not in such cases *know*. The pagans may not be in the outer darkness but we are in the dark about whether they are or not. To be invisibly united to the Church is to be *invisibly* united to her. Now it seems to me that we can say the same of a pagan marriage. In such a case again the second level reality would be missing, the sacramental bond. This is the reason why it is possible in certain extraordinary circumstances for such a marriage to be dissolved.

But once more by-passing the second level it seems to me that by an implicit desire for the sacrament a pagan husband and wife might receive the reality at the fundamental level, the reality of participation in the divine love which unites Christ to his bride, the Church. It must be emphasized, however, that the final reality at the third level is something we cannot detect with any certainty. The Christian cannot even be certain that he himself is in a state of grace, still less can he know about the secret workings of divine love in the soul of a man who shows none of the sacramental signs of that love.

Odious Corollaries in D. H. Lawrence

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

The most serious and perceptive assault on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, in the recent flurry of controversy, issued from Dr Leavis in his review of the Pelican Special which told the story of the trial.[1] Apart from his judgment that it is a bad novel, and the persuasive rationale that he offers there to support this decision, which, though much sharpened and more circumstantial, is essentially the one he reached in his book on Lawrence in 1955, Dr Leavis makes an interesting sociological comment on the significance of the Defence's success. The Prosecution, he observes, was defeated, 'not by the presentment of any sound or compelling case, but by its realization that it was confronted by a new

[1] *The Spectator*, February 17, 1961.

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and confident orthodoxy of enlightenment'. The verdict, in fact, registered a change in the values of educated people—a change which owes a good deal, in ways that it would be instructive to examine, to the deep impact of Lawrence's work on a whole generation, and of Dr Leavis's own faithful interpretation of it (the terms in which the novel was, and is, generally defended, and even *read*, were originally put about by him). Now, if it is true, as it seems to be, that our moral environment has been sensibly modified, so that people brought up on admiration for Lawrence can now carry the day, it is important to insist, as Dr Leavis does in his review, and has always done, on how intimately and indissolubly the worst in Lawrence is related to the best. Any great body of creative fiction contains and expresses a whole conception of life, and it is important to recognize it for what it is, as a whole, and not eclectically. When a writer's authority is such that he can alter sensitivities and modify conscience, one needs to take stock of *all* that he stands for. Henry James spoke once of 'the high and helpful and, as it were, civic use of the imagination—a faculty for the possible fine employments of which in the interest of morality my esteem grows every hour I live.'[2] This is a good definition of what serious novelists have often been engaged in—not simply in entertainment but also in exploring and forming conscience. It is another question how far any novelist, however serious, cannot but affect his reader's moral sensibility—how far, that is, the weary intellectual or the retired gentlewoman is not really being morally blunted and subverted by regular doses of cowboys and gangsters. Lawrence would have expected them to be so, juding by the definitive passage on the power of the novel in *Lady Chatterley's Lover:* 'It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore, the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life: for it is in the *passional* secret places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and freshening. But the novel, like gossip, can also excite spurious sympathies and recoils, mechanical and deadening to the psyche'.[3]

The question may fairly be put, then, as to where, morally, a novelist is leading our sympathies. How is he orientating our sense of humanity?

[2]Preface to *The Lesson of the Master*, etc.
[3]*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, ch. 9.

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What he may claim to stand for, at a philosophical level, may not be at all corroborated by his novels. This need not mean that he is a bad novelist—or a good one. Literary criticism is a different, though related, activity from analysis of the moral and social implications of literature. It is not enough, in evaluating a writer, merely to unearth the bedrock principles about human nature which his work, designedly or not, encourages and accredits. It is, on the other hand, an incomplete judgment which ignores the built-in moral axioms and urgencies in the fictional project. Lawrence, at any rate, in the long essay on 'Education of the People', to be found in *Phoenix*, offers an extended and coherent account of his conception of man and society which is so profoundly consistent with what he presents in his creative practice, and which bears so particularly on those values of spontaneity and independence in personal relationships which are generally supposed to be his most telling benefaction to the common weal,[4] that it is worth examing in some detail. It contains a view of community and family relationships which is taken for granted in his greatest novels. This is something that will have to be demonstrated some other time. All that can be suggested here, as regards the novels, is that they should be read with some awareness of the kind of society which Lawrence unswervingly recommended all his life.

The essay was originally invited, though never published, by the *Times Educational Supplement*, late in 1918. Lawrence, it is also relevant to recall, had been a successful teacher in Croydon from 1908 to 1912, in a then new and well-equipped grammar school. It is this experience which governs some of his passion, but the central issue, in this programme for popular education as much as in all his fiction, is about what it means at all to be a man. The industrial revolution initiated a social and a sexual revolution, and it is in the throes of this triple revolution that Lawrence makes his diagnosis of what is happening to human life. *Women in Love* is perhaps the finest statement of the case. The problem had emerged long before. Since we have mentioned Henry James, *The Bostonians* might be offered, as Lionel Trilling suggests,[5] as among the earliest and most sensitive essays to register the change. 'I wished to write a very *American* tale', we read in the *Notebooks*, 'a tale very characteristic of our social conditions, and I asked myself what was the most salient and peculiar point in our social life. The answer was: the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment

[4]See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (Pelican) pp. 199 ff.
[5]In *The Opposing Self*, pp. 104 ff.

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of sex, the agitation on their behalf'. It turned into a superb novel, as flawless as only Henry James can be, and far better than anything Lawrence ever did. Set just after the Civil War, it is the exciting story of the fight put up by Basil Ransom, an impoverished southerner, to rescue Verena Tarrant, a young *diseuse*, from the clutches of his cousin, Miss Chancellor, who is using the girl's talent to publicize the cause of militant feminism. The study of Olive Chancellor's relationship with Verena is a moving evaluation of sexual disorientation, while Verena's 'inspirational speaking', not to mention her unspeakable father's mesmeric healing, go to make this also a great comic novel. Ransom breaks his cousin's sinister hold over the girl only in the last hectic scene of the book, backstage in the Boston Music Hall, with a packed house baying for the young *diseuse*, by carrying her off to become his wife—to become a private person, to be, according to his old-fashioned lights, truly womanly. His sense that the proper roles of men and women are being subverted is the articulation of the whole drama of the novel. The sexual issue is only the most sensitive and vulnerable point in a complex social situation—ultimately, in the clash between mutually exclusive ideas of human life, which are particularized here in the Boston bluestocking and the gentleman from Mississippi. There is one place, during a walk with Verena in the Central Park, when Ransom's positions become explicit, and this is worth quoting because it is an apt summary of something that Lawrence was always saying: 'The whole generation is womanized; the masculine tone is passing out of the world; it's a feminine, a nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age, an age of hollow phrases and false delicacy and exaggerated solicitudes and coddled sensibilities which, if we don't look out, will usher in the reign of mediocrity, of the feeblest and flattest and the most pretentious that has ever been. The masculine character, the ability to dare and endure, to know and yet not fear reality, to look the world in the face and take it for what it is—a very queer and partly very base mixture—that is what I want to preserve, or rather, as I may say, to recover'.[6]

'Education of the People' is full of that kind of derisive railing at the present age, often accurate, devastating, and very funny. What is of more importance, however, to secure a more inclusive sense of the general morale that Lawrence is promoting here, is to turn to

[6] *The Bostonians*, ch. 34.

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several times and tells a tale, but Lawrence forestalls objections. One of the most important parts of the system is the judging of the children—and if a great deal of power here must pass into the hands of teachers and inspectors, this does not worry him very much: 'better there than in the hands of factory-owners and trades unions'. But the judging is to be done on something a good deal more profound than intelligence quotient—at least, one is never quite sure. He is evidently against producing a meritocracy, and one is with him there. The alternative is presumably to judge, humanely and generously, what environment a child may most flourish in, and his native intelligence, as the primary manifestation of what he is, must be given due attention in the decision. The language that Lawrence uses at this point, however, becomes so exalted that one feels that a good deal more is at stake. His educators are judges of *being*. 'We, the educators, have got to decide for the children: decide the steps of their young fates, seriously and reverently. It is a sacred business, and unless we can act from our deep, believing souls, we'd best not act at all, but leave it to Northcliffe and trades unions. We must choose, with this end in view. We want quality of life . . . Every man himself, according to his true nature . . . We must have an ideal. So let our ideal be living, spontaneous individuality, in every man and woman. Which living, spontaneous individuality, being the hardest thing of all to come at, will need most careful rearing. Educators will take a grave responsibility upon themselves. They will be the priests of life, deep in the wisdom of life. They will be the life-priests of the new era. And the leaders, the inspectors, will be men deeply initiated into the mysteries of life, adepts in the dark mystery of living, fearing nothing but life itself, and subject to nothing but their own reverence for the incalculable life-gesture'. It is, in fact, a hierarchy founded on quality of religious, or quasi-religious, experience (and Lawrence expects generals and industrialists to be in the lowest class). He is quite clear about this: 'the system is primarily religious . . . Our supreme judges and our master professors will be primarily *priests*. Let us not take fright at the word. The true religious faculty is the most powerful and the highest faculty in man . . .the new system will be established upon the living religious faculty in men'. It is difficult not to take fright at this. It is not beatific complacency with the *status quo* in English education which makes one jib. Clearly Lawrence is right—and, as probably most of us agree now, something fairly radical must be done soon to create forms of education that correspond to the present situation. The model that he provides, of this hieratic organ-

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ization, might well appeal to a certain Catholic sense of how society should be run, provided, of course, that the priest-inspectors belonged to the true religion. It is inconceivable, however, that most of the people who have gained, and who are going to gain, in scope and depth of moral awareness, from reading Lawrence, are at all likely to accept his ideas for the reconstruction of our education system. And yet these ideas are deep-seated and prevalent in all his work. It is not only that they come out, say in Birkin, the 'hero' of *Women in Love*, who is in fact a school inspector. It is important to remember, without identifying Birkin altogether with Lawrence himself, that 'Education of the People' is very much the kind of essay that Birkin would have written. More than that, however, is the fact that the constructive insights about the discovery and invention of new social relationships which one so rightly appreciates in Lawrence, and which he so abundantly supplies, cannot easily be disentangled from his basic assumptions and recommendations about the structure of the community. These are not always obvious, but it is not difficult to see that they are so central and so inclusive that they are always active, even though latent. Lawrence often assaults the idea of fraternity, and the paternalism which emerges in various forms throughout his thinking is not something that many people would want to endorse. Here, however, with these priest-inspectors, one has not only paternalism, but something very like a sacral and theocratic community. While one should agree that teachers have, or share in, a responsibility for children which is ultimately of a religious kind, it is surely true that most 'enlightened' people would find it hard to stomach what Lawrence here proposes. Still, he is insisting on something that the best teachers have always done, as part of their vocation, namely, exercising a certain sympathy and vigilance, 'to find out the living nature in each child, so that, ultimately, a man's destiny shall be shaped into the natural form of that man's being, not as now, where children are rammed down into ready-made destinies, like so much canned fish'. That is manifestly part of a fine statement, made with real compassion and vision. All that one is urging is that it cannot be abstracted from the rest of what Lawrence is saying.

When Lawrence comes to discuss the nature of family life, later in the essay, the valuable points he has to make begin to emerge in such an angry barrage of violent and unpalatable generalizations that one comes close to repudiating the whole argument. The treatise on how to bring up babies (it is scarcely anything less), with which this section

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starts, incites him to savage attacks on the over-loving modern mother, doting on her single child: 'babies should invariably be taken away from their modern mothers and given, not to yearning and maternal old maids, but to rather stupid fat women who can't be bothered with them. . . . A mother should have ten strokes with the birch every time she "comes over" with soul or yearning love or aching responsibility. Ten hard, keen, stinging strokes on her bare back, each time'. This is more than silly and eccentric, it is unpleasant and even wicked. There is a certain coarse home-truth buried in it all, but, besides the doubtful taste of this contemptuous picture of obese and indifferent wet-nurses, surely the important point he has to make about a mother's relation to her child is gravely vitiated by that almost exultant injunction to birch her for smothering it with love. This is a critical instance of how ambivalent Lawrence's best insights often are, of how, even in his most telling and generous meanings, some odious corollary is present. What he is out to protect, as always, is the deep life of a human being which is so much more than his intellectual life and which may be, and often is, injured by undue or premature development of his intellectual life. A baby should not be provoked or cajoled into making personal responses, into being self-conscious, too soon. I don't know if this is true or not. It sounds likely enough. The insistence that young children are primarily *creatures*, not yet persons, means that they should be left alone, and not suffer the violation of too hasty domestication in adult manners and sophistication. The child's inner being must be freed from every form of parasitism, and the navel-string of consciousness cut even with violence—or rather, especially with violence. 'Whipping, beating, yes, these alone will thunder into the moribund centres and bring them to life. Sharp, stinging, whipping, keen, fierce smacks, and all the roused fury of reaction in the child, these alone will restore us to psychic health. Away with all mental punishments and reprobation. You *must* rouse the powerful physical reaction of anger, dark flushing anger in the child. You must. You *must* fight him, tooth and nail, if you're going to keep him healthy and alive'. This is not, of course, fodder for those who want to see the flogging of juvenile delinquents, because it is precisely well-behaved children, with their meek and mannerly submissiveness, whom Lawrence here wants to beat into a frenzy of resistance. This will not lead, he thinks, to tense, sullen deadlocks in the family circle. On the contrary, family life, for Lawrence, is miserably unreal and hypocritical unless it is stormy and turbulent. 'A row, a fierce storm in a family, is a natural and healthy thing, which

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we ought even to have the courage to enjoy and exult in, as we can enjoy and exult in a storm of the elements'. It is true that in the more uninhibited and instinctive milieu of working-class life which Lawrence has in mind, arguments flare up and are fought with a virulence of invective which would leave middle-class people nervously exhausted and enemies for life, and leave the combatants as firm friends as ever. Surely, however, even among the English middle-classes, with their tradition of affected deference, children have become as lively and spirited as Lawrence could have wished, without this incitement of animal passion.

'We will have a new education, where a black eye is a sign of honour, and where men strip stark for the fierce business of the fight'. The defiant exhilaration with which Lawrence puts this kind of thing down, his earnestness about it, shows how essentially it belongs to his whole conception of life—to the intimate play of family relations on which all human life is ultimately grounded. His model boy is the cheeky urchin who likes a scrap. His idea of manliness, and the image of society which goes with it, has a good deal in common with the independent pugnacity of the old-time pioneer. His ideal men, indeed, at the close of the essay, could be identified in the opening shots of countless western movies. 'Let them go always ahead of their women, in the endless trek across life. Central, with the wagons, travels the woman, with the children and the whole responsibility of immediate, personal living. And on ahead, scouting, fighting, gathering provision, running on the brink of death and at the tip of the life advance, all the time hovering at the tip of life and on the verge of death, the men, the leaders, the outriders'. The cowboys, in fact. Now, it is all very well to like cheeky urchins and to admire the spirit of the frontier, though whether it is important to stress *this* in England, surrounded as we are by what amounts to a cult of guts and pluck, is another question. Whether it adds up to an adult morale for twentieth-century civilization, and whether it should be allowed to slip into our consciousness along with other, more immediately palatable elements in Lawrence, are questions to which there are obvious answers. It is surely profoundly suspect to propose a morale which images human life as a nomad raid and society as a gipsy camp. One may agree, up to a point, that a certain conflict is a permanent source of progress in human growth. One may even agree that it would be saner to bring hostilities out of the ambuscade of internecine gossip and make people fight out their dislikes with their fists—but only because they might then recognize

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how poisonous and how silly they are. It is easier to see what you are doing when you hit somebody than it is when you only slander him. It is also true that a power of dissent is a cornerstone against all forms of spiritual capitulation. On the other hand, surely, one can let some of the fresh air of passion and energy into the wilted paradises of the suburban palefaces without leading them into the ebullient war-chant of story-book redskins.

That this largely repugnant image of community exerts an influence on Lawrence's creative vision would have to be demonstrated in detail (one might begin by analysing *St Mawr*). To do so would not be to practise the discipline of literary criticism. Literary values are sized up and vindicated independently of the implied morale of a book. But it would be a valid investigation. We can certainly take stock of the moral orientations, of the human intuitions, endorsed by and embedded in a writer's inventions. We can, in fact, appraise the *civic* use that he makes of his imagination. It is at this point, I suggest, that one must ask how far Lawrence's imagination, however liberating and heartening in certain directions, does not, ultimately, nourish conceptions of community and virtue which are not viable, or even permissible, in an enlightened sense of civilization. The presence of reactionary minds may be salutary, but one must recognize them for what they are.

Three poems

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

HOSPITAL

Observe the hours which seem to stand
Between these beds and pause until
A shriek breaks through the time to show
That humankind is suffering still.

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