

# Europe and America in novels 'The Plumed Serpent' and 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' by David Herbert Lawrence

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**Europa i Amerika u romanima**

*Pernata zmija i Ljubavnik Lady Chatterley*

**Davidu Herberta Lawrencea**

Diplomski rad

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**Europe and America in novels**

***The Plumed Serpent and Lady Chatterley's Lover***

**by David Herbert Lawrence**

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Dr. Sc. Sven Cvek, Associate Professor

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**Abstract:**

Examining the representation of Europe and America in the last two major novels written by British Modernist author David Herbert Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent* completed in 1925 set in Mexico and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* completed in 1928 set in rural England, the work explores radical cosmopoietic projects of each novel as they attempt to reclaim the human body from socially sanctioned abuses of industrial modernity. With modern warfare being a manifestation of industrial modernity, both novels deal with the process of resolving the trauma of the First World War and social conflict plaguing the troubled global modernity of the 1920s.

**Key Words:**

D.H. Lawrence, Europe, America, Modernism, cosmopoiesis

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## 1. Introduction

"If only *he* would make her a world," thinks Constance Chatterley in the cottage of Oliver Mellors, wishing in the "clear clean morning with birds flying and triumphantly singing" that "there weren't the other ghastly world of smoke and iron" (222). In the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* completed in 1928, David Herbert Lawrence used the intrinsic cosmopoietic features of novel as a genre to its utmost potential, not just to create *a* world in the space of the novel, but to loosen the scaffolding holding together the logic of his contemporary world, so as to imagine the possibility of a reality different from the post-war, industrial modernity of the 1920s. The only other one of Lawrence's major novels as intensely involved in the process of cosmopoiesis is *The Plumed Serpent*, a novel immediately preceding *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, completed in 1925 as a result of three visits to Mexico in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution.

Cosmopoiesis, as a term denoting the process of creating a world, has hitherto been almost exclusively applied to the imaginary utopias of early modern texts, with the most recent of these types of studies being the 2001 Giuseppe Mazzotta's *Cosmopoiesis: the Renaissance experiment*, an exploration of the cosmopoietic features in the works of Poliziano, Machiavelli, Ariosto, Campanella, Bacon and Cervantes, where the author defines the notion of "cosmopoiesis" as "the Renaissance myth of *cosmopoiesis* or world—making" (xi). Referring to the works of Nelson Goodman and Harry Berger, Mazzotta lists the cosmopoietic varieties in the literature of Renaissance as "actual worlds and possible worlds, green pastoral worlds turning into scientific utopias, golden, brazen, and dreamt worlds" (xi). While Berger's 1988 study *Second World and Green World. Studies in Renaissance Fiction-Making* explores the cosmopoietic features of Renaissance texts, Goodman's 1978 study *Ways of Worldmaking* tackles the philosophical and representational issues invested in creating a fictional world from a more general and diachronic perspective of various arts, not just literature. Cosmopoiesis as a notion of great relevance for European Renaissance's empassioned exploration of both literary and geographic new worlds,

assumes, as I hope to show, fresh significance in two Modernist novels which are the subject of this work. Lawrence's novels were created in the aftermath of the Great War and the ensuing social conflicts all over the globe which started off the 20th century with a massive regression into violence and destruction, provoking an equally impassioned search for fictional and real new worlds.

At first glance, these last two of Lawrence's major novels could not be more different in setting, subject matter and narrative flow. The first is broadly scattered across urban and rural Mexico, the last one returns to the microcosm of Lawrence's youth and his early novels, a mining community and estate in rural England. The first is a strange narrative concoction of realism and mythopoesis, the second is almost Victorian in its balanced, lyrical narrative flow were it not for the explicit language and descriptions of lovemaking. The first deals with violent religious and political reforms during the Mexican Revolution, the second starts with a domestic tragedy in the wake of the First World War. And yet, both novels are passionately implicated in destruction and reconstruction of entire sociocultural systems, set in author's immediate contemporaneity.

Described as "weeding men out of his colliery to shove them into war" (11), Sir George Chatterley in the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* partakes in a war effort different from that of a Mexican general in *The Plumed Serpent* who, leading an army in support of a revival of Aztec religion, declares "My men are no cannon-fodder, nor trench-dung" (329). With modern warfare recognized in Lawrence's texts as just another manifestation of the mechanized modernity (Schorer, 283), his last two major novels present Europe and America of the 1920s as sites of industrial modernity's socially sanctioned abuse of the human body which must be resolved with a cosmopoietic project that reclaims the body. Just as the Mexico described in *The Plumed Serpent* is the Mexico of the mid-1920s when Lawrence visited the country, so *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, completed in 1928, is the novel of the European 1920s. It is in this last of his major novels that the "now" of the novel is more emphatically the immediate present than in any other one, as its opening lines are directed to "us" who "are among the ruins" and to "a tragic age" that is "ours", directly

speaking to the reader living in the 1920s. As the opening lines reveal, building new little worlds on the ruins of the old one is *the* project of the moment:

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. (5)

Situated in the narrative territory of exotic sublimity, the cosmopoiesis of *The Plumed Serpent* imagines Mexico's return to its precolonial Aztec culture as a radical rejection of a modernity that came from Spain and the United States. Calling to aid the tradition of pastoral romance, the cosmopoiesis of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* opposes a sensually charged nucleus of human relationship to barbaric automatism of European industrial modernity. The overarching spatiality of America in *The Plumed Serpent* and Europe in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* plays an immensely significant role in the unfolding of each cosmopoietic project, establishing its framework, delimiting its possibilities and ultimately influencing its outcome. Written by author who spent most of his life travelling and writing as he moved around the world (Schorer, 282), the last two major novels of D.H. Lawrence, considered with all the contradictions and contrasts of their America and Europe, paint a rich canvas of the troubled global modernity of the 1920s.

## **2. The cosmopoiesis of *The Plumed Serpent***

The cosmopoietic project of *The Plumed Serpent* consists of an attempt to revive the premodern, precolonial Mexico by exchanging its Catholic religion for the ancient Aztec one. Its ideologist Ramón Carrasco is a *hacendado*, member of the landowning elite and, as we learn from a newspaper article, also an "eminent historian and archeologist" (47). He writes a corpus of sermons and hymns that are distributed as printed pamphlets to the populace consisting mostly of *peones*,



poor peasants of predominantly indigenous and mixed background, and recited in towns of Mexican countryside by members of his movement Men of Quezalcoatl in rituals involving singing, dancing and colourful symbolic costumes. Ramón's movement is initially established within the framework of narrative realism in the novel, as pessimistic views are exchanged between foreigners and natives about Mexico's political and social reality, and future prospects of the country. The novel then crosses the border from the real to the surreal, from pragmatics of Mexico's sociopolitical reality to a cosmopoiesis, as it starts to recount the process of Ramón's self-fashioning as the Aztec deity Quezalcoatl, the "plumed serpent", and the narrative voice starts slipping from the domain of realism into that of mythopoesy. As the movement gathers momentum and spreads through the country, the Catholic churches are stripped of all religious markings, statues of Jesus and Mary are ceremoniously burned in lake Sayula and the removal of bells from church steeples announces the beginning of a non-European organization of time with "no hours", described in the language of fantasy: "Strange the change that was taking place in the world. Always the air had a softer, more velvety silence, it seemed alive. And there were no hours...a new world was unfolding, as softly and subtly as twilight failing and removing the clutter of day" (322).

The charismatic, populist aspect of the movement, however, has to be backed up with violence, as Ramón's partner in the cosmopoietic project, Mexican general Cipriano Viedma, refashioned as the Aztec deity of war Huitzilopochtli leads an army of insurgents in support of the movement. The conflict between the movement of the Men of Quezalcoatl and the Knights of Cortés in the novel eerily foreshadows a series of violent conflicts between Church and State named the Cristero Wars after the supporters of the Catholic Church, which erupted in 1926, a year after Lawrence left Mexico (Meyer, 58). Freely mingling with Lawrence's mythopoetic flights of fancy, the extended passages of hymns and sermons, are pragmatic discussions between Ramón and Cipriano about possible modes of aligning their movement with the political program of the new Mexican president. A formidable challenge thrown to the ordinary reader, and one that has frustrated many a critical reader, consists of the novel's demand to take the abundance of

mythopoesy as seriously as the quite astute observations which the text makes on the chaotic social and political reality of Mexico in the 1920s. A way of grounding the mythopoesy is in the space of America and author's experience of it. Just as the setting of the novel frames the possibilities of its cosmopoietic project, so the representation of this space is influenced by author's own experience of America.

## **2.1. D.H. Lawrence's liminal America**

Lawrence experienced America through its southwestern borderlands between the United States and Mexico, travelling from Taos in New Mexico as his main place of residence to Mexico. It is this liminal America, an intense contact zone between the ancient indigenous cultures such as that of local Pueblo Indians, the early modern Spanish Catholic culture and the modern industrial culture coming from the mainland United States, with its unique and compelling landscape, which stimulated author's literary and philosophical explorations of the large issue of civilization. First entering the American imaginary through late 19th-century painters who founded the Taos colony of artists (Scott,1), the unique cultural zone of the American southwestern borderlands has since developed into an important branch of contemporary American studies. It is, thus, especially interesting that, apart from several works of fiction and travel impressions, an important literary legacy of Lawrence's residence in the American southwestern borderlands is his *Studies in Classic American Literature*, a uniquely impressionistic and compelling exploration of what constitutes not just the classic American literary canon, but also a uniquely American spirit manifesting itself in its literature. Begun in Europe in 1917 and completed and published while Lawrence lived in Taos of New Mexico in 1923, it greatly influenced the myth and symbol school of American Studies (Jenkins, 46).

Any reading of *The Plumed Serpent*, the most ambitious fictional work of Lawrence's American period, as a political novel, must take into account, as Meyers suggests, that it is a fictional reworking of author's contradictory impressions of Mexico during the three extended visits to the country between 1923 and 1925 when the novel was completed, for "Lawrence was thoroughly familiar with the contemporary political situation in Mexico, and his novel is based on a political reality which the mythology attempts to transcend and redeem. It is precisely this montage of myth and *Realpolitik* that gives the book its unusual and disturbing qualities" (56). Lawrence's own responses to the unstable social and political situation in Mexico ranged from anxiety about personal safety, as he reports in a letter written shortly after his arrival that "In these states almost every *hacienda* is smashed, and you can't live even one mile outside the village or town: you will probably be robbed or murdered by roving bandits and scoundrels who still call themselves revolutionaries" (Meyers, 59), to a derision of the Mexican version of socialism as "an absurd sort of socialism" that is "a farce of farces: except very dangerous" (Meyers, 61) and a recognition of a Darwinian brutality as the only law governing revolutions in Mexico, for "There will be a leader, like Villa or Zapata, or somebody stronger. And once they have a strong leader these people will be strong too. They'll be as merciless to their masters as their masters have been to them" (Meyers, 63).

Though Lawrence visited Mexico in the aftermath of the main period of the Mexican Revolution which lasted from 1910 to 1920, he did witness much destruction and violence that accompanied it, was there when Pancho Villa was murdered in July of 1923 by the order of president Obregón and when Obregón named Plutarcho Calles as his successor, supressing the revolt of Adolfo Huerta (Meyers, 58). The novel refers with a certain nostalgia to the authoritarian late 19th century regime of Porfirio Díaz that was toppled by the Revolution and mentions the assassinated president Carranza, general de la Huerta as Angulo and the revolutionary leaders Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata (Meyers, 64). It is set during the rise to power of Plutarcho Calles named in the novel as Socrates Montes (Meyers, 66), the president who will attempt to carry out a violent secularization of the country in the Cristero Wars of 1926 to 1929.

The reality of politics during the Mexican revolution was one of a chaotic and exhausting stream of violence and corruption in a long series of assassinations and subsequent overthrows of one general as president for the next, for, as the novel tells us, Mexico has "more generals than soldiers" (22). From the opening scene of a vulgar mass spectacle of violence in the bull-fight arena in Mexico City to depressing sights of "broken walls, broken houses, broken *haciendas*, along the endless desolation left by revolutions" (63), the European protagonist Kate's initial impression of Mexico is one of a dismal social reality, only aggravated by the encroachment of mechanized modernity coming as an import from the United States. Based on a fiercely antimodern program in an opposition to the industrial modernity of United States, Ramón's movement can also be read as an attempt to reinstitute a type of authoritarian, pre-revolutionary regime that Mexico had under Porfirio Díaz but, this time, dressed in the charismatic mythopoetic garments with the aim of drawing support from Mexico's poor, peasant population. However one reads the cosmopoietic project of the novel, one that was not so divorced from volatile Mexican politics as the Cristero Wars show, it is evident that it represents Lawrence's endeavour to impose an imaginary literary structure on a both exciting and terrifying social chaos of post-revolutionary Mexico. Its extreme dissonances between the industrial modernity imported from the United States and a still vibrant, ancient, indigenous character of precolonial America hostile to modernity must have fascinated the author in the same domain of the exotic sublime where he situates the gaze of his European protagonist Kate.

At the time of his three longer visits to Mexico, Lawrence and his wife lived in the American southwestern borderlands of Taos in New Mexico, where they had been invited by the patron of its art colony Mabel Dodge Luhan, a wealthy New York socialite who settled in Taos permanently, marrying a local Kiowa Indian as her third husband (Willard, 18). Short story *The Woman Who Rode Away* written by Lawrence at Taos in the summer of 1924 (Sagar, 143) offers a New World reconfiguration of two key symbolic landscapes of Lawrence's opus, that of a mine and that of nature untouched by human activity. In the story, they are taken out of the pastoral

familiarity of England and transposed into the inhospitable wilderness of the borderlands between United States and Mexico. The unnamed female protagonist, a woman from California, lives with her entrepreneurial husband in a house on a ranch right next to a silver mine, in a desolate loneliness of a remote part of northern Mexico. The depressing proximity of the mine to her living quarters foreshadows the spatial arrangement of Wragby Hall and mine sustaining it in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, for "when you looked up" from a precarious shelter of an inner garden, a "shut-in flowered patio" (391), "you saw the huge pink cone of silver-mud refuse, and the machinery of the extracting plant against heaven above. No more" (391). The encroachment of the industrial plant upon the air space is very similar to the haze that encloses lord and lady Chatterley's first excursion out of Wragby Hall in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, where "Round the near horizon went the haze, opalescent with frost and smoke, and on top lay the small blue sky; so that it was like being inside an enclosure, always inside" (42). The nearest small town is far away and the landscape alternates between desert and mountainous, pine-crested wilderness bristling with wild animals and dangerous natives. And yet, for the the Californian native, this is an enclosure and not a shelter. The enclosure of the ranch and the mining outpost is an essentialized sublimation of Western industrial modernity "withering amid the terrifying powers of nature with which it has no living connection" (Hough, 142).

She is enticed by the menacing sublimity of the surrounding mountains and stories of a tribe of Indians who still practice life sacrifice. As she trespasses into their territory, she is captured, drugged and kept in a state of prolonged narcotic sedation before brought to the cave where she is to be sacrificed in an elaborate and prolonged ritual of death, thus exchanging one enclosure for another. The woman's horseback ride into the mountainous landscape, her encounter with Indians and her narcotized captivity are described with a dark lyricism, by which the unnamed female protagonist becomes a symbol of the modern civilization, annihilated by a more powerful and primeval authority of the indigenous America.

Of the borderline between the "consciousness" of modern man and the American Indian, Lawrence wrote in *Mornings in Mexico*, a collection of travel impressions from his life in the American borderlands, that "The Indian way of consciousness is different and fatal to our way of consciousness. Our way of consciousness is different from and fatal to the Indian. The two ways, the two streams are never to be united, they are never to be reconciled. There is no bridge, canal, connection" (45-46). Short works of fiction *Princess*, *The Woman Who Rode Away* and *St Mawr*, along with the travel essays *Mornings in Mexico* written at this time, all intensely deal with approaching or trespassing various kinds of geographical, cultural and psychological borders between the modern man and the indigenous essence of America, in a process in which a modern identity is often relinquished or annihilated in favour of a premodern consciousness. While female protagonists of short stories *Princess* and *The Woman Who Rode Away* escape the enclosure of an existence on an outpost of industrial modernity by riding off into their death in the American wilderness, the title of novella *St Mawr* is the name of a beautiful stallion who symbolizes a savage, pagan energy and freedom, "the deep spontaneous life which is not at the beck and call of the conscious and willing mind" (Leavis, 231), presented as the force which compels the female protagonist to abandon Europe and her English husband for a life on a ranch in the mountains of New Mexico. It was in New Mexico that Lawrence learned to ride a horse (Dodge, 82) and bought a ranch in the mountains above Taos (Sagar, 147). Writing from Taos in 1923, he notes that "America is more or less as I expected: shove or be shoved. But it still has a bigness, a sense of space, and a certain sense of rough freedom, which I like. I dread the petty, fogging narrowness of England" (Burgess, 148).

Taking up the incentive of the editor and Lawrence's contemporary Richard Aldington to read *Mornings in Mexico* together with *The Plumed Serpent* as they were written simultaneously (v), one discovers that Lawrence's fascination with rituals of New Mexican Indians was profound, revealing a genuine belief of the author that he had found a cultural and psychological landscape, a "consciousness" (45), that was entirely opposed to that of the modern man. Lawrence also claimed

to have rediscovered his own sense of genuine religious feeling in the culture of American Indians (Hough, 120).

## 2.2. America as the dark sublime

A constant presence of Europe in the novel is maintained by the gaze of its female protagonist, Irish widow Kate, enabling the reader to keep contrasting the opposing spirits of two continents. A confrontation between Europe and America occurs already in the opening of the novel, for *The Plumed Serpent* operates through modes of conflict between race, culture, class, gender and even natural elements, offering very few moments of suspended harmony and closing with "no less convincing ending in the entire Lawrence's canon" (Burgess, 157) which attempts to reconcile all the collisions.

Kate's Irish, European sensibility is sharply contrasted to that of her American companions Owen and Villiers, in the opening bull-fight scene. As seen by Kate, the bull-fight turns out to be a vulgar and perversely violent spectacle of carnage and butchery, introducing one of the key fields of contrast between Europe and United States. Kate is shocked and revolted by Owen's and Villiers' perverse attraction to the vulgarity of the spectacle for masses. With their search for spectacle and novelty that is supposed to represent life, Owen and Villiers represent the superficiality and flippancy of the modern industrialized America of United States. As they recount how many bulls and horses were slaughtered in the arena, Kate wonders "How could one be like these Americans, picking over the garbage of sensations, and gobbling it up like carrion birds!"(20) Being "swept with an American despair of having lived in vain, or of not having *really* lived", Owen's attraction to any kind of spectacle is seen as a rush of "mechanical steel filings to a magnet" (20).

Owen's and Villiers' mechanical, American need for excitement parallels the sterile hedonism and mechanized sensuality which the female protagonist of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

experiences on her trip through Europe as a sign of modern times, somewhat influenced by the spirit of modern America, as Constance senses Paris to be "weary of its now-mechanical sensuality, weary of the tensions of money, money, money, weary even of resentment and conceit, just weary to death, and still not sufficiently Americanised or Londonized to hide the weariness under a mechanical jig-jig-jig!" (266) Mexico and United States will be joined in opposition to the European sensibility of Kate later on in the novel, as Kate is both fascinated and repelled by the cruel ritualistic executions of the traitors of the movement, as a typically American, frenzied manifestation of will devoid of moral scruples, "this terrible, natural *will* which seemed to beat its wings in the very air of the American continent. Always will, will, will, without remorse or relenting. This was America to her: all the Americas. Sheer will!" (347)

Divided as the initial threesome of characters thus is internally by a difference between a European and north American sensibility, they are also immediately placed in opposition to the mass of poor Mexican spectators, entering into a conflict with two Mexicans who attempt to sit themselves down on the space meant for their feet. A note of added irony is struck as we learn that Owen is also "a great socialist" who "disapproved of bullfights" and who declaratively "disapproved" of Kate's statement "I really hate common people" (3) while "as a happy man, he was disconcerted", for "his own real self, as far as he had any left, hated common rowdiness just as much as Kate did" (4). Class is an immense gulf in *The Plumed Serpent*, separating the mass of Mexican populace from both the initial threesome of Kate and the two Americans, and the later one of her and the two Mexican men belonging to the social elite. Mexican majority of poor peasants, as a dark-skinned body of exotic sublimity to be manipulated, ruled or sublimated into the domain of myth remains outside the purview of a more rounded psychological shading. Even the attempts at a more three-dimensional portrayal of the members of Kate's household, the servants she rents together with the house on lake Sayula, ultimately reveal themselves tainted by the inevitable racism of her colonizing, Eurocentric gaze.



As she waits in a light summer dress for the rain to stop at the exit to the arena already crowding with "mostly loutish men in city clothes, the mongrel men of a mongrel city" (13), Kate is rescued from both the ungallantry of her American companions, the violent spectacle and the vulgar masses by a Mexican general who lightly separates the crowd "with a glowed hand" (14) and addresses Kate "in very English English, that sounded strange from his dark face, and a little stiff on his soft tongue" (14) in a chapter where Mexicans speak "American" (1) to the touristic threesome. One of the two main male protagonists of the novel who thus makes his first appearance in the novel is Cipriano Viedma, a Mexican general educated at Oxford University in England, of pure Indian blood, as the final division is thrown inside the arena in Mexico City.

Kate's seduction into the novel's cosmopoetic project unfolds as the mode of narrative realism which opens the novel during the bull-fight, starts blending with the mode of the darkly exotic sublime, circumscribing a domain of terror and fascination with ancient Mexico for Kate, a productive ground for Kate's quest for sources of mystery and wonder, and a fertile one for the novel's cosmopoiesis. Invited to a tea-party in Tlacolula where she is to be introduced to the ideologist of the movement, Kate senses the exoticism of the mansion's patio as exhuding the same ponderous, earthbound essence that seems to be inundating all the Mexican spaces she finds herself in:

The square, inner patio, dark, with sun lying on the heavy arches of one side, had pots of red and white flowers, but was ponderous, as if dead for centuries. A certain dead, heavy strength and beauty seemed there, unable to pass away, unable to liberate itself and decompose. There was a stone basin of clear but motionless water, and the heavy reddish-and-yellow arches went round the courtyard with warrior-like fatality, their bases in dark shadows. (24)

Her host is Mrs Norris, an archeologist involved in the study of Aztecs, and as the evening falls on her garden, the moribund atmosphere intensifies, with Kate feeling like "being at the bottom of

some dusky, flowering garden in Hades" (36), while "the mysterious white bells of datura" are "suspended, large and silent, like very ghosts of sound" (36-37).

Observing the mountains of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl framing the skyline of Mexico City, she senses a difference between the exotic Mexican sublime, and that of the Alps, the prototypical sublime of the European landscape:

There they were, the two monsters, watching gigantically and terribly over their lofty, bloody cradle of men, the Valley of Mexico. Alien, ponderous, the white-hung mountains seemed to emit a deep purring sound, too deep for the ear to hear, and yet audible on the blood, a sound of dread. There was no soaring or uplift or exaltation as there is in the snowy mountains of Europe. Rather a ponderous, white-shouldered weight, pressing terribly on the earth, and murmuring like two watchful lions. (40)

The same menacing spirit compared to an exotic beast is sensed lurking beneath the Mexico City's everyday, mechanised modernity. The daytime motorized shuffle of the city is but a shell of civilized contemporaneity hiding the authentic, savage essence of the country, for "Superficially, Mexico might be all right: with its suburbs of villas, its central fine streets, its thousands of motor-cars, its tennis, and its bridge-parties" where "The sun shone brilliantly every day, and big bright flowers stood out from the trees. It was a holiday" (40), but its genuine spirit comes alive at night, as the mechanized bustle calms down, when "the undertone was like the low, angry, snarling purring of some jaguar spotted with night. There was a ponderous, down-pressing weight upon the spirit: the great folds of the dragon of Aztecs, the dragon of Toltec winding around one and weighing down the soul" (40).

Kate dismisses the political reactionarism of a young professor at the University of Mexico as belonging to "half Spaniards full of European ideas" (44), accusing him of lacking a genuine compassion for the poor and making a "*casus belli*" out of native Mexicans, "the twelve million poor – mostly Indians" who "don't understand the very words of capital and socialism" (44). Along the same lines, she recognizes "craft" in Diego Rivera's murals but finds Indians depicted as

"symbols in the weary script of socialism and anarchy" (42). These essentially pragmatic observations that cannot be entirely reproached for expressing a Eurocentric or an arrogantly colonial vantage point are followed by a confirmation of Kate's search for a mystery. While initially establishing quite a convincing framework of a soberly realistic assessment of issues plaguing the post-revolutionary Mexico of the 1920s, the novel proceeds to search for a possible solution in the realm of the sublime rather than that of realism.

Following Kate's visit to the university, the novel makes her conveniently stumble across an article in the local newspapers reporting a strange and half comic event of a man rising naked out of lake Sayula to steal the clothes of a peasant woman's husband, claiming that he is the Aztec deity Quetzalcoatl. For the first time in the novel, the repulsive and menacing aspect of Mexico acquires a glitter of mysticism, as Kate avidly latches on to this possibility, wondering

...what was at the back of this: if anything more than a story. Yet, strangely, a different light than the common light seemed to gleam out of the words of even this newspaper paragraph. She wanted to see the big lake where the gods once lived, and whence they were due to emerge. Amid all the bitterness that Mexico produced in her spirit, there was still a strange beam of wonder and mystery almost like hope. A strange darkly-iridescent beam of wonder, of magic. (47)

Compared to vulnerable but earnest "new little hopes" (5) and "a hopeful heart" (317) which open and close *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, what Kate is offered in *The Plumed Serpent* is a "mystery almost like hope" and the fact that its "beam of wonder" is "strange darkly-iridescent" underlines the subliminal nature of her fascination. But the "beam of wonder and mystery" which Kate sees in Ramón's movement is contrasted to the "slushy mysticism or sordid spiritualism" of Europe, where "the magic had gone" (90).

In an expansively evocative contemplative chapter that follows, superbly blended modes of realism and sublimity outline Kate's dilemma about staying in Mexico. Kate here makes the crucial equation between Mexico's dark, exotic sublimity and that of the American continent as a whole

which will enable the novel's Mexican cosmopoietic project to be understood as an alternative to the industrial modernity of not just the whole American continent but, at one point in the novel, even the whole world. Surveying the country from a bird's-eye view perspective that passes over different regions and their inhabitants, diving into the past of the Spanish conquest and the more ancient one of the Aztecs represented by the pyramids at Teotihuacan, Cholula and Mitla, Kate wonders

...whether America really was the great death-continent, the great *No!* to the European and Asiatic, and even African *Yes!* Was it really the great-melting pot, where men from the creative continents were smelted back again, not to a new creation, but down into the homogeneity of death? Was it the great continent of the undoing, and all its people the agents of the mystic destruction! (65-66)

The "final meaning" of American ancient identity, embodied in "hard, sharp-angled, intricate fascination" (67) of the Aztec pyramids devoid of "gentleness or grace or charm" (68) can only be approached by the European protagonist Kate in the domain of the exotic sublime:

Oh America, with your unspeakable hard lack of charm, what then is your final meaning? Is it forever the knife of sacrifice, as you put out your tongue at the world? Charmless America! With your hard, vindictive beauty, are you forever to smite death? Is the world your everlasting victim? (68)

with even the gentleness of the twittering of birds and voices of native boys possibly being "the dark-fingered quietness of death, and the music of the presence of death in their voices" (68).

For the Mexican ideologist of the movement to revive Aztec religion whose view dovetails Kate's, the all-pervasive downward ponderosity of the country and its people represents a productive yearning for the preindustrial and premodern roots, from which "each new shoot that comes up overthrows a Spanish church or an American factory" (68). While *peones* of Ramón's estate are portrayed as content in spinning colourful textiles and forging the metal paraphernalia for his movement, an estate whose reduction of land resources during the revolution is luckily

supplemented by an income from his wife's mines mentioned as a side note in the novel, Ramón's hostility towards American industrial capitalism seems more a manifestation of a local patriotism mobilized for a preservation of its own profit against foreign investment than a genuinely philanthropic impulse toward social reform. Though there are plenty of poor but handsome Mexican peasants in the novel, there are no factory workers, no men in 'heavy ironshod boots' (166) we find in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; and the only direct mention of industrial activities are rather pastoral images of sugar cane fields and a *tequilla* factory. The Aztec preindustrial fantasy of the novel's cosmopoietic project functions as an antidote to global industrial modernism of the 1920s only in the domain of exotic sublimity, where the trauma of modern warfare and barbaric industrialism of mines and factories, unnamed and unspecified, is processed indirectly, through the opposite extremes of ritualistic violence and exotic eroticism.

Mexico of *The Plumed Serpent* is the dark, exotic, liminal America whose "ponderous repudiation of the modern spirit" (101) is hostile to the modernity of Europe and United States, while also being the cradle of the authentic, ancient identity of the American continent as a whole. This ancient identity is presented as one of a lust for destruction and death that is highly ritualized and, as such, contrasted to the vulgarized nature of death in the everyday reality of modern Mexico. "Once, Mexico had had an elaborate ritual of death", thinks Kate, while "Now it has death, ragged, squalid, vulgar, without even the passion of its own mystery" (40), as she resettles her shock with the bull-fight and foreshadows her enticement to Ramón's movement. One way of reading the novel's cosmopoietic project is as a progression from the street-level violence of the bull-fight that opens the novel and the countryside banditry that keeps reappearing, to the ritualized violence clad in the charismatic feathers of a socioreligious movement.

Mexico as the heart of "the great death-continent" (65) of America thus becomes the perfect site for enacting a fantasy of a premodern, ritualized and even eroticized death; a fantasy which attempts to resolve the collective trauma of the horrifyingly impersonal, massive and automatized destruction of human bodies in the mechanized modern warfare of the First World War trenches,

evoked by general Cipriano's cry, "My men are no cannon-fodder, nor trench-dung" (329), or a gradual, grinding desintegration of human body and soul taking place in factories and mines. Kate's fascination with the dark moribund essence of Mexico as the authentic spirit of ancient America stems from the same source of the exotic sublime as her erotic attraction to Mexican exotic male bodies.

The novel is haunted by images which merge the erotic with the perverse, repulsive and violent, contaminating even the pastoral elements with the unsettling sublimity of Mexico. As the reader's eyes fall upon Lake Sayula during Kate's first boat ride, a landscape central to the novel's cosmopoiesis, it bears some aspects of a *locus amoenus*, the "pleasant place" for amorous encounters in the European pastoral tradition (Curtius, 195), relocated to a non-European, exotic landscape, with "little tufts of floating water-hyacinth" (77) drifting on its "flimsy, soft, sperm-like water" (77) and lined by willow trees and "pepper-trees of most delicate green foliage" (77), exotic birds, ducks, water-fowl, "luxurious cows" (77) led down to the water for a drink, and a breeze inviting the movement of sailing boats. Kate's glance at the Indian men "whose wet skins flashed with the beautiful brown-rose colour and glitter of the naked natives" (78) reiterates her continuous erotic attraction to the exotic, dark-skinned bodies of Mexican men, but the colonizing nature of her gaze keeps perpetuating an impression that the eyes of natives "have no centre to them" (32) with their gaze expressed in terms of dark sublimity as "a raging black hole, like the middle of a maelstrom" (32). In a rare moment of suspended harmony between her and her exotic surroundings on lake Sayula, Kate's gaze meets that of her Indian boatman, "the silent, vulnerable centre of all life's quivering, like the nucleus gleaming in tranquil suspense, within a cell" (79) where "for the first time Kate felt she had met the mystery of the natives, the strange and mysterious gentleness between a scylla and a charybdis of violence; the small poised perfect body of the bird that waves wings of thunder and wings of fire" (80-81), where the overall earthbound ponderosity of Mexico is relieved by an uplifting image.

The possibility of lake Sayula as a *locus amoenus* is sabotaged by the contamination of the novel's erotic shading with the repulsive, perverse and violent. The image of the "flimsy, soft, sperm-like water" (77) of the lake merges with a fecund impurity of "the filmy water that was hardly like water at all" (84) at the hotel where Kate takes a bath, the "milky-dim" (75) water which bubbles up from the basins of women in town, and the final image of the lake water as "the lymphatic milk of fishes" (84). The field of cacti behind the hotel soon becomes a setting for more accounts of local violence recounted to Kate, with an especially disturbing image of a *hacienda* manager murdered by peons "with his sexual organs cut off and put into his mouth, his nose slit and pinned back, the two halves, to his cheeks, with long cactus spines" (88). With "phallic cacti and sperm-like water" supporting "harsh images of male sexuality" (Niven, 169), an aggressive phallic eroticism is also present in Kate's contemplation of the process of making Mexico's popular drink *pulque*, for "The Mediterranean has the dark grape, old Europe has malted beer, and China has opium from the white poppy. But out of Mexican soil a bunch of black-tarnished swords bursts up, and a great unfolded bud of the once-flowering monster begins to thrust at the sky. They cut the great phallic bud and crush out the sperm-like juice for the pulque. *Aqua miel! Pulque!*" (63) The "dark gods" that in Lawrence's novels "preside over a union of Eros with Death" (di Battista, 46) are, in the exotic American sublime of Mexico, mobilized to process the fantasy of a death different from a destruction of human body in the impersonal machine of modernity. But, the "dark gods" can also be recognized as authoritarian leaders manipulating inferior masses (Przybylowicz, 290) in Lawrence's "leadership group of novels" which include *Aaron's Rod*, *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent* (Moynahan, xii).

Mexico's "ponderous repudiation of the modern spirit" (101) conducive to Ramón's movement, manifests itself as the modern and ancient America meet most closely in the countryside town of Sayula, one of the focal points of Ramón's movement, whose *hacienda* lies in the district, and provides one of the key spaces for the novel's cosmopoiesis. Described as "a little lake resort" that is "not for the idle rich, for Mexico had few left; but for tradespeople from Guadalajara, and the

weekenders" (97), it has only a marginal branch of railway, "her one train a day" (97) that is not profitable and risks being cancelled. It has two hotels and some villas remaining "from the safe, quiet days of Don Porfirio" (97), plenty of abandoned villas and villages in its environs and "terrors" in the shape of "bandits and bolshevists" (97). And yet, the dismal provinciality of Sayula also has "that real insanity of America, the automobile" (97). Mechanized modernity makes itself heard even here in a perpetual rush of "machines", motor-cars and motor-buses – called *camiones* – along the one forlorn road coming to Sayula from Guadalajara" (98). The material desires of Mexicans seem to coincide with the rest of the industrialized world on the subject of car, for, as the narrative somewhat sarcastically comments, "One hope, one faith, one destiny; to ride in a *camion*, to own a car" (98).

The provincial urbanity of Sayula also has its connection to the world of modern entertainment in the shape of rare butterflies, Mexican versions of flappers who visit the town on weekends, when "the *camiones* and motor-cars came in lurching and hissing. And, like strange birds alighting, you had slim and charming girls in organdie frocks and face-powder and bobbed hair, fluttering into the *plaza*"(99), accompanied by their male gallants *fifis* "in white flannel trousers and white shoes, dark jackets, correct straw hats, and canes" (100). They are discordant with the "world of big, handsome peon men" (101), the dark-skinned Mexican peasants from the surrounding countryside who watch them dancing to music in the main square with silent hostility, "the stone-heavy passivity of resistance" (101). It is here that the narrative voice reveals its colonizing gaze, passing a civilizational judgement that sides with the reader against the indigenous Mexican, separating him and the modern man along the lines of spirit and soul.:

It is spirit which makes the flapper flap her organdic wings like a butterfly. It is spirit which creases the white flannel-trousers of the *fifi* and makes him cut his rather pathetic dash. They try to talk the elegancies and flippancies of the modern spirit. But down on it all, like a weight of obsidian, comes the passive negation of the Indian. He



understands soul, which is of the blood. But spirit, which is superior, and is the quality of our civilization, this, in the mass, he darkly and barbarically repudiates. (101)

because "it is this ponderous repudiation of the modern spirit which makes Mexico what it is" (101).

While it may be seductive in the domain of the exotic sublime, the impossibility to breach the border between the "consciousness" (45) of the modern white man and the American native sensed by the author in both his fictional and non-fictional works of the period, reveals a Eurocentric relegation of non-European mental landscapes "to the same unspecified realm of pure alterity", for the passage from *Mornings in Mexico* compares the different "consciousness" (45) of the American Indian to that of Hindoos, Polynesians and Bantu people (Nielson, 318).

### **2.3. Cosmopoiesis between modernity and imperial fantasy**

With the European observer Kate being the most frequent center of its focalisation, the narrative voice never cancels an aspect of scepticism about the cosmopoiesis. The unfolding of the novel's cosmopoietic project thus takes place on a liquid border between a political ideology exposed as such and a utopia, a dialectic seen by Przybylowicz as one of the defining features of a political reading of the novel, not innocent of tensions and contradictions brought on by the colonizing gaze of the novel's European protagonist (310). A German manager struggling to keep a hotel on lake Sayula running, in an area infested with bandits and hostility from peasants, qualifies Ramón's movement as "another try-on of the Bolshevists" who "thought socialism needed a god, so they're going to fish him out of this lake" and "he'll do for another pious catchword in another revolution" (89). The narrative keeps sabotaging itself, unable to decide where it wants to position itself generically. As it proceeds to describe the transformation of Mexico into the land of the Aztecs, it keeps puncturing the mythopoetic balloon needed to sustain the reader's willing suspension of disbelief. Asked to assume the role of Aztec goddess Malintzi, Kate thinks of "London and Paris

and New York, and all the people there", thinking that she wants "to get out of this" and "go back to simple human people", tired of the mythopoetic trappings as "high-flown bunk" (333), and yet, in the last chapter, she wonders why she should return to London "to see the buses on the mud of Piccadilly, on Christmas Eve, and the crowds of people on the wet pavements, under the big shops like great caves of light" (396) when she might as well stay in Mexico where her "soul is less dreary" (396). Kate is a character hopelessly stuck between the continents of Europe and America, torn between the eroticism and repulsion of her colonizing fascination with Mexico and its male bodies, unable to make a definitive transition from her old to her new self and thus revealing the incompleteness of the novel's cosmopoietic project.

The narrative hybridity of realism and mythopoesis, and the fact that the plot is set in motion by a European protagonist's quest for sources of wonder and mystery, generically situates *The Plumed Serpent*, not so much in the realm of a political novel or "a psychodrama set in the country of the mind" (Pritchard, 171), as "a romance of truancy" (Baldick, 213), featuring a Christian protagonist who relinquishes his identity in favour of "pagan sensuality or of 'oriental' spirituality" (Baldick, 218). The novel thus continues the narrative project of the Victorian imperial romance. While being an evocative portrait of Mexico and its turbulent politics in 1920s, not devoid of psychological nuance in the representations of its American, European and Mexican characters, it reveals an inability to break with the imperial nostalgia of late Victorian imperial romance where characters "move to the fringes of Empire in search of a revitalizing lesson" (Armstrong, 138).

For all its mythopoetic ornaments, the cosmopoietic project of the novel is revealed as one that can only be kept alive by perpetuating differences and maintaining sharply drawn distinctions between enemies and supporters, leaders and followers, the elite and the mass, with continuous conflict being the only effective means to do so. It rests on the charismatic manipulation of the masses through colourful paraphernalia and an equally appealing emphasis on a preindustrial relationship between men and nature. Its insistence on the polarity of the male-female relations can be seen as a tactic of sedating the followers into accepting the unavailability of difference on an

intimate as well as political level. As Ramón explains to Kate early on in the novel, "There is no such thing as liberty. The greatest liberators are usually slaves of an idea. The freest people are slaves to conventions and public opinion, and more still, slaves to the industrial machine. You can only change one sort of domination for another" (61).

An evocative naturalism and a genuine fascination with the culture of ancient indigenous America painted in the colours of the sublime and the mythopoetic, coexist in the novel with more unsettling aspects of a colonizing perspective which Przybylowicz recognizes as colonial racism and proto-fascism (295). In a letter sent to J.Murry from Mexico in 1923, Lawrence finds that "though England may lead the world again, as you say, she's got to find a way first. She's got to pick up a lost trail. And the end of the lost trail is here in Mexico. The Englishman, per se, is not enough. He has to modify himself to a distant end. He has to balance with something that is not himself" (Sagar, 145). As the cosmopoietic project of *The Plumed Serpent* enacts the process of reclaiming the body from industrial modernity through various aspects of the exotic sublime, it also betrays a covert purpose of searching for sources of regeneration for the white man's empire. Tainted with imperial nostalgia, the cosmopoiesis of *The Plumed Serpent* proves unable to assert itself as an imaginary world that has a potential of being an authentically new alternative to the industrial modernity of the 1920s.

### **3. Cosmopoiesis in *locus amoenus* of *Lady Chatterley's Lover***

Delimited with two sites of barbaric industrial modernity, a mining settlement on one and a family estate run by "mechanical anarchy" (18) drawing income from the mine on the other, the Nottinghamshire wood where the lovers of D.H. Lawrence's last major novel meet is a place of shelter from barbaric industrial modernity that caters to a proliferation of meanings both literal and symbolic. As a site of the cosmopoietic project of the novel, a redemption of human dignity in the

age of machines through intimate, sensual rituals of the body, the wood can be read as a conflation of various symbolic landscapes of the European pastoral imaginary: a hermit's abode or a garden of Eden (Sagar, 176), a *locus amoenus* (Squires, 136-137), the Arcadia or the wood of the Sleeping Beauty (Niven, 176), while also being tied to a concrete local landscape of Nottinghamshire of the author's youth, with its own mythic past of the legend of Robin Hood. Unfolding within this setting densely charged with symbolism of the European pastoral tradition are rites of the body by which the lovers explore "refinements of passion" (258), narrated in language whose explicitness was considered pornographically obscene when the novel was written in 1928, and threatening to the scaffolding of social propriety because of a wide social gap between the upper class adulteress and her lover.

Aware that no publisher in the English speaking world will undertake its publication, Lawrence arranged for a private edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, a novel written while he was living on a farmhouse in Tuscany, to be printed by a firm in Florence in 1928 (Worthen, 372-373). In a letter to Dorothy Brett from 1927, Lawrence writes "I've done my novel – I like it – but it's so improper, according to poor conventional fools, that it'll never be printed. And I will *not* cut it" (Coombs, 182). Lawrence was right about the English-speaking world. The unexpurgated version of the novel, though pirate copies circulated in abundance, was not officially published there until 1960, thirty years after the author's death, in what was one of the most protracted suppressions of a book and famous censorship trials in the history of 20th-century publishing (Worthen, xxiii). Explicit descriptions of lovemaking between its protagonists that have not yet been used in "serious literature in English" (Moore, 225), as part of the extension of the project of realism into the domain of the intimate (Baldick, 374) were just part of the issue. A significant additional element, one that other characters of the novel themselves such as Constance's husband and her sister find repulsive and problematic, was the social distance between the lovers.

The female protagonist, a member of the comfortably affluent and educated upper middle class married to a member of English landed gentry, commits adultery with her husband's

gamekeeper from the working class background of the mining community that supports the income of her husband's estate. What partially redeems the gamekeeper Oliver Mellors is the fact that he has been made a lieutenant during his army service in English colonies but regrettably chose not to maintain himself at this social level. Though increasingly willing to explore the love affairs in the social taboo zones of great age and class difference, the novels of the 1920s predominantly castigate the female protagonist involved in extramarital affair with two exceptions to "the convention of miserable infidelity", Joyce's *Ulysses* and Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, being "not coincidentally – the most scandalously banned books of the period" (Baldick, 375). Their hereticism lay in triumphant, rather than repentant figures of adulteresses.

Sounding hopelessly anachronistic in 1960 when the book was finally acquitted of charges for obscenity, the question "Is it a book that you would even wish your wife or your servants to read?", which the prosecutor Mervyn Griffith-Jones posed to a jury consisting of "the dock laborer, the teacher, the butcher, the dress machinist, the foreman, the driver and the several salesmen", publicized with much mirth at the time (Hilliard, 653-654), nevertheless reveals social scaffolding whose logic the author was trying to unsettle writing the book in 1928. In the Edwardian England of the 1920s and its "pan-European upper caste in the twilight of its days" (Coetzee, 4), adultery was condoned among men, but forbidden to women as an unnatural pollution of a more refined blood with the seed of the man of lower social caste (Coetzee, 4), which gives an added weight to Clifford's accusation of Connie, "You're one of those half-insane, perverted women who must run after depravity, the *nostalgie de la boue*" (311). Sodomitic sex practised by Connie and Mellors was a crime in the British penal code of 1920s punishable even within marriage; obscene words exchanged between men were allowed while those directed from men to women or to children were recognized as a corruption of their innocence (Coetzee, 4).

Though *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was by no means the first of D.H. Lawrence's novels suppressed for obscenity and generally socially unacceptable content, as the same happened with *Rainbow* and *Women in Love* (Moynahan, 114) today recognized as the center of author's opus, in a

letter from 1927 written to Nancy Hearn, the author admits to having taken his exploration of sensualism in English language to a level more radical than before:

It's what the world would call very improper. But you know it's not really improper – I always labour at the same thing, to make the sex relations valid and precious, instead of shameful. And this novel is the furthest I've gone. To me it is beautiful and tender and frail as the naked self is, and I shrink very much even from having it typed. (Coombs, 183)

The erotic cosmopoiesis of *Lady Chattererly's Lover*, a novel which Lawrence qualifies in his correspondence as a "tender phallic novel", that restores "the phallic consciousness" which "will save us from horrors" because it is "not cerebral sex consciousness" but "root of poetry, lived or sung" (Coombs, 185), attacks the overly developed intellect at the expense of an atrophy of emotion and sensual instinct, as the root of the savagery of industrial modernity.

The flawed logic of social propriety which caused a prolonged repression of the novel on charges of obscenity is exposed by the editor of the second British edition through a joke told about a homecoming soldier who, finding his wife in bed with another man, explains his enraged attack on him as "I come home after three fucking years in fucking Africa, and what do I fucking-well find? - my wife in bed, engaging in illicit cohabitation with a male!" (Hoggart, ix) What lies in the subtext of this joke is how wars "fuck" with human bodies yet citizens comply with this socially sanctioned abuse, in an incomprehensible collective rush toward self-annihilation. Writing about "the dark sensual or Dionysiac or Aphrodisiac ecstasy, which does actually burst the world, burst the world-consciousness in every individual" (Coombs, 114-115) in his novel *Rainbow* written in Italy before the war, Lawrence contrasts the consummation of sensual ecstasy with the humanity's propensity for a vulgar, massive self-destruction in war, noting that "There is a great *consummation* in death, or sensual ecstasy, as in *The Rainbow*. But there is the death which is the rushing of the Gadarene swine down the slope of extinction. And this is the war in Europe. We have chosen our extinction in death, rather than our consummation" (Coombs, 114-115).

The connection made between the industrial modernity's abuse of the body and war as an extreme example of it, is immediate, direct and precisely designated in time in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, as we learn that Constance's husband is "shipped over to England" (5) from Flanders like a commodity, "more or less in bits" (5) at the age of twenty-nine in 1918, remaining an invalid in a wheelchair who cannot produce an heir. We are also given the exact time when Connie returns with her invalid husband to Wragby Hall as the autumn of 1920. As the narrative of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* exits Wragby Hall for the first time "on a frosty morning with a little February sun" (42), the seat of the family tragedy occupying the first four chapters of the novel, and steps into the natural world around it, we learn that the life of Lord and Lady Chatterley is "always a dream, or a frenzy, inside an enclosure" (42). With "a dream" or "a frenzy" being two inadequate modes of existence in modernity, the first implying a dulled awareness and the second symbolizing a frenetic skimming over the surface of meaning, a difference between enclosures and shelters is of great significance for the cosmopoietic project of the novel. The wood which shelters the lovers harbours a potential for being one the "new little habitats" (5) invoked in the opening lines of the novel. In contrast to the exotic sublimity of Mexico and its "dark repudiation of the modern spirit" (101) as a potential source of regeneration for all of America in *The Plumed Serpent*, the Europe of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* offers fragile shelters amidst the wilderness of barbaric modernity, not unlike the early medieval abodes of first hermits, the "new little habitats" that need to be constructed "among the ruins" left by the "cataclysm" of the Great War (5).

As Lawrence's last major novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a work of an intricately spun inner harmony in its precisely timed correspondance between the plot, the characters and the space they move through. The plot of the novel unfolds in close connection to the changes that take place in nature as the winter gives way to spring and the spring develops into summer, paralleling the immense transformaton and awakening which takes place in Connie's life. It is through a gradual synchronization of Connie's emotional landscape and the changes taking place in nature that the wood is transformed from a modern hermit's abode into a shelter for lovers, a modern *locus*

*amoenus*. As "the pleasant place" of European spatial imaginary from antiquity to Middle Ages, *locus amoenus* is "a beautiful, shaded, natural site. Its minimum ingredients comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or a brook. Birdsong and flowers may be added. The most elaborate examples also include a breeze" (Curtius, 195), where nature provides a shelter for lovers supporting a benevolent, procreative eroticism. Each of Constance Chatterley's excursions into the wood is accompanied by a lyrical yet botanically accurate catalogue of new flowers and plants assuming their place in the order of events in nature, not unlike the rhetorical delight that a poet of antiquity or Middle Ages describing a *locus amoenus* would take in providing detailed catalogues of flora and fauna. In keeping with a symbolic pastoralism, the morning in February when the novel makes its first excursion into the natural world precisely designates the time of transition between winter and spring when the novel brings its female protagonist and the reader out of the enclosure of Wragby Hall for the first time.

The first time that the female protagonist of the novel secretly glances upon the half-naked body of Oliver Mellors, he is described as a hermit in his "Perfect, white, solitary nudity of a creature that lives alone, and inwardly alone" (68-69). The moment in which we learn that Mellors starts regretting Connie trespassing into his hermit-like seclusion is the point at which the novel will start paying an almost equal attention to the development of his character. After the first time he makes love to Connie, Mellors observes the Tevershall mine in the distance, contemplating the impossibility of a modern hermit-like isolation in the wood, for "he knew that the seclusion of the wood was illusory. The industrial noises broke the solitude, the sharp lights, though unseen, mocked it. A man could no longer be private and withdrawn. The world allows no hermits" (123). The hostility he feels toward the encroachment of the mine and the mining village upon his forest refuge is shared by Connie who suffers from noise and olfactory pollution resulting from the proximity of mine to Wragby Hall. The lovers are thus united and distinguished from other characters in their heightened sensitivity to an unnatural and menacing aspect of the everyday reality.



The transformation of the wood from a place of seclusion to a *locus amoenus*, a "pleasant place" suitable for love, unfolds as the psychosomatic symptoms of Connie's melancholy worsen and she takes more frequent excursions into the wood to escape the atmosphere of her home which, like that of the protagonist in *The Woman Who Rode Away*, is a simulacrum of safety while actually being an enclosure. A sympathetic vibration between the natural elements of the wood and Connie's melancholy signals the beginning of her slow healing process, closely following the events taking place in her mind. As she breaks of a disappointing affair and decides to embark on an "experiment" of finding a suitable father for her child, with the project of having a child felt by her as "still one of the sensations" (66), Connie finds that "From the old wood came an ancient melancholy, somehow soothing to her better than the harsh insentience of the outer world. She liked the *inwardness* of the remnant of the forest, the unspeaking reticence of the old trees. They seemed a very power of silence, and yet a vital presence" (67). On her next visit, a botanically accurate catalogue of early spring flowers; celandines, anemones, windflowers, primroses, violets and wild daffodils, complements an uplifting motion of nature, so unlike the earthbound ponderosity pervading all the spaces of *The Plumed Serpent*, with Constance sitting "down with her back to a young pine-tree, that swayed against her with curious life, elastic, and powerful, rising up. The erect, alive thing, with its top in the sun!" (88) In a deepening of the physical and emotional harmony between the lovers, Connie's body appropriates the features of the wood, thus becoming a *locus amoenus* in itself, "like a forest, like the dark interlacing of the oakwood, humming inaudibly with myriad unfolding buds" with "birds of desire asleep in the vast interlaced intricacy of her body" (143-44).

The cosmopoietic project of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is focused on the nucleus of human relationship and the bodies of lovers. It makes no attempt to involve the masses, such as the one in *The Plumed Serpent*. Destruction of that half of Clifford's body which bears the potential to harmonize the sensuality and intellect, symbolically underlines the fact that Clifford belongs to a different "race" (74). Clifford's physical invalidity aggravates an intrinsic dislocation between the corporeal and the intellectual which was present in him before the war as a pathology typical of

industrial modernity. Clifford's lack of need for spontaneous human touch and contact distinguishes him as belonging not just to a different "class" (74) from Connie but also a different "race" (74) for whom "warmth" is "just bad taste" (74). The term "race" is used here for a different level of consciousness. In the first version of the novel, Connie comes home from one of the passionate amorous encounters with Mellors, to Clifford who reads Racine to her aloud in French, "But it sounded to her like the uncouth cries and howls of barbarous, disconnected savages dancing around a fire somewhere outside the wood" (Moynahan, 148), in an interesting inversion of Clifford's European breeding becoming savage to Connie's awakened sensuality sanctified in "pentecostal terms" as she is "filled with the pure communication of the other man, a communication delicate as the inspiration of the gods" (Moynahan, 148).

The wood where Connie and Mellors meet is a precarious shelter from two sites of barbaric modernity, with the lovers placed in a privileged position of gaining insight into a fuller, more enlightened and more civilised experience of being human. Unlike the leaders of the Quezalcoatl movement in *The Plumed Serpent*, the carriers of the cosmopoietic project of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* make no attempt to convert the multitudes to their way of seeing the reality. Mellors harbours no illusion that his philosophy can lead the masses of workers toward a different lifestyle for, as he explains to Connie, "the colliers aren't pagan, far from it. They're a sad lot, a deadened lot of men: dead to their women, dead to life" (315), with the new paganism embraced by the novel's cosmopoietic project as a new, enlightened antidote to the mechanized barbarity of industrial processes.

The radical idea of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is that society can and does reproduce itself, creating new human beings, but blindly and mechanically so, without, for the most part, ever experiencing a true synergy of body and soul and accessing a knowledge of the full sensual capabilities of their bodies. Connie observes the colliers

...trailing from the pits, grey-black, distorted, one shoulder higher than the other, slurring their heavy ironshod boots. Underground grey faces, whites of eyes rolling, necks cringing

from the pit roof, shoulders out of shape. Men! Men! Alas, in some ways patient and good men. In other ways, non-existent. Something that men *should* have was bred and killed out of them. Yet they were men. They begot children. (166)

They are recognized by Connie as "a new race of mankind, over-conscious in the money and social and political side, on the spontaneous, intuitive side dead" (159), and this new race includes the working class as well as the elites. As the two lovers are described joining in perfect orgasmic harmony, Mellors tells Connie afterwards how "Most folks live their lives through and never know it" (139) adding that "You can see by the raw look of them" (140). The lovers thus distinguish themselves as a type of new elite, different from both the aristocratic class and the working masses who are both equally sensually and emotionally disabled in their submission to and worship of materialism, the modern "Mammon of mechanized greed" (124). It is represented by the Wragby Hall on one side of the lovers' wood, and the mining community on the other, and symbolically consolidated at the end of the novel in the "monstrous, unvital embrace" between "the aristocratic Sir Clifford" and his servant, the "plebeian Mrs Bolton" (Moynahan, 77).

### **3.1. Cosmopoiesis between dream and frenzy**

The mythic past of the wood is evoked as "a remnant of the great forest where Robin Hood hunted" that "still had some of the mystery of the wild, old England" (43) with "deer, and archers, and monks padding along on asses" (43), while the recent past of the First World War manifests itself in the shape of a "lifeless" clearing where the forest has been "denuded" of trees, cut for trench timber on the orders of Clifford's father, Sir George (43). Sir George Clifford's rupture with this mythic past is defined as a flawed logic of a conservative impulse to perpetuate and preserve. He denudes his own forest for war timber, because he "stood for England and Lloyd George as his forebears had stood for England and St George" (12), is described as "weeding men out of his

colliery to shove them into war" (11), sends both of his sons to the trenches of Flanders and dies "of chagrin" (13) after one is killed and the other one disabled from producing an heir. In an obstinate frenzy of a perpetuation of fixed meanings and positions, Sir George "felled timber and stood for Lloyd George and England, England and Lloyd George", and "never knew there was a difference", being "utterly divorced from the England that was really England" (12). Deforested knoll, described in terms of a ravished human body as "denuded and forlorn" (43) awakes a feeling of anger and hate toward war and his father in disabled Clifford. Though he undertakes measures to protect it as "the heart of England" (44), Clifford's impulse is possessive. He loves the old oak trees because he feels "they were his own through generations" (43), and expresses his desire to Connie of having an heir as "a link in a chain" (45), one which strikes her with "the curious impersonality of his desire for a son" (45). Clifford is perpetuating the same, flawed logic of a mechanistic conservation of meaning and partaking in the same automated frenzy of preservation as his father. The subtly tuned symbolic timing of events in the novel will make Clifford's gamekeeper, whom he hires to raise back pheasants and help protect the wood, to ensure that nobody "trespass in it" (44), trespass into Connie's enclosed existence as Connie and her husband discuss the option of Connie producing an heir with a suitable alternative to Clifford. With "the great forest where Robin Hood hunted" (43) as "an old, old thoroughfare coming across country" (43), now being "only a riding through the private wood" (43) of the Chatterley estate, as the text tells us, Clifford's impulse to preserve the wood is underlined as an impulse toward forming enclosures. In contrast, lovers use the wood as a shelter.

The wider European world to which the refuge of the lovers is contrasted, as Connie takes a road trip through Europe to Venice with her sister in the aftermath of her sensual awakening, seems to her strangely unreal. The people of London "seemed so spectral and blank" and "had no alive happiness, no matter how brisk and good-looking they were" (265). Paris had a remnant of sensuality but "a weary, tired, worn-out" one (265), "weary of its now-mechanical sensuality, weary of the tensions of money, money, money, weary even of resentment and conceit, just weary to death, and still not sufficiently Americanised or Londonized to hide the weariness under a mechanical jig-

jig-jig!" (266) As an introduction to a period of literary modernity which he defines as "The Exciting Age" of 1915 to 1930, Bradbury juxtaposes quotes from Aldous Huxley's novel *Barren Leaves* where, along with options of "another war, the artificial creation of life, the proof of continued existence after death" (132), a character finds "infinitely exhilarating" even "the possibility that everything may be destroyed" (132), to the opening lines of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* which suggest that an apocalyptic destruction has already taken place necessitating the creation of "new little habitats" (5). The two excerpts succinctly depict the two opposing impulses of the period.

These opposing impulses of the time, a jaded, mechanistic hedonism and frenetic materialism of life as "always a dream, or a frenzy, inside an enclosure" (42), contrasted to the need for a refuge from the relentless automatism of it all, meet in Constance's gaze upon Europe. Away from the *locus amoenus* of her sensual rebirth, Connie find herself recoiling from European reality into a need for a hermit-like seclusion, "shrinking and afraid of the world" (266), comparing herself to "Saint Bernard who could sail down the lake of Lucerne without ever noticing that there were even mountains and green water" (266) and finding "nothing vital in France or Switzerland or the Tyrol or Italy" (266). Like Mellors in his last letter to her, Connie finds Europe contaminated with materialism and a vulgar impulse for enjoyment, with the landscape itself "squeezed, to provide a thrill, to provide enjoyment" (267).

Venice is an "almost enjoyment" (270) with tourists seeking the languid stupour of pleasure that, unlike the "refinements of passion" (258) between the lovers, are a state of a drugged sedation:

..with all the cocktails, all the lying in the warmish water and sun-bathing on the hot sand in the hot sun, jazzing with your stomach up against some fellow in the warm nights, cooling off with ices, it was a complete narcotic. And that was what they all wanted, a drug: the slow water, a drug; the sun, a drug; jazz, a drug; cigarettes, cocktails, ices, vermouth. To be drugged! Enjoyment! Enjoyment! (270)

Along the same lines, Kate's disappointment with Europe in *The Plumed Serpent* will be described through the code of jazz music, as "She thought of going back to Europe. But what was the good?

She knew it! It was all politics or jazzing or slushy mysticism or sordid spiritualism. And the magic had gone. The younger generation, so smart and *interesting*, but so without any mystery, any background. The younger the generation, the flatter and more jazzy, more and more devoid of wonder" (90). The imagery of inebriation is also used in *The Plumed Serpent* to describe the attraction that Ramón's movement holds for the poor Mexican masses who crave "things beyond the world" (232) being "weary of events, and weary of news and the newspapers, weary even of things that are taught in education" (232), for "though they took not much active notice of the Hymns, they craved for them, as men crave for alcohol, as a relief from the weariness and *ennui* of mankind's man-made world" (232).

In opposition to a dulling of the senses marking a tired hedonism of European modernity, the "refinements of passion" (258) engaged in by the protagonists of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as rituals of a heightened awareness of senses and the body, sanctify the fragile modern *locus amoenus* of a Nottinghamshire wood with a long ancestral lineage. Constance wondering "what Abélard meant, when he said that in their years of love he and Héloïse had passed through all the stages and refinements of passion. The same thing, a thousand years ago: ten thousand years ago! The same on Greek vases, everywhere! The refinements of passion, the extravagance of sensuality!" (258) implies that the mechanistic hedonism of modern Europe has severed Europe's connection with its past identity. The American influence in Europe emerges, much like in Mexico, as a catalyst for the invasion of mechanistic impulses into all spheres of life, as Paris is "still not sufficiently Americanised or Londonised to hide the weariness" of a "mechanical sensuality" (266) and materialism in the rites of modern entertainment.

A mechanistic abandonment to an automated hedonism presented by the novel as a predominant atmosphere of the Europe of 1920s, a desire to be drugged into a pleasant stupour, is not unlike the escapist tendency embraced by Lawrence's American heroines, the unnamed woman of "The Woman Who Rode Away" and Kate in *The Plumed Serpent*. It reveals a flawed logic of the modern man's attempt to reclaim his body and soul from the hold of industrial modernity, a logic of

life as "a dream". The lesson proposed by *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is that an abandonment to the senses and instincts of the body as a way of reclaiming the body and soul from the tyranny of intellect which sustains mechanical modernity must be pure, extreme and complete, achieved in a state of heightened awareness of the self, rather than a drugged stupor which is just another form of an enclosure. The open, unconvincing ending of *The Plumed Serpent* seems to suggest that Kate's desperate search for a source of sublime wonder and mystery may be a delusion with yet another instance of "slushy mysticism or sordid spiritualism" (90), but this time grown on Mexican soil, with her seduction into the movement also being a type of narcosis. Knowing that she is pregnant, Connie finds herself surrendering to the touristic charms of Venice, "the stupor of the light of the lagoon, the lapping saltiness of the water, the space, the emptiness, the nothingness...complete stupor of health" (273) which the messy pragmatics of her relationship with Mellors soon disperse. Between life as "a dream, or a frenzy, inside an enclosure" (42), Connie ultimately chooses an escape.

Connie's transformation is a radical one. Entering her former home Wragby Hall for the last time, an enclosure from which she made a very gradual physical and psychological escape, Connie feels herself "no longer its mistress" but "its victim" (308), thus becoming aware of always being its victim. By refusing to stay married to a Chatterley and let her child be recognized as an heir to Wragby Hall, she breaks the continuity of an older European hierarchical social order which displays a tenuous ability to survive cataclysms. This order is embodied in the flawed logic of Clifford's father Sir Geoffrey who denudes his own forest for war timber to fuel the state machinery of war, and given an uncanny new life in the character of Clifford who survives the severe injuries because "His hold on life was marvellous" (5) and revitalizes the capitalist enterprise of the mines feeding the income of his estate. It is also shown alive and well in the mentality of the more liberal intellectual elites such as Connie's father, a knighted academic painter, who urges Connie to "Put a little baronet in Wragby" because "Wragby stands and will go on standing" (286), being of the

opinion that "The world is more or less a fixed thing" (286) and it is, therefore, always more convenient to embrace the position of a divergence between an external and private self .

The same, flawed, mechanical logic of life "as a frenzy" (42) is exposed in a 1916 article from London *Daily News* criticizing universal conscription, pointing out that six million out of eight million men of military age have already enlisted, and proceeding to report that, as the Battle of the Somme began, "on the first day alone some 20 000 were killed and 40 000 wounded" (Matthews, 42). The whole offensive on Somme claimed a terrifyingly surreal figure of close to half a million British soldiers (Hobsbawm, 25). Observing how "the industrial England blots out the agricultural England" (163) and thus "One meaning blots out another" (163), during a car ride through the countryside, Constance concludes that "the continuity is not organic but mechanical" (163). It is the continuity of life "as a frenzy" (42).

Presenting the wood as a fragile but genuine *locus amoenus*, the cosmopoietic project of the novel unfolds in a space that is a vulnerable shelter of a smaller and more fragile world of nature and lovers, from the larger and more intimidating encroaching world of industrial modernity with its masses of blind followers, for, in this novel, "the value of vitality is embodied in tender and vulnerable things, while insentience has the sanction of powerful institutions, individuals, and movements" (Moynahan, 144-145). The novel's opening warning that "there is now no smooth road into the future" (5) accurately describes the prospects of lovers at the end. And yet, the carefully structured synchronization of the events in the lives of lovers with those taking place in nature is maintained. In waiting for divorce from their former spouses and Mellors to earn money working on a farm so they can start "some small farm of their own" (312), the lovers "would have to wait till spring was in, till the baby was born, till the early summer came round again" (313), as the optimistic cyclicality of nature is emphasized by Mellors' conclusion that "All the bad times that ever have been, haven't been able to blow the crocus out; not even the love of women" (316). Thus, the cosmopoiesis of the novel unfolds as a life-affirming project in the basic unit of human relationship, "the silent, vulnerable centre of all life's quivering, like the nucleus gleaming in tranquil suspense,



within a cell" (79), evoked in the exotic, American *locus amoenus* of *The Plumed Serpent*, but realized in the fragile European *locus amoenus* of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

#### 4. Conclusion

Novels *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, read as two cosmopoietic projects for the world of the 1920s, offer drastically different solutions to the inadequacies of industrial modernity and a crisis of liberalism in the world traumatized by the aftermath of the First World War, in which "the great edifice of nineteenth-century civilisation crumpled in the flames of war, as its pillars collapsed" (Hobsbawm, 22). The one in *The Plumed Serpent* endorses violence as legitimate means of creating new social structures, the other in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* embraces a tender nurturing of fragile but genuine bonds of true physical and emotional harmony in human relationships. In the first solution, the few elect men-gods subjugate and manipulate the masses into a new social and religious order through mythopoetic charisma and violence. In the second, the potential for creating a new world rests exclusively and hermetically within a reformed relationship between a man and a woman. As extremely different as these two last major novels of D.H. Lawrence are in tone, setting, themes and characterization, read together, they offer a complete picture of the profoundly disturbed world in the aftermath of the Great War, providing no easy or definitive answers with their open endings.

The world which we find ourselves in, a whole century away from Lawrence's first encounter with the indigenous culture of America, has made as impressive scientific advancement in areas which heal and connect people, as it has in the machinery of war. On both an artistic and personal level, Lawrence harboured a deep mistrust in modernity's seemingly inexhaustible faith in science and scientific progress. As one of his few, most loyal friends and interlocutors in the great Modernist polemic between intellect and instinct, Aldous Huxley emphasizes Lawrence's

empassioned rejection of science in an introduction to the earliest edition of Lawrence's correspondance which he edited and had published in 1932, two years after Lawrence's death. "It was not", writes Huxley, "an incapacity to understand that made him reject those generalizations and abstractions by means of which philosophers and men of science try to open up a path for the human spirit through the chaos of phenomena" (xv), but rather a profound, inner sense that "the methods of science and critical philosophy were incompatible with the exercise of his gift – the immediate perception and artistic rendering of divine otherness" (xv). The approach to the mystery of life, to the "the silent, vulnerable center of all life's quivering" (79) invoked in *The Plumed Serpent*, on Lawrence's terms, can only be made in the domain of a sensual and instinctual awareness, crucial as a counterbalance to "a dream, or a frenzy" (42) of mechanized modernity invoked in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

The mechanized frenzy of the appetite for continuous scientific progress shows no signs of deacceleration in our own times. But if one is to heed the advice of the narrative voice in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* about "the vast importance of the novel, properly handled" being "to lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead" (104), then D.H. Lawrence's last two great novels fulfill this task with admirable success.

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