

The Internal Travel Towards *Jouissance*

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All along his literary career, D.H. Lawrence has been fascinated by the exploration of the depths of the soul; this is how he was led to devote two theoretical essays to the issue – “Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious” (1921) and “Fantasia of the Unconscious” (1922) – and most of his novels and short stories can be regarded as experiments in approaching what he intuited as being the unconscious. Interestingly enough, a close reading of his narrative works leads us to realise that Lawrence the writer goes far beyond the conclusions of Lawrence the theorist. A lot of narrative works dramatically display characters who are struggling when they initiate an internal travel, a descent into the underworld of their soul, and the discoveries they make about their inner self open to a mystery that the discursive essays cannot manage to exhaust. A lot of Lawrence’s characters are travellers. It is doubtless that when Lawrence represents them on a journey, their geographical itinerary also constitutes a spatial metaphor of their inner progress towards something elementary, a nucleus of mystery that language can only distort or fix in trying to capture it. As aware as Lawrence is of this risk, what can he do in order to communicate what this mystery is? This is what I should like to focus on in this paper – on Lawrence’s representation of the inner experience. However mysterious and ineffable this irreducible nucleus of darkness may be, Lawrence has recourse to metaphors and poetry’s magic power of evocation to suggest to his reader what it is.

Most commentators acknowledge that the Lawrencian initiatory travel leads to an experience of intense vitality; nevertheless some characters seem strangely attracted to what they fear whereas others reject what could make them much happier. Besides, one must not set aside a story such as “The Woman Who Rode Away” in which the heroine’s journey towards death really seems to contradict an affirmation of life and thus represents a challenge for interpretation. At first sight, the characters that Lawrence makes die would embody a failure in the achievement of a better life. On the other hand, how can we explain the fact that the same metaphors keep cropping up in descriptions of death and moments of ecstatic phallic vital connection? We may assume spontaneously that the life drive, *Eros*, is associated with creation and conservation and therefore contrasts with *Thanatos*, the death drive that can threaten the integrity of the subject. In fact, Lawrence’s oeuvre demonstrates a more complex connection between *Eros* and *Thanatos*. *Eros* is related to life, but from a certain point of view – the one of mystics – it does not necessarily contrast with *Thanatos*. Let us remember that the expression “little death” is used to refer to orgasm. As for Georges Bataille, another specialist of eroticism, who studied the resemblance between the erotic apex and the mystic experience, he defined eroticism as “l’affirmation de la vie jusque dans la mort” [the affirmation of life even in death itself].¹

My hypothesis is that the internal travel of Lawrence’s characters leads to a mystic experience the ambiguity of which can be clarified thanks to the Lacanian notion of *jouissance*. We are therefore going to examine five examples extracted from several fictions of Lawrence which demonstrate some convergences with Lacan’s theory.

¹ Bataille, Georges. *L’Erotisme: Œuvres Complètes vol. X* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 17.

First convergence: the *jouissance* of being

It is impossible to find a satisfactory equivalent in English of the French word *jouissance*. In the common meaning of the term, it designates an intense pleasure, either intellectual or sensual. In this precise sense, the verb *jouir* can be translated by “to enjoy”; now let us examine how this enjoyment is depicted in “Sun” (CSS 528-545).

“Sun” evokes the geographical travel of Juliet, from New York to Mediterranean Europe, and this geographical travel is rapidly recovered by a symbolic itinerary; the geographical travel converts itself into a temporal travel from the new continent and its modern life (with all the negative connotations they carry in Lawrence’s universe) to the old continent, the place where it is possible to trace the origin of primitive religions, a sacred a-historical time when men used to live in harmony with nature.

Comparing the beginning and the end of the story reveals Juliet’s metamorphosis. The narrator states: “She was another person” (533). She belonged to the same world of greyness than her husband: “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” (540); she now belongs to a world of warm colours: “rosy, rosy and turning to gold” (533), “pink,” “blond,” “pomegranate scarlet” (534). She was made of metal: “the iron that had gone into her soul” (528); she is now associated with organic metaphors: “like a flower” (532), “pear-shaped breasts” (537), “quick as a serpent” (535). The hard, metal-like, cold core inside herself alchemically transformed into something soft, beating and alive. She was unhappy and suffered from “that little civilised tension” (534) associated with want, she is now happy since :

Something deep inside her unfolded and relaxed, and she was given. By some mysterious power inside her, deeper than her known consciousness and will, she was put into connection with the sun, and the stream flowed of itself, from her womb. (535)

In “Sun”, the disappearance of ego, associated with tension, anxiety, weariness and unhappiness is experienced in a euphoric manner.

Juliet sat down by the cypress tree and took off her clothes. The contorted cactus made a forest, hideous yet fascinating, about her. She sat and *offered her bosom to the sun*, sighing, even now, with *a certain hard pain*, against the *cruelty of having to give herself*.

But the sun marched in blue heaven and sent down his rays as he went. She felt *the soft air of the sea* on her breasts, that seemed as if they would never ripen. But she hardly felt the sun. Fruits that would wither and not mature, her breasts.

Soon, however, she felt the sun *inside* them, warmer than ever love had been, *warmer than milk or the hands of her baby*. At last, at last her breasts were like long white grapes in the hot sun.

She slid off all her clothes and lay naked in the sun, and as she lay she looked up through her fingers at the central sun, his *blue pulsing roundness*, whose outer edges streamed brilliance. *Pulsing with marvellous blue*, and *alive*, and streaming *white fire* from his edges, the sun! He faced down to her with his look of *blue fire*, and enveloped her breasts and her face, her throat, her tired belly, her knees, her thighs and her feet.

She lay with shut eyes, the colour of *rosy flame* through her lids. It was too much. She reached and put leaves over her eyes. Then she lay again, like a long white gourd in the sun, that must ripen to gold.

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. Turning over, she let her shoulders *dissolve* in the sun, her loins, the backs of her thighs, even her heels. And she lay half stunned with wonder at the thing that was happening to her. Her weary, chilled heart was *melting*, and, in *melting*, *evaporating*. (my italics; 530-531)

Several clues allow us to identify this extract as the description of a mystical experience. Having taken off her clothes, which can symbolise the abandonment of profane bonds, she steps into a secret spot. There, she is surrounded by cactuses; thus, she seems to embody a female sacrificial victim placed within a barrier that separates her from the profane world like Brunhilde or Cassiopeia. There she lies next to a cypress tree, a sacred tree that contains the mysterious knowledge of the primitive phallic religions as developed in the poem “Cypresses” (CP 234-236). Two vertical links between the earth and the sky designate this place as the centre of all connections: while the tree springs

in the direction of heaven, the sun pours its beneficial light upon her. There she offers her body to the god-sun; having to “give herself” is referred as a “pain” since abandoning the old, hard and painful ego is a difficult yielding. Lawrence describes this abandonment as a sacrifice of the hard ego; the new, organic and happy self can then be released.

Lawrence has recourse to metaphors of liquefaction and evaporation to suggest the death of her personal self. In “Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious” Lawrence lists the poles of the unconscious and situates the wilful poles at the back of the body; in “Sun,” they “dissolve” one after the other. Juliet is lead into a cosmological synaesthetic new mode of being which designates this scene as the representation of a mystical experience. The internal and the external become indistinct, everything becomes fluid, she becomes permeable and the rhythm of the sentences mimes the gradation of her transformation. Elements mingle to the point where the sun is described as a “blue fire” and “milk.” The mingling of the wind and the water in “the soft air of the sea” echoes the evaporation of her own body. She is now part of the cosmos and aware of the impersonal “dark flow” (535) pulsing within her.

The sun is referred to as a he, as a lover in the text. However, it is also compared to a “rosy flame” and a “pulsing roundness”, echoing and fusing with the breasts of the heroine. Euphoria is suggested by the image of milk falling from heaven. The mention of her baby’s hands complete the effect of motherly atmosphere. It is now that the convergence with Lacan’s description of the first *jouissance* reveals itself.

The contact with the mother’s breasts, with her strokes, and her warmth that envelops the body of her baby provide it with a sensation of well-being comparable to pre-castration life within the *sein* of the mother. The word *sein* in French means both “breast” and “womb”; in addition, the word *mer* (sea) is a homonym of *mère* (mother), thus we can symbolically associate images of liquefaction with the motherly. The circularity of the sacred space has a

connection with the motherly *sein*; it is interesting to note that this symbolism is acknowledged by historians of religion too (Getty). In Lacan's understanding of the Oedipal complex, not only the mother responds to the need and demand of the child, but also brings a surplus of pleasure – this surplus beyond the plain contentment of the need is what Lacan calls *jouissance*. The child imagines that if its mother provides it with *jouissance*, it is because she must lack something – Lacan calls the missing object “phallus”. The phallus is not the penis, it is something that exists in the imaginary register; it is not what men have and women lack but it is the signifier of the lack for every single subject (although they miss it in different ways, according to the gender they identify with). The phallus designates the imaginary original completeness the subject believes he or she lost. At this stage of the Oedipal complex, Lacan states that the infant believes that it *is* the phallus of the mother, it experiences no distinction between itself and the body of the mother. Yet, later on, the infant discovers the “name/no of the father” (“le Nom/Non du Père”) and it is the end of bliss. Lacan's pun states that the “name of the father” is also the “no”, that is to say the “law of the father”, in other words the castrating rule that forbids the access to the body of the mother, what separates the child from an original completeness and which is necessary to enter the realm of the signifier, the profane realm of discontinuity. The subject can only build itself through the separation/ distinction from the body of the mother, the ineffable realm of immanent continuity.

From this point of view, “Sun” can be read as an example of *jouissance* of being, of becoming again the phallus of the mother in order to re-encounter the lost immanent completeness. “Sun” displays mythically the recovery of the prelapsarian state anterior to castration and the building of the separated subject. In a first instance, *jouissance* can be defined as the intense enjoyment of one's being entailing the release of the tension of want, and the expanding of

self into cosmic impersonality. However, a sacrifice is required, the death of the “old stable ego.”

The erotic atmosphere of the quoted extract is also distinctly perceptible. This leads us to examine now a second acceptance of the word *jouissance* – it can also refer to the intense feeling during the apex of sexual intercourse.

Second convergence: orgasm and the feminine *jouissance*

The Plumed Serpent too displays the itinerary of a heroine in the process of a change of being. Yet this time, it does not go without any resistance. Deep down she can feel the phallic power of Mexico, the power of the dark snake buried in the soil of this land. Sometimes she perceives it as fascinating and sometimes as unbearably intruding into her autonomy. During intimacy (*PS* 421-423), while Kate is seeking for the “frictional, irritant sensation,” Cipriano seems to encourage her into another way of experiencing orgasm. Something described as “hot springs of water that gashed up, so noiseless, so soft, yet so powerful, with a sort of secret potency.” Therefore, the “electric female ecstasy,” the “spasms” and the hard “beak-like friction” contrast with the “soft, heavy, hot flow, when she was like a fountain.” Lawrence introduces in this passage his rejection of clitoral orgasm and praise of the vaginal one. In Lawrence’s logic, the clitoral orgasm is superficial; he speaks of: “this foam-effervescence” and of “its strange externality”; in a word, clitoral orgasm is comparable to masturbation. Lawrence rejects this type of orgasm because instead of questioning the ego it reinforces its introverted self-sufficiency by leaving the subject in control. The problem is that there is no real connection between partners, nor even between the subject and the rest of the world. Lawrence only exalts what touches the inside and what contributes to connect the individuals together. He reproaches clitoral orgasm as being a way for women to have sex without abandoning themselves. On the contrary, vaginal

orgasm brings something more, and paradoxically, it brings more because one loses more; only this kind of orgasm can question the personal self. It is the opposite of a grip of the will: “she was open to him.” It is contrary to tension: “she had to let be,” “she had to leave him,” “she had to yield before it.” And what the woman yields before is not the man nor the penis but the power of the phallus, the connection to the cosmos. “We belong neither to men nor our children nor even ourselves but to the sun” (*CP* 525). The internal yielding is an opening of the being to something beyond pleasure – it is *jouissance*.

In this extract, Lawrence refers to it as being something “subterranean,” something related to the great chthonian forces. Now, historians of religion acknowledge that for the Ancients, earth symbols and the snake that lives in the depths of the earth are to be related with the most ancient divinity, the mother-goddess, called *Magna Mater* by the Romans. Lawrence insists on the mystery of this “dark” force, he uses the words “untellable,” “unconscious,” “impersonal presence”; to recapitulate, what is in question here is “a mindless communion of the blood.”

All of this receives an interesting light when put in parallel with Lacan’s seminar about the feminine *jouissance* (*S XX*). In this text, Lacan establishes that women are able to know another sort of *jouissance*, a *jouissance* “beyond the phallus.” Effectively, in Lacan’s theory, men and women are different because they build differently their gender function in relation to the phallus. Whereas men consider that they have/are deprived of the phallus, women do not situate themselves in this problematic since they do not consider they ever had it. The woman is said to be “*pas toute*” (not whole). According to Lacan, the phallus is a signifier and women do not have it, so they do not belong to the symbolic realm of language. In the vocabulary of religious ethnography one could say that women do not belong entirely to the profane world; something sacred (secret) in them resists conceptualization for it is something “beyond” language. Lacan asserts that women cannot *know* anything about their

jouissance. They can only feel it because since it is something “beyond the phallus,” it is beyond the signifier. Being “not whole”, women can have a “surplus” of *jouissance*.

If Kate struggles in accepting this new kind of orgasm, it is because she wants to keep control over herself. She refuses to surrender to the impersonal flow that carries Cipriano, Ramon, and Teresa. Paradoxically, in Lawrence’s view, modern women resist the feminine specific mode of being. They act like men, they define themselves as castrated and fear what can take them away from the profane realm of identities and oppositions, the realm of language. According to Lacan, the phrase “clitoral *jouissance*” is a contradiction in terms. There can be a clitoral orgasm but the *jouissance* is the experience of the not-whole, it is something beyond. This leads us to our next example.

Third convergence: *jouissance* can also be experienced by men

Lacan eventually identifies *jouissance* to the mystical ecstasy. He reproaches nineteenth century psychiatrists like Charcot to have reduced mysticism to sexuality, whereas it should be the other way round. He writes:

Mysticism [...] is something serious, about which several people inform us – most often women, or bright people like Saint John of the Cross, because one is not obliged, when one is male, to situate oneself on the side of [the phallic function]. One can also situate oneself on the side of the not-whole. There are men who are just as good as women. It happens. And who also feel just fine about it. (*SEX* 76)

This can enlighten the scene in “The Living Huitzilopochtli” of the *Plumed Serpent* when Ramon lays on his hands on each of Cipriano’s energetic poles in order to revive the unconscious energies in his body (*PS* 367-369). Cipriano’s experience is described through a gradual penetration into a “living darkness” inside him: “In Cipriano, another circle of darkness had started slowly to revolve, from his heart. It swung in widening rounds, like a greater sleep”; further it is also written: “he was a man without a head, moving like a dark wind over the face of the dark waters [...] the breath upon the waters was

sinking into the waters, there was no more utterance.” Once again, the bottom of the experience is referred to in terms of darkness and liquefaction while waters almost mingle with the air. At the end of the internal journey, in the deepest layers of the self, the ego almost evaporates. At the end, the darkness of the internal travel resolves into silence, Cipriano becomes unable to answer Ramon’s ritual question “Is it dark?” because he has passed beyond: “And both men passed into perfect unconsciousness, Cipriano within the *womb* of undisturbed creation, Ramon in the *death* sleep.” (my italics)

Here *Jouissance* is depicted as a sort of “death” related to “creation,” the internal travel is referred as a passage through a second womb. This enables us to see how sexual images participate to describe a mystical experience where the death of ego gives way to the birth of a new self. Because it is a mystical death, this travel through the feminine *jouissance*, through the motherly creation, can also be experienced by men.

Yet we can go further and acknowledge that Lacan made other statements about *jouissance*, such as the fact that *jouissance* being beyond pleasure (pleasure is the satisfaction of a need), being a surplus, being untenable (“unbearable” as it is said in “Sun”), it can therefore be absolutely compatible with pain.

Fourth convergence: the painful excess of *jouissance*

Two passages are striking in the “Horse-Dealer’s Daughter” (CSS 441-457) because they are symmetrical, while they tackle, in appearance, opposite feelings. The first passage describes the moment when Jack goes into the pond to rescue Mabel who is trying to drown herself (449-450). Soon, he finds himself sinking progressively into the “muddy,” “cold” and, above all, “dark” waters. The vocabulary suggesting the anguish and the horror fills the text. Lawrence devotes a particular care to enumerate the parts of the body as they

are getting immersed one after the other; this gradation recalls “Sun” and the last extract I quoted. This is to show that the travel towards the depths of the waters corresponds here one more time to a travel towards the unconscious through successive stages. The fear of death – real death – dominates this passage, but something even more anguishing is suggested. So far, we have described passages where *jouissance* was a regenerative travel through a mystical death from which resulted a new birth. In “The Horse-Dealer’s Daughter,” the immersion into waters, which presents itself as a travel towards the feminine, turns into a descent into hell and Jack becomes an avatar of Orpheus going to rescue Eurydice. The anguish results from the fact that the woman, the object of desire, ends up attracting the man into a feminine threatening element that soon evokes a mouth, or a devouring and suffocating womb. The image of the loving mother has reversed into a capturing avid monster. The feeling of uncanny results here from the reversal of the attractive into the horrible.

In the second passage (452-457), once Jack has resuscitated Mabel and she has realized that he saved her, she bursts out into tears and cries: “You love me!” The whole scene is once again told from Jack’s viewpoint. Words such as “afraid” and “horrible” echo with the pond scene. Although Jack is repelled by the woman, he feels a mysterious force that weakens him and prevents him from releasing himself from her “clutching.” The smell coming from her hair reminds him of death: “he smelt the horrid stagnant smell of that water,” and he feels the danger of the feminine going to clasp him once again, all the more that this time, he feels that his will to survive is going to surrender.

Now there are clues that allow us to identify this scene as one of *jouissance*: “it was over. He had crossed over the gulf to her.” This marks a passing, a radical change. Here again, the vocabulary of abandonment fills the text: “he gave way,” “his soul seemed to melt,” “his heart yield towards her.” Images of liquefaction appear again with all the remarks about tears that are

compared to “a slow fountain coming up.” Following the tears, elements mingle into each other: “his heart seemed to burn and melt away in his breast”, his will has given up and he is driven into *jouissance*.

However, while in “Sun,” the passing from solid to liquid state was easy, in this extract, the resistance of the ego causes a violent contradiction: he was “torn open” and “ripped off.” Until the end, love is something unwanted, rejected, something which his will tries to resist. Love is an impersonal force that started to take a grip on him during his travel into the dark waters of his unconscious. *Eros* is experienced as an unbearable surplus of emotion, something far beyond what is felt in normal life, something which can group both pain and untellable joy. The burst of *jouissance* appears even more clearly than in the previous extracts we have examined as a taste of death. The mystical death can be terrifying and suffocating and, paradoxically, also lead to love.

This does not appear as paradoxical when reading Lacan, who states that *jouissance* is not the satisfaction of a need, but rather the opposite, the satisfaction of the death drive. The death drive is the drive towards the decomposition of the ego. The hero, like those who pass through Hell or the womb of a monster, resurrects as a new being. Jack is reborn as accepting to be the phallus, the signifier of the lost object – the womb.

Fifth convergence: *Jouissance* as mythological death

I have been dealing with symbolical death so far. Yet “The Woman Who Rode Away” (CSS 546-581) tells the story of a real journey followed by an internal change and real death.

From the beginning, the heroine feels a lack in her life. She is unsatisfied and unhappy, she has the feeling that she is just passing by real life: “Deadness within deadness” (547), there is a lack in her life. This is how desire awakens

in her, soon she feels strongly attracted to what is *beyond* the mountains. She is aware that the Indians are dangerous: “they kill a missionary at sight. And where a missionary can’t get, nobody can” (549), and the narrator’s irony is perceptible when he writes that “She was overcome by a foolish romanticism” (549), but at the same time, he suggests that she never discovered the physical side of life, something essential to feel complete. Hence, the Indians, with “their own savage customs and religion” and “their savage’s bare legs” (549), appear as the holders of a sacred sensual wisdom. She is attracted to their physical way of being, in spite of the danger or rather, I should say, *because* of the danger.

During her journey in the mountain, she passes through the different stages of an elevation ritual. Her ascension takes her far from civilisation, towards the wilderness and the desert. All along her way, she feels that she is sustained by “a strange elation” (552). Her joy is compared to “a drink of cold water to one who is very thirsty” (552). While water itself is the response to a need (thirst), the coldness of the water is something in surplus; *jouissance* is surplus. This feeling is connected to another feeling: “like a woman who has died and passed beyond”, something that provoked “a great crash at the centre of herself, which was the crash of her own death. Or else it was a crash at the centre of the earth, and [it] meant something big and mysterious” (552). So while she goes towards the sky, she feels somehow more connected to chthonian forces.

Eventually, she manages to join the Chilchuis’ village. She is submitted to a ritual which she partially understands but the reader can guess that it describes something like the Aztec fertility rituals who consecrated a consenting victim and worshipped her for several weeks before finally sacrificing him or her at the winter solstice. This kind of rituals is depicted in *The Golden Bough* (Frazer 47: 3) and it is known that Lawrence read this book before he wrote “The Woman Who Rode Away”. This story was sometimes

interpreted as a sadistic treatment Lawrence wanted to inflict on women in a moment of revengeful misogyny (Millet, 285-293) but this kind of reading does not take Lawrence's interest in the sacred and pagan religions seriously enough. It is important to note that the heroine becomes gradually more and more consenting. The drugs and a mysterious force emanating from the Indians' presence entail a new way of perceiving reality:

a sort of heightened, mystic acuteness and a feeling as if she were diffusing out deliciously into the harmony of things. This at length became the only state of consciousness she really recognised: this exquisite sense of bleeding out into the higher beauty and harmony of things. (572)

She can feel her soul becoming liquid and so subtle that she can hear noises which are normally not perceptible. and the following text is very close to the description of what Mircea Eliade calls a "shamanic travel". The shaman, with the help of hunger, tiredness and drugs manages to put himself into another way of perceiving reality. At the apex of his trance he can feel that his soul becomes able to take off his body and fly in the sky.

This slow preparation leading to the death of her old being explains why, during the sacrifice, she does not demonstrate any fear. She is taken at the top of a mountain into a cave which suggests a gigantic threatening mouth: a "fanged inverted pinnacle of ice, hanging from the lip of the dark precipice above" (579). Now the woman is going to undertake her greatest journey, the one through the monster's stomach. The naked priest approaches her and the story stops right at the moment when he is going to stab her to death, but also the moment when the sun rays are going to reach the sacrificial stone on which she is lain. Can we say that this final death is a representation of *jouissance*? Mythically yes, and it is probably the only way to read "The Woman Who Rode Away" – as a myth. With this myth, Lawrence would suggest that the ultimate significance of desire is the death drive. Besides, this death is not an end according to the Chilchuis' beliefs; it is meant to complete the final metamorphosis of the woman. Commentators often remembered that the white woman's death is meant to pass the mastery "from race to race," to quote the

last sentence of the story. Yet who is the author of this sentence? Is it the narrator who sometimes comments on the heroine's thoughts or is it the heroine herself, this woman who suffers from a "foolish romanticism" (549) and thinks that the Indians "hate" the white (571-572)? What is certain is that according to the Chilchuis' mythology, if men are "the fire of and the day-time" and "women are the spaces between the stars at night" (570), the invisible that relates what is visible for the eyes, the sacred victim wears a blue dress because she has to *be* the wind. The sacrifice will enable her to become the most fluid element and the messenger from the earth to the sun, the cosmic connection, the great phallus of the universe. Her sacrifice will become the redemption, the new alliance of the Chilchui people with its gods.

To speak in Lacanian terms, the mystic travels in the reverse way than that of the subject, he goes backward through the different Oedipal stages, questions the image of his self as a whole, and he swaps the problematic of having the phallus with being the phallus, the symbol of the unnamed mysterious sacred harmony of things in order to reach "the Thing," mythically represented as the body of the mother.

To insist on the interpretation that *jouissance*, as the simultaneous desire for joy and death, is what Lawrence tries to suggest in his fictions, we can now have a look back at "Sun." Once the woman is initiated, she looks at men who are not enlightened as she is and it is written: "There was a little soft white core of fear, like a snail in a shell, where the soul of the men cowered in fear of death, and in fear of the natural blaze of life" (533). Death drive and joy are combined in *jouissance* for the mystic does not fear her or his sacrifice.

The notion of *jouissance* conceived by Lacan has the advantage of reconciling the philosophical analysis of desire with what we know of the ancient pagan phallic cults. Therefore, as D.H. Lawrence was interested in both, this notion enables us to shed a different light on his fictions. It gives account for:

1) death as an image of what a surplus of life can be, beyond imagination, beyond language. Death becomes the image *par excellence* because above all, it is the death of mental consciousness that holds our individuality as a whole, it is the entry into a mystical ecstasy (from *ek* and *stasis*: “out of being”);

2) Lawrence’s fascination for female characters. According to him, the final revelation is a recognition of one’s feminine mode of being, which can also be experienced by certain men. It reveals in Lawrence’s imagination the modes of nostalgia for a mythical original immanence symbolized by the infant in the *sein* of the mother;

3) the phallus is not the organ that biology teaches us to consider as the male counterpart of female genitalia but a symbol. It is the signifier that points at what we imagine to be our lost connection with immanence.

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