

NATURAL SYMBOLISM IN THE SHORT

STORIES OF D. H. LAWRENCE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

D. H. Lawrence, an almost legendary figure in his own lifetime, chose for his personal emblem a legendary bird--the phoenix. The phoenix, which rises renewed from its own ashes, was to Lawrence symbolic of his belief that the individual could achieve wholeness of being only through the destruction of his intellectualized existence and a rebirth into the passional life. I believe that Lawrence's choice of the phoenix as his emblem illustrates very well not only one of his beliefs, but also one of the principal techniques of his craft, for throughout Lawrence's writings--in his novels, short stories, essays, and poems--he uses birds, animals, and natural objects as major symbolic elements in developing his themes.

The place of D. H. Lawrence in literary history is certainly not agreed upon by everyone, but it is generally accepted that Lawrence is an important writer, one that had an impact on readers of his generation and one that continues to be read and discussed. In the last fifteen years the amount of scholarly and critical interest in his works has increased greatly. Perhaps foremost among Lawrence's admirers is F. R. Leavis, who believes that "Lawrence is before all else a great novelist, one of the very greatest, and it is as one of the major novelists of the English tradition that he will above all live."<sup>1</sup> Mark Spilka says of Lawrence, "He is now generally recognized as the

foremost English novelist of his generation, and he begins to take his place among the important modern novelists: Joyce, Mann, Proust, Faulkner, Kafka,"<sup>2</sup> Harry T. Moore, who has written extensively on Lawrence, and Frederick J. Hoffman edited a recent collection of essays on Lawrence, in which they concurred with a statement by Charles Olson, "The man who more and more stands up as the one man of this century to be put with Melville, Dostoyevsky, and Rimbaud (men who engaged themselves with modern reality in such fierceness and pity as to be of real use to any of us who want to take on the post-modern) is D. H. Lawrence."<sup>3</sup>

Lawrence's writings are numerous and complex, and the amount of his literary output, for a man who died at the age of forty-four and who spent much of his life in ill health, is impressive. He wrote novels, short stories, poems, plays, essays, and travel pieces. Although perhaps best known as a novelist, Lawrence wrote many short stories. His short stories represent a considerable achievement in themselves, and they also illustrate many of Lawrence's basic themes and techniques. As Frank Amon says, "More concentrated but less complex than his novels, they introduce many of the nuclear symbols, patterns, and themes essential to all his art."<sup>4</sup> For this reason I have chosen to analyze Lawrence's use of natural symbolism in his short stories, although such symbolism also occurs prominently in such novels as The Rainbow and The Plumed Serpent and in the short novels The Fox and St. Mawr. In the short stories one can see the great importance the natural symbol had for Lawrence in the development of his themes.

But what do we mean when we use the term "symbol" or write of "symbolism" in a story? William York Tindall says that "the literary

symbol, an analogy for something unstated, consists of an articulation of verbal elements that, going beyond reference and the limits of discourse, embodies and offers a complex of feeling and thought."<sup>5</sup>

Tindall says that the symbol "resists total explanation."<sup>6</sup> He goes on to say, though, that "each symbol is particular in feeling and quality, and the critic, without trying to define the indefinable, may suggest its singularity. By analysis of image and context he may reveal the shape of the image, the relation of part to part and to the whole, and the function of each part."<sup>7</sup>

Lawrence himself, writing on the nature of the symbol, said, "The true symbol defies all explanation, so does the true myth. You can give meanings to either--you will never explain them away. Because symbol and myth do not affect us only mentally, they move the deep emotional centres every time."<sup>8</sup> Lawrence also wrote, "You can't give a symbol a 'meaning.' Symbols are organic units of consciousness with a life of their own, and you can never explain them away, because their value is dynamic, emotional belonging to the sense-consciousness of the body and the soul, and not simply mental. An allegorical image has meaning. Mr. Facing-both-ways has a meaning. But I defy you to lay your finger on the full meaning of Janus, who is a symbol."<sup>9</sup>

I think that commonly a symbol is understood to be "something that stands for something else," and in literature it is still the same, although the "something" and the "something else" may be very complex, very obscure, or both. As a working guide, though, I would like to go back to Tindall's description of the literary symbol and use his definition of the symbol as "an analogy for something unstated" that "embodies and offers a complex of feeling and thought." Although, as

Tindall and Lawrence pointed out, the symbol can never be totally explained or its meaning completely defined, I believe that its general meaning can be suggested and through analysis the relation of the symbol to its context can be in some way determined. It is this that I wish to do with the natural symbols in the short stories of D. H. Lawrence.

Another question that arises in any discussion of symbols in Lawrence's writings is whether Lawrence was a symbolist, in the tradition of Mallarme or of Yeats. The concensus of the critics seems to be that he was not, although Moore notes that in some of Lawrence's works his method seemed to approach that of the symbolists.<sup>10</sup> Eugene Goodheart says, "Finally, however, Lawrence's conception of the symbol must be radically distinguished from that of the symbolists and their heirs. The kind of faith in art that symbolism presupposes Lawrence never possessed."<sup>11</sup> Spilka concludes that Lawrence was not a symbolist but used symbols to illuminate the "rites of passage" that form the pattern for most of his works.<sup>12</sup> Kingsley Widmer says, "For Lawrence, a symbol points neither to an ultimate reality of another order nor to a unique entity within apparent reality; a symbol is simply an ordinary fact showing transcendent subjective meaning."<sup>13</sup> Moore perhaps best sums up Lawrence's use of symbols when he says, "Lawrence of course always used symbols, but these were in the general literary tradition: the symbolism of the title in The White Peacock, in which the bird is identified with certain types of women, or the symbolism of Lawrence's later short novel, St. Mawr, in which the fierce and vital horse is identified with the savage maleness that civilization wants to crush."<sup>14</sup>

The specific instances of symbolism noted above by Moore are



typical of Lawrence's animal symbols. Lawrence's frequent use of animals and natural objects as symbols has been noted, although only rather briefly, by several writers. E. W. Tedlock, Jr., writing of Lawrence's early life and development, says, "Perhaps most crucial was Lawrence's locating in the countryside's birds, beasts and flowers an ultimate wholeness of being to which he aspired and to which he could turn from divided, unhappy humanity. In these and their participation in the cycles of night and day, moon, stars and sun, and seasons, he found his basic imagery and symbolism, however varied later through accretion of the idiosyncratic life of other places, and alliances to myth."<sup>15</sup> Tedlock again notes Lawrence's natural symbolism when he writes, "The use of natural objects as correlatives of psychic states is characteristic Lawrence."<sup>16</sup> E. L. Nicholes, in a discussion of "the symbol of the sparrow" in The Rainbow, writes, "An important aspect of the prose style of D. H. Lawrence is his use of animal imagery and symbol, in brief metaphors or in the more extensive and complex images which characterize whole episodes and conflicts."<sup>17</sup> Widmer, in a brief passage, refers to Lawrence's "erotic bestiary." He notes many examples of Lawrence's use of birds to represent human situations, from peacocks and blue birds to the escaped cock in The Man Who Died to Lawrence's own symbol, the phoenix.<sup>18</sup> Raymond Wright points out how frequently Lawrence uses animals that correspond to humans as a "particular type of symbolic detail." He says that the non-human analogues "can be described as 'given' material, as formulations in terms of birds and beasts (and sometimes of flowers) which may anticipate, modify, or replace discursive analysis and one learns to expect them especially at moments of stress or illumination."<sup>19</sup> However, Wright

confines himself to a treatment of Lawrence's natural symbolism as "a particular type of symbolic detail" and does not go into Lawrence's use of the natural symbol as a major element in his work.

There are forty-seven stories in The Collected Short Stories of D. H. Lawrence. Of these, I believe that over half contain significant instances of natural symbolism, although Lawrence was apparently so accustomed to thinking in terms of the natural world that it is sometimes difficult to determine whether some references to nature are intended specifically as symbols or just as background or plot incident.

In many stories, though, Lawrence's use of nature is obviously intended as symbolic. For instance, in the story "The Border Line" the dark hills and pine forests of Germany are "empty," "sullen," and "heavy," clearly representative of the mood of the post-World War I Germany to which the heroine is returning.<sup>20</sup> And in "The Old Adam" the storm outside is a counterpart of the storm within the characters (pp. 29-30). The love scenes in Lawrence's stories frequently take place outdoors, as in "A Modern Lover" (pp. 1-22), "The Witch A La Mode" (pp. 54-70), and "The Overtone" (pp. 747-760). In the last story the man's wish to make love to his wife outdoors becomes "a holy desire" (p. 752), and the quality of their relationship hinges upon her compliance with this desire.

At times Lawrence drew symbols from sources other than the natural world. "The Rocking-Horse Winner," "The Blue Moccasins," "Things," "Rawdon's Roof," and "The White Stocking" are stories in which such symbolism occurs. These stories are generally characterized by a feeling of sterility and frustration, and it is possible that in using non-natural symbols Lawrence was expressing a relationship between these

qualities and man's lack of harmony with nature. The best known of these stories is probably "The Rocking-Horse Winner," a tale of a woman who is obsessed with money and her son, who is obsessed with his mother's desire for money. This story illustrates very well Lawrence's use of a non-natural symbol. The wooden rocking-horse in the story belongs to Paul, whose parents both have expensive tastes but not enough money to pay for them. The house is continually whispering, "There must be more money" (p. 791). Paul's mother attributes the lack of money to a lack of luck, and the boy neurotically seizes upon this point. He feels he must become lucky to still the insistent whispering of the house for more money.

With the help of the gardener, Paul begins betting on the races. Sometimes he is "sure" of the winner, and when he is, he is always right. Paul's method for picking the winner is somewhat unusual, though. He rides his rocking-horse until the name of the winner comes to him.

When the Derby draws near, Paul tries desperately to find the name of the winner. One night his mother comes home to find him riding his rocking-horse frantically. He screams the name of the winning horse and falls to the floor, fatally ill with a brain fever. After he is dead, his uncle says of him, "'But, poor devil, poor devil, he's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner.'" (p. 804).

Paul's obsessive riding of his rocking-horse can be explained as a psychological manifestation of his unbalanced nature. Through the rocking-horse the boy acts out his compulsive desire for "luck" and acceptance in his mother's eyes. The rocking-horse, a reproduction of

the real thing, suggests the sterile nature of the boy's obsession. The mother's emphasis on money and material goods has warped her son's nature to the point that he fastens on an artificial object, a wooden horse, in an effort to satisfy his desires. In fact, the artificial nature of the symbol suggests the barren quality of the mother's values, which she has tragically passed on to her son.

While in many of Lawrence's stories natural elements function symbolically in relatively minor ways, in at least a fourth of his stories the main theme of the story revolves around a natural symbol or symbols. Such stories are "The Shades of Spring," "The Shadow in the Rose Garden," "Odour of Chrysanthemums," "Two Blue Birds," "Second Best," "Wintry Peacock," "The Prussian Officer," "The Horse Dealer's Daughter," "The Princess," "The Man Who Loved Islands," and "Sun."

In all of Lawrence's natural symbolism, though, the symbol has meaning only in relation to the human beings in the story, for despite Lawrence's interest in nature, he was primarily concerned with people and their relationships with each other. Mary Freeman writes that Lawrence believed that "man lived within a social context; without it he died."<sup>21</sup> In his stories Lawrence used nature as a means of illuminating the human condition.

As Amon says of Lawrence's short stories, "Lawrence has captured a moment of transition, reinforced it with an emotionally charged symbol . . . and perpetuated it on the printed page."<sup>22</sup> That Lawrence frequently drew his symbols from the natural world and that many of his short stories contain major instances of natural symbolism can be seen, I believe, through an analysis of those stories that best illustrate this Lawrencean technique. I believe that these stories can be grouped

into three main categories, the symbolic flowers, the animal tropes, and the symbolic setting. The stories in the first group are "The Shades of Spring," "The Shadow in the Rose Garden," and "Odour of Chrysanthemums." In the second category, in which Lawrence uses animals as symbols of humans in the stories, the stories are "Two Blue Birds," "Second Best," and "Wintry Peacock." In the last division the setting becomes symbolic, embodying much of the central meaning of the story. The stories which in most cases depend for their chief effect upon the symbolic setting are "The Prussian Officer," "The Horse Dealer's Daughter," "The Princess," "The Man Who Loved Islands," and "Sun."

## CHAPTER II

### THE SYMBOLIC FLOWERS

In "The Shadow in the Rose Garden" and "Odour of Chrysanthemums" Lawrence uses flowers as the central symbolic element. In several other stories flowers may have symbolic meaning, although they do not have the major significance that the chrysanthemums and roses do in these two stories.

In "The Shades of Spring," flowers, as well as birds, trees, and other natural phenomena, figure prominently in the story. A young man who has recently married returns to visit the farm of his former sweetheart. Lawrence associates flowers with love when he writes, "With tangled emotions, Syson noted the plum blossom falling on the profuse, coloured primroses, which he himself had brought here and set. How they had increased! There were thick tufts of scarlet, and pink, and pale purple primroses under the plum trees" (p. 200).

Later Syson and Hilda walk together outside. As Hilda shows Syson the bird nests, apple buds, and flowers on the farm, she reveals to him that she has taken a lover. The fecundity of the natural world is a backdrop for the woman's revelation of her own sensual nature. Syson had always thought of Hilda as more spiritual than physical, and he suddenly realizes that he had never really known her. Now, "the path was almost flowerless, gloomy" (p. 205).

Hilda's lover is a gamekeeper who lives a simple life in close

contact with nature, in contrast to the intellectual young Syson. After his parting with Hilda, Syson ponders what he has learned, ironically noting the beauty and vitality of the flowers. "Lying on the dry brown turf, he discovered sprigs of tiny purple milkwort and pink spots of lousewort. What a wonderful world it was--marvellous, for ever new. He felt as if it were underground, like the fields of monotone hell, notwithstanding. Inside his breast was a pain like a wound" (p. 210). Syson "knew now it never had been true, that which was between him and her, not for a moment" (p. 210).

Another story in which Lawrence's flowers suggest a symbolic meaning is "England, My England." In this story a young man retreats to primitive surroundings, taking his wife with him to a simple cottage, where he spends his time working in the garden. The garden and flowers come to represent the young man's love for his wife and his withdrawal from the commercial world. Lawrence writes that the young man came to the cottage with his bride, "and he had come to fill it with flowers" (p. 304). In another instance, in "New Eve and Old Adam" the woman threads primroses in her hair as she and her husband discuss their conflicting demands on each other (p. 71).

In the story "The Shadow in the Rose Garden" the roses, richly and sensuously depicted, symbolize the love affair that the honeymooning woman once had with a man who is now a lunatic. The roses evoke for the woman the memory of her lover and suggest the sensuous, physical side of that love.

The woman, who is simply called "she," and her bridegroom are honeymooning at the woman's insistence in a seaside town where she once lived. In the first scene the rose motif is prefigured by the

roses outside the honeymoon cottage. Lawrence writes, "Outside, the glory roses hung in the morning sunshine like little bowls of fire tipped up" (p. 221).

The woman seems unaware of her husband, preoccupied and discontented. Making excuses, she manages to be rid of her bridegroom for the morning. She then goes out, wearing a white dress and a hat with roses. Her destination is the rectory garden, which was the setting for the love affair she wants to relive in her mind. Lawrence writes that, approaching the garden, the woman changes, and "her face began to shine, transfigured with pain and joy" (p. 225). The garden obviously represents for the woman her past love. Lawrence's description of the garden evokes vividly the lushness of the roses. "All around were rose bushes, big banks of roses, then roses hanging and tumbling from pillars, or roses balanced on the standard bushes. By the open earth were many other flowers" (p. 225). The association of flowers and a garden with sexual love is not unusual, and in the next passage Lawrence develops the motif of the rose as the image of erotic love to the point where the woman becomes a rose, one that "could not quite come into blossom" (p. 226).

Slowly she went down one path, lingering, like one who has gone back into the past. Suddenly she was touching some heavy crimson roses that were soft as velvet, touching them thoughtfully, without knowing, as a mother sometimes fondles the hand of her child. She leaned slightly forward to catch the scent. Then she wandered on in abstraction. Sometimes a flame-coloured, scentless rose would hold her arrested. She stood gazing at it as if she could not understand it. Again the same softness of intimacy came over her, as she stood before a tumbling heap of pink petals. Then she wandered over to the white rose, that was greenish, like ice, in the centre. So, slowly, like a white, pathetic butterfly, she drifted down the path, coming at last to a tiny terrace all full of roses. They seemed to fill the place, a sunny, gay throng. She was shy of them, they



were so many and so bright. They seemed to be conversing and laughing. She felt herself in a strange crowd. It exhilarated her, carried her out of herself. She flushed with excitement. The air was pure scent.

Hastily, she went to a little seat among the white roses, and sat down. Her scarlet sunshade made a hard blot of colour. She sat quite still, feeling her own existence lapse. She was no more than a rose, a rose that could not quite come into blossom, but remained tense. A little fly dropped on her knee, on her white dress. She watched it, as if it had fallen on a rose. She was not herself. (pp. 225-226)

When the woman touches and fondles the roses, gazes at them, smells them, and becomes almost, in a sense, absorbed into their being, she seems to be imaginatively and symbolically reenacting her experiences with her lover. The sensual quality of her contact with the roses echoes the sensual contact with the man. She is completely absorbed into the garden with all its erotic associations. When the fly lands on her knee, blotting the whiteness of her dress, it foreshadows the larger shock she receives when her lover, who she thought was dead, appears in the garden. He appears, though, as a parody of his former self, a lunatic who does not recognize the woman who loved him. His shadow, seen by the woman before she actually sees the man, is the one to which the title of the story refers. The title is thus particularly significant, since the shadow has both literal and symbolic meaning. The grotesque shock of seeing her lover as a lunatic mars the memory of her love--represented by the rose garden--for the woman.

In fact, the unexpected encounter with her former lover so shocks the woman that, when she returns to their cottage, she reveals the old love affair to her husband, who is shocked, dismayed, and morally outraged. When he learns, though, that the man is now a lunatic, he is sobered by the news. "They were both shocked so much, they were

impersonal, and no longer hated each other. After some minutes he left her and went out" (p. 233). The implication at the end of the story is that the man and woman are now free to rebuild their relationship on a new basis. Through a process of catharsis they have been cleansed of their old emotions and can start afresh. The secretly guarded memories of her old love, symbolized by the erotically suggestive rose garden, prevented the woman from committing herself to another. The jolt of seeing her lover, returned as if from the dead, but hopelessly mad, loosened the hold of those old memories and left her free to face her life with her husband.

The rose garden stands out as a richly textured, powerful, and evocative symbol of love. Barbara Seward, writing on the rose as symbol in "The Shadow in the Rose Garden," says the rose is "clearly an effective and genuine symbol."<sup>23</sup> The roses "communicate the mystery of conscious human love."<sup>24</sup> Widmer agrees, "Part of the significant effect of the story depends upon the rose garden of love."<sup>25</sup> The garden also serves as an integral part of the plot, since the action revolves around the woman's visit to the garden. The visit suggests something in the nature of a religious pilgrimage, except that the devotional object is the site of an old love affair, which is, ironically, the garden of a rectory. That Lawrence chose a rectory garden as the setting for the love affair has special significance, for Lawrence disliked what he felt was the emasculating spiritualism of the church, and in choosing a rectory as the site for the love affair Lawrence expressed his irreverence for the spiritual values of Christianity.

The other Lawrence short story that is marked by the use of a

central flower symbol, "Odour of Chrysanthemums," uses a flower as a motif marking the major events in the life of Elizabeth, a miner's wife. Widmer calls the chrysanthemums a "sense symbol."<sup>26</sup> The flowers that appear in the story are bedraggled and grotesque, "dishevelled pink chrysanthemums, like pink cloths hung on bushes" (p. 284). They suggest the sterile and faded tone of Elizabeth's life.

The story begins with Elizabeth Bates waiting for her miner husband to come home from work. She is a tall, handsome woman, strong-willed and bitterly unyielding in her opposition to her husband, who habitually spends his time and money in the local taverns. As she calls her sullen young son in from play, he tears at some chrysanthemums. Scolding him for the destruction, she stops and picks some of the wan flowers, impulsively putting them in her apron band.

Elizabeth speaks coldly to her father, who stops by for tea and who has apparently remarried too soon, in Elizabeth's opinion, after the death of his wife. The old man defends himself, "'Well, what's a man to do? It's no sort of life for a man of my years, to sit at my own hearth like a stranger. And if I'm going to marry again it may as well be soon as late--what does it matter to anybody?'" (p. 285).

This small incident at the beginning of the story serves to indicate Elizabeth's relative lack of understanding or compassion for others. Though not necessarily unfeeling, she fails to grasp the individuality of her father and his needs.

With growing impatience, the woman awaits the return of her husband. Her daughter comes in from school, and the tense family waits for the father to come home for dinner. Elizabeth complains bitterly to the children, "'It is a scandalous thing as a man can't

even come home to his dinner! If it's crozzled up to a cinder I don't see why I should care. Past his very door he goes to get to a public-house, and here I sit with his dinner waiting for him--'" (p. 288).

But then her daughter notices the flowers in Elizabeth's apron band as she reaches up to light the lamp. In the act of reaching, "her figure displayed itself just rounding with maternity" (p. 288). She irritably removes the flowers, over the girl's protests, and when the daughter says, "'Don't they smell beautiful!'" the mother answers her crossly. "'No,' she said, 'not to me. It was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when you were born, and the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he'd got brown chrysanthemums in his button-hole!'" (p. 289). Here, perhaps too explicitly, Lawrence states how the chrysanthemums function as a talisman of change in Elizabeth's life, and to her, they are grim reminders.

She finally puts the children to bed, and now she waits with fear as well as anger. At last she asks a neighbor, who is also a miner, to go and look for her husband. The man says that he left her husband down in the mine finishing a stint. But while he is still gone, her husband's old mother comes, tearfully reporting that her son has had an accident. Not knowing his condition, the two women wait anxiously for him to be brought to them.

He is returned, dead of suffocation from a cave-in in the mine. The men put him in the parlor, where there is the "cold, deathly smell of chrysanthemums in the room" (p. 296). As the men put him down, one of them knocks over a vase of the flowers, and Elizabeth immediately picks up the broken pieces of the vase and the flowers. The shattered vase of flowers symbolizes the sudden death of Elizabeth's husband and

repeats the chrysanthemum motif.

After quieting and reassuring the children, who had been awakened in their beds by the unusual noises downstairs, Elizabeth, with her mother-in-law, prepares to lay her husband out.

As Elizabeth goes through the ritualistic motions of preparing the dead man for his grave, she suddenly realizes how she had failed in her relationship with him. "Now he was dead, she knew how eternally he was apart from her, how eternally he had nothing more to do with her. She saw this episode of her life closed. They had denied each other in life. Now he had withdrawn. An anguish came over her. It was finished then: it had become hopeless between them long before he died. Yet he had been her husband. But how little" (p. 301).

Widmer says that the chrysanthemums are used as a "death trope" and "presage the end of the self-destructive miner and a shattering moment of illumination for his embittered and unyielding wife."<sup>27</sup> Widmer also calls the flowers a "thematic metaphor."<sup>28</sup> Julian Moynahan sees added significance in the flowers, which he believes reflect the sickness of life in an industrialized society. He writes, "The story's image of life in the industrial age is that of a sickly, autumnal flower growing beside a cinder track and appearing first in association with pregnancy--Elizabeth puts chrysanthemums in the band of her apron--finally in association with death."<sup>29</sup> Amon says of the chrysanthemums, "Here then is their significance: they are talismans of change, transition into a new way of life--a tragic way of life. They are markers of marriage, birth, and--inevitably--death."<sup>30</sup>

I believe that Lawrence also uses the chrysanthemums as an artistic device to give a feeling of unity to the story. Thus, the recurring

images of the flowers function in somewhat the same manner as a recurring theme in a piece of music. The chrysanthemums form a reference point throughout the story, but they are not a necessary part of the plot, as Lawrence's natural symbols usually are. In fact, the chrysanthemums are perhaps too obviously intended as symbolic, and the many references to them seem in places superimposed on the story rather than growing naturally out of the theme or plot. Lawrence's best stories are those in which the natural symbol is an integral part of the story.

That the flowers in "Odour of Chrysanthemums" are symbolic is indisputable, although I believe that this particular symbol comes close to exemplifying Lawrence's own definition of the symbol as indefinable. The chrysanthemums suggest many things, but it is impossible to say that they stand for any one thing. The flowers in the story are past their prime and thus suggest a withering away, a sterility, an absence of vitality. No longer growing and vital, the flowers seem to reflect the life around them. At the same time, the chrysanthemums retain aspects of their beauty, which the miner's wife fails to see. They remind her only of the ugliness in her life. The meaning the chrysanthemums hold for Elizabeth is in ironic contrast to the usual meaning of flowers, associated as they are with beauty and love. This irony is typical of many of Lawrence's symbols, which depend for their full effect upon the juxtaposition in the reader's mind of the old familiar meanings with the new ones Lawrence gives them in the stories. However, the symbolism in "The Shadow in the Rose Garden" does not follow this pattern, for in that story Lawrence builds upon the more conventional meaning of the rose. The chrysanthemums, though, are both beautiful and grotesque at the same time, ironically suggesting the

possibilities for fulfillment in Elizabeth's life and her failure to reach that wholeness of being that Lawrence so passionately advocated. At the end of the story, though, there is a suggestion that the woman has found, through the profound knowledge of death, her place in life. Lawrence writes, "Then, with peace sunk heavy on her heart, she went about making tidy the kitchen. She knew she submitted to life, which was her immediate master. But from death, her ultimate master, she winced with fear and shame" (p. 302).

## CHAPTER III

### THE ANIMAL TROPES

Lawrence's fondness for natural symbolism includes the use of animals as symbols. He uses these animal symbols in a particular way, which Widmer describes as "'the projection of your own fate' into the living object."<sup>31</sup> Widmer says that the Lawrencean symbol is typically "an analogy of the subjective problem of the hero."<sup>32</sup> Thus, the animal symbols in such stories as "Two Blue Birds," "Second Best," and "Wintry Peacock" can best be described as animal tropes, symbols that are representative of the characters in the stories.

In "Two Blue Birds" the blue birds represent two women who wear blue dresses of the same shade. The story is a multiple character sketch of a writer, his wife, and his secretary, with the theme of the story brought out by the parallel of the two women with the two blue birds.

The story begins in the manner of a fable. "There was a woman who loved her husband, but she could not live with him. The husband, on his side, was sincerely attached to his wife, yet he could not live with her" (p. 513). Lawrence goes on to describe the husband and wife, who are handsome people married to each other for a dozen years and for the last three or four years unable to live with each other except for brief periods of time. The husband is a stuffy, but vain writer, apparently quite successful, and the wife is an independent,



rather cynical woman who goes south every winter and has "gallant affairs" (p. 513). And yet they are, as Lawrence says, "in some odd way, eternally married to one another" (p. 513).

The husband is attended by a faithful secretary, Miss Wrexall, and her family. The secretary serves her master with selfless devotion, and the very selflessness of that devotion vexes the wife, who is herself fiercely self-centered. On a visit to her husband, the wife asks him if he is happy. He answers that he is comfortable, to which the wife replies, "'Are you sure it isn't bad for you?'" (p. 517). Later she says again, "'Perhaps it's not good for a man's work if he is too comfortable'" (p. 517). The husband denies that he is too comfortable, but after the conversation is closed, the wife continues to think of her husband's condition. "His comfortableness didn't consist so much in good food and a soft bed, as in having nobody, absolutely nobody and nothing to contradict him. 'I do like to think he's got nothing to aggravate him,' the secretary had said to the wife" (p. 518).

From some obscure sense of wifely loyalty, the wife decides that something must be done about the situation, since she believes that the quality of her husband's work is suffering from the pampering that he receives from the family of his secretary. Yet she makes no move until one afternoon when she overhears her husband dictating to Miss Wrexall in the garden. She stops to listen but is startled by the sight of a blue bird at the secretary's feet. Then another blue bird appears and begins to fight with the first one. The wife thinks, "A couple of blue birds of happiness, having a fight over it!" (p. 522).

The husband notices the birds and waves them off, asking the secretary if she saw them fighting. She didn't, but the wife steps

forward, saying that she did. After some comments about the intensity of the fight, the wife begins baiting the secretary about her lack of self-interest. She asks her accusingly, "'Why do people like you never think about yourselves?'" (p. 523). The wife leaves and then returns for tea wearing a chicory-blue dress. When the secretary starts to leave, the wife urges her to have tea with them. The secretary assents, but goes to tell her mother of the decision and to put on another dress, which turns out to be exactly the same chicory-blue color as the wife's.

During tea the wife suggests that Miss Wrexall has become so competent that she is writing her husband's books for him. The secretary accuses the wife of trying to make a fool out of her, and the insulted husband denies that the secretary writes his books. Miss Wrexall then bitterly complains that the wife is trying to spoil the relationship between her and her master. The wife denies this, saying that her only criticism is of her husband for taking so much from the secretary and giving nothing in return. In turn, the secretary says that he gives her everything, a reply which causes the wife to ask sharply what is meant.

"I mean nothing that you need begrudge me," said the little secretary rather haughtily. "I've never made myself cheap."

There was a blank pause.

"My God!" said the wife. "You don't call that being cheap? Why, I should say you got nothing out of him at all, you only give! And if you don't call that making yourself cheap--my God!"

"You see, we see things different," said the secretary.

"I should say we do!--thank God!" rejoined the wife.

"On whose behalf are you thanking God?" he asked sarcastically.

"Everybody's, I suppose! Yours, because you get everything for nothing, and Miss Wrexall's, because she seems to like it, and mine because I'm well out of it all."

"You needn't be out of it all," cried Miss Wrexall magnanimously, "if you didn't put yourself out of it all."

"Thank you, my dear, for your offer," said the wife rising, "but I'm afraid no man can expect two blue birds of happiness to flutter round his feet, tearing out their little feathers!"

With which she walked away. (p. 527)

Thus, with the end of the story ends the parallel with the two blue birds. The wife is not willing to fight. She bows out of the struggle to save her husband's integrity as a writer and abandons him to the influence of the secretary.

Lawrence uses the episode of the two blue birds to point out the relationship of the two women, who symbolically don blue dresses for their confrontation at the feet of the husband. The incident of the two blue birds serves as a focal point for the story, which does not contain much action but consists mainly of talk. The use of the scene then probably gives some feeling of form to the story that it otherwise would not have. However, the humans in the story, and their problems, are not really convincing, and thus the use of the birds as analagous to the humans does not illuminate the meaning of the story much. As a result, the symbolism of the two blue birds seems more of a device for making a point than an organic part of the story. Also, Lawrence's tone in this story can best be described as catty, and the whole story reflects this superficiality. But the story undoubtedly does reveal much of Lawrence's thinking on the subject of authors, their work habits, and their relationships with those around them, and it does

illustrate the Lawrencean technique of making animals symbolic of characters in the story.

I believe that a more successful use of animal symbolism in Lawrence's short stories can be found in "Second Best," a story that returns to the scenes of Lawrence's youth and suggests the period of Sons and Lovers. In this story the central symbol is a mole, and the action revolves around an incident concerning a young woman, her potential lover, and her relationship with him as expressed by her treatment of the mole.

The young and beautiful woman, Frances, is bitter over an unhappy love affair. Her sweetheart, an educated young man who has just become a "Doctor of Chemistry" (p. 215), has become engaged to another girl. Frances and her younger sister, Anne, are resting while on a walk in the country when they see a mole. Lawrence describes the mole in this way: "A mole was moving silently over the warm, red soil, nosing, shuffling hither and thither, flat, and dark as a shadow, shifting about, and as suddenly brisk, and as silent, like a very ghost of joie de vivre" (p. 215). Frances watches the mole, "paddling, snuffing, touching things to discover them, running in blindness, delighted to ecstasy by the sunlight and the hot, strange things that caressed its belly and its nose" (p. 214). The two girls discuss killing the mole. Ann says, "'It's got to be killed--look at the damage they do'" (p. 215). Since neither girl wants to do the killing herself, Ann catches the mole and ties him up in her handkerchief to take him home for their father to kill. However, in trying to get loose, the mole bites Anne sharply on her finger, and the girl angrily kills it with a blow from her sister's walking cane.

Frances is shocked by the sudden death of something that had been so alive just a moment before. But then, "Frances suddenly became calm; in that moment grown-up. 'I suppose they have to be killed,' she said, and a certain rather dreary indifference succeeded to her grief" (p. 216). This point marks the change in Frances' feelings about her old lover, for Lawrence writes, "Something had died in her, so that things lost their poignancy. She was calm, indifference overlying her quiet sadness" (p. 216). It is as if through the death of the mole, the "ghost of joie de vivre," Frances' bitter grief had been exorcised.

Continuing on their way, the girls meet Tom Smedley, a young man mowing fodder with a scythe in a field. He has always been rather subconsciously attracted to Frances. Frances is aware of his latent desire for her and decides to play upon it. "If she could not have the best--Jimmy, whom she knew to be something of a snob--she would have the second best, Tom" (p. 217).

Anne and Frances stop to talk to Tom, and they discuss the dead mole. There is a tension of awareness between Tom and Frances. Tom asks Frances if she thinks it is necessary for the moles to be killed. Frances answers that it is not necessary for her and then asks Tom if he would like for her to kill them. He replies that they do a lot of damage. "'Well, I'll see the next time I come across one,' she promised defiantly. Their eyes met, and she sank before him, her pride troubled" (p. 219).

The next day Frances deliberately hunts for a mole and kills it. She takes it to Tom, who then asks her to go out with him. "'We s'll 'ave to tell your mother,'" he tells her. "And he stood, suffering, resisting his passion for her. 'Yes,' she replied, in a dead voice.

But there was a thrill of pleasure in this death" (p. 220).

Thus the story ends with Frances' submission to Tom through the sacrifice of the mole. When she kills the mole and takes it to Tom, she signifies her capitulation to his views on the necessity of killing the moles, and symbolically, she signifies her own submission to him. The mole, according to Widmer, symbolized Frances' lost love. "Statements about the mole's death thus constitute statements about the loss of Frances' love."<sup>33</sup> Widmer says, too, that the mole represents "unconscious, blind passion," and that when Frances kills another mole and gives it to Tom, the act is one of "ritualistic propitiation."<sup>34</sup> Tedlock says of the mole that "the appearance of a mole establishes a correlative of her feeling. He is like a 'very ghost of joie de vivre.'"<sup>35</sup>

The mole, then, not only forms a basis for the plot development of the story, but also embodies much of the inner meaning or significance of the tale. The animal corresponds to Frances' emotions about her former love, and by deliberately seeking out another mole and killing it, Frances symbolically destroys those emotions and submits herself to her new love. The mole also carries suggestions of darkness, warmth, and intimacy that relate to Frances' love for Jimmy. Yet it is a "ghost" of that love, seen through bitter and unhappy eyes. The mole in "Second Best" undeniably has significance beyond itself, but no one-to-one correspondence between the mole and something else is explicitly clear in the story. It suggests both Frances' emotions for her lost love and the quality of that love. The mole also serves as a method for Frances' submission to Tom.

A similar use of animal symbolism can be found in another Lawrence

short story placed in the English countryside, "Wintry Peacock." The symbolic animal in this story is Joey, a pet peacock, and, as in "Second Best," much of the action involves the bird. The story is about a young farm wife, her returning soldier husband, and the struggle between them for domination. The peacock, symbolic of the struggle, is also symbolic of the willful, antagonistic wife, Maggie.

The narrator begins by describing the crisp winter day. The peacocks appear almost immediately in the story. "And then I saw the peacocks. There they were in the road before me, three of them, and tailless, brown, speckled birds, with dark-blue necks and ragged crests. They stepped archly over the filigree snow, and their bodies moved with slow motion, like small, light, flat-bottomed boats. I admired them, they were curious" (p. 379). The symbol, as in "Odour of Chrysanthemums," is described in terms different from those usually associated with it. Lawrence emphasizes the unlovely aspects of the birds, which are usually thought of as beautiful. The peacock, then, is a paradoxical symbol, a usually beautiful bird suggesting the ugliness of self-will and vanity. Then the narrator meets a young woman with whom he is slightly acquainted. She asks him to wait and soon returns with a letter written in French. The letter is to her husband, Alfred, a wounded soldier who has been first in France and then in Scotland and is about to be sent home. According to his wife, he is recovered now and limps only slightly.

Then they are interrupted by the peacocks, who appear again. Maggie calls to one of the birds, who comes forward. "'Joey, dear,' she said, in an odd, saturnine caressive voice, 'you're bound to find me, aren't you?'" She put her face forward, and the bird rolled his

neck, almost touching her face with his beak, as if kissing her" (p. 382).

The letter is from a Belgian girl, and it tells of the birth of her baby, whom she has named Alfred for his father. The wife realizes it is a love letter but wants to know exactly what the letter says. The narrator pretends to translate the letter but tells the wife instead that the baby was born to the girl's mother and that Alfred was a friend of the family. But Maggie suspects that the child is Alfred's, although she cannot be certain.

It snows the next day, and that afternoon the narrator sees a flapping, struggling thing in the distance. He goes to see what it is, and it turns out to be Joey, the pet peacock. He takes the bird back to his house, where he nurses it for the night.

The next day he takes it back to Maggie, who kisses the bird fondly. It was her husband who had frightened him off. The narrator is invited into the house for tea, where the peacock enters and again is a dominant presence on the scene.

The narrator feels physically attracted to Maggie, who urges him to come and visit them again. However, he comments, "The moment I went out of her presence I ceased to exist for her--as utterly as I ceased to exist for Joey" (p. 390).

The husband stops the teller of the story after he leaves the house and asks him about the letter. The narrator tells him of the real contents as well as of what he had told Maggie. This news makes Alfred feel as if he has won "a big move in his contest with his wife" (p. 392). When asked about the Belgian girl, he dismisses her after a moment of confusion. Alfred then asks the narrator why he didn't wring



Joey's neck. He says of the bird, "I hate the brute" (p. 393). The story concludes with both men laughing wildly over the events they have discussed and Alfred then muttering, "I'll do that blasted Joey in--" (p. 393).

Although the cause of their amusement is not completely clear, I assume it is over the fact that Alfred has outsmarted both the Belgian girl and his wife. The relationship of Alfred and Maggie seems to be one of love-hate, with each person struggling for dominance over the other. In addition, Maggie is something of a diabolical figure, who is frequently described as dark, diabolical, and saturnine. In fact, Alfred says of her, "She's a little devil, she is" (p. 392). The tie between Maggie and the peacock also seems to reflect folklore about witches and their familiars.

The part that the peacock plays in the story is definitely symbolic in that it represents more than just a bird. It suggests the vain, willful, and sensual qualities of Maggie and seems to function as her counterpart in the struggle with her husband. It is Maggie's representative in the battle, and, as such, Alfred focuses his hatred on the peacock. The identification of the woman with the male bird suggests that Maggie, in trying to dominate her husband, is abandoning the proper feminine role. The bird also serves as a thematic device, appearing throughout the story as a sort of leitmotif of beauty, sensuality, and brutality.

The peacock apparently had a special meaning for Lawrence, since in his first book, The White Peacock, he used an incident involving a peacock and related the defiling nature of the bird to that of woman. The peacock is usually suggestive of beauty, vanity, and pride. But

Lawrence, while no doubt building on that popular association and playing against it, gave the peacock a different meaning. The Lawrencean peacock suggests brutality, self-will, and vanity. Widmer refers to the peacock as "the bird trope for the woman"<sup>36</sup> and as the "soul symbol of the woman."<sup>37</sup> Tedlock writes, "The peacock's 'spiteful, inhuman' behavior is the correlative of the spirit of the young farm wife . . ."<sup>38</sup> In its complexity and originality the "wintry peacock" is what Moore calls "a familiar Lawrencean symbol."<sup>39</sup>

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SYMBOLIC SETTING

In many of his later stories, such as "The Prussian Officer," "The Horse Dealer's Daughter," "The Princess," "The Man Who Loved Islands," and "Sun," Lawrence extends his use of natural elements as symbols so that the whole setting of the story functions in a symbolic manner.

The setting in "The Shades of Spring," a story discussed in the second chapter, is also of vital importance to the meaning of the story. In this story the countryside around the farm becomes symbolic of the physical love that Hilda has found with the gamekeeper, who, incidentally, might be considered a forerunner of the gamekeeper in Lady Chatterley's Lover. The importance of the countryside to Hilda is brought out when Syson and Hilda discuss her love for the gamekeeper. Hilda admits that much of the attraction the gamekeeper holds for her is his continual, close contact with nature. "'But is it a matter of surroundings?' he said. He had considered her all spirit. 'I am like a plant,' she replied, 'I can only grow in my own soil'" (p. 206). A necessary part of the love affair is the setting in which it takes place.

In "The Woman Who Rode Away" setting again plays an important role. In this story a restless young woman's desire for something different from what she has known leads her to her death in the wild mountains of

Mexico. The wife of a miner, the woman sees "those great blank hills" (p. 548) as, paradoxically, the symbol of the vitality that is missing from her life. "She felt it was her destiny to wander into the secret haunts of these timeless, mysterious, marvellous Indians of the mountains" (p. 549). The mountains, drawing the woman on to her destruction, are quite similar to the mountains in "The Princess," a story in which the heroine is similarly drawn by what appears to her as the vitality and strength of the wilderness and the mountains.

In "The Prussian Officer" the setting also has symbolic value. The significance of the valley, the forest, and the mountains is found in the psychological meaning they hold for the young orderly. While the mountains are not directly involved in the central action of the story, as are the mountains in "The Princess" or the islands in "The Man Who Loved Islands," they help to illuminate the state of mind of the young soldier. In their majestic height and distance, they symbolize for the orderly the lost and unattainable.

In the story the mountains also function as a solemn motif, connecting the beginning and the end of the story. In the first paragraph Lawrence writes, "But right in front the mountains ranged across, pale blue and very still, snow gleaming gently out of the deep atmosphere" (p. 95). At the end of the story, as the orderly lies dying, he looks at the mountains. "Then again, his consciousness reasserted itself. He roused on to his elbow and stared at the gleaming mountains. There they ranked, all still and wonderful between earth and heaven. He stared till his eyes went black, and the mountains, as they stood in their beauty, so clean and cool, seemed to have it, that which was lost to him" (p. 116).

The story of the young soldier and the aristocratic and sadistic Prussian officer involves the latter's unnatural passion, at first unconscious, for his orderly, a peasant youth characterized by a warm, animal nature. The captain's attraction to his orderly takes the form of a brutal attack on the youth when he refuses to tell his superior why he has a pencil over his ear. Suffering from the pain of the beating and driven, perhaps, by the instinctive knowledge that his manhood has been violated, the orderly kills the captain the next day as they rest in the forest.

The young soldier then flees through the forest, his throat parched, pursuing the vision of the distant mountains. He dies, of thirst, and the heat, and the injuries from the captain's beating, with his head turned towards the mountains.

Widmer notes the significance of the mountain images in Lawrence's work. "Perhaps inherited from the romantics, where it was an image of defiant withdrawal (as in Byron and Stendhal), it also represents for Lawrence the icy idealizing and dutiful conscience of northern Europe and its Christianity, in contrast to the warm pagan South."<sup>40</sup> I believe that this statement may apply more correctly to Lawrence's European stories, such as "The Prussian Officer" and the novel Women in Love, than to the tales set in Mexico and the American Southwest, where the mountains seem to suggest more the raw strength and vitality that Lawrence apparently associated with these areas. Writing on "The Prussian Officer," Widmer also says that "at almost all points Lawrence's style insists that we be aware of the relation of person and natural scene, and it is his aesthetic as well as his metaphysical principle that everything in life must be 'one living continuum with

all the universe."<sup>41</sup>

In "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" the setting is not so dominant as in a later story, "Sun," but still the gloomy countryside and murky pond of the story are symbolic. The girl of the title is Mabel, whose father, a horse-dealer, has died and left the family of three brothers and a sister in a state of financial collapse. The brothers, all making plans of their own, ask Mabel if she is going to stay with another sister. Impassive, Mabel does not reply to their questioning. At that point a young doctor, Jack Ferguson, appears and talks to the brothers. When he asks Mabel if she is going to stay with her sister, she calmly answers no. She is reserved and "brutally proud" (p. 447). Lawrence writes, "Now, for Mabel, the end had come. Still she would not cast about her. She would follow her own way just the same. She would always hold the keys of her own situation. Mindless and persistent, she endured from day to day. Why should she think? Why should she answer anybody? It was enough that this was the end, and there was no way out?" (p. 447). Mabel has gone beyond despair and "seemed in a sort of ecstasy to be coming nearer to her fulfillment, her own glorification, approaching her dead mother, who was glorified" (p. 447).

That afternoon Mabel goes to the cemetery to tend her mother's grave. The young doctor sees her there and their eyes meet for a moment in recognition, foreshadowing their later, more fateful meeting. After going about his afternoon duties, the doctor again sees Mabel. This time she is going towards a pond that lies in "the green, shallow soddened hollow of fields" (p. 449). He watches her go straight toward the pond. "There she stood on the bank for a moment. She never raised her head. Then she waded slowly into the water" (p. 449). The

doctor hurries to the pond, where he can see no more of the girl.

Lawrence describes the scene vividly:

He slowly ventured into the pond. The bottom was deep, soft clay, he sank in, and the water clasped dead cold round his legs. As he stirred he could smell the cold, rotten clay that fouled up into the water. It was objectionable in his lungs. Still, repelled and yet not heeding, he moved deeper into the pond. The cold water rose over his thighs, over his loins, upon his abdomen. The lower part of his body was all sunk in the hideous cold element. And the bottom was so deeply soft and uncertain, he was afraid of pitching with his mouth underneath. He could not swim, and was afraid. (p. 450)

After going under and almost suffocating himself, the doctor finally grabs Mabel's clothing and slowly pulls her out of the "horror of wet, grey clay" (p. 450). He works to revive her, and soon she begins breathing again. He carries her, wrapped in his overcoat, to the house, where he removes her clothes and wraps her naked in some blankets. After a drink of whiskey, she regains consciousness, and when she discovers that she has no clothes on under the blankets, she asks the doctor who undressed her. He answers that he did, and Mabel asks him, "'Do you love me, then?'" (p. 452). Then on her knees, she puts her arms around the doctor's thighs and clutches him to her, murmuring, "'You love me. I know you love, I know'" (p. 453).

Though the doctor had had no conscious thoughts about the girl, he finds himself unable to break away. "It was horrible. And yet wonderful was the touch of her shoulders, beautiful the shining of her face" (p. 453). He finally gives in and feels an overwhelming wave of passion for her. When Mabel asks him again if he loves her, he answers yes. "The word cost him a painful effort. Not because it wasn't true. But because it was too newly true, the saying seemed to tear open again his newly-torn heart. And he hardly wanted it to be true, even now" (p.

454). The two then put on dry clothes, and, over Mabel's protests now that she is "too awful" (p. 456), the doctor insists that he wants her and they will be married the next day.

In "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" the pond, foul and murky, suggests the depths of despair to which the girl has gone. As the instrument of her attempted suicide, it reflects her grim despair. But the pond has a paradoxical nature, for it is through her entry into its waters that Mabel comes to discover her love for the young doctor. The nature of love is paradoxical as well, combining great tenderness with fear and anger. The doctor's frightening rescue of the girl from the pond, almost drowning himself and at the same time leading the way to falling in love with the girl, reflects the paradoxical nature of love. The doctor's near death in the pond parallels the symbolic death and rebirth of the girl, thus emphasizing the paradox involved. The girl's attempted suicide in the pond could be construed as a form of ritual, a baptism into love. In fact, Widmer writes of the pond, "The regenerative waters open the salvational eros."<sup>42</sup> Moore notes the symbolic properties of water as both life-giving and sex-giving in a later long short story, The Virgin and the Gypsy, as well as in "The Horse Dealer's Daughter."<sup>43</sup>

"The Princess" is a long short story in which the wilderness and mountains of New Mexico take on a symbolic meaning for the woman who is called the Princess. Widmer says, "A Lawrencean landscape functions as an expressionist metaphor as well as a graphic scene." Thus, according to Widmer, the mountains represent for the Princess the nihilism of the universe.<sup>44</sup> Widmer places special emphasis on the nihilistic elements in Lawrence, but I believe that in "The Princess" the mountains also suggest the physical side of life as opposed to the superficial,



intellectual side. For the Princess, confrontation with that physical side is nearly fatal, destroying her sanity, and because of their effect on the Princess, the mountains could be termed a symbol of nihilism.

Dollie Urquhart, nicknamed the Princess by her handsome, other-worldly father, has grown up with a sense of her own special quality and an awareness of her difference from others. Her mother had died when the Princess was two, and she had been raised by her father far from her Boston relatives. A rapport that insulated them from the rest of the world existed between the father and daughter, and when her father died when she was thirty-eight years old, the Princess was still as virginal and as fragilely beautiful as a girl.

With her faithful companion, Miss Cummins, the Princess then goes to a guest ranch in New Mexico, the idea of marriage fixed firmly in her mind. "She thought that marriage, in the blank abstract, was the thing she ought to do. That marriage implied a man she also knew. She knew all the facts. But the man seemed a property of her own mind rather than a thing in himself, another thing" (p. 480). Although even college boys hint at marriage with her, the Princess is intrigued with only one man at the ranch, a guide called Romero. Romero is descended from a once proud Spanish family, and he still retains a "spark of pride, or self-confidence, or dauntlessness" (p. 483) that interests the Princess, although otherwise he appears to be a typical Mexican peasant. A "vague, unspoken intimacy" (p. 484) grows up between the Princess and Romero. They go riding, along with Miss Cummins, every day.

One day the Princess complains that she never sees any wild animals,

saying, "I can't bear to go away till I've seen them: a bear, or a deer--'" (p. 486). Romero suggests that, if she really wants to see wild animals, he has a cabin far up in the mountains that she could stay in to watch for the animals. The Princess "wanted to look over the mountains into their secret heart. She wanted to descend to the cabin below the spruce trees, near the tarn of bright green water. She wanted to see the wild animals move about in their wild unconsciousness" (pp. 487-488).

So the Princess, Romero, and Miss Cummins start out on horseback to the cabin in the wilderness. But Miss Cummins' horse stumbles and becomes lame. Reluctantly, Romero agrees to the Princess' insistence that Miss Cummins turn back her horse, allowing the other two to continue the trip. Lawrence describes her thoughts:

And she thought of her adventure. She was going on alone with Romero. But then she was very sure of herself, and Romero was not the kind of man to do anything to her against her will. This was her first thought. And she just had a fixed desire to go over the brim of the mountains, to look into the inner chaos of the Rockies. And she wanted to go with Romero, because he had some peculiar kinship with her; there was some peculiar link between the two of them. (p. 493)

Yet when she finally sees the wilderness, "It frightened the Princess, it was so inhuman. She had not thought it could be so inhuman, so, as it were, anti-life" (p. 496). Though now afraid, the Princess continues to the little cabin. That evening she sees a wildcat at the pond, and "she shivered with cold and fear. She knew well enough the dread and repulsiveness of the wild" (p. 501). That night she awakes, feeling intensely cold. After she tells Romero that it is so cold, he asks her if she wants him to make her warm. She answers yes, although she feels that she will scream if he touches her.

The next day she feels an urgent desire to get back to "the world of people" (p. 505). Romero asks the Princess, "'You don't like last night?'" (p. 506). She tells him that she didn't, and then Romero, with anger and despair, tells her that they will not return, they will stay at the cabin. He throws her clothes and the saddles in the icy pond. At first Romero forces her to submit to him, but later, after the Princess breaks into hysterical sobbing, he sits stony and silent. "They were too people who had died" (p. 509).

Then on the fourth day they see two horsemen coming over the crest. Thinking that they have come to get him, Romero begins shooting. In return, the men, who are in the Forest Service, shoot and kill Romero. When they ask the Princess why Romero started firing, she says that he had gone out of his mind. They take her back to the ranch, where the affair is hushed up and the Princess put in Miss Cummins' care. "She was the Princess, and a virgin intact" (p. 512). But her hair has gone gray at the temples, and her eyes are "a little mad" (p. 512). She says of the incident, "Since my accident in the mountains, when a man went mad and shot my horse from under me, and my guide had to shoot him dead, I have never felt quite myself" (p. 512). Lawrence adds to the story, "Later, she married an elderly man, and seemed pleased" (p. 512). The Princess' unconscious desire drew her to both the wilderness and Romero, while in the end she is repelled by both and goes mad because the balance her nature had established is destroyed.

The mountains, so vividly described by Lawrence, represent for the Princess the physical realities from which she has held herself aloof all her life. Almost against her will, she is drawn to a fatal confrontation with her physical self in the setting that symbolizes the

darker, chaotic, and untamed elements of man's nature. Since the Princess' confrontation must necessarily be a destructive one, the wilderness takes on additional negative suggestions of what Lawrence calls "anti-life." The mountains represent a type of symbol that is more diffused, becoming also background and setting but still retaining a symbolic meaning.

As Moore puts it, "the scenery becomes one of the actors."<sup>45</sup> He says, "Setting becomes symbol in no overt way, but gradually and masterfully. The countryside itself, as seen from the lower foothills, had moved the Princess to seek new experience, and as she goes up with Romero to the remotest heights, the hard masculine scenery becomes the symbol of what she is seeking."<sup>46</sup> The setting in "The Princess" thus functions as a symbol, though it is a complex symbol made up of several elements--the mountains, the wilderness, the wild animals. The total effect of the setting suggests raw vitality and masculinity, qualities that the Princess unconsciously seeks and then rejects. The symbolic setting in "The Princess" is an essential, organic part of the story, and the chief effect of the tale is achieved through this symbol.

"The Man Who Loved Islands" is another Lawrence story in which the setting is essentially symbolic, with the various islands functioning as successive symbols of the man's growing misanthropy and nihilism. The story, like "Two Blue Birds," begins in the manner of a fable. "There was a man who loved islands. He was born on one, but it didn't suit him, as there were too many other people on it, besides himself. He wanted an island all of his own: not necessarily to be alone on it, but to make it a world of his own" (p. 722).

Lawrence adds, "An island, if it is big enough, is no better than

a continent. It has to be really quite small, before it feels like an island; and this story will show how tiny it has to be, before you can presume to fill it with your own personality" (p. 722). The man who loved islands acquires an island with a farm house and several cottages. He sets himself up as lord of the island and his household and busies himself with the material needs of the small group. But things do not quite work out as he desires. The farm loses money, and the servants, who call him "the Master," do not really like him. Though he spends long hours in the library "compiling a book of references to all the flowers mentioned in the Greek and Latin authors" (p. 728), eventually, "the island itself seemed malicious" (p. 730).

So the islander sells his island after four years and moves to a yet smaller island nearby which still belongs to him. On this island there are only a house and two small cottages. The Master takes with him his old carpenter and his wife, a widow and her daughter, and an orphan lad to help the old man. His life is different from the way it was on the old island. "The island was no longer a 'world.' It was a sort of refuge. The islander no longer struggled for anything. He had no need" (p. 743). He spends most of his days in his study working on his book, and the days go by, "without desire, without ennui" (p. 735). But the islander's comfortable state of desirelessness, as Lawrence calls it, is shattered when the widow's daughter pursues him and he becomes her lover. Now his island is "smirched and spoiled" (p. 737), and after staying long enough to marry the girl, who is pregnant, and be with her until she has their baby, he settles the best part of his property on her and leaves for his third island.

Lawrence writes of the third island, "It was just a few acres of

rock away in the north, on the outer fringe of the isles. It was low, it rose low out of the great ocean. There was not a building, not even a tree on it. Only northern sea-turf, a pool of rain-water, a bit of sedge, rock, and sea-birds. Nothing else. Under the weeping wet western sky." (p. 738). As he says, "This was indeed an island" (p. 738). The islander builds a small house on the island and keeps half a dozen sheep and a cat. He doesn't want trees or bushes since they stand up like people and are "too assertive" (p. 740). He fears the approach of a boat because it might mean human contact, and he is shocked by the sound of his own voice. Soon he decides to get rid of the sheep, and he is glad when the cat disappears. His existence descends to a sort of trance-like state, with little awareness of his surroundings or of passing time. "Only he still derived his single satisfaction from being alone, absolutely alone, with the space soaking into him" (pp. 742-743).

Any reminder of humanity nauseates him. The printed letters in a book look "obscene" (p. 743), and he tears the brass label from his stove. The days become cold and gray, with the birds and all other signs of life withdrawing. "'Soon,' he said to himself, 'it will all be gone, and in all these regions nothing will be alive.' He felt a cruel satisfaction in the thought" (p. 744). Then one day it begins snowing continuously, and the islander struggles fiercely to get at his boat, since he feels that if he is to be shut in it must be of his own choice. He succeeds, but that night the snow comes again and a drift builds up to the top of his door. After struggling to get out once again, the islander sees that the snow covers everything. "But his island was gone. Its shape was all changed, great heaping white

hills rose where no hills had been, inaccessible, and they fumed like volcanoes, but with snow powder. He was sickened and overcome" (p. 746). Stumbling back to his house, he waits dumbly, thinking, "You can't win against the elements" (p. 746). So "The Man Who Loved Islands" ends with the almost complete annihilation of the islander's world, a world he had made for himself.

Moynahan says of the islands that they are "on one level, images or mirror reflections of his [the islander's] thought."<sup>47</sup> The individual islands are both symbolic and functional, representing the growing misanthropy and nihilism of the islander and at the same time serving as the setting for the story. The islands as symbolic elements in the story change, reflecting the islander's increasing mental and physical isolation. On the first island the man has isolated himself only to a degree, for he is still surrounded by people and concerned with his farm. On the second island he retreats further, becoming less involved with the world of men. When he is almost brought back into involvement again by the widow's daughter, he reacts by going to the extreme and isolating himself completely on the third island. This small, bleak island, covered with snow, represents the total disintegration of the islander's personality. The retreat to an island implies both physical and mental isolation from the rest of society and from reality, and in Lawrence's story, the islands themselves become representative of that isolation. Lawrence's hero also finds, although too late, that man cannot control nature; he must submit to it. It is through the symbolic islands that Lawrence conveys the main theme of the story, that the individual must live as a part of society, for to cut himself off from his fellow man is fatal.

The very opposite of the frozen northern island is found in the story "Sun," in which the glowing Mediterranean sun is the symbol of warmth and life. In this story a young woman, Juliet, finds that her life becomes meaningful through the integration of her personality with her surroundings. The doctors have ordered Juliet to the sun for her health, and with her two year old son, she dutifully goes to Italy.

One morning in her new house in Italy, Juliet watches the sun rise, "naked and molten," and "so the desire sprang secretly in her to go naked in the sun" (p. 529). She finds a hidden place on a bluff over the sea where she can sun-bathe in private. Lawrence writes, "She could feel the sun penetrating even into her bones; nay, farther, even into her emotions and her thoughts. The dark tensions of her emotion began to give way, the cold dark clots of her thoughts began to dissolve. She was beginning to feel warm right through" (p. 530). When she goes back to the house, she is moving in a haze of physical well-being. She languidly greets her son, who is a tense and anxious child. Taking the boy's clothes off, she rolls him an orange and tells him to play in the sun.

Juliet is no longer a worrisome, overprotective mother, for, as Lawrence puts it, "She was thinking inside herself, of the sun in his splendour, and her mating with him" (p. 532). Her days move in a ritual of sunbathing beside the lone cypress tree on the bluff. Soon she is taking the child with her, watching him play happily in the sun. One day they are startled by a snake, but Juliet remains unfrightened by it. "The curious soothing power of the sun filled her, filled the whole place like a charm, and the snake was part of the place, along with her and the child" (p. 537).



Unexpectedly, Juliet's husband appears one day to visit her from New York. Juliet tells the old servant woman to send him to her, where she and the boy are sunbathing. Maurice, the husband, is nervous and embarrassed at the sight of his wife nude. Lawrence's portrait of the husband projects an image of weakness and impotence. "He was utterly out of the picture, in his dark grey suit and pale grey hat, and his grey, monastic face of a shy business man" (p. 547). Maurice, though, is impressed by the change in Juliet, and he agrees with her that she cannot go back to New York but must stay in the sun.

Juliet is now torn by a desire she has been harboring for a burly peasant she has been noticing in the vicinity. Exuding an aura of earthy vitality, he is the opposite of Maurice. Though they have spoken to each other only briefly, each is aware of the attraction between them. Juliet thinks, "Why shouldn't I meet this man for an hour, and bear his child? Why should I have to identify my life with a man's life? Why not meet him for an hour, as long as the desire lasts, and no more? There is already a spark between us?" (p. 544). But she can see from the look in her husband's eyes that he intends to participate in her new life, too. He agrees to sunbathe with her while he is there, and Juliet knows that her next child will be his. Nevertheless, she regrets her loss of the peasant, for "he would have been a procreative sun-bath to her, and she wanted it" (p. 545).

Clearly, Lawrence's sun has very explicit sexual associations. By extension, it also suggests vitality, warmth, and life as opposed to the sterility and coldness of urban New York. Juliet's transformation by the sun extends to her whole personality and way of living, and she is changed from a tense, nervous, and cold woman to a relaxed

and warmly passionate one. The sun, symbolic of warmth, vitality, and sexuality, is the means of this transformation.

In the story "The Lovely Lady" there is an episode that contains the same theme that dominates "Sun." The girl in the story, Cecilia, goes up on the roof to sunbathe. "It was rather lovely, to bask all one's length like this in warm sun and air. Yes, it was very lovely! It even seemed to melt some of the hard bitterness of her heart, some of that core of unspoken resentment which never dissolved. Luxuriously, she spread herself, so that the sun should touch her limbs fully, fully. If she had no other lover, she should have the sun! She rolled voluptuously" (p. 766).

Moore says that in his last years Lawrence turned to sun worship, partly because he was tuberculous. Moore calls the symbol in "Sun" "the giver of life and the nourisher of the mysteries of sex."<sup>48</sup> Widmer writes that Lawrence saw the sun as a symbol of "fertility, passion, and the golden life."<sup>49</sup> He continues, "More than an artistic device, but less than a formalized religion, Lawrence's sun sacramentalism received elaborate development in the story 'Sun.'"<sup>50</sup> Tedlock says of this story, "The rather commonplace situation of an American woman seeking health on the Mediterranean, develops into a vitalistic marriage with the sun through the intricate interplay of realistic detail with a central symbol that marks Lawrence's best short fiction."<sup>51</sup>

The central symbol in "Sun," like those in the other stories discussed in this chapter, is essential to the story. The symbols in these stories are not imposed upon the plots; they are necessary to them. Nor can the symbols be separated from the stories and examined

as isolated elements. They are organically part of the stories, functioning as both setting and symbol, and in almost every story in this chapter it is through the symbolic setting that the chief effect of the story is achieved.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

D. H. Lawrence saw life in symbolic terms. Often he equated people with the animals they resembled. Roses stood for love, chrysanthemums for love and death. The sun was the symbol of sexuality, and mountains suggested idealism and purity in some cases and rugged vitality in others.

I believe that Lawrence's use of natural symbols can be traced in part to his philosophy. Lawrence advocated a life ruled by man's elemental passions, and, while Lawrence was not a primitivist in the usual sense, he exhibited a certain element of primitivism in his rejection of modern society and his fascination with primitive peoples. It is quite possible, I believe, that Lawrence's use of natural symbolism may be related to the primitivistic aspects of his philosophy, for a basic part of primitive man's life is his contact with nature, and thus he often speaks and thinks in terms of the natural world. It is largely from the natural world that Lawrence drew the symbols that he used to communicate his vision. Mary Freeman recognizes this trait of Lawrence's when she writes, "Lawrence frequently tried to partake of nature's potency by symbolic identification with one of her aspects, much as the primitive tried to partake of the potency of his totem animal."<sup>52</sup> With the exception of "The Rocking Horse Winner," Lawrence's non-natural symbols tend to be of minor importance, with their

significance limited to the specific story in which they appear, as in "The Blue Moccasins," in which the moccasins, a gift from an older woman, become representative of her love for the young man she married. The moccasins as a symbol do not have the depth of meaning of most of Lawrence's natural symbols--the mountains, islands, animals, or sun.

Although he turned to nature for his basic symbols, Lawrence's primary concern was with the individual person and his relationships with others. Man was literally the center of the universe for Lawrence. He formulated a bizarre cosmology that was as unusual if not so complex as that of Yeats. In Fantasia of the Unconscious he wrote, "The Cosmos is nothing but the aggregate of the dead bodies and dead energies of bygone individuals."<sup>53</sup> Also, "And earth, sun, and moon are born only of our death. But it is only their polarized dynamic connection with us who live which sustains them all in their place and maintains them all in their own activities. The inanimate universe rests absolutely on the life-circuit of living creatures, is built upon the arch which spans the duality of living beings."<sup>54</sup> For Lawrence, then, nature was not something separate from man; it was part of the continuum. Nature and man were inextricably bound together, but man was of primary importance.

Lawrence used the symbols he took from nature to illuminate his stories of man and his conflicts and desires. Often these symbols convey the principal meaning of the story, as in "The Princess" or "Sun," and without an understanding of the meaning of the symbol, one misses the point of the story. In other stories, such as "The Shadow in the Rose Garden" and "Wintry Peacock," the natural symbols illustrate part of the theme, and an understanding of these symbols

increases one's appreciation of the stories.

Natural symbolism occurs in Lawrence's novels as much as in his short stories, although I believe that, due to the economy of the form, his short stories contain symbols which are easier to analyze and classify in relation to the story. A study of Lawrence's natural symbolism could well be extended to his novels, for in them he uses many of the techniques and ideas that he uses in his short stories. In Kangaroo the title character takes his name from the animal he resembles, and in The Fox the young man looks like a fox who also appears in the story, suggesting the same sort of animal-human correlation that we find between the girl and the peacock in "Wintry Peacock." In St. Mawr a magnificent horse becomes the symbol of masculine vitality. In the chapter in Women in Love called "Mino" the young tomcat, in his superior attitude towards a female cat, shows Ursula and Birkin the proper relationship of the sexes. The climactic scene at the end of The Rainbow, in which the terrified Ursula is surrounded by a herd of stamping horses, suggests something in the nature of a symbolic recognition by Ursula of the life force. Sons and Lovers contains examples of flower symbolism, and the occupation of Mellors in Lady Chatterley's Lover, like that of the gamekeeper in "The Shades of Spring," has symbolic meaning. In The Man Who Died an escaped cock symbolizes the "escape" of Christ from his former self. As in his short stories, there are examples throughout Lawrence's novels and short novels of natural symbolism.

In an allegorical chapter in Kangaroo Lawrence tries to define the perfect marriage relationship through a fantasied conversation between Harriet and Lovat, characters who resemble very much

D. H. Lawrence and his wife, Freida. Lovat says to Harriet, "And I want you to yield to my mystery and my divination, and let me put my flag of a phoenix rising from a nest in flames in place of that old rose on a field azure." The rose represented the old sentimental love relationship. Harriet replies, "Of course, you lonely phoenix, you are the bird and the ashes and the flames all by yourself."<sup>55</sup> Lawrence's symbolism extended to himself, just as he so often phrased his view of life in symbolic terms, with those terms taken basically from the natural world. It is eminently fitting, I believe, that Lawrence, with his vitalistic philosophy, drew from an elemental part of life, man's contact with nature, one of his chief modes of symbolic expression.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>F. R. Leavis, D. H. Lawrence, Novelist (London, 1955), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Mark Spilka, ed., D. H. Lawrence: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted from the New Republic of Sept. 8, 1952, by Frederick J. Hoffman and Harry T. Moore, eds., The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence (Norman, 1953), p. 45.

<sup>4</sup>Frank Amon, "D. H. Lawrence and the Short Story," The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence, eds., Frederick J. Hoffman and Harry T. Moore (Norman, 1953), p. 222.

<sup>5</sup>William York Tindall, The Literary Symbol (New York, 1955), pp. 12-13.

<sup>6</sup>Tindall, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup>Tindall, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted by E. W. Tedlock, Jr., D. H. Lawrence: Artist and Rebel (Albuquerque, 1963), p. 234.

<sup>9</sup>Quoted by Anthony Beal, ed., D. H. Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism (New York, 1936), p. 157.

<sup>10</sup>Harry T. Moore, The Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence (New York, 1951), p. 152.

<sup>11</sup>Eugene Goodheart, The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence (Chicago, 1963), pp. 43-44.

<sup>12</sup>Mark Spilka, "Was D. H. Lawrence a Symbolist?" Accent, XV (Winter, 1955), pp. 49-60.



- <sup>13</sup>Kingsley Widmer, The Art of Perversity (Seattle, 1962), p. 60.
- <sup>14</sup>Moore, The Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence, p. 152.
- <sup>15</sup>Tedlock, p. 5.
- <sup>16</sup>Tedlock, p. 25.
- <sup>17</sup>E. L. Nicholes, "The 'Symbol of the Sparrow' in The Rainbow by D. H. Lawrence," The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence, eds., Hoffman and Moore, p. 159.
- <sup>18</sup>Widmer, pp. 111-112.
- <sup>19</sup>Raymond Wright, "Lawrence's Non-Human Analogues," Modern Language Notes, 1961, pp. 426-432.
- <sup>20</sup>D. H. Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, Volume Three (New York, 1961), p. 600. All subsequent references to the short stories of D. H. Lawrence will be to these three volumes, and the page numbers will be included in parentheses in the text. The three volumes are paged consecutively.
- <sup>21</sup>Mary Freeman, D. H. Lawrence: A Basic Study of His Ideas (New York, 1955), p. 80.
- <sup>22</sup>Amon, The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence, eds., Hoffman and Moore, p. 234.
- <sup>23</sup>Barbara Seward, The Symbolic Rose (New York, 1960), p. 140.
- <sup>24</sup>Seward, p. 139.
- <sup>25</sup>Widmer, p. 155.
- <sup>26</sup>Widmer, p. 22.
- <sup>27</sup>Widmer, p. 22.
- <sup>28</sup>Widmer, p. 23.
- <sup>29</sup>Julian Moynahan, The Deed of Life (Princeton, 1963), p. 194.

- <sup>30</sup>Amon, The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence, eds., Hoffman and Moore, p. 224.
- <sup>31</sup>Widmer, p. 62.
- <sup>32</sup>Widmer, p. 159.
- <sup>33</sup>Widmer, p. 124.
- <sup>34</sup>Widmer, p. 124.
- <sup>35</sup>Tedlock, p. 23.
- <sup>36</sup>Widmer, p. 111.
- <sup>37</sup>Widmer, p. 111.
- <sup>38</sup>Tedlock, p. 112.
- <sup>39</sup>Moore, The Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence, p. 201.
- <sup>40</sup>Widmer, p. 8.
- <sup>41</sup>Widmer, p. 9.
- <sup>42</sup>Widmer, p. 27.
- <sup>43</sup>Moore, The Intelligent Heart (New York, 1962), p. 432.
- <sup>44</sup>Widmer, p. 84.
- <sup>45</sup>Moore, The Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence, p. 229.
- <sup>46</sup>Moore, The Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence, p. 229.
- <sup>47</sup>Moynahan, p. 190.
- <sup>48</sup>Moore, The Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence, p. 257.
- <sup>49</sup>Widmer, p. 195.
- <sup>50</sup>Widmer, p. 195.
- <sup>51</sup>Tedlock, p. 202.
- <sup>52</sup>Freeman, p. 80.
- <sup>53</sup>D. H. Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious (New York, 1960), p. 182.

<sup>54</sup>Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious, p. 189.

<sup>55</sup>D. H. Lawrence, Kangaroo (New York, 1960), p. 175.

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