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PIPAN, RICHARD C. The Harmony of Conflict: The Cosmology of Heracleitus in D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love. (1975) Directed by: Dr. Randolph M. Bulgin. Pp. 58.

It was the purpose of this study to relate the world view expressed within Women in Love to a cosmological order devised by the Greek philosopher Heracleitus as expressed in his work "On Nature." Women in Love contains a plethora of bipolar dichotomies which often reveal a world of conflict, tension and oscillating change. When the Heracleitian world order is superimposed on the conflicting forces operating in Lawrence's novel, an underlying unity or logos becomes apparent.

Lawrence's strong affinity with Heracleitus' cosmology is traced throughout Women in Love and other selections from his writing. Lawrence's intentional air of mysticism and choric suggestivity are compared to Heracleitus' oracular, often ambiguous statements. Both Lawrence and Heracleitus share perceptions of a dual plane of experience: one of the phenomenal world of physical, material forces and a second of noumenal, transcendental communion.

Both these planes are apparent to the reader of Women in Love, but they are only incrementally revealed to and imperfectly appreciated by the characters in the novel. In both conscious and unconscious ways, Lawrence's characters come to discover basic tenets of Heracleitian

philosophy. The major focus of this study is on the characters' search for a "perfect relationship" between the two planes of phenomenal and noumenal experience.

THE HARMONY OF CONFLICT: THE COSMOLOGY OF  
HERACLEITUS IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S  
WOMEN IN LOVE

by

Richard C. Pisan

A Thesis Submitted to  
The Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Greensboro  
1975

Approved by

*Handbook Bulgin*

Thesis Adviser

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This paper has profited from the opinions and assistance of a number of people. I am very grateful for

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

To the other members of my committee, Dr. Murray J. Amott and Dr. Robert Watson, my deepest thanks for their accurate criticism performed under most pressing time limitations. Their combined comments

Thesis Adviser

Randolph Bulgin

Committee Members

R. L. W. W. W.

Murray J. Amott

Without the superlative preparation of the text by my typist Mrs. E. D. Crabtree, this paper would have required an impossible amount of time. I am indebted to John Mallard for his drafting figure. I am indebted to Mrs. Barbara Israel who has lived with me through these many months of credit research and preparation, I offer myself whole again.

To those good people and my friends who thought I had gone underground, hello again. My project, as sponsored by the University of North Carolina, is a project of the Department of Education. I am grateful for all the support and effort. My thanks, of course, to my own family.

15 December 1975

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This paper has profited from the opinions and assistance of a number of people. I am very grateful for the encouragement and reliable advice tendered by my adviser Dr. Randolph Bulgin. His warmth and understanding always tempered his criticism of this project.

To the other members of my committee, Dr. Murray D. Arndt and Dr. Robert Watson, my deepest thanks for their accurate criticism performed under most pressing time limitations. Their combined comments have given me a better appreciation of this type of literary study.

Without the superlative preparation of the text by my typist Mrs. R. D. Crabtree, this paper would have required many more hours of revision. Thanks also to John Mallard for his drafting Figure 1.

And to Ms. Barbara Israel who has lived with me through these many months of crabbed research and preoccupation, I offer myself whole again.

To these good people and my friends who thought I had gone underground, hello again. My project, as ephemeral as it may be, is me. I am grateful for all the support and kindness which have aided my efforts. Any errors, mechanical or judgmental, are, of course, of my own making.

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classics. Like many of Lawrence's other works, it is an experiment in novelistic techniques and a vehicle for the author's emphatic pedagogy. It is an eminently "educational" novel--one which presents the unfolding of a world view which has been adopted from many sources and portrays characters whose development is based on their appreciation of or disagreement with this world order. It is not my intention to track down and enumerate all the sources from which Lawrence prepared his mélange. Such a task would be beyond my scope and, moreover, a somewhat impractical project. Lawrence himself bluntly advises his readers to exercise caution if they attempt an historical-critical approach:

I am not a proper archaeologist nor an anthropologist nor an ethnologist. I am no "scholar" of any sort. But I am very grateful to scholars for their sound work. I have found hints, suggestions for what I say here in all kinds of scholarly books, from the Yoga and Plato and St. John the Evangelist and the early Greek philosophers like Herakleitos down to Frazer and his Golden Bough, and even Freud and Probenius. Even then I only remember hints and I proceed by intuition.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>D. H. Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious (1921, 1922; rpt. New York: The Viking Press, 1960), p. 54 v

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

D. H. Lawrence's novel Women in Love is a modern classic. Like many of Lawrence's other works, it is an experiment in novelistic techniques and a vehicle for the author's emphatic pedagogy. It is an eminently "educational" novel--one which presents the unfolding of a world view which has been adopted from many sources and portrays characters whose development is based on their appreciation of or disagreement with this world order. It is not my intention to track down and enumerate all the sources from which Lawrence prepared his mélange. Such a task would be beyond my scope and, moreover, a somewhat impractical project. Lawrence himself bluntly advises his readers to exercise caution if they attempt an historical-critical approach:

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<sup>1</sup>D. H. Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious (1921, 1922; rpt. New York: The Viking Press, 1960), p. 54.

This study restricts itself to an exploration of just one particular world view which Lawrence might have entertained--that of the Greek philosopher Heracleitus--and its influence on and presence in Women in Love.

Lawrence seems to have consciously and/or unconsciously patterned many of the novel's relationships, structural developments and images upon Heracleitus' cosmological model. This cosmology maintains that the world is revealed and defined by the relationships between both polar and contextual opposites. Thus, the order of the universe is an expression of the logos or unifying principle as seen within active, antagonistic forces in equilibrium.

My second chapter, therefore, provides a brief summary of the Heracleitic cosmological model--its features, organization and ramifications. Chapter Three explores Lawrence's disposition toward this Heracleitic view and probes recurring motifs in Women in Love which serve as evidence for this particular reading of the novel. Chapter Four traces the development of the characters in Women in Love and their progressive appreciation or rejection of the Heracleitic perspective.

Though the volume of Lawrentian criticism is already swollen with the works of scholars and dilettantes alike, this study is proffered with the hope that some of the fine

lines traced in the sand of Lawrence's art will be revealed as having been formed by Heracleitus' "bow" and Lawrence's deft fiddling.

CHAPTER II

THE HERACLEITIAN COSMOLOGY: NILE AND HUDSON

The way up and the way down  
is one and the same.

Heracleitus

In order to explore the meaning of appearance, Alice was allowed to step through their lookingglass surfaces. In order to escape "from the tyranny of solidity and the menace of mass-form," the impressionists discovered the way up and the way down. In order to unite the mind and the body, the forward and backward reach of time and space, the obvious and the contrived, Lawrence used the "bow" of a Heracleitian cosmological model. Despite the quest regarding the gnarled reading of Lawrence's "bow" -- not that he was concerned with the matter at all -- almost as soon as one begins to read his work as cosmic allegories -- there is an underlying allegory in Women in Love and the Heracleitian cosmology are indeed.

Lawrence tells his readers that Women in Love was first written in 1913 and later rewritten in 1917. Whatever changes Lawrence made in the MS during the 1913-17

<sup>2</sup> Annals, D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study with an introduction by Harry T. Moore (Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1968), p. 85.

## CHAPTER II

## THE HERACLEITIAN COSMOLOGY: NILE AND HUDSON

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In order to explore the meaning of appearances, Alice was allowed to step through their lookingglass surfaces. In order to escape "from the tyranny of solidity and the menace of mass-form," the impressionists discovered plein air and plein soleil. In order to unite the mind and the body, the forward and backward reach of time and space, the obvious and the contrived, Lawrence bent the "bow" of a Heracleitian cosmological model. Despite Anais Nin's caveat regarding any cosmological reading of Lawrence's fiction--"Lawrence was not interested in the cosmos, and it is a mistake to read his books as cosmic allegories"--<sup>2</sup> there is an underlying weltanschauung in Women in Love in which features of the Heracleitian cosmology are imbedded.

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<sup>2</sup>Anais Nin, D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study with an introduction by Harry T. Moore (Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1964), p. 86.

period, some of his preoccupations during these years were markedly ontological. In an essay entitled "Beldower like Sodom," written September 8, 1915, Lawrence says: "So it seemed our cosmos has burst . . . the stars and moon blown away, the envelope of the sky burst out, and a new cosmos appeared. . . ." This "new cosmos" is one in which bipolar relationships predominate. Some of the more dominant pairings may be catalogued as follows: male/female, light/dark, static/dynamic, organic/mechanical, love/hate, and production/dissolution.

Anais Nin seems to ignore her own caveat when she describes the polarized structure of Women in Love:

Love and hate alternating in men and women, as in Women in Love, is due to the same profound sense of oscillation, of flux and reflux (Herakleitos) revulsion and convulsions, mobility. The becoming always seething and fluctuating.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than provide distinct directions (Lawrence himself stated in his essay "Why the Novel Matters" that he did not "want to grow in any one direction any more."), polarization and associative connections between opposites provide dynamic disequilibrium.

The focus of this paper is intended to link Lawrence's heavily bipolar representation of life forces with the fragments of a cosmological model which survive from Heracleitus. Though little is known about Heracleitus

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<sup>3</sup>Nin, p. 32.

himself, his ideas stimulate intriguing questions regarding his role and place in the development of philosophical thought.

His theories defy facile classification. His preoccupation with physical, material correspondences would seem to place him within the Physicist school, but he lacks its rigorous, systematic order. He derives some of his rudimentary principles from the Ionians--he essentially perceives the universe in rational terms and has an appreciation for the inherent wholeness of the cosmos. Though his systems are represented in particularly geometrical terminology, he is not considered to be a part of the mathematical nor logical schools. Nor is he a materialist nor a formalist.

One might best consider Heraclitus to be, as he was nicknamed, "the Obscure." He consciously developed an epigrammatic style which had not been more effectively used until perhaps Nietzsche's examples in Thus Spake Zarathustra. His epigrammatic statements also often compare favorably with modern eastern, particularly Zen poetry. In his theorizing Heraclitus thinks abstractly but experiences directly, immediately.

Heraclitus' preoccupation with existence rather than essence places him in good stead with contemporary existential thought as well.

From his formulae one is often left with fleeting impressions--one grasps for unity and coherence and is left trying to extricate oneself from a tangle of ambiguity. After twenty-five hundred years, the unraveling is still a delightful challenge. Lawrence shares his delight with us in his "Introduction to New Poems" where he finds "the strands are all flying, quivering, intermingling into the web. . . ." As the strands go, so goes the meaning.

As Lewis A. Richards writes in his Introduction to the Bywater and Patrick edition of Heraclitus of Ephesus, Heraclitus' "fascinating thesis is that there is harmony in opposition, that harmony does exist in tension, and that rest and stability are merely the temporary equilibrium of opposite, striving forces."<sup>4</sup> The symbolic representation of Heraclitus' cosmological order is that of a strung bow. Just as two opposed arms compose a bow, two poles, those of flux and reflux, make up the cosmology of Heraclitus. The opposing forces of flux and reflux are united, as the two arms of a bow are united by means of a bowstring, by the logos. Logos, as it is understood by Heraclitus, is the underlying unity of the world order. This unity is reflected in patterns of association, a

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<sup>4</sup>G. T. W. Patrick and I Bywater, eds., Heraclitus of Ephesus: An Edition combining in one volume the Fragments of the Work of Heraclitus of Ephesus "On Nature" translated with Introduction and critical notes by G. T. W. Patrick and Heraclitiae Ephesii Reliquiae I Bywater with an introduction and select Bibliography by Lewis A. Richards (Chicago: Argonaut, Inc., Publishers, 1969) p. viii.

geometry of relationships--specifically the "unity or coincidence of each couple of opposites." As we shall see in the next chapter, Women in Love proceeds from a fundamental "geometry of relationships" where each character is juxtaposed against his or her opposite personality. It is the contrast and tension within the pairings that produce much of the vibrant quality of the book.

As M. Marcovich explains in his edition of Heraclitus: "As paradoxical as it seems, the most important reason for the unity of opposites consists in a constant tension or variance between them."<sup>5</sup> Marcovich is actually stating the converse of what survives from Heraclitus. Fragment 4 of Group 1 reads as follows: "Men are at variance with that with whom they have most continuous intercourse."<sup>6</sup> Thus, what appears to be a constant relationship in time and/or space is, in Heraclitian terms, a balance of striving and opposed forces. Just as the Manichean heresy depicts the active, striving forces of evil pitted against the threatened forces of Good, Heraclitus' theory calls for the substitution of change (but not necessarily perpetual change) for stasis. Like a continuum of time where the moment cannot be abstracted from its context, "rest" in Heraclitus' theory is to be found only "in change."

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<sup>5</sup>M. Marcovich, ed., Heraclitus (Greek Text with a Short Commentary) (Meridan, Venezuela: The Los Andes University Press, 1967), p. 101.

<sup>6</sup>Marcovich, p. 18.

In his edition of Heracleitus, G. T. W. Patrick offers an explanation which may clarify Heracleitus' concept of "rest in change." He writes:

The Heraclitic harmony of opposites, as of the bow and the lyre, is a purely physical harmony. It is simply the operation of the strife of opposite forces, by which motion within an organism [order], at the point where if further continued it would endanger the whole, is balanced and caused to return within the limits of a determined amplitude.<sup>7</sup>

This "determined amplitude" can best be equated to Heracleitus' concept of logos. Oscillation and tension reveal the range which is permitted by the logos.

Perhaps if a diagram of the "bow" is presented, the logos and its relationship to forces in balance can be more readily perceived.

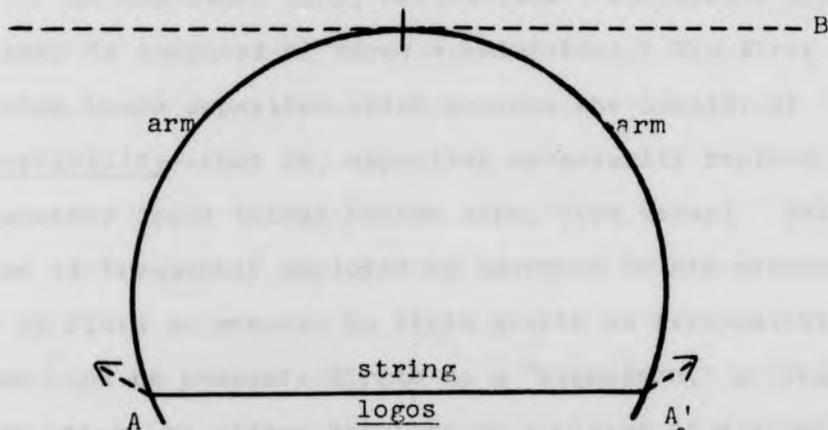


Figure 1. The Heraclitian Bow

In Heracleitus' work entitled "On Nature," Fragment 56 reads: "The harmony of the world is a harmony of oppositions,

<sup>7</sup>Patrick, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>Marcovich, p. 128.

as in the case of the bow and the lyre" (Patrick, p. 98). In his "Doctrine of the Logos," Heraclitus sets forth two categories of "opposites": simultaneous and successive. The bow model represents the former category.

By "simultaneous" Heraclitus meant that both opposites are present in the same object or medium at the same time. Neither causes the other. They are viewed synchronically. In his statement "The way up and the way down is one and the same," Heraclitus draws attention to the simultaneous existence of at least two potentials. The existence of a road connecting the Plaka to the Acropolis is, at the same time, a road up to the Acropolis and a road down to the Plaka.

On the other hand, Heraclitus' "successive opposites" category is composed of three subdivisions. The first contains those opposites which possess the quality of convertibility--that is, opposites necessarily replace one another (cold things become warm, vice versa). This scheme is frequently employed by Lawrence in his representation of fluid as opposed to rigid growth of personalities. On one hand he presents Birkin as a "chameleon," a "changer." On the other, he offers Hermione as a player of a single role, the status-stiffened social fossil. Birkin prefers to move in the directions of fluidity and freedom; he fears being ossified within any circumscribed pattern. Hermione either buttresses her already impeccable appearance or she slips into trembling chaos and insufficiency.

Heracleitus' second classification of "successive opposites" is that of correlativeness--one "opposite" cannot be correctly valued without the other one (disease makes health pleasant). Lawrence found this category an intriguing one. By creating an interdependence between two extremes, he could emphasize or amplify the range of a comparison. In his pseudo-psychological work entitled Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence offers this correlative scheme: "If you disturb the current at one pole, it must be disturbed at the other" (p. 25). Like the relationship between the arms of the Heracleitian bow and its unifying string, the yoking of opposite concepts sets up lines of tension--if only a tension resulting from the contrivance of the relationship! (An example of this "relational tension" can be found in Donne's use of the compass conceit in his metaphysical poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." In some respects it is a brilliant comparison; in others, it is oafish.)

Heracleitus' third subdivision of "successive opposites" is that of effectiveness--"opposites" are one because they have the same effect or they condition each other (immortal heroes owe their survival to mortal survivors).

This third type of "successive opposites" can easily be seen in Frost's poem "Fire and Ice." He says in it that both forces would have the same ultimate effect. They are linked in this special relational scheme of "effectiveness."

Lawrence, too, uses this relational order when, in Women in Love, he discusses the ramifications of "mechanical order." Mechanical order is presented as being a source of freedom and, at the same time, the "finest state of chaos." Lawrence's narrator describes this "new order" in the chapter entitled "The Industrial Magnate":

There was a new world, a new order, strict, terrible, inhuman, but satisfying in its very destructiveness. . . . they [the miners] wanted this participation in a great and perfect system that subjected life to pure mathematical principles. This was a sort of freedom, the sort they really wanted. It was the first great step in undoing, the first great phase of chaos, the substitution of the mechanical principle for the organic, the destruction of the organic purpose, the organic unity, and the subordination of every organic unit to the great mechanical purpose. It was pure organic disintegration and pure mechanical organization. This is the first and finest state of chaos.<sup>9</sup>

Thus "freedom" is brought about through two totally opposed and exclusive systems. Organic development is contrasted against mechanical regularity. Both are needed to fully appreciate the ramifications of each.

Returning to the bow model, we can see that it demonstrates the relationship of simultaneous opposites to their ontological context. It must first be understood that the bow is "at rest"; that is, neither an archer nor an arrow is exerting force on the strung bow. Arms A and A' are "back-stretched," united by the string, exerting

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<sup>9</sup>D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love (1920; rpt. New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1969), p. 233. All citations refer to this text.

tension on the string, and striving to return to inert rest represented by line B. What appears to be a static form is actually the result of a balance of opposing forces. If the outward pull of the arms is too strong, the string breaks. If the inward pull of the string is too strong, the arms break. Thus the logos or order of the universe of opposing forces is revealed in the attitude of the string as it runs parallel to the original line B formed by the unflexed bow. The striving toward inert rest (represented by line B) may be interpreted as flux, the movement toward perishability, inertia. The unifying tension of the bowstring as it reveals the logos may be interpreted as reflux, the unifying or sustaining force. These two forces of flux and reflux are the tides in the world of Heracleitus.

One last elaboration on the Heracleitic concept of flux and reflux can be made here. T. S. Eliot mirrors this same flux and reflux movement in a passage from his book Notes Towards the Definition of Culture:

A people should be neither too united nor too divided, if its culture is to flourish. Excess of unity may be due to barbarianism and may lead to tyranny; excess of division may be due to decadence and may also lead to tyranny: either excess will prevent further development in cultures.<sup>10</sup>

Eliot, despite his caustic criticism of Lawrence, seems to share at least this elemental concern for a

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<sup>10</sup>T. S. Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 50.

"determined amplitude" of change and stability in the world.

Just as the annual flooding of the Nile brought destruction as well as rebirth, Heracleitus' forces of flux and reflux brought mankind into constantly alternating rapports with the universe. These countervailing forces may be viewed either synchronically or diachronically. When viewed from the former perspective, the "state of the universe" is seen as the culmination of the conflict between the two forces. In this manner détente is seen not so much as a process than as a result. Seen diachronically, the "state of the universe" appears to be divided into phases or cycles--now dominated by flux; soon to return through reflux. This same diachronic viewpoint can be revealed in the simple recycling process. As the ice melts in a glass on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, we must not forget that sometime last week it might have been thrown out as the wash water of a Harlem laundromat.

## CHAPTER III

## A HERACLEITIAN PANE IN LAWRENCE'S WINDOW TO THE WORLD

Fair and foul are near of kin  
 And fair needs foul, I cried.

"Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop,"  
 Yeats

If we are trying to plot Lawrence's central concern or position in relation to Heracleitus, we can only attempt to discover it by some method of triangulation. In this chapter Lawrence's world view, his ideals and his preoccupations with time, life and order will be discussed.

When Lawrence chose to adopt an essentially bipolar model of the world, he did so by making some costly exaggerations. Looking at Women in Love, Sons and Lovers and The Rainbow, one might conclude that Lawrence used the formula "On one hand we have the problem of developing a character's consciousness, and on the other hand, we have a glove." One might apply the same criticism to Lawrence as was leveled against his character Birkin: "In a way he is not clever enough, he is too intense in spots." This intensity is often the result and the cause of wide oscillations between ever-widening and more extreme polarities. These polarities are never fixed locations; rather, they are discovered through momentary revelations. Lawrence contends in his essay "Morality and the Novel" that "Life

is so made that opposites sway about a trembling center of balance." Like the infinitesimal interplay among the two arms and the bowstring in Heracleitus' model, this "trembling center of balance" admits an element of indeterminacy in Lawrence's scheme of things.

With all due respect to Lawrence and his speculations, he was not a philosopher. The distinction being made here has best been drawn by Graham Hough in his book The Dark Sun: A Study of D. H. Lawrence. He writes:

For of course Lawrence is not a philosopher. At the back of every philosophy is a vision, but the philosopher's claim is that the vision has been corrected--checked for internal consistency and for consistency with the reports derived from other modes of experience than his own. Lawrence could make no such claim; what he offers is a weltanschauung, his own vision of life.<sup>11</sup>

At best, we can say that Lawrence tried to communicate tactfully and intelligently a view of life--a life of feeling, value, and reason. At worst, he was a victim of his own idiom.

Lawrence's not-so-quiet revolution was one in which he tried to give life a chance. He saw his role as not that of a taxonomist, but that of a sounding board from which the music of the spheres could be reflected. His goal was a lofty one, and his music is not always melodic nor coherent--nor did Lawrence ever expect it could ever be

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<sup>11</sup>Graham Hough, The Dark Sun: A Study of D. H. Lawrence (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1957), p. 218.

thus. This world we live in is, at best, a

"for ever surging chaos. The chaos which we have got used to we call a cosmos. The unspeakable inner chaos of which we are composed we call consciousness, and mind, and even civilization. But it is, ultimately, chaos, lit up by visions, or not lit up by visions."<sup>12</sup>

Even when the world is illuminated like Shelley's white Eternity--stained under a "dome of many-coloured glass"--Lawrence sees men living and seeing "according to some gradually developing and gradually withering vision."<sup>13</sup> Lawrence sees the forces of flux and reflux operating on the epiphanies in life. When he writes that "staring kills my vision," he seems to be admitting that visions, like one's breathing, must be allowed to come and go naturally, freely. Just as we can neither willfully stop our breathing beyond a physical limit nor continue breathing past our appointed hour (except by the obvious and recently much-discussed artificial means available), so must visions and perceptions be allowed to arise and fade in this universe we share.

But how is this universe depicted? Are Lawrence's novel and Heracleitus' cosmology integrated in any significant way? On these questions Lawrence provides a guide:

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<sup>12</sup>D. H. Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Anthony Beal (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), p. 90.

<sup>13</sup>Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, p. 57.

Because a novel is a microcosm, and because man in viewing the universe must view it in the light of theory, therefore every novel must have as the background the structural skeleton of some theory of being, some metaphysic. But the metaphysic must always subserve the artistic purpose beyond the artist's conscious aim.<sup>14</sup>

Let us hope that while discussing Lawrence's "conscious aim" and the "structural skeleton" of Women in Love, we will not do any injustice to his "artistic purpose."

If we are to discover any order and structure in Lawrence's "conscious aim," we should perhaps begin by developing a perspective on "systems" and human life. William Walsh, in his book The Use of Imagination: Educational Thought and the Literary Mind, offers a cogent scheme:

Our choice is not between system and no system, but between one . . . established for the purpose of material production, and therefore a mechanism, a social machine, and an organic system of human life capable of producing "the real blossoms of life and being."<sup>15</sup>

Lawrence, except sometimes to attack, flatly denies any preoccupation with the former system. In an essay entitled "The State of Funk," Lawrence says "As a novelist, I feel it is the change inside the individual which is my real concern. The great social change interests me and troubles me, but it is not my field." From this one might assume that

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<sup>14</sup>Beal, p. 188.

<sup>15</sup>(New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1959), p. 20.

Lawrence withdrew into a closet to contemplate his navel. No doubt he found the omphalos fascinating--but more importantly, Lawrence is proposing that the individual is a system within himself and reflects the larger cosmological system. He gives a more elaborate rendering of this thought in his Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious:

The actual evolution of the individual psyche is a result of the interaction between the individual and the outer universe. Which means that just as a child in the womb grows as a result of the parental blood-stream which nourishes the vital quick of the foetus, so does every man and woman grow and develop as a result of the polarized flux between the spontaneous self and some other self or selves.

(p. 46)

What one should probably discover about Lawrence's systems in the previous passage, and what Eugene Goodheart reiterates in his book is that "In virtually all the systems, he employs the almost purely verbal device of using the same categories to deal with nature and the self."<sup>16</sup> This is important, but what is even more crucial is that Lawrence is attempting to depict a pure relationship between ourselves and the living universe about us. It is this integration of macro- and microcosmic systems which tends to make Lawrence an extremely airy and metaphysical writer at times. Like Heracleitus, Lawrence sees with a double vision--he observes the tottering of a simple see-saw and expands this

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<sup>16</sup>Eugene Goodheart, The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 47.

image into a cosmic metaphor. Heraclitus takes the intriguing relationship of forces operating in a strung bow and begins to interpret the world through the understanding of this physical relationship. Both writers shift scales of proportion--often to the dismay of their sub-lunary readers.

Despite the problems both Lawrence and Heraclitus have had with their audiences (Lawrence was variously described as a pornographer, a social boor; Heraclitus as "the vague one"), Lawrence seems to have committed himself to his purpose (not enough is known about Heraclitus to venture his stance on this topic). Lawrence claims in his essay "Morality and the Novel" that it is the business of his art

to reveal the relation between man and his circum-ambient universe, at the living moment. As mankind is always struggling in the toils of old relationships art is always ahead of the "times," which themselves are always far in the rear of the living moment. . . . Now here we see the beauty and the great value of the novel. . . . The novel is the highest example of subtle interrelatedness that man has discovered. . . . The novel is a perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationships.<sup>17</sup>

Lawrence uses the novel, according to F. R. Leavis, "to set forth the conditions of health and wholeness in the psyche."<sup>18</sup> For Lawrence the human psyche, like the cosmos

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<sup>17</sup>Beal, p. 110.

<sup>18</sup>F. R. Leavis, "D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence," *Scrutiny*, 18(June, 1951); rpt. in *The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. and introduction by Frederick J. Hoffman and Harry T. Moore (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), p. 103.

at large, is an intricately interrelated whole organism. He chastises those, like Freud and Kant, who subdivided or compartmentalized human intelligence. In an essay entitled "Solitaria," Lawrence says "If you divide the human psyche into two halves, one half will be white, the other black. It's the division itself which is pernicious. The swing to one extreme causes the swing to the other."<sup>19</sup>

Lawrence seems to adopt a view which is more closely aligned with gestalt psychology. This tendency is revealed in his essay "Why the Novel Matters": "Now I absolutely flatly deny that I am a soul, or a body, or a mind, or an intelligence, or a brain, or a nervous system, or a bunch of glands, or any of the rest of these bits of me. The whole is greater than the part."<sup>20</sup> Thus, it is the interrelationship rather than the "components" which characterizes his system. Life is, for Lawrence, a process of becoming. When people prefer to elect a state in which to remain, when people select a lifeless ideal as a guide, they become part of the dead-alive. As Anais Nin says: "The livingness of the body was natural; the interference of the mind has created divisions. . . ."<sup>21</sup> The mind which divides brings about dissolution and death. A synthesizing,

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<sup>19</sup>Beal, p. 249.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>21</sup>Nin, p. 19.

encompassing mind grows in wholeness and life. For that matter, it is not the mind that is the source of divisiveness and death; rather, as Lawrence says in a letter to John Middleton Murray, "It isn't the being that must follow the mind, but the mind must follow the being."<sup>22</sup>

In another letter to Murray, Lawrence wryly admits that "I don't blame humanity for having no mind, I blame it for putting its mind in a box and using it as a nice little self-gratifying instrument."<sup>23</sup> The "box" to which Lawrence probably refers is a set of neat, often rationally arranged ideas or ideals. He knew that he could not move or "shock" the world into a higher consciousness by offering it ideas--"The world . . . can pigeon-hole any idea--" rather, he tried to offer it a new experience--". . . it can't pigeon-hole a real new experience. It can only dodge. The world is a great dodger. . . ."<sup>24</sup> Thus, Lawrence approaches his art and the world with the idea that life is the axis of the world. It is upon a life/death continuum that Lawrence judges all experience.

In order for us to understand Lawrence's ideas on the transitory nature of relationships, his constant emphasis on experience, his appreciation of the Heracleitic concept of flux and reflux and of the harmony found in

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<sup>22</sup>Beal, p. 237.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>24</sup>Beal, p. 296.

conflict, we must explore what Lawrence meant by life. If we can discover how he defines "life," we are closer to an understanding of his relationship to the living world and the reconstructed world of the novel.

In his essay "Why the Novel Matters," Lawrence shatters the taxonomic frame we have been building. His slippery rhetoric leaves us in the mire of our own making: "What we mean by living is, of course, just as indescribable as what we mean by being. Men get ideas into their heads, of what they mean by Life, and they proceed to cut life out to pattern."<sup>25</sup> Touché! It is not our place to define it--rather, to live and love and promote it. If anything can be said about Lawrence's description of life, it can be said that he provides transcendental definitions of it. By this is meant that the definitions themselves are alive or at least have a dimension of living vibrancy about them. Lawrence's essay "On Human Destiny," perhaps, reveals this essential transcendental quality:

I live and I die. I ask no other. Whatever proceeds from me lives and dies. I am glad, too. God is eternal, but my idea of Him is my own, and perishable. Everything human, human knowledge, human faith, human emotions, all perishes. And that is very good; if it were not so, everything would turn to cast-iron. There is too much of this cast-iron of permanence today.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Beal, p. 107.

<sup>26</sup>Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose Works by D. H. Lawrence, collected and edited with an Introduction and Notes by Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 629.

Lawrence grew to detest ready-made or permanent ideals. It goes against his appreciation of the nature of the ambient universe. His ideas on this matter squarely fit those of Heracleitus. Even Lawrence's description of an "ideal rings with his disgust at human arrogance and contrivance:

The ideal--what is the ideal? A figment. An abstraction. A static abstraction, abstracted from life. It is a fragment of the before or the after. It is a crystallized aspiration, or a crystallized remembrance: crystallized, set, finished. It is a thing apart, in the great storehouse of eternity, the storehouse of finished things.<sup>27</sup>

How antithetical is Lawrence's conception of dead ideals to that of life! Unlike the plasmic, living quality Lawrence perceives in all this world's objects, forms and relationships, the conventional meaning of ideals calls for some deathly inertness, some separateness, some aloof existence apart from the world's fluid change.

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, Lawrence describes life as "chaos, lit up by visions or not lit up by visions." There are two distinct kinds of visions Lawrence refers to in this essay "Chaos in Poetry." One vision is myopic and confining; the other is transcendental and expansive. The former is described by Lawrence as follows:

Man must wrap himself in a vision, make a house of apparent form and stability, fixity. In his terror

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<sup>27</sup>Beal, p. 89.

of chaos he begins by putting up an umbrella between himself and the everlasting whirl. Then he paints the underside of his umbrella like a firmament. Then he parades around, lives and dies under his umbrella. Bequeathed to his descendents, the umbrella becomes a dome, a vault, and men at last begin to feel that something is wrong.

Man fixes some wonderful erection of his own between himself and the wild chaos, and gradually goes bleached and stifled under his parasol.<sup>28</sup>

It is a vision of inflexible, contrived ideals--ideals generated from the depths of fear and mal fois. These are the ideals under which Gerald in Women in Love functions. His is a peculiarly egocentric world order. He is the center of the whirling, cog-clicking world of the industrial-material system. As manager/savior Gerald's existence defines and is defined by the strictly material conflict epitomized by the colliery. His consciousness brings about what Lawrence describes as a "democratic-industrial-lovey-dovey-darling take me to mamma state of things."

For the latter vision, the expansive, transcendental one, Lawrence offers a clever, resourceful explanation. Though most of the previous discussion of ideals has been based on the assumption that ideas are, by convention, static, inflexible and prescribed, Lawrence offers an alternative definition. In an essay entitled "Education of the People" Lawrence admits "We must have an ideal. So let our ideal be living, spontaneous individuality in every

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<sup>28</sup>Beal, p. 90.

man and woman. Which living, spontaneous individuality, being the hardest thing of all to come at, will need most careful rearing."<sup>29</sup>

Lawrence has perpetrated a coup. He has been able, if only by sleight of hand, to include those previously unassailable ideals into the ambience of his cosmological order. He extends his life/death polarity to the realms of abstract, non-material nature. He subsumes all under his relentless, expansive categories. Just as Heraclitus perceived the cosmos awash in the flood of flux and reflux, Lawrence sees the forces of life and death each carrying its freight. So, as Anais Nin summarizes: ". . . ideals also have a fundamental mobility: they are born and they die. And to stick to dead ideals is to die."<sup>30</sup> It was not Lawrence's desire to become one of the living-dead. He, and his character Birkin in Women in Love, believe that "the hero is he who touches and transmits the life of the universe. . . ." <sup>31</sup>

And how is it that a "hero" touches and transmits the life of the universe? It is done as easily as he

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<sup>29</sup> Phoenix; the Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence, edited and with an introduction by Edward D. McDonald (New York: The Viking Press, 1936), p. 587.

<sup>30</sup> Nin, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. A. Huxley, p. 688; rpt. in The Use of Imagination: Educational Thought and the Literary Mind (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1959), p. 204.

breathes. It is as though he inhales the future and exhales the past. His only true location in the universe is the present moment--the Now. Lawrence attains most fully what E. M. Forster terms his "rapt bardic quality" when he apostrophizes on the Now. Another long passage from his "Introduction to New Poems" reveals Lawrence's tendency to this:

Give me nothing fixed, set, static. Don't give me the infinite or the eternal: nothing of infinity, nothing of eternity. Give me the still, white seething, the incandescence and the coldness of the incarnate moment: the moment, the quick of all change and haste and opposition: the moment, the immediate present, the Now. The immediate moment is not a drop of water running downstream. It is the source and issue, the bubbling up of the stream. Here in this very instant moment, up bubbles the stream of time, out of the wells of futurity, flowing on to the oceans of the past. The source, the issue, the creative quick.<sup>32</sup>

The Now is the intersection of all flux and reflux. It is the poised relationship of all forces, movement, matter. This same "poised relationship" is operating in the back-stretched bow model of Heraclitus. At a given moment, all forces of the universe are balancing to produce a particular phenomenon. To attempt to alter this cosmic unity is an act of recklessness and vanity. Both Lawrence's and Heraclitus' representations of order are severe forms of epoché; where all is bracketed out and reduced down to the essential relationship of man to his immediate cosmos. But for Lawrence it was eminently sufficient. It precludes a "second chance." All

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<sup>32</sup>Beal, p. 86

must be accomplished now, all must be what is now. It is an intimate, religious meeting of all there is in life. Lawrence explains the phenomenon thus: "There must be the rapid momentaneous association of things which meet and pass on the for ever incalculable journey of creation: everything left in its own rapid, fluid relationship with the rest of things."<sup>33</sup> It is an opportunity to limit, and at the same time, transcend all limits. Lawrence again says this best:

This is how I 'save my soul' by accomplishing a pure relationship between me and another person, me and other people, me and a nation, me and a race of men, me and the animals, me and the trees and flowers, me and the earth, me and the skies and sun and stars, me and the moon: an infinity of pure relations, big and little. . . .<sup>34</sup>

Within one moment, Lawrence experiences infinity. He breaks from the imprisonment of homogeneous, three-dimensional space and finds another world in the fourth dimension.

Essentially Lawrence's views can be classified into two categories. Both have their parallels in Heraclitian theory. The first category serves all the phenomena of time and space. As with Heracleitus, these relationships are represented in primarily spacial, materialistic metaphors. The processes of the universe are correlated to physical forces.

The second category is reserved for only those extraordinary noumenal or fourth-dimensional experiences.

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<sup>33</sup>Beal, p. 86.

<sup>34</sup>Phoenix, p. 528.

These experiences are conveyed through interlinear associations, through subtle suggestivity, through, in both Lawrence's but more apparently Heracleitus' style, an oracular and playful ambiguity. This noumenal realm is discovered only when we realize that we are not self-contained nor self-accomplished. As Lawrence says "At every moment we derive from the unknown." It is this X factor that provides Lawrence with a "window to the world." Just as Heracleitus provided one skeletal frame upon which Lawrence could hang the accoutrements of cosmic speculation, the noumenal experience, the transcendental experience, the participation in the essential mystery of creation, provided the energy for Lawrence's mystical communion. As Aldous Huxley observes of Lawrence: "He was always intensely aware of the mystery of the world, and the mystery was always for him a numen, divine."<sup>35</sup>

Lawrence seems to draw a quibbling distinction between living and existing--but the distinction is, perhaps, that which distinguishes what Lawrence writes about from what other writers of fiction write about. He says: "But a thing isn't life just because somebody does it . . . it is just existence. . . . By life we mean something that gleams, that has fourth-dimensional quality."<sup>36</sup> Lawrence believes that this "fourth-dimensional quality" is able to be found in artists such as Blake, Shelley, Proust, Titian

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<sup>35</sup>Hoffman and Moore, p. 164.

<sup>36</sup>Beal, p. 111.

and Beethoven. It is not a commonly achieved ability-- few can experience it and even fewer can convey it to others. It is both the source and issue of all great art. According to Lawrence

It is a revelation of the perfected relation, at a certain moment, between man and a sunflower. It is neither man-in-the-mirror nor flower-in-the-mirror, neither is it above or below or across anything. It is between everything, in the fourth dimension.

Hence art which reveals or attains to another perfect relationship, will be for ever new.<sup>37</sup>

Women in Love is, quintessentially, a novel about the ceaseless search for a perfect relationship. Each character strives and fails in his or her own way. It is the nature of the game. In my fourth chapter I will attempt to interpret the various character developments in light of Heracleitus' and Lawrence's combined world views.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-09.

CHAPTER IV  
THE ILLUMINATED THRESHOLD

I never saw a wild thing sorry for itself.  
"Self Pity," D. H. Lawrence

In his "Foreword" to Women in Love, Lawrence attempts to justify what many of his critics have found to be a fault in the style--that of "continual, slightly modified repetition." The only defense Lawrence offers is "that it is natural to the author." Be that as it may, the novel does proceed in a manner not unlike the act of coitus. (The metaphor is his and not mine.) Lawrence's own description (again from the "Foreword") is "that every crisis in emotion or passion or understanding comes from this pulsing, frictional to-and-fro which works up to culmination." The primary fault of this point of view is that Lawrence seemed to consider almost everything as crisis. At times this causes Women in Love to become shrill and charged with feigned emotion.

This prelude to the discussion of the development of the characters' consciousnesses is not intended to announce a Freudian interpretation of the book, but rather to prepare the reader for an analysis which proceeds by incremental extension and which will lead, one hopes, to the

only knowledge Lawrence says is worth having--that which "is always a matter of whole experience. . . ."

In the first chapter of the novel, Ursula and Gudrun discuss that crucial rite-of-passage, marriage. It seems to both sisters to be the "inevitable next step." In the "abstract," marriage seem to be a normal step in the socialization process. In the immediate emotional and physical awareness of the women, being married is foreign and incomprehensible. They both find the undetermined future separated from them by "a void, a terrifying chasm." Of course, the day to day routine stretches on with dulling continuity and concreteness--that they seem to comprehend. But both women begin to feel the constriction, the confinement of a future which is cut out in partially their, and partially their social system's, pattern. They demand (from whom?) the freedom to change.

When Ursula and Gudrun are confronted on their walk to (of all things) the wedding by moiling masses of "dull" people, Gudrun, the narrator recounts, "would have liked them all annihilated, cleared away, so that the world was left clear for her" (p. 7). How unlike the novels of Dickens, of Austen, of Hardy, where the social milieu often provides the opportunity for actualization and fulfillment. For Lawrence, it seems that mankind's natural state in nature and in society is alienation. This alienation does not necessarily bring about total isolation, rather it causes

disharmony and tension--natural conditions needed for personal growth. In Lawrence's scheme of things, the individual must resist the conforming force of social relationships--the total absorption of personality into a role-identity.

Then, out of this conflict and dullness. . .

'His gleaming beauty, maleness, like a young, good-humoured, smiling wolf. . ." her "transport, as if she had made some incredible discovery, known to nobody else on earth . . .": the numen flashes forth. Lawrence has, by page nine, presented the pattern which his "repetitions" are to follow. But these "repetitions" are guided by something other than random discoveries or some blind Life Force; they oscillate within a construct similar to the Heracleitian logos-- a unity found in opposition. It is a cosmos strangely like that of a very different writer, Pope, who wrote in "Windsor Forest": "the world, harmoniously confus'd:/ Where order in variety we see,/ And where, though all things differ, all agree."

Dullness, conformity and reluctance to change all are personified in Hermione. Her "completeness," perfection and willful knowledge all are limited to the shallow surface of appearances--the rind of the world. Lawrence's narrator describes her in these words: "All her life, she had sought to make herself invulnerable, unassailable, beyond reach of the world's judgment" (p. 11). But she is

within Lawrence's reach, and he savages her unmercifully. He gives her insatiable will-driven desires. She cannot fill a "terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being within her." He deprives her of gracefulness, of warm blood, of sensuality. Her body has "a peculiar fixity of the hips"--is incapable of performing with natural rhythm or suppleness.

Immediately juxtaposed against Hermione is Rupert Birkin. He is described as having "an innate incongruity." Moreover, "His nature was clever and separate, he did not fit at all in the conventional occasion. Yet he subordinated himself to the common idea, travestied himself" (pp. 14-15). Unlike either Hermione or Gudrun, Birkin possesses a certain insouciance; he believes he can function within the social chess-game and yet remain unaffected. He claims to be above standards, conventions, roles: ". . . they're necessary for the common ruck."

In addition to his slippery nature, Birkin possesses a peculiar hypothesis about how the world, and particularly people, operate. Gerald calls it nonsense. Despite Gerald's unwillingness or inability to consider it, we should be able to recognize a striking resemblance to the Heraclitic arrangement of "correlative opposites." Birkin echoes Heraclitus in passages like this:

"No man . . . cuts another man's throat unless he wants to cut it, and unless the other man wants it cutting. This is a complete truth. It takes two people to make a

murder: a murderer and a murderee. And a murderee is a man who is murderable . . . ."

(p. 28)

Though this passage reads like a word game, it does convey the essential idea that opposites are related; they do condition each other; and that to be or to more fully understand one thing, one may have to consider being its opposite. Birkin reiterates this idea of "definition by opposition" in a conversation with Ursula and Hermione. In it he says ". . . lapse into unknowingness, and give up your volition . . . You've got to learn not-to-be, before you can come into being" (p. 39).

Lawrence seems to be presenting the paradox that the more one comes to know one's self, the less one knows oneself. Evidently the willful directing of knowledge and experience leads only as far as the will can reach. According to Lawrence, our knowledge is an imperfect one and our will is limited by this same knowledge. In his essay "The State of Funk," Lawrence writes: "We, none of us, know what will be best . . . a change is a slow flux, which must happen bit by bit. And it must happen. You can't drive it like a steam engine."<sup>38</sup>

According to Birkin, it is the willful natures of Hermione and Gerald which produce dysfunctional growth.

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<sup>38</sup>D. H. Lawrence, Assorted Articles (1930; rpt. Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p. 96.

As Mark Schorer explains:

Will is mechanical, and its symbol is therefore the machine; its historical and social embodiment is an industrial society that lives by war. Being is the integration of life forces in total and complete self-responsibility. Its historical embodiment lives in the future.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps a closer look at Gerald Crich will uncover the mechanism underlying the working of the will. In Gerald's strictly pragmatic, managerial handling of problems, he employs a kind of developmental approach--"You've got to start with material things . . . And [later] we've got to live for something. . . ." (p. 50). This "something" is not coherently defined by Gerald. He has not gotten to the center of the problem. After considerable goading by Birkin, Gerald surmises that it has something to do with "love." But when asked by Birkin if he can clarify what he means by "love," Gerald replies: "I don't know-- that's what I want somebody to tell me. As far as I can make out, it doesn't centre at all. It is artificially held together by the social mechanism" (p. 52). The highest contribution Gerald can make toward solving his society's problems is providing jobs, a product, and a more refined, efficient system. Gerald concentrates on the system rather than the motivating forces behind his concentration.

When, during his discussion on love with Birkin "The evening light flooding yellow along the fields, lit up

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<sup>39</sup>Mark Schorer, "Women in Love," The Hudson Review (Spring, 1953), rpt. in Hoffman and Moore, p. 173.

Birkin's face with a tense, abstract steadfastness [,] Gerald still could not make it out. . . ." (p. 52), Gerald is described as having missed an important moment. He is not yet attuned to the gleaming, noumenal, hidden dimension. Birkin is poised in a tense, profound communion with everything--the time of day, his friend, the thoughts of love, himself. But Gerald's mind grinds on, thinking about "social mechanisms"!

Gerald is preoccupied with his own thoughts during the end of his and Birkin's conversation. Birkin is left to ponder his own thoughts. Lawrence describes the scene poignantly:

Birkin looked at the land, at the evening, and was thinking: "Well, if mankind is destroyed, if our race is destroyed like Sodom, and there is this beautiful evening with the luminous land and trees, I am satisfied. That which informs it all is there, and can never be lost. After all, what is mankind but just one expression of the incomprehensible. And if mankind passes away, it will only mean that this particular expression is completed and done. That which is expressed, and that which is to be expressed, cannot be diminished. There it is, in the shining evening."  
(p. 53)

Again, Birkin echoes the Heracleitic concepts of the "Fire of Destiny" and the logos of the unity underlying change. He, like the sun-washed landscape, gleams during this momentary experience. He is in oneness with the flooding light.

While Gerald offers society a more refined mechanical system, Birkin simply recognizes the ultimate refinement

which already exists. While Gerald attempts to preserve and extend a contrived order, Birkin knows, perhaps indirectly and subconsciously, an order similar to that Heracleitus recognized twenty-five hundred years earlier: "This world-order, the same for all men, no one of gods or men has made, but it always was and is and shall be; an ever-living fire, kindling in measures and going out in measures."<sup>40</sup>

The next significant recognition of a Heracleitic principle occurs at Breadalby--Hermione's estate whose nature is "unchanged and unchanging." It is within this placid setting that Birkin narrowly escapes destruction at the hands of Hermione. Hermione and her irrepressible will seek consummation in an ecstasy of destructiveness. After her unsuccessful attempt to batter Birkin to death, she seems to freeze into a trance-like state; she becomes an automaton. She feels that her role has been fulfilled, that she is complete. She joins the dead-alive.

Despite all these lurid changes in Hermione, it is Birkin who undergoes the most radical transformation. His preservation has been brought about by some intuitive force, some survival instinct. His relationship with the rest of mankind becomes even more tenuous than the one he had before the attack. Though he had kept his distance from other people and had cultivated more metaphysical

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<sup>40</sup>Marcovich, p. 268.

conjunctions, as did Heraclitus, his "madness" which results from the severe blow he has received, brings him into a subtle conjunction with a non-human, vegetative life. His appreciation of this intention-free contact is heightened. He is fulfilled and happy. After having been nearly fragmented, nearly reduced to insentient matter, his radically altered consciousness discovers the rapture of being--or, more accurately, of experiencing the threshold between being and non-being.

The wretched mechanicalness of human consciousness--particularly the consciousness of the will, both his own and the will of others--has been replaced by a primitive but highly perceptive unconsciousness. He experiences a new freedom. These thoughts come to him: "Why should he pretend to have anything to do with human beings at all? Here was his world, he wanted nobody and nothing but the lovely, subtle, responsive vegetation, and himself, his own living self" (p. 103). Like Heraclitus, Birkin detests the "dulness," the intrusive willfulness of humanity. In a state of madness where he is practically unaffected by human will, Birkin comes closest to a guiding force, the logos, which unites him with the elemental processes and substances of the universe. Paradoxically, Birkin passes through this reductive process to an experience of wholeness; out of cataclysm and chaos come subtle appreciation and integration.

But Lawrence, in keeping with his "to-and-fro" development of the novel, spatters the succeeding pages of the book with violence--the clash of wills, the clamor of machine and animal fury--and the blood of subjugation, subordination. This violence erupts most significantly in Gerald's brutal training of his "mares"--the Arabian and Gudrun. Lawrence juxtaposes Birkin's quiet, cool vegetable exploration and succor against Gerald's blood-streaming battle of wills. It is an impressive reversal of tone and tempo. Most importantly, the scene adumbrates Gerald's and Gudrun's course for the remainder of the novel.

Gudrun swoons under the force of Gerald's crushing will. Gerald demonstrates his control over material, animal, and human systems. He acts with brutish deliberateness. Though his awareness may be shallow, oversimplified and narrowly egocentric, he seems to prevail. He is an egoist, a scientist, who is described as being "too cold, too destructive." Gudrun sees her fate linked to this destructive force. It thrills her.

Unlike Gudrun who is attracted by Gerald's forceful actions, Ursula is drawn to Birkin who is suffering from a severe case of "abstraction." Birkin becomes a misanthrope. Humans be damned! He prefers tangential spiritual contact. He has lost touch with the body half of his dualism. Ursula (who is apparently well aware of her body) seeks to bring Birkin back to normalcy. Birkin's attention

is focussed on the invisible, spiritual connections between things. Ursula refuses to be abstracted or depersonalized.

In the chapter entitled "Mino," Birkin and Ursula try to arrive at an amicable relationship. Birkin prefers the ethereal; Ursula the concreteness of flesh and blood and emotions. She cannot make herself "invisible" for Birkin, and he cannot deny his own inability to become invisible. What Birkin requests of Ursula is "a strange conjunction . . . an equilibrium, a pure balance of two beings:--as the stars balance each other" (p. 144). Lawrence's narrator, anticipating Ursula's objection to this relationship, asks "But why drag in the stars?" Why indeed! Birkin has lapsed into what Lawrence has described as "the male vice"--that of abstraction and geometric relativity. Birkin, like his tomcat Mino, wants a "superfine stability"--a stability both he and Heraclitus have found is most easily depicted by some geometric metaphor.

But Ursula refuses to be reduced to a point on some imaginary mathematical chart. And she is right in doing so. To his scheme she replies: "I don't trust you when you drag in the stars" (p. 149). Birkin chastises Ursula for her unwillingness to submit to his will and, in effect, returns to a now familiar Heraclitian formula--definition by opposition. Birkin perceives Ursula's love as a

masochistic subservience. Ursula contends that it is quite the opposite--that it is a "process of pride." Birkin flashes out in anger: "Proud and subservient, proud and subservient, I know you . . . Proud and subservient, then subservient to the proud--I know you and your love. It is a tick-tack, tick-tack, a dance of opposites" (p. 150).

Ursula presses him to admit his love for her. At this point "He looked back into her eyes, and saw. His face flickered with sardonic comprehension" (p. 150). He has returned from the ethereal plane to the essentially human: it is a bitter, but amused comprehension he has recovered. Remaining in the abstract has bored him; he now swings back toward the antithesis of abstraction--toward concreteness, physical appreciation, mortality. He later admits that during his intensely abstract experience he had become nothing but a "word bag," part of the dead-alive. In his far-ranging escape from Hermione, Birkin has, oddly enough, become much like her. Again, opposites define each other.

Though Ursula and Birkin achieve something other than the "strange conjunction," a strange conjunction does indeed occur, but the members of this relationship happen to be Gerald and Gudrun. During the languid, surreal calm at the beginning of the "Water-Party,"--the calm before the chaos precipitated by the drowning of Diana--Gudrun and Gerald search for consummation. For Gudrun, Gerald embodies a deathly, willful force. She perceives him as an instrument of forces far more potent than he himself is

aware. For Gerald, Gudrun offers acute sensation. She evokes in him "ungovernable emotion"--flames of desire of consciousness--destroying intensity. In fact, Lawrence writes that "His mind was gone, he grasped for sufficient mechanical control to save himself" (p. 169).

This experience runs diametrically opposed to Gerald's usual state of alertness. He is experiencing the very Heracleitian proposition which Birkin offers a few pages later--"Heracleitos says 'a dry soul is best.' I know so well what that means" (p. 171). A "dry soul" is one which is in the state or condition of alert wakefulness. It is a soul which is receptive to the ignis fatuus, the "Fire of Destiny" which burns and transforms all substances and processes. When a "dry soul" perceives the ignis fatuus, it is consumed, transported into oneness. It is an ecstatic communion with the "common" (though not commonly perceived) order of the universe.

Previously, Gerald has only been aware of his conscious will and its logical positivistic effect on the world. In his conjunction with Ursula--who "laughed a silvery little mockery"--Gerald discovers and, perhaps, involuntarily submits to forces which are out of his control. This is his first noumenal experience. He makes contact with that which (especially that experience already described in the conversation about love with Birkin) has previously evaded his awareness.

Lawrence's narrator describes Gudren's and Gerald's noumenal experience. They hold a Chinese lantern to the night:

Her soul was really pierced with beauty, she was translated beyond herself. Gerald leaned near to her, into her zone of light, as if to see. He came close to her and stood touching her, looking with her at the primrose-shining globe. And she turned her face to his, that was faintly bright in the light of the lantern, and they stood together in one luminous union, close together and ringed round with light, all the rest excluded.

(p. 173)

And later, when they are in the water drifting: "he had always kept such a keen attentiveness, concentrated and unyielding in himself. Now he had let go, imperceptibly he was melting into oneness with the whole." Eugene Goodheart describes their conjunction incompletely: "Gerald and Gudrun have for the moment achieved the male-female polarity, in which in their real connection with each other they still maintain their individual identities."<sup>41</sup> Goodheart identifies the Heracleitic "balance of opposites," but he neglects to mention both the Heracleitian and Laurentian concept of noumenal experience. The gleaming light, the light suffusing both characters and separating them from the rest of the night is ample indication of the cosmic rapport which is being experienced.

An interesting phenomenon has occurred in Gerald's and Gudrun's union; they are representative of two antithetical

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<sup>41</sup>Goodheart, p. 19.

forces which, when brought into close association, yield something of great importance. Gerald obviously represents the forces of conscious will, of mechanical organization, of productivity in a material-industrial system. He is a technocrat, a director of forces. Gudrun, on the other hand, is an aesthete, a decadent. She participates in the flow of creative consciousness; she opens herself to sensual experience; she grows in subjectivity and instinctive experience. Both characters fit a pattern which Birkin emphasizes with gusto on several occasions in the novel.\*

Birkin perceives a bipolar world, an order in which two flowing "rivers" of production and dissolution closely correspond to the bipolar forces of flux and reflux in the Heraclitian model. Birkin's cosmological model is revealed most clearly in a conversation he holds with Ursula in the chapter entitled "Water-Party" and in the chapter "Gudrun in the Pompadour." In the latter scene, a letter written by Birkin is given a dramatic (and drunken) reading by friends of his Bohemian days.

The letter read by Halliday at the Pompadour is one in which Birkin discusses the "desire for the reduction-process in oneself, a reducing back to the origin, a

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\* It is impractical to present Birkin's scheme in detail here, but the reader is advised to consult the text for a more comprehensive understanding of the system being described.

return along the Flux of Corruption, to the original rudimentary conditions of being--!" (p. 393). Birkin traces the "great retrogression" from "the created body of life," to "knowledge" and ultimately to "acute sensation." He parallels the Heracleitic idea of being as an emergence from nullity--a desire for "positive creation" coming from the experience of "black sensation." From reduction and fragmentation, Birkin postulates (as did Heracleitus) that an underlying unity reveals itself. (The reader is reminded here of Birkin's "retrogression experience" after Hermione's attack.) The frequent references to corruption, decadence and degeneration in Women in Love tend to emphasize the importance of Birkin's manifesto.

Birkin's conversation with Ursula in "Water-Party" offers a hyperbolic rendition of Heracleitus' concepts of flux and reflux. Because of the incremental arrangement of Birkin's argument, it is necessary to quote the passage intact:

"It seethes and seethes, a river of darkness," he said, "putting forth lilies and snakes, and the ignis fatuus, and rolling all the time onward. That's what we never take into count--that it rolls onwards."

"What does?"  
 "The other river, the black river. We always consider the silver river of life, rolling on and quickening all the world to brightness, on and on to heaven, flowing into a bright eternal sea, a heaven of angels thronging. But the other is our real reality--"

"But what other? I don't see any other," said Ursula.

"It is your reality, nevertheless," he said; "that dark river of dissolution. You see it rolls in just as the other rolls--the black river of corruption. And our flowers are of this--our sea born Aphrodite, all our white phosphorescent flowers of sensuous perfection, all our reality, nowadays."

"You mean that Aphrodite is really deathly?" asked Ursula.

"I mean she is the flowering mystery of the death process, yes," he replied. "When the stream of synthetic creation lapses, we find ourselves part of the inverse process, the blood of destructive creation. Aphrodite is born in the first spasm of universal dissolution--then the snakes and swans and lotus--marsh flowers--and Gudrun and Gerald--born in the process of destructive creation."

"And you and me--?" she asked.

Probably," he replied. "In part, certainly. Whether we are that, in toto, I don't yet know."

"You mean we are flowers of dissolution--fleurs du mal? I don't feel as if I were," she protested.

He was silent for a time.

"I don't feel as if we were, altogether," he replied. "Some people are pure flowers of dark corruption--lilies. But there ought to be some roses, warm and flamy. You know Herakleitos says 'a dry soul is best'. I know so well what that means. Do you?"

"I'm not sure," Ursula replied. "But what if people are all flowers of dissolution--when they are flowers at all--what difference does it make?"

"No difference--and all the difference. Dissolution rolls on just as production does," he said. "It is a progressive process--and it ends in universal nothing--the end of the world, if you like. But why isn't the end of the world as good as the beginning?"

"I suppose it isn't," said Ursula, rather angry.

"Oh yes, ultimately," he said. "It means a new cycle of creation after--but not for us. If it is the end, then we are of the end--fleurs du mal, if you like. If we are fleurs du mal, we are not roses of happiness, and there you are."

"But I think I am," said Ursula. "I think I am a rose of happiness."

"Ready-made?" he asked ironically.

"No--real," she said, hurt.

"If we are the end we are not the beginning," he said.

"Yes, we are," she said. "The beginning comes out of the end."

"After it, not out of it. After us, not out of us."

After Birkin's histrionic and pretentious speech, Ursula concludes that he wants only to know death. A soft voice from the shadows replies, "You're quite right." The voice is Gerald's.

Gerald may actually have understood Birkin's meaning--certainly he felt the presence of death in Gudrun's peculiar, enraptured transport described earlier. Gerald experiences the ignis fatuus. It burns him and sweeps him into rapt sensation, near unconsciousness. He has tasted of his mortality and of the sheer power of inhuman forces. Gerald, as an instrument of the forces of production, may have realized that great forces were pitted against his frail mechanical order.

Gudrun, whose participation in the decadent movement enkindles her with ignis fatuus, recognizes Gerald's vulnerability. And he recognizes her annihilating presence. Symbolically, Diana's drowning marks Gerald's loss of control and centrality. Gudrun accelerates his fragmentation and decline to uncertainty by withholding her comfort from him. Instead, she rehearses her part for the debacle.

Lawrence thrusts Gerald into the midst of chaos. Death follows death. The world begins to take on those transient characteristics found in Heracleitus' model. Soon after Diana's death, Gerald's father hovers on the

threshold of death. Gerald is forced to contemplate the impending transition in front of him. Lawrence's narrator describes Gerald's quandary:

He did not inherit an established order and a living idea. The whole unifying idea of mankind seemed to be dying with his father, the centralizing force that had held the whole together seemed to collapse with his father, the parts were ready to go asunder in terrible disintegration.

(p. 222)

On one side of Gerald's father's life lay the misery and poverty and ugliness of the colliery. On the other side lay human compassion, a social consciousness and the improvement of material conditions. These contradictory, antagonistic forces were, in some way, mediated through the senior Crich. Through his humane will, Thomas Crich brought these contrary powers into a tenuous control. He could effect a change in the proportion of misery to happiness about him. When his will is absorbed by death, the forces of order and chaos are free to flow randomly.

When Gerald witnesses his father's death and the disintegration of his will, the essential transiency of the human condition becomes terrifyingly apparent. We are all nought. Gerald hypothesizes that if there is to be any lasting effect of the will, it must, alas, be extended into non-human, self-sustaining processes and forms. Gerald's choice to convert human will into a mechanical expression is his attempt to transcend his finite limitations. His search, in effect, is for perpetual motion in production.

As Lawrence's narrator says, "he perceived that the only way to fulfill perfectly the will of man was to establish the perfect, inhuman machine" (p. 230). If human frailty is unable to hold back the erosive energies of dissolution, then perhaps mechanical, productive forces can counter-balance them. Gerald hopes to erect something of permanence. He has not learned that all is, was, and will be in flux. Paradoxically, Gerald has helped bring about that which he feared--for the machine cannot regenerate itself; it is ultimately reduced by friction:

It was the first great step in undoing, the first great phase of chaos, the substitution of the mechanical principle for the organic, the destruction of the organic purpose, the organic unity, and the subordination of every organic unit to the great mechanical purpose. It was pure organic disintegration and pure mechanical organization. This is the first and finest state of chaos.

(p. 233)

The irony of Gerald's accomplishment is revealed in a scene of existential terror: "When he was alone in the evening and had nothing to do, he . . . stood up in terror, not knowing what he was. . . ." (p. 234). After translating his will into a near-perfect mechanical system, Gerald finds that the system has apparently evolved out of a void and that he is the void. Gerald's vague goal was some undefined "harmony"; unfortunately, it is a harmony incapable of expression. What Gerald has failed to discover is that his "harmony" was in conflict with the greater harmony already existing, and thus doomed to failure. Gerald's willful

behavior is that same despicable tendency which Heraclitus saw in social man. Heraclitus, like Birkin, objects to the narrow egocentric perspective within which most men function. Gerald epitomizes Heraclitus' social animal.

Two chapters later in "Moony," "harmony" is again an issue. Birkin recognizes a natural harmony and tests its persistence. The harmonic relationship, briefly, is this: The gleaming moon reflects light of the hidden sun. The tranquil pond reflects the reflected light of the sun. All is arranged, without contrivance, to reveal this intricate relationship.

Birkin "tests" this harmony by shattering the surface of the pond. Time after time he scatters the luminous reflection of the moon--only to have it slowly, incessantly, certainly return to wholeness. Unlike Gerald who must try to fabricate a human concept of harmony in mechanistic terms, Birkin observes the natural harmony as it is manifested in general phenomena. This is the same kind of inquiry Heraclitus made into the world's inherent order. From observations of general physical correspondences in the material world, Heraclitus is able to extrapolate relationships of a grander, yet more subtle scale.

Birkin interprets his relationship to the world, and especially the people in it, from this "natural perspective." Just as the world order reveals intention, Birkin believes that human existence should reveal

rather than be directed by intention. He explains this idea to Ursula: "But I want us to be together without bothering about ourselves--to be really together because we are together, as if it were a phenomenon, not a thing we have to maintain by our own effort" (p. 253).

This conception is drawn to its conclusion in the chapter "Flitting." Birkin's thoughts are recorded by the narrator:

In the new, superfine bliss, a peace superseding knowledge, there was no I and you, there was only the third, unrealized wonder, the wonder of existing not as oneself, but in a consummation of my being and of her being in a new one, a new, paradisaal unit regained from the duality. How can I say "I love you" when I have ceased to be, and you have ceased to be: we are both caught up and transcended into a new oneness where everything is silent, because there is nothing to answer, all is perfect and at one.

(p. 379)

When one abandons the intrusive human will, when one passes from one state in life to another as one inevitably must if one is to remain truly alive, the identity formerly known as "I" is lost forever and the experience of becoming is the consummation. Becoming, not having or doing or even being.

One last scene can be cited to unite these relationships and recognitions. Let me conclude with Gerald's surrender to the forces of nature.

A withered man, Gerald leaves his confrontation with Loerke and Gudrun. The narrator describes his departure in these words--"A weakness ran over his body, a terrible

relaxing, a thaw, a decay of strength" (p. 486). He drifts away as if blown by the winds. He wants to go on and on but this is an unconscious urging toward motion, not a willed behavior. He loses "his sense of place." He is left wandering in the hollow between two ridges. He wants to climb both. He cannot choose between them. Either direction might mean survival. The narrator most significantly suggests the now familiar model of the bow: "How frail the thread of his being was stretched" (p. 488). Between the two opposed curves of the glimmering valley walls, Gerald is suspended, extended, poised. Lawrence's narrator makes one last suggestion of the Heracleitic pattern. The logos runs through Gerald. It is stretched to extremity--"as he fell something broke in his soul. . . ." The connection has broken. Gerald is absorbed, merged into the ice and snow; becomes ice and is subject to a new uniting logos.

## CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSION

To see a world in a grain of sand  
And heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
And eternity in an hour.

William Blake

Despite D. H. Lawrence's near degeneration into sheer mechanism in Women in Love--a tendency compounded by his close affinity to and partial adoption of the Heracleitian cosmological model--he was able to escape the cloture imposed by a strictly materialistic system. His escape from the numbing relativity of the physical world is achieved in much the same manner that Heracleitus escaped being relegated to the Physicist school of philosophy. Both cultivated an oracular vision which only used physical relational systems as symbolic representations of a more profound, if imprecise, order.

Both Lawrence and Heracleitus attempted to avoid the tiresome orthodoxies of conventionalized social thought. By depicting the world in a state of flux, Lawrence and Heracleitus effectively dissolve those "permanent" signposts erected by the ignorant, the insecure, the presumptuous. If mankind is, as Birkin suggests, "just one more expression of the incomprehensible," it appears that Lawrence sought to depict through symbolism, choric incremental repetition and

oracular suggestion, that the incomprehensibility of the world is comprehensible. We start, as he would say, "by first knowing that we cannot know ourselves." Like Heraclitus, Lawrence prefers to characterize the world in highly impersonal, transcendental terms. We must bracket out all human, personal agendas, screen out all coercive intentionality, reduce the whirling of the world to the center of both our being and its abode which is the fleeting here and now--the intersection of all flux and reflux.

So it was Lawrence's way, and the way of Heraclitus, to replace relativity with relationship and substitute for fear a love of mystery. Lawrence's efforts to comprehend the mystery of existence gravitated toward those about which Birkin mused at the conclusion of Women in Love:

Whatever the mystery which has brought forth man and the universe, it is a non-human mystery, it has its own great ends, man is not the criterion. Best leave it all to the vast, creative, non-human mystery . . . Best strive with oneself only, not with the universe.

(p. 493)

But in striving to understand the world of the self, the artist finds the macrocosm reflected in his microcosm. Essentially and ultimately it is a bifocal perspective--lit by fires inextinguishable.

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