems (and his various prefaces or introductions to collections of poems) will be given parenthetically, as page references, to the Penguin edition of *The Complete Poems*.

<sup>2</sup> In "Environmental Consciousness in Modern Literature: Four Representative Examples" (1995), Del Ivan Janik claims that Lawrence 'stands at the beginning of the modern posthumanist tradition and of the literature of environmental consciousness' (qtd. Garrard 89).



naïve political and religious agendas (“deep ecology” being perhaps the most notorious example). In the first chapter of *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Lawrence himself warns the reader against such naivety, in other words, the confusion between what I would term cosmopoetics (that is, the art of poetic cosmogony) and cosmology proper: “truly art,” Lawrence argues, “is a sort of subterfuge. But thank God for it, we can see through the subterfuge if we choose” (8).

To return to Lawrence’s subterfuge of cosmopoetic apotheosis, we are presented here with an abject adolescent male, a sexually crucified human tortoise, who is transformed or transfigured into the risen lord of “the all-promising rainbow,” Lucky Noon as the sexually triumphant lover — *Lucky Noon* being one of the titles that Lawrence used when referring to his unfinished and unpublished autobiographical novel *Mr Noon* (the two finished parts of the book were not published until 1984). However, such a one-dimensional upbeat reading of Lawrence’s sex-romance will have to be qualified somewhat, as the question mark of my title also indicates.

Like his 1917 collection of love poems, *Look! We Have Come Through!*, *Mr Noon* also describes, but in a surprisingly carnivalesque, relaxed and self-ironic mode, the early years of his relationship with Frieda von Richthofen Weekley, a culturally and sexually emancipated New Woman from Germany, who also happened to be the wife of his former modern-languages tutor at Nottingham University College when the two became lovers in 1912. In the “Foreword” and “Argument” of *Look! We Have Come Through!*, Lawrence’s rainbow resurrection as Frieda’s lover and husband is ceremoniously celebrated as ‘the crisis of manhood, when he marries and comes into himself,’ the man and the woman ‘transcend[ing] into some condition of blessedness’ (191).

But let us start at the beginnings as presented by the poet’s own portrait of the artist as a sexually discontented young man, the cosmopoetics of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), more specifically, the two reptile poems “Lui et Elle” and ‘tortoise Shout,’ which describe the young male tortoise as *in extremis* because his “adolescence saw him crucified into sex,” “[s]ex, which breaks up our integrity, our single inviolability, our deep silence” (361, 366). In the beginning was, no, not the word, but nature/sex, to paraphrase the opening paragraph of Camille Paglia’s *Sexual Personae* (1990). “Sexuality and eroticism,” Paglia argues, “are the intricate intersection of nature and culture” (1), and it is this crucial moment of intersection that could be said to constitute the psychodynamic core of Lawrence’s cosmopoetic eroticism. It was Lawrence’s agonizing sense of sexual crucifixion in a puritan culture, the Victorian version of Freud’s civilization and its discontents, that broke not only Lawrence’s existential *integrity*, but also the *silence* of his natural tortoise self, thus engendering the predominantly whining love poetry of his youth as the spontaneous overflow of his powerful feelings of sexual frustration. Lawrence’s post-romantic spontaneity is, of course, considerably more radical than that of Wordsworth who famously claimed that poetry “takes its origin from emotion recollected in *tranquillity*” (my italics), for Lawrence, as a poet, insists on articulating directly and dynamically, to quote his 1918 introduction to the American edition of *New Poems*, “the “pulsating, carnal self,” mysterious and palpable”:



There is poetry of this immediate present, instant poetry, as well as poetry of the infinite past and the infinite future. The seething poetry of the incarnate Now is supreme, beyond even the everlasting gems of the before and after. In its quivering momentaneity it surpasses the crystalline, pearl-hard jewels, the poems of the eternities. Do not ask for the qualities of the unfading timeless gems. Ask for the whiteness which is the seethe of mud, ask for that incipient putrescence which is the skies falling, ask for the never-pausing, never-ceasing life itself. There must be mutation, swifter than iridescence, haste, not rest, come-and-go, not fixity, inconclusiveness, immediacy, the quality of life itself, without dénouement or close. (183)

From the very beginning of his poetic career, in *Love Poems and Others* (1913), Lawrence's emphasis on the spontaneous articulation of this *pulsating, carnal self* is in evidence. In "the Wild Common" (33-34), for instance, young pubescent Lawrence is ecstatically welcomed and embraced by a sensuously Whitmanesque nature:

Over my skin in the sunshine, the warm, clinging air  
Flushed with the songs of seven larks singing at once, goes kissing me glad.  
You are here! You are here! We have found you! Everywhere  
We sought you substantial, you touchstone of caresses, you naked lad.

Oh but the water loves me and folds me,  
Plays with me, sways me, lifts me and sinks me, murmurs: Oh marvellous stuff!  
No longer shadow! —and it holds me  
Close, and it rolls me, enfolds me, touches me, as if never it could touch me  
enough.

In an earlier version of "the Wild Common" (894-95), the sexual implications of the cosmic embrace are made even more explicit —evidently too explicit seeing that Lawrence chose to revise or cancel the lines in the final version of the poem. This is the earlier version of the poem's cosmopoetic conclusion:

Oh but the water loves me and folds me,  
Plays with me, sways me, lifts me and sinks me as though it were living blood,  
Blood of a heaving woman who holds me,  
Owning my supple body a rare glad thing, supremely good.

So there are limits to Lawrence's narcissistic spontaneity —he did revise some of his poems "to let the [real poetic] demon say his say," — as he put it in the preface to the 1928 edition of *Collected Poems* (28). The final version of "Virgin Youth" (38-40), on the other hand, presents a sexually much more clinical portrait of young Lawrence as God's gift to women, the God in question being what he would later, in *Kangaroo* (1923), refer to as "the first, dark, ithyphallic God" (224), "ithyphallic" denoting, according to my *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, "(especially of a statue of a deity or other carved figure) having an erect penis":

My soft, slumbering belly,  
Quivering awake with one impulse and one will,



Then willy nilly  
A lower me gets up and greets me;  
Homunculus stirs from his roots, and strives until,  
Risen up, he beats me.

A Shakespearean pun on “willy” as penis (Sonnet 135) is probably not intended. At this stage of his sex-life, Lawrence shares the tragic fate of the sexually frustrated or crucified tortoise in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, as evidenced, for instance, by “Virgin Youth,” which concludes with the following pathetic address to the ithyphallic godhead:

Dark, ruddy pillar, forgive me! I  
Am helplessly bound  
To the rock of virginity. Thy  
Strange voice has no sound.

We cry in the wilderness. Forgive me, I  
Would so gladly lie  
In the womanly valley, and ply  
Thy twofold dance.

Thou dark one, thou proud, curved beauty! I  
Would worship thee, letting my buttocks prance.  
But the hosts of men with one voice deny  
Me the chance.

The hosts of Englishmen, but one woman in particular would deny him this chance in the so-called Croydon years of virginity—what Lawrence, in “Restlessness” (179-80), described as “the stunting bonds of my chastity.” That woman was Helen Corke, like Lawrence a school teacher in Croydon, but also an experienced bisexual *femme fatale*, who was more impressed by Lawrence’s intellect than by his body. As she later recorded in her “Portrait of D.H. Lawrence, 1909-1910” (1962):

Our minds are extraordinarily intimate, and their perceptions reciprocal. Our physical relationship has been that of brother and sister, but since early summer I have become increasingly aware of the demand that he, as instinctive man, makes upon me as woman. I cannot indefinitely ignore it; but there is no instinctive response of my own body. My desire is not towards him. I do not want either to marry him and bear him children, or to be his mistress. (15)

Like her famous Greek namesake, the Helen of the Trojan War commiserated by the contemporary American imagist/feminist H.D. alias Hilda Doolittle in “Helen” (1924), Lawrence’s Helen would also be reviled in poems with titles like ‘the Appeal,’ “tease,” “Repulsed,” “turned Down,” “Coldness in Love,” “Lotus and Frost,” “Come Spring, Come Sorrow” and “these Clever Women.” Like all Doolittle’s Greek males, Lawrence could, to quote the last three lines of “Helen,” “love indeed



the maid,/ only if she were laid,/ with ash and funereal cypresses” (the sexual punning on *laid* included, I am sure). Helen as a frigid New Woman is reviled, for instance, in “these Clever Women” (118-19), which concludes with the following rhetorical questions:

Am I doomed in a long coition of words to mate you?  
Unsatisfied! Is there no hope  
Between your thighs, far, far from your peering sight?

The more funereal or deadly touch of the H.D. pun we register, for instance, in the concluding lines of “Repulsed” (97-98):

In the fur of the world, alone: but this Helen close by!  
How we hate one another to-night, hate, she and I  
To numbness and nothingness; I dead, she refusing to die,  
The female whose venom can more than kill, can numb and then nullify.

“Over her dead body” —seeing that Helen’s “soft white body” (“Release,” 117-18) is dead to him anyway. Also Lawrence’s letters to Helen boil over with the lethal anger and frustration of the repulsed lover: “I feel often inclined, when I think of you, to put my thumbs on your throat”; or, in another letter from the same 1910 summer: “You don’t know how inimical I feel towards you. C’est moi qui perdrai le jeu” (*Letters* I 160, 162). *Cris de coeur* from a human tortoise crucified into sex, indeed. Incidentally, I have often wondered how T.S. Eliot, of all people, could take umbrage, in *After Strange Gods* (1934), at Lawrence’s “distinct sexual morbidity” (58), seeing that, for instance, Eliot’s own famous monologue about a young man’s combined existential alienation and sexual frustration, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (written about the same time as the Croydon poems), so closely resembles Lawrence’s lament for the male tortoise crucified into sex. Poor Prufrock is also being victimized by Clever Women that “come and go/ Talking of Michelangelo” and is also metaphorically “crucified” into modern sex/celibacy by a frigid female gaze:

The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin...

Also in Prufrock’s case, the female repulse is a foregone conclusion. Thus one of the Clever Women would coldly respond to Prufrock’s sexual appeal, “settling a pillow by her head”: “that’s not what I meant at all./ That’s not it all.” Indeed, Eliot’s own distinct sexual morbidity would also include his fascination by the “over-her-dead-body” scenario, witness, for instance, Sweeney’s lethal misogyny in “sweeney Agonistes: Fragments of an Aristophanic melodrama” (1932):

Any man might do a girl in  
Any man has to, needs to, wants to



Once in a lifetime, do a girl in.  
(*Collected* 134)

Within the cosmopoetic universe of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” the only ontological alternative to the crucified human tortoise or “bug” rather (Prufrock is sprawling on a pin while being studied by a clever female entomologist!) seems to be the crab with his “pair of ragged claws/ Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.” Well, “[h]ow unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot,” to quote one of Eliot’s self-ironic poems about himself (“Lines for Cuscuscaraway and Mirza Ali Beg”), so let me quickly return to the unquestionably less unpleasant Mr Lawrence’s cosmopoetic eroticism and round off the Helen or Croydon phase with a love poem, in which our hapless cosmopoet, in a more graceful manner, resigns himself to the foregone conclusion of his sexual crucifixion, namely “Lotus and Frost” (113):

How many times, like lotus lillies risen  
Upon the surface of the waters, there  
Have risen floating on my blood the rare  
Soft glimmers of desire escaped from prison!

So I am clothed all over with the light  
And sensitive, bud-like blossoming of passion;  
Till, naked for her in the finest fashion,  
The flowers of all my mud swim into sight.

And then I offer all myself unto  
This woman who likes to love me; but she turns  
A look of hatred on the flower that burns  
To break and pour her out its precious dew.

And slowly all the blossom shuts in pain,  
And all the lotus buds of love sink over  
To die unopened; when this moon-faced lover  
Kind on the weight of suffering smiles again.

One of Lawrence’s more conventionally mythopoetic constructions, by way of compensating for the stunting bonds of his enforced chastity, is the pastoral fantasy of the “ripe, slack country lass,” presented in “Hymn to Priapus” (198-99). This lass is described as a warm, sensuous woman, picked up far from the madding metropolitan crowd of *Clever Women*, a woman whom he could dance into the hay in no time—the Lawrentian version of what Erica Jong later in the twentieth century, in *Fear of Flying* (1973), would notoriously celebrate as the zipless fuck:

The big, soft country lass  
Like a loose sheaf of wheat  
Slipped through my arms on the threshing floor  
At my feet.



The warm, soft country lass,  
Sweet as an armful of wheat  
At threshing time broken, was broken  
For me, and ah, it was sweet!

Actually, there is an earlier and more naturalistic, slightly sadomasochistic version of this pastoral sex scenario, but seen from the woman's point of view, namely in "Love on the Farm" (42-43). The man returns home from his farm work, flinging the rabbit he has just killed for supper on the tableboard, and the woman submissively lets "him nose [at her] like a stoat/ Who sniffs with joy before he drinks the blood":

And down his mouth comes to my mouth! And down  
His bright dark eyes come over me, like a hood  
Upon my mind! His lips meet mine, and a flood  
Of sweet fire sweeps across me, so I drown  
Against him, die, and find death good.

In the second phase of Lawrence's sexual history, the resurrection or rainbow phase, these pastoral scenarios of erotic wish-fulfilment are translated into "real life" or, at least, more or less successfully negotiated in terms of what I have described as the rumbustious sex-war romance with Frieda. For Lawrence eventually found his Mrs Right, a sexually experienced and uninhibited New Woman, also a heavy smoker, with a curvaceous, voluptuous figure, radiating, in Lawrence biographer Brenda Maddox's fine phrase, "untroubled teutonic sensuality" (92). Well, it was actually Mrs Right that found and seduced Mr Lawrence, for, at least according to Maddox, "[w]ithin twenty minutes of meeting him, Frieda had Lawrence in bed" (113). As the sexually risen lord, Mr Lucky Noon in his autobiographical fiction, Lawrence celebrates, in "I Am Like a Rose" (218), his new identity and authenticity as a lover in terms of what I have called his cosmopoetic apotheosis:

I am myself now; now I achieve  
My very self. I, with the wonder mellow,  
Full of fine warmth, I issue forth in clear  
And single me, perfected from my fellow.

Here I am all myself. No rose-bush heaving  
Its limpid sap to culmination has brought  
Itself more sheer and naked out of the green  
In stark-clear roses, than I to myself am brought.

In "Rose of All the World" (218-19), Lawrence pays homage to Frieda as the glorious female rose needed to complement his male rose, their two roses fusing into "[o]ne rose of wonderment upon the tree/ Of perfect life." It is not, Lawrence stresses, "the ripe rose-fruits of the luscious fall," "the child begot," that matter, but the ecstasy of the erotic consummation here and now, "the red rose-flowers" fiery transience." Hence, Frieda is worshipped as his sublime Rosamund, his "rosa mundi":





Blossom, my darling, blossom, be a rose  
Of roses unchidden and purposeless; a rose  
For rosiness only, without ulterior motive;  
For me it is more than enough if the flower unclose.

The carnality of this female *rosiness*, the breath-taking beauty of Frieda in the nude when she sponges herself in the morning, is lovingly dwelt upon in “Gloire de Dijon” (217):

She stoops to the sponge, and her swung breasts  
Sway like full-blown yellow  
Gloire de Dijon roses.

She drips herself with water, and her shoulders  
Glisten as silver, they crumple up  
Like wet and falling roses...

There is surely nothing morbid in the tenderness of Lawrence’s erotic-aesthetic fascination here. Nor is there anything morbid, I believe, in the more masculine-aggressive eroticism Lawrence evinces, for instance, in “New Year’s Night” (238-39), in which he is playing a sadomasochistic sex game with Frieda as the innocent dove “bought for sacrifice” on New Year’s Night:

Look, she is a wonderful dove, without a blemish or spot!  
I sacrifice all in her, my last of the world,  
Pride, strength, all the lot.

All, all on the altar! And death swooping down  
Like a falcon. ‘tis God has taken the victim;  
I have won my renown.

The poet is playfully flaunting his resurrection as macho lover. The risen lord and master, the champion of the ithyphallic godhead, is evidently entitled to his share of female victims and sacrifices, but at the same time Lawrence is also acutely aware of the contingency and fragility of his recently acquired masculine prowess. Frieda is not the only victim in their ongoing sex war, Lawrence anxiously points out in “A Bad Beginning” (230-31):

What? Your throat is bruised, bruised with my kisses?  
Ah, but if I am cruel what then are you?  
I am bruised right through.

What if I love you! —This misery  
Of your dissatisfaction and misprision  
Stupefies me.

“What if I love you?” Yes, Lawrence loves his Frieda and is utterly dependent upon “her” love. No Frieda, no rainbow resurrection, no masculine identity as



lover and husband, no travelling to the “Eden home” of “bliss-drenched revel” (“Paradise Re-entered,” 242-43). If Frieda left him, he would again be the crucified human tortoise *in extremis*. Hence, Lawrence’s existential agonizing and nightmare in “Quite Forsaken” (220):

What pain, to wake and miss you!  
To wake with a tightened heart,  
And mouth reaching forward to kiss you.

This then at last is the dawn, and the bell  
Clanging at the farm! Such bewilderment  
Comes with the sight of the room, I cannot tell.

The same anxiety combined with a growing sense of masculine fragility and vulnerability (who has really got the clout in the couple’s power game?) is expressed, complete with the animal imagery of Lawrentian cosmopoetics, in “Wedlock” (245-48):

My little one, my big one,  
My bird, my brown sparrow in my breast,  
My squirrel clutching in to me;  
My pigeon, my little one, so warm,  
So close, breathing so still.

My little one, my big one,  
I, who am so fierce and strong, enfolding you,  
If you start away from my breast, and leave me,  
How suddenly I shall go down into nothing  
Like a flame that falls of a sudden.

Once more Lawrence imagines himself crucified into sex, even though he has now found the one and only woman who, to quote “Manifesto” (262-68), can satisfy his deep, ravening “hunger for the woman,” and whose body, in the words of “Song of a Man Who Is Loved” (249-50), can provide him with the Edenic home he has been yearning for in the wasteland of chaotic modernity:

Between her breasts is my home, between her breasts.  
Three sides set on me chaos and bounce, but the fourth side rests  
Sure on a haven of peace, between the mounds of her breasts.

Lawrence’s recrudescant fear of sex-crucifixion, at this stage, springs from what he experiences as an abject dependence upon the woman he loves, the woman he cannot possibly live without, which is, at the same time, so humiliating to his masculine ego. Like Gerald fighting his losing sex battle against Gudrun in *Women in Love* (1920), Lawrence can no longer feel “self-sufficient” because, like Gerald, he lacks the will power ‘to close upon himself as a stone fixes upon itself, and is impervious, self-completed, a thing isolated’ (542-43). Only at this stage, I believe,



can we observe an element of morbidity in Lawrence's eroticism, possibly related to his deteriorating and debilitating tubercular condition, which may also be responsible for what Eliot, in *To Criticize the Critic*, singled out as a failing Lawrence had in common with Thomas Hardy, namely 'the lack of a sense of humour' (25). The morbidity I am referring to here are the primitivist phantasms that Lawrence introduces in "Manifesto" in order to solve the problem of existential dependency or insufficiency in his relationship with Frieda. As Gerald wished to be reduced to an impervious, self-completed and isolated thing, a stone *à la* Emily Dickinson's happy little stone that "rambles in the Road alone ... Fulfilling absolute Decree/ In casual simplicity" (1373), Frieda and Lawrence must both perish as human personalities, must cease from knowing, must pass away into some cosmic *other*, each "one clear, burnished, isolated being, unique." This kind of ultra-regression can also be accomplished, Lawrence suggests, through anal sex as a joint or reciprocal venture because Frieda must also put "her" hand on Lawrence's "secret, darkest sources, the darkest outgoings," "the fearful "other flesh," ah, darkness unfathomable and fearful":

[Frieda] also, pure, isolated being, unique,  
two of us, unutterably distinguished, and in unutterable conjunction.  
Then we shall be free, freer than angels, ah, perfect.

At this point, Lawrence's cosmopoetic eroticism could perhaps be said to go more cosmic than erotic as his sexual utopia increasingly draws on images of cosmic regression and transcendence. Under this new dispensation, every human being will be "like a flower, untrammelled," for the brave new world of Lawrence's "Manifesto" is presented as a mystical quasi-Blakean and quasi-Nietzschean paradise beyond good and evil, beyond modern civilization and its discontents, including its all-too-human tortoises crucified into sex:

The blazing tiger will spring upon the deer, undimmed,  
The hen will nestle over her chickens,  
We shall love, we shall hate,  
But it will be like music, sheer utterance,  
Issuing straight out of the unknown...

"Manifesto," one of the last poems in *Look! We Have Come Through!*, concludes with the line "We [that is, Frieda and Lawrence], the mystic NOW," suggesting that more radical forms of mysticism and primitivism are, if not displacing, then at least inundating Lawrence's original cosmopoetic eroticism. One of the more bizarre illustrations of this development may be found in "The Border Line" (1924), a short story, in which the ghost of a dead husband manages to control or contain the wife, still alive, beyond the grave, enveloping her with the cosmic "limbs of the living tree," "crushing her in the last, final ecstasy of submission" (*Selected* 390). This does not mean, however, that Lawrence's writerly engagement in sexual politics from now on is entirely devoid of realism. Far from it. As a critique of the typical gender roles of modern marriage (his own included), Chapter 9 of *Kangaroo*, for instance, clearly demonstrates that Lawrence could still write as incisively



and as humorously as he had done in *Mr Noon*. As a writer, Lawrence himself is as “allotropic,” that is, protean and volatile a personality as any of the characters operating in the “futuristic” fiction that he started writing after *Sons and Lovers* (1913), and which he had felt obliged to lecture Edward Garnett about in the famous letter of 5 June 1914:

You mustn't look in my novel [that is, the novel that would eventually become *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*] for the old stable ego of the character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognizable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states... (*Letters* II 183)

Throughout his life, Lawrence passed through or oscillated between various allotropic states of mind, and in some of these states he certainly did lose his sense of humour, which, incidentally, Lawrence himself might humorously comment on “post festum” (the *Kangaroo* chapter being again a case in point). As a writer, he continued the campaign for his neo-pagan “sex-love” gospel in an amazing variety of discourses, philosophical-theological as well as fictional and poetic. For the record, he pointed out once more, in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, that “[s]ex without the consummating act of coition is never quite sex: just as a eunuch is never quite a man” (17). Lawrence’s sexual politics, as far as his fiction is concerned, could be said to climax with *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928) and *The Man Who Died* (1929), the latter being Jesus Christ who is crucified, but resurrected into human sexuality, a full sex-life, because, in Lawrence’s modern version of the Christian myth, Jesus must be truly revived in the flesh so that he can start enjoying Lawrentian sex-love with its consummating act of coition.

However, as a love poet writing about his own life, Lawrence also had to come to terms with the fact that love, the body and its sexual potency, indeed, life itself, do not last for ever, especially if you have suffered from tuberculosis for most of your life. Lawrence’s last will and testament, in terms of his unique *cosmopoiesis*, is not his apocalyptic build-your-ship-of-death poems, but rather, I suggest, the sublimely cosmopoetic epitaph concluding *Apocalypse* (1931), with its fusion of the human body and death into some kind of cosmic “Liebestod”:

We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and in the flesh, and part of the living, incarnate cosmos... There is nothing of me that is alone and absolute except my mind, and we shall find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter of the sun on the surface of the waters. (126)

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