

**ÇANKAYA UNIVERSITY
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MASTER THESIS

**SYMBOLS OF NATURE AND GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND THEIR
RELATION TO BELIEFES ON DEATH IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S *LAST
POEMS***

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Title of the Thesis: **SYMBOLS OF NATURE AND GREEK MYTHOLOGY
AND THEIR RELATION TO BELIEVES ON DEATH IN D. H.
LAWRENCE'S LAST POEMS**

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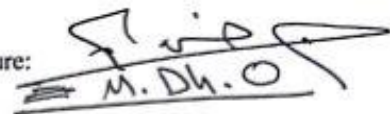


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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on the poetry written by D. H. Lawrence in his last three months, posthumously called *Last Poems*. It will argue, firstly, how Lawrence's inspiration and approach changed considerably around the time of his death. Through his study of ancient cultures, he came to believe that his long-held views on morality and the intellect, his honor for the body, were prefigured in such civilizations as the Minoans and Etruscans. The *Last Poems* show that he now puts his beliefs in a new and broader historical perspective. Secondly, by focusing on Lawrence's symbolism, drawn broadly from nature and mythology, the thesis will show how his deepening knowledge of these ancient sources of inspiration contribute to his poetry. The Introduction of the thesis presents the argument and gives some biographical information. Chapter two analyses and discusses the symbols of nature and Greek mythology in this collection, showing that they too take their inspiration from Pre-Socratic thoughts and ideas of life and death. Lawrence believed in a life-force of nature which was vast and impersonal (oblivion), but a guarantee of continuing existence. The symbols of Greek mythology show Lawrence's response to the old beliefs, heroes and kings of the archaic civilizations. There is no doubt that the reality of death was the focus of his thoughts, driving him to deepen his approach during this period. This thesis also discusses *Apocalypse*, Lawrence's only book written around the time of the *Last Poems*, in order to highlight Lawrence's use of key apocalyptic symbols in his late poems. The concluding chapter draws together Lawrence's source of hope, and the renewing of the body, and his new direction questioning immortality and different kinds of renewal, the new life.

KEY WORDS: D. H. Lawrence, *Last Poems*, Nature, Greek mythology, *Apocalypse*.

ÖZ

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Bu tez D. H. Lawrence'ın yaşamının son üç ayında kaleme aldığı şiirleri içeren *Last Poems* (Son Şiirler) kitabını incelemektedir. İlk olarak, Lawrence'ın ölüme yaklaştığı sırada ilham kaynağının ve ölüme karşı tutumunun nasıl değiştiği ele alınacaktır. Lawrence eski kültürleri incelediğinde, kendi etik ve akıl konusundaki görüşlerinin ve bedene verdiği değerlerin Minoa ve Etrüsk kültürlerinde olduğunu fark eder. *Last Poems* şairin kendi düşüncelerini yeni ve daha geniş bir tarihsel çerçevede değerlendirdiğini gösterir. İkinci olarak tez, Lawrence'ın kullandığı doğa ve mitolojiye dair sembollerin şairin şiirlerine sağladığı ilhamı ve kattığı değeri ele alacaktır. Tezin giriş bölümü Lawrence ile ilgili biyografik bilgi ve tezin tartışma konusunu içerir. İkinci bölüm, son şiirlerdeki doğa sembollerini ve Yunan mitolojisine yapılan referansları ele alarak şairin Sokrates öncesi yaşam ve ölüm hakkındaki düşüncelerden nasıl ilham aldığına ortaya koyar. Lawrence engin doğanın, yaşam gücü ve varlığın sürekliliğinin bir garantisi olduğuna inanır. Yunan mitolojisiyle ilgili semboller şairin eski inançlara olan ilgisini göstermektedir. Hiç şüphesiz, ölümün gerçekliği şairin düşüncelerinin temelini oluşturur ve düşünceleri bu dönemde daha derinlik kazanır. Bu tez, Lawrence'ın *Apocalypse* adlı kitabını da şairin son dönem şiirlerinde kullandığı sembolleri açıklamak için ele alır. Son bölüm Lawrence'ın umut, bedenin yenilenmesi ve ölümsüzlük ile ilgili düşünceleri inceler.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER: D. H. Lawrence, *Last Poems*, Doğa, Yunan Mitolojisi, *Apocalypse*.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1:1. Thesis Statement and Introduction

This thesis will argue that David Herbert Lawrence's *Last Poems* show the poet's approach to the idea of death through his study of ancient cultures. He came to believe that his long-held views on morality and the intellect, his honor for the body, were prefigured in such civilizations as the Minoans and Etruscans. The *Last Poems* show that he now puts his beliefs in a new and broader historical perspective. By focusing on Lawrence's symbolism, drawn broadly from nature and mythology, the thesis will show how his deepening knowledge of these ancient sources of inspiration contribute to and enrich his poetry. After his diagnosis with tuberculosis, the collection was written in the last three months of his life in 1929, when he was 44 years old.

Lawrence gains many new ideas, and changes after reading about ancient civilizations, above all John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*,¹ which he read in 1915, 1926 and 1929 in all its three editions, and the *Five Stages of Greek Religion* by Gilbert Murray. As Bethan Jones writes, Burnet's books made "such impression on Lawrence that he felt compelled to revise his own philosophical writing in the light of his newfound insights" (Jones, 172). Lawrence had read D. Randall-Maclver's *Villanovans and Early Etruscan*, and Pericle Ducati's *Etruria Antica* (Burgess, 171). Lawrence now seeks to set his convictions in a wide sweep of the history of ideas, identifying above all with the civilizations before Socrates. Burgess

¹ Bethan Jones writes: "Lawrence returned to the book regularly: he had a copy in America in 1922-3 and left it there; he bought a copy in London in 1926, and then had to ask for it again in 1929 (in a letter of 10 October), when engaged on the writing of his last book, *Apocalypse*." Burnet's three-editions appeared in 1892, 1908, and 1920.

argues that "[Lawrence] needed the Etruscans more than they needed him" (171). It was in mind that he visited the Etruscan tombs and the shrines and statues of ancient times. He sought to understand the ancient societies still existing in his day, the Indo-American society. His visit to New Mexico was in September 1922² and he stayed in Taos less than two years. He found that these people believed, as he did, in the eternity of the body as well as the soul. It is clear that ancient man and society which did not become the focus of Lawrence's differenticle between the physical and intellectual.

The ancient societies and the tribal groups visited by Lawrence in America were strongly related to his world-view. As David Ellis writes Lawrence was impressed by "the way [the American-Indians] were able to avoid the fatal matter/spirit, body/soul, dualism of Western culture by treating their gods as not '*in*' or '*behind*' the natural world but '*identical*' with it" (Ellis, 67, Italics are mine). Lawrence writes, for example, that he witnessed a gathering which he described as "a kind of primitive happening in which dance is a spontaneous release of the cosmic energy, a segment of the "untellable flood of creation", with "no beginning and no end" with "no division between actor and the audience [and there is] absolutely no judgment [. . .] because there is nothing outside it to judge it" (Fass, 124). What we find distinctive about the *Last Poems* is Lawrence's moveback to the Pre-Socratic time. The main reason for this is the need felt by Lawrence to put his assertions in a sweeping historical context. He aligns himself with the ancients and thus associates his beliefs with a perpetual struggle within human society. Without hesitation, we can assert that this was one of the boldest transformations in the development of his works, and one which deserves much more critical attention than it has received. Meanwhile, Lawrence links men deeply with nature, and combines them as they are one. Importantly, he is also convinced that these cultures lived in an unconscious way of the self and moral laws, and were therefore stronger and naturally tied with the cosmos. Lawrence himself wrote: "I have been wrong, much too Christian, in

² or 1923 in some sources.

my philosophy. These early Greeks have clarified my soul" (qtd. in Jones, 172). What he meant by his reference to a struggle with Christianity lies not only in rejecting belief in doctrines, but in advocating fundamental ethical and conceptual changes: man must honor the body, and respond directly, not intellectually, to nature and the self.

Lawrence identified Plato and Socrates as the source of a mind-body dualism which he rejects. Other Greek philosophers appealed or repelled him in various ways. As will be shown, the *Last Poems* refer frequently to pre-Socratic philosophers and thinkers, like Empedocles, Heraclitus, Anaximander and Anaxagoras, and other philosophers who wrote of life according to a more primal and ancient thinking. For instance, he makes use of the "Wheel theory" of Anaximander, the concept of "wonder" associated with Thales, and above all Heraclitus, famous for seeing life in terms of a paradoxical struggle between attraction and strife.

One reason why Lawrence prefers pre-Socratic philosophy is his critique of the scientific and industrial revolution, and the modern world. As Charles I. Glicksberg writes the "issue being fought out is not over the nature of God, but the nature of man and his destiny on earth" (p. 99). The main problem is caused by the technological developments and urbanized lifestyle, which suppress and distance man from nature.

It is significant that Lawrence deliberately moved to the Mediterranean at this time, a sea full of symbolic significance for him. Sandra Gilbert comments on this in the *Acts of Attention*: "In Lawrence's last years, this old Mediterranean world, its geography, its mythology, its light and shade became the vital cradle of thought, a shrine to which he brought all his religious imaginings" (Gilbert, 1972, 270). Here the poet had a fine view across the sea, often mentioned in the last poems and also in his prose work, the *Apocalypse*. The *Last Poems* belongs to the period of the stay in the south of Europe, "when Lawrence thought that if he remained any longer in the climate of Northern Europe, it would kill him, and he felt weak and close to death" (Lockwood, 164). The work is also written during his stay "at Bandol, a little town of two or three thousand inhabitants close to Toulon" (Aldington, 1950, 339).

1:2. The Two Manuscripts

Two manuscripts were found among Lawrence's papers after Lawrence's death, and they make up the whole of Lawrence's posthumously published poetry. Richard Aldington, who discovered them, called these two books Manuscripts "A" and "B". Manuscript "A" is the subject of this study. These thirty pages in Lawrence's handwriting are filled with poems on both sides of each page, and are without a general title. This manuscript contains sixty-seven poems and begins with the poem: "The Greeks Are Coming!" (Pinto and Roberts, 687), and ends with the bird of renewal "Phoenix" (Pinto and Roberts, 728) which suggests that they were put more or less in an order ready for publication. The "coming" of the Greeks reflects how important ancient Greek civilization has become as an inspiration for Lawrence, while renewal is suggested by the last poem. In terms of subject matter as opposed to inspiration and symbolism, the *Last Poems* is concerned with the theme of death, and depicts a concept of "becoming".

The other manuscript seems to be a continuation of Lawrence's previous collection, *Pansies*. Aldington saw the manuscript "A", not as a continuation of this, or belonging to it, like manuscript "B", but as a new collection of poems written just before Lawrence's death, with death as their main topic. MS. "A" therefore refers to the *Last Poems*, and manuscript "B" refers to *More Pansies*, which was published separately (Pinto and Roberts, 591). Richard Aldington in his Introduction to *Last Poems*, describes how he named the collection: "I felt I have no right to give a fancy title without the MS. authority" (qtd. In Pinto and Roberts, 539).

1:3. Ancient Civilizations and Nature

Lawrence suggests that before Plato and Christianity there was an awareness of a oneness with the cosmos. Steve Taylor suggests, "For ancient man the whole phenomenal world was sacred, every tree, stone, and river was pervaded with divine essence, and so there was no need to invent gods who lived outside the world", or who created it "ex nihilo". Such "gods only became necessary when [man] lost this connection to the cosmos" (Steve Taylor). Such union with the cosmos is the ultimate reality for Lawrence. As he writes in the *Apocalypse*:

The very ancient world was entirely religious and godless. While men still lived in close physical unison, like flocks of birds on the wing, in a close physical oneness, an ancient tribal unison in which the individual was hardly separated out, then the tribe lived breast to breast with a cosmos that was alive and in contact with the flesh of man, there was no room for the good idea. It was not till the individual began to feel separated off [. . .] that the concept of a god arose, to intervene between man, the cosmos, God, and gods enter when man has "fallen" into a sense of separateness and loneliness (Lawrence, 1980, 66).

Fall means a loss of contact with god. Again, as mentioned in the *Apocalypse*:

The greatest difference between us and the pagans lies in our different relation to the cosmos. With us, all is personal. Landscape and the sky, these are to us the delicious background of our personal life, and no more [. . .] To the pagan, landscape and personal background were on the whole indifferent (Lawrence, 1980, 76).

In the *Last Poems* his message comes to be seen as a return to the ancient Greek period, which existed for millennia, before it was obscured by false ideas of the intellect and morality. According to the poet, the connection with the cosmos, the ultimate god, is broken.

Lawrence was a believer in hylozoism, which means "the archaic pre-Socratic conception that all matter is alive, or that life and matter are indivisible" (Gutierrez, 1978,178). This made him enchanted by the old civilizations thinking that they appreciate this concept more than the modern cultures. Lawrence synthesizes the symbols of Greek myths with the symbols of nature to build his more modern conception of the divine and death. Clearly, myths and nature are related because, as Greek beliefs tell us, there is no god outside of nature, but the gods represent nature itself. For instance, the first known gods in Greek mythology are Uranus (Sky), and Gaia (Earth).

His symbolism immediately becomes clear from a close reading of his *Last Poems*. "Middle of the World" (Pinto and Roberts, 688), the third of the *Last Poems*, is set in the context of Greek mythology, naming the Greek gods of greatest interest to the poet. Here Lawrence also develops the most important elements of nature in the collection, "the sea", almost always the Mediterranean. He emphasizes the immortality of this sea, saying: "This sea will never die, neither will it ever grow old /nor cease to be blue, nor in the dawn / cease to lift up its hills" (1-3). Lawrence refers to the sea to show, first of all, the power and the long life of the sea, which is the same sea known to the Greek gods, Dionysos and Hermes. He says: ". . . let the slim black ship of Dionysos come sailing in /with grape-vines up the mast, and dolphins leaping" (4-5). Lawrence uses the sea as a symbol to remind him of continuity, and later it will be the main symbol for his concept of oblivion. Lawrence gives great importance to Dionysos, firstly because he is the god of unreflected dynamism and creativity, in contrast to Apollo. Secondly, as will be shown in the next chapter, Dionysos is a god who has the ability to renew nature. Dolphins are sacred Dionysos because in his youth he changed some pirates, who attacked him, into dolphins.

In the next part of this poem, Lawrence mentions modern ships "P. & O. and Orient Line" (6-7) and contrasts ancient and modern life. Modern life, depicted in the *Last Poems*, is hostile to all elements of nature as well as the soul. When the ships cross, they do not arouse feelings of excitement. In contrast, Dionysos's ships are mysterious and associated with the ancient civilization of Crete. Lawrence lives emotionally with these ancient men of "Cnossos", the ancient capital of Crete, where the Bronze Age Minoan culture flourished from about 2000 BC to 1400 BC. He sees the ancient people with the "archaic smile" coming back to life in his poem. In the last part of the poem, Lawrence sees the ancient civilization as still present:

[. . .] the Minoan Gods, and the God of Tiryns
are heard softly laughing and chatting, as ever;
and Dionysos, young and a stranger
leans listing on the gate, in all respect, (18-21).

The gods of Tiryns and Minoa, in Lawrence's imagination, laugh and talk in the familiar surroundings of the poet's house. His images of these gods are always energetic and positive.

This poem shows the sea as a medium for the coming of the ancient gods and heroes. The sea is used by the ancient cultures and it is shown to be the link with old cultures as it will be discussed in nature symbolism. In the poem, Lawrence says that it is notable that Dionysus is 'young and a stranger' (20). His name means "Zeus-young" or "Zeus-the-son". His mother is the mortal "Semele", who is always persecuted by Hera but rescued by her son. The ever-young god, Dionysus, bearer of spring and the new summer, is the savior of the earth and of mankind from all kinds of evils, and is the bringer of a new age of the world. Referring partly to this passage Lockwood says:

The Greek heroes, he sees returning, have much about them which
is fatherly, and Lawrence's attitude to them has that respect and

deference proper to a son, or to the young man before his elder,
such as is shown by Dionysos. (Lockwood, 191)

Thus, "Middle of the World" illustrates well what this thesis aims, to show, that Lawrence, in his *Last Poems*, uses nature symbolism and focuses on the ancient world to talk about life as an opposite of death, concentrating on the ancient idea of life as a composite of opposites, as will be shown in the poem "Kissing and Horrid Strife". So, Dionysos represents everlasting life, which could be renewed by himself.

Also, the sun-moon image is found in "Middle of the World", and the scene is created within the poet's mind, returning through the Mediterranean Sea. The moon can renew persons, "[. . .] now the moon who gives men glistening bodies /is in her exaltation, and can look down on the sun /I see descending from the ship at dawn", (10-12). This image represent the life force. Ironically the appearance of the moon represents, to the poet, the hope of life, since the moon suggests the light in the dark and life after death, as it will be analyzed in chapter II.

The next chapter, will discuss symbols of nature and Greek mythology in the *Last Poems* to show how Lawrence, deals with death. Lawrence believes that nonhuman beings in nature, like plants, animals, and other natural phenomenon, were all treated as part of the cosmos by the Greeks. The word "cosmos" is a term with a special meaning to Lawrence. He prefers it to "universe" because he is aware of its original meaning, which in Greek implies a dynamic, living order. In his essay called *Phoenix* he writes:

Man and the animals, and the flowers all live within a strange and forever surging *chaos*. The chaos which we have got used to call a *cosmos*. The unspeakable inner chaos of which we are composed we call consciousness [. . .] mind, and even civilization. But it is ultimately *chaos*, [which is] lit up by visions or not lit up by *visions*.(qtd. in Gilbert, 1972, 5. Italics are mine)

As will be shown in detail in the next chapter, man is thus part of the divine life best expressed by this term. Poetry, in Lawrence's point of view, is visionary and creative, and it allows man to participate in this concept of cosmology.

Nature, in the *Last Poems*, described as the source of life, is a metaphor for the soul that is transformed from death into rebirth. For example, nature in all its phenomena is attractive to Lawrence, like the sun, the moon, the sea, the animals, and others. The symbols of Greek mythology depict the theme of death and life at the same time. The concept of death is seen by the poet as heroic. Hence, as Henry Miller claims, Lawrence "regards himself as a savior of mankind, universalizes, this personal and unimportant experience" (Miller, 123). Lawrence, in the *Last Poems*, is as a prophet who defends nature and man's life (Burgess, 99).

The sun-moon imagery is one of the components of nature that characterizes the *Last Poems*. These images are not new to Lawrence, he was influenced by them when he started writing. Richard Aldington, drawing on personal recollections of his friendship with Lawrence, says:

Late in life, Lawrence dreamed up some half-serious symbolism about the moon not really being a planet of stone but composed of some unknown phosphorescent substance [. . .] he did sometimes experience a powerful influence from the moon, an influence which was usually not beneficent, or, at any rate, stimulated the "dark" repellent side of him (1950, 52).

Referring to Lawrence's youth friend, Jessie Chambers, Aldington also mentions that the moon's influence on the poet was "exceptionally violent [. . .] it is a fact that during most of his life he had this odd susceptibility to the light of full moon" (1950, 53). Lawrence also emphasizes the power of the sun and the moon on human beings, saying: "We and the cosmos are one. The cosmos is a vast living body, of which we are still parts. The sun is a great heart whose tremors run through our smaller veins. The moon is a great gleaming nerve-center from which we quiver forever"

(Lawrence, 1980, 77). Certainly, Lawrence was concerned to return to an ancient vision of the universe as modern man in the 20th century has lost his interest in it. He says:

Don't let us imagine we see the sun as the old civilizations saw it. All we see is scientific little luminary, dwindled to a ball of blazing gas. In the centuries before Ezekiel and John, the sun was still a magnificent reality, men drew forth from him strength and splendour and gave him back homage and luster and thanks (Lawrence, 1980, 76).

The moon and the sun have their value for the previous civilizations, and modern man, according to Lawrence, destroyed the holy connection between the old man and the elements of nature.

Lawrence explored in the early writings that the sun and the moon are symbols of male and female principles. This is a major element of his use of these images also in the *Last Poems*. Secondly, the sun and the moon represent conscious life followed by the unconscious phase after death. Again, the calmness of the moon offers optimistic feelings. On other occasions the sun-moon imagery reflects death and rebirth, as it will be shown in this section. In some poems, the images suggest the writer's regret because the pollution of modern life causes, according to Lawrence, even the death to the moon and the sun.

Other nature symbols Lawrence uses are the sea and the four elements, air, water, fire and earth. In this way Lawrence the engagement with the ancient idea of how the earth is made. The poet is attracted to Hericlitus's idea that the world is constituted of opposites. The second main symbol, which will be discussed in detail in this thesis, is Greek Gods and heroic ancient man. For the poet, the anthropomorphic deities led to a higher valuation of man, and "encouraged man to worship the universe with his whole body, rather than with only his spiritual part" (Tracy, 443). This chapter offers two main characteristics of the gods: the god with

capital "G" which refers to the God of Christianity. Lawrence sought to regain "the conception of the vitality of the cosmos" (Tracy, 442-43), lost in the otherworldly religions like Judaism, Christianity and others by referring to ancient gods. This aspect of the *Last Poems* has been called the "return of the Olympians" (Jones, 202).

Clearly, the gods have symbolic ties with enduring aspects of nature and human psychology, like fatherhood, power, sexuality, intellect, and creativity. The symbolic dimensions of Zeus, Dionysus, Aphrodite and Hermes are much more profound and multi-layered (as is well known, Nietzsche was able to find the whole development of tragedy in the contrast of the chaotic, joyous Dionysus and the bright, intellectual Apollo). The Greek gods are similar to personifications, a kind close to the symbol. The poems that will be analyzed are characterized by themes, related to the divine and human death, and a moral preoccupation with the problems of evil and modern life.

It would be true to say that on one level the persona in Lawrence's *Last Poems* seeks, like the old heroes and the ancient Greek gods, to gain the "mana" of creatures, to take their power and energy, in a way which recalls the ancient practices of sacrifice, and the ritual of eating animal flesh. This belief was well known by Lawrence through his reading of James Frazier's *The Golden Bough*. The "mana of a slain animal is in the head and blood and fur, [and the man gains it through being covered by] the skin and he wraps himself deep into it. He embarks on by being a man wearing animal's skin" (qtd. in Murray, 1951, 46).

Towards the end of his life, Lawrence considers the symbols of nature and Greek mythology as the sources of eternal life. Oblivion shows the end of Lawrence's long journey, as in oblivion the soul will be renewed. Finally, this chapter will offer Lawrence's rejection of all thinkers from Plato to the modern world.

CHAPTER TWO

SYMBOLS OF NATURE AND GREEK MYTHOLOGY IN LAWRENCE'S *LAST POEMS*

Towards the end of his life Lawrence's focus was on timeless beliefs grounded in the cycles of nature, and this effected a remarkable transformation in his books: by aligning with the ancient writers. Lawrence changed the tone of his works fundamentally, moving from youthful rebellion to a mature reconciliation. His rejection of the material "gods" of his time deepened, and he criticized the lack of the divine in the secular, modern age. This chapter deals with the poems referring to nature and the Greek myths connected with death and the underworld / upward journey in order to show how the poet understands the ancients' vision and how these themes echo in Lawrence's consciousness. Richard Aldington introduced Lawrence to the works of George Dennis, and more specific to his well-known book *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*, a comprehensive two-volume travel book (Tracy, 438). Such reading took him back to one major area of the humanities in Europe: the study of Greece. However, unlike his predecessors among the admirers of the classical world, Lawrence is not interested in Rome, and he opposes the most famous authors of classical Greek thought (Plato, Aristotle, etc.) in favor of the ancient time. "Etruscan art becomes life as observed by the newcomer" (Jones, 1998, 151). Additionally, this chapter aims to show Greek symbolism and the myths about death and resurrection of gods which become the dominant myths in the *Last Poems*.

In addition to Greek symbolism, Lawrence uses the symbols of nature to underline the continuation of life in spite of death. Lawrence in his novels and poems link human behaviors to nature. He believes in an irresistible life force that provokes feelings and physical senses of human beings and makes them close to nature and its elements. Considered as one of the poet-prophets of nature, he glorifies the earth, and anything that lives on it. He attacks the reliance on machines and industry, which

destroys nature. Anthony Burgess's comment on Lawrence's *Women in Love*, in *Flame into Being*, applies to his poems as well: "Lawrence has come to certain conclusions about human emotions which draw man and woman closer to nature, the world of animals, of plants, of sun and moon, than the old fictional emphasis on man as a social animal would allow" (Burgess, 99).

From the outset, then, we must examine Lawrence's view of nature as participating in a wider life force which he called "cosmos". This is presented in his poetry, but in the *Last Poems* we see a strong new factor; a fascination with tradition and mythology. It is rarely recognized that the concept of the life-force, applies not just to humans but to all beings. Above all, Lawrence presents the life force as eternal, and criticizes individuality and how human life is disturbed by the rational thinking of modern man. Thus, life is closely related to nature.

One of the poems which discusses nature as well as myth is "Bavarian Gentians" (Pinto and Roberts, 697). Lawrence starts his poem telling us that "Not every man has gentians in his house", thus immediately drawing attention to this plant. The poem revolves around the flower gentian and the myths of Persephone, Demeter and Pluto (Hades). The persona uses this kind of flower, which reminds him of the shape of the torch used by Persephone's mother Demeter, but this time the torch is in the underworld, in the darkest place. He wants to be guided to the place where Persephone lives, the place of "blue darkness", but he cannot go there without the Bavarian Gentians which serve as his torch.

The poem plays on two images: darkness / light and the need for a torch. In the second line we learn that it is "September", the month when plants start to die, the month of the Michaelmas celebration, which is 29th of this month. Nonetheless, there are elements of hope: in the darkness the nightingale sings, there are "new, strange flowers" (5), for as it will be shown in this poem life does not end with death, but the mysterious character of afterlife is represented by exotic flowers. From the very beginning of this poem he makes an image of death by describing the gentians as "big and dark, only dark /darkening the day-time, torch-like with the smoking blueness of / Pluto's gloom" (3-5). The Bavarian Gentians mean two things: they have the shape of a torch used to guide man, and they are dark. In contrast to a bright torch, that are used to show the way in life, the dark blue torch is chosen as a symbol of guidance through the unknown world of death.

In the following stanzas, the journey in afterlife brings to mind those who made the journey in mythology: above all Persephone, Pluto's wife.

[R]ibbed and torch-like, with their blaze of darkness spread blue
down flattening into points, flattened under the sweep of white day
torch-flower of blue-smoking darkness, Pluto's dark-blue daze,
black lamps from the halls of Dis, burning dark blue,
giving off darkness, blue darkness, as Demeter's pale lamps give off
light. (6-11)

There is a contrast between the mother, Demeter, who has a bright torch as she searches through the world of the living for her daughter, and the dark torch which guides to the depths of darkness. The underlying story is that of the love and loyalty of the mother goddess for her lost daughter, the disappearance and then eventually the discovery of her daughter's whereabouts, and her return to the upper-world, at least for part of each year. Persephone is a symbol of coming back after death, i.e. the resurrection. She comes back to life and nature, regenerates in spring and summer and goes to the underworld and nature dies in the fall and winter.

The reference to such heroes, who suggest coming back to life, is an optimistic point that Lawrence used in order to reconcile himself with his coming death. Lawrence wants to come back again from death as his soul continues to live. He wishes to assert that there is nothing to worry about for those who prepare themselves in a right way; death is a new starting point of a new life. Also, this poem, as well as others in this book, suggest a return to the united world which does not divide mind and body, or life and death. Such a man will not grow old, just like Dionysus, who renews everything, including himself, by accepting sacrifices of animals like lambs, young bulls, horses or fawns, or by going to and coming from the underworld to rescue the mortal mother-figure.

Generally, in "The Argonauts", "Middle of the World", "For the Heroes are Dipped in Scarlet", and "Return of Returns", Lawrence uses the sun-moon imagery to escape from the reality into an imaginary world. "The Argonauts" (Pinto and Roberts, 687), like other opining poems, expresses Lawrence's struggle with his coming death. In the poem, the poet refuses to accept the loss of the Greek heroes,

the Argonauts, saying "they are not dead, they are not dead" (1). Lawrence uses different images in this poem showing that life continues and these heroes are still alive in his imagination. Then, the persona passes to another hopeful imagery concerning nature, and here it is the sun-moon imagery. When the sun disappears (dies) it permits the moon to appear in a (new life). Here the sun refers to the male gender as Lawrence personifies the sun as "a lion" who "goes slowly down the hill" (2), whereas the moon is personified as "a queen" who climbs the hill:

now that the moon, who remembers, and only cares
that we should be lovely in the flesh, with bright, crescent feet,
pauses near the crest of the hill, climbing slowly, like a queen
looking down on the lion as he retreats. (3-6)

As suggested in the Introduction, for Lawrence everything in the cosmos is alive. The moon, for example, like a human being "remembers" and looks down on the sun. Here, the poet provokes that death is coming by the coming of the queen, the moon, and thus life comes to an end.

As always with Lawrence's style in his *Last Poems*, he uses again his couple of contrasted words and meanings, the duality. Here in this poem this duality is in words such as: death and life, old and modern, day and night, sun and moon, rising up and falling down. The "moon" refers to the "connection with individuality, with separateness" (Gilbert. 287). Such individuality is shown in the last stanza of this poem:

Now the sea is the Argonauts' sea, and in the down
Odysseus calls the commands, as he steers past those foamy islands:
wait, wait, don't bring me the coffee yet, nor the *pain grille*.
The dawn is not off the sea, and Odysseus' ships
have not yet passed the island, I must watch them still. (8-12)

In front of the sea, the persona is waiting for the passing of the ancient ships, he does not want to be disturbed by anybody. The scene of the passing ships is better to him than having his drug and coffee, but it is itself the drug of his soul. This stanza shows

two main themes: the importance of the heroes to the poet, and the close link between the heroes and nature. Also, as Bethan Jones suggests the moon is "a link with the older" civilizations, and a "figure of ancient myth and another kind of consciousness" (1998, 337), that enables Greek Gods, like the Argonauts, to return.

Another sun-moon imagery is the relation of this imagery to sex, which dominates the poem "Invocation to the Moon" (Pinto and Roberts, 695). From the very beginning of this poem, the persona shows his positive mood, when he talks about the moon, personified as a lady in the poem, saying: "you beauty, O you beauty" (1). The moon, i.e. the woman, is bright with its "garmentless beauty" (2). This imagery emphasizes the naked beauty which attracts the poet in most of his works. Commenting on this imagery, Sandra Gilbert says that the moon is "the lady of the soul's nakedness when it is divorced from the body and, paradoxically, the lady of the body's nakedness" (Gilbert, 1972, 286). Unlike modern queens who show their beauty by wearing expensive materials, like crowns and jewels, the moon as queen is "crownless and jewelless and garmentless" (5). Lawrence depicts two themes, his long-held view of the beauty of naked body, and his negative mood towards modern life.

The persona wants to be accepted into the realm of the moon, saying:

Be good to me, lady, great lady of the nearest
heavenly mansion, and last!
Now I am at your gate, you beauty, you lady of all nakedness!
Now I must enter your mansion, and beg your gift
Moon, O Moon, great lady of the heavenly few. (8-12)

The persona asks the moon to permit him to enter her house and to reward him with "one warm kind kiss" (21). Lawrence in this poem refers to astrology, moving through the houses of the zodiac. He passes from Venus, the sun to the others:

Far and forgotten in the Villa of Venus the glowing
and behind me now in the gulf of space lies the golden
house of the sun,

and six have given me gifts, and kissed me god-speed
kisses of four great lords, beautiful, as they held me to their
bosoms in farewell,
and kiss of the far-off lingering lady who looks over the dis-
tant fence of the twilight,
and one warm kind kiss of the lion with golden paws. (Pinto and
Roberts, 695, 13-21)

The "six" are Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, the sun, and the moon, towards whose house he is traveling. According to Lawrence, all of these lords and rulers are forgotten now. However, as Gilbert claims, "the poet, journeying towards death and rebirth, is concentrated purely on his individual fate, his impending separation and lonely renewal" (Gilbert, 1972, 288), to induce his full happiness through individuality. It was long characteristic of Lawrence to take astrology seriously. In the context of the *Last Poems*, however, these key ideas are placed in the context of thorough and earnest devotion to all aspects of ancient beliefs and behaviors. Again, like the previous poem, the sun is described as a lion giving a farewell kiss to the persona. This could be interpreted passing as a journey from life/sun to death/ moon. In the last part of this poem, Lawrence expects that the moon will make him "a healed, whole man, O moon!" (29) Hence, the poem ends with an optimistic suggestion that the persona will be recovered from death.

Another sun-moon imagery is in "Prayer"³, (Pinto and Roberts, 684), which Lawrence wrote on the morning of his death-day. In this poem, he "makes an explicit distinction between the sympathetic moon and hostile sun" (Bethan Jones, 172):

Give me the moon at my feet
Put my feet upon the crescent, like a Lord!
O let my ankle be bathed in moonlight, that I may go
sure and moon-shod, cool and bright-footed
towards my goal. (1-5)

³ As mentioned by Bethan Jones, the poem ""Prayer" (the final poem in "More Pansies") was written with the poem "Invocation to the Moon"". (1998, 14)

Now the dying poet insists on facing death bravely, and he takes his courage from the moon when she is at his "feet" giving him the sensation of glory and majesty just like a "Lord". The moon imagery gives him support in autumn, the end of life. This poem is addressed to his wife, and summarizes his imaginative life and his battle as a diseased man. Aldington says that Lawrence wrote or recited this last poem when Frieda was sitting by his bed holding his ankle to calm him (1950, 352). This scene refers to Lawrence's close connection with the female character in his works. It is clear that the poet's interest in light continued to his last breath. Then the persona implies the characteristics of the sun by personifying it as man: "for the sun is hostile, now / his face is like the red lion" (7-8). The brutal nature of the sun with its bright red light is compared to man's brutality, as he lost contact with the cosmos. However, Lawrence wants to live "breast to breast with the naked cosmos" (Lawrence, 1980, 180). He believes in the ultimate heavenly bodies, they supply man with power, potency and competency.

Moreover, "Stoic", (Pinto and Roberts, 702-03) expresses grief and "occasioned by the death of the sun through loss of contact" (Jones, 171), regret is the overall theme. In this poem too, the sun-moon imagery depicts the idea of death:

Groan then, groan.

For the sun is dead, and all that is in heaven
is the pyre of blazing gas.

And the moon that went

so queenly, shaking her glistening beams

is dead too, a dead orb wheeled once a month round the park.

(1-6)

Lawrence implies his great regret towards the modern life and its negative effects. The moan of the modern man is shown through the death of the sun and the moon, since the modern man destroyed the heavenly features, as it will be discussed later in the poem "In the Cities", and Lawrence's rejection of the characteristics of modern life.

Lawrence in his Introduction to *The Dragon of the Apocalypse*, mentioned the modern attitude towards nature, and more specific the sun, saying: "our

experience of the sun is dead" (Lawrence, 1995, 34). Also Lawrence criticizes the modern man's relationship with the cosmos, above all the moon. He says:

And we have lost the moon, the cool, the bright, ever-varying moon. It is she who would caress our nerves, smooth them with silky hand of her glowing, soothe them into serenity again with her cool presence [. . .]. Oh the moon could soothe us and heal us like a cool great Artemis between her arms. (Lawrence, 1980, 77)

The modern man's attitude to the sun is not different. Lawrence thinks:

Our sun is quite different thing from the cosmic sun of the ancients, so much more trivial. We may see what we call sun, but we have lost Helios forever, and the great orb of the Chaldeans still more. We have lost the cosmos, by coming out of connection with it, and this is our chief tragedy (Lawrence, 1980, 76).

The connection with the cosmos is lost because, according to the poet, modern man has lost his imagination through engaging in the rational thinking. Although he states that the sun and the moon have died, he claims that this death is illusory: "In the center of your being groan not groan not. / For perhaps the greatest of all illusions / is this illusion of the death of the undying (17-21). The sun and moon are immortal and seem to be equal to the gods, they are heavenly creatures.

The poet repeatedly alludes here to a book he knew from his childhood, the *Revelation*, in which "there appears a great wonder to heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and [therefore] the moon below her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (The Holy Bible, Revelation, 12:1). Here the visionary sees a woman, in a mythological way that makes her godlike.

In the *Last Poems*, the return of the Greek Gods and heroes is just like the moon appearing every night. The writer compares his life to an evening and hopes it will be lit by the approach of the Greek Gods. The day is merely the time for finding a "subsistence" in the world, whereas night is intimate and familiar. Night i.e. the moon, covers the world with its peace. Through this imagery, Lawrence shows one

of his ideas of life, that everybody contains the "opposite tensions", like the sharpness of the sun, as a lion, and the gentleness of the moon, as a queen, which refers to the continuation of life, as will be discussed in the poem "Kissing and Horrid Strife".

It is mentioned in the Introduction that, Lawrence was interested in alchemical ideas, as is reflected in the title of his novels *The White Peacock* and *The Plumed Serpent*. In the *Last Poems* there are poems in which he shows an engagement with ancient ideas of how the earth is made. The poem, "The Four" (Pinto and Roberts, 706), shows the origin of life, the elements of nature, his wish to be part of it. Also, this poem shows Lawrence's interest in the Pre-Socratic scientific world-view, and proclaims that it is better than modern science because ancient Greeks do not separate mind and body. As mentioned before, Burnet asserts the truth of "the four roots of all things" (Burnet, 1920, 111), which results straightly from Empedokles who assumed that the four elements are: "fire, air, earth, and water" (Burnet, 1920, 111). In this poem the poet says:

To our senses, the elements are four
and ever been, and will ever be
for they are elements of life, of poetry and perception,
the four Great Ones, the Four Roots, the First Four
of Fire and the Wet, Earth and the wide Air of the world (1-5).

Bethan Jones asserts that these four elements "can be apprehended by the senses or by sense-consciousness" so "their significance is emphasized by the reference to them as the elements of life, of poetry, and of perception" (98). This poem shows the poet engaging in the intellectual history of the archaic world and defending even its scientific ideas. What the modern world of science may add to those four elements is unimportant:

To find the other many elements, you must go to the laboratory
and hunt them down.
But the Four we have always with us, they are our world
Or rather, they have us with them (6-9).

Natural elements are responsible for the balance of life and any difference in their quantity may lead to destruction or the death of nature. The four elements are shown in this poem as they are "able to dictate or order our lives, accepting or rejecting us" (Jones, 99). Thus the message of the poem is that the four elements of nature and the nature and their combination of opposites, fire/water and air/earth, should be glorified against scientific developments made in the laboratory. In this poem too, the poet once again emphasizes the order in nature.

In "Salt" (Pinto and Roberts, 705) Lawrence expresses the opposition between two of the main elements of nature: fire and sea. He says:

Salt is scorched water that the sun has scorched
into substance and flaky whiteness
in the eternal opposition
between the two great ones, Fire, and the Wet. (1-4).

In this one-sentence poem the idea of forming salt from two opposites, water/wet and sun /fire, corresponds to the archaic belief. According to Bethan Jones, salt "has the role of counteracting a superfluity of good, and preserving a necessary balance" (Jones, 193). Just as salt harmonizes metals and non-metals, or Fire and Water in the ancient tradition, life demands that the body and mind be sensed as one. In the *Last Poems* we thus find a far more thorough-going commitment to ancient beliefs. The ancient concept of the originality of the world, according to Lawrence, is better than the modern one because it is more than a theory, it is sensed and experienced by the body every day. According to this poem, Lawrence depicts the idea of opposites everywhere, he thinks that life is a combination of opposites, like death and life at the same time, just like the seeds they are dead and alive.

Lawrence is concerned with salt in his *Apocalypse* as well. He suggests:

Salt had a great hold on the imagination. It was supposed to be the product of "elemental" injustice. Fire and water, the two great living elements and opposites, gave rise to all substance in their slippery unstable "marriage"[. . .]. So the sun-fire got too strong

for the sweet water, it *burnt* them, and when water was burnt by fire, it produced salt, child of injustice (Lawrence, 1980, 112-13).

This salt despoils water and makes it bitter, and the injustice comes when one element defeats the other, thus destroying the required balance. Lawrence uses this imagery to refer to the idea of opposites in nature, and so life is a combination of opposites, i.e. life and death and here it is represented by the "child of injustice", salt.

Lawrence believes that Heraclitus expressed some of the immortal truths to be learned from the ancients. For example, life is based on flux and on a tension between what he called kissing and horrid strife, words which occur in several of the late poems, notably in "Kissing and Horrid Strife" (Pinto and Roberts, 709-10), and "Death is not Evil, Evil is Mechanical" (Pinto and Roberts, 713-14). The persona suggests that in "Kissing and Horrid Strife", humans are not "absolved from kissing and strife" (1). The idea of opposites fits Lawrence's conviction that life involves reconciling opposites. As the title underlines, the poem is divided into two parts: kissing and horrid part.

"Kissing", for Lawrence, is love. The division between kissing and strife is applied to the way the body of this poem is structured. The beginning of this poem introduces kissing and positive images, like the sun kissing the sea (10). The persona says:

But still I know that life is for delight
and for bliss
as now when the tiny wavelets of the sea
tip the morning light on edge, and spill it with delight
to show how inexhaustible it is:

And life is for delight, and bliss
like now when the white sun kisses the sea
and plays with wavelets like panther playing with its cubs
cuffing them with soft paws,
and blows that are caresses,
kisses of the soft-balled paws, where the talons are. (3-13)

The simile for this gentle but powerful life is animal imagery, the panther playing with its young. Lawrence uses the time-related imagery of morning to refer to a new beginning and a new life. The sun stands in a living relation to the cosmos, brightening the sea. Hence, he talks about the peaceful, happy life in nature which is isolated from human existence.

In the next part, the poet transforms the imagery into horrid strife by referring to darkness, doom, storms and autumn.

And life is for dread,
for doom that darkens, and the Sunderers
that sunder us from each other,
that strip us and destroy us and break us down
as the tall foxgloves and the mulleins and mallows
are torn down by dismembering autumn
till not a vestige is left,
and black winter has no trace
of any such flowers;
and yet the roots below the blackness are intact:
the Thunderers and Sunderers have their term,
their limit, their thus far and no further. (14-24)

This part of the poem is the striving aspect of life. In this part, the destroyed flowers in autumn and winter suggest end of life, which is dreadful.

A third theme emerges when Lawrence claims that even after death, flowers will continue their life because their "roots" are alive in spite of the "blackness" of winter (22). These roots are "intact" underneath. In these lines the sense of hope comes back again, the sense of life after death. Just as these flowers can grow up again after the winter, life in an underworld will continue after death.

Finally, Lawrence suggests that people must embrace life with its contradiction. These two principles are parallel and exist simultaneously. He says:

Life is for kissing and for horrid strife.

Life is for angles and Sunderers.
Life is for daimons and demons,
those that put honey on our lips, and those that put salt. (25-
28)

After he shows his idea of kissing, in the first part, and strife, in the second part, Lawrence puts, in the third part, his idea of life constructed of two opposites at the same time. In a rhetorical question, Lawrence asks: "why then should we die while we can live?" (39-40). He criticizes people who try to find a way to live without strife. This is part of the poet's rejection of a morality of good and evil. The two are inevitable, and depend on each other. Lawrence presents the circular, repeated cycle of life, where there is life, death and then rebirth again.

Like "Kissing and Horrid Strife", "Anaxagoras" (Pinto and Roberts, 708) also refers to the strife of opposites:

When Anaxagoras says: Even snow is black!
he is taken by the scientists very seriously
because he is enunciating a "principle", a "law"
that all things are mixed, and therefore the purest white snow
has in it an element of blackness. (1-5)

Here white snow is described as black, shows that life is balanced by this view of Anaxagoras, death.

Perhaps referring to this theory, Lawrence depicts the idea of science. He says in "Anaxagoras":

That they call science, and reality.
I call it mental conceit and mystification
and nonsense, for pure snow is white to us
white and white and only white
with lovely bloom of whiteness upon white
in which the soul delights and the senses
have an experience of bliss. (6-12)

As this poem shows, Lawrence criticizes the modern man who interprets phenomena rationally.

According to Lawrence, life is mixed of opposites. Life is not just for bliss, but also for "dread". Commenting on these lines Bethan Jones says:

The perception results in the description of the snow as [black] so that the colour is seen reflecting the way in which it is alien to human beings, [. . .]. The "funeral black" of Anaxagoras is absent entirely from this sensory response. It is described as "funeral" not only because black is linked to funerals; but also because the scientific laws or principles showing that snow is - in part - black are the death of sense-consciousness, and therefore the death of man's actual relationship with the cosmos (Jones, 102).

Lawrence repeats the word "snow" in this poem referring to its purity and to its clearness. "According to Lawrence it is the response of the senses or sense-consciousness that is important, as this entails a sensitivity to the beauty and wonder of nature"(Jones, 102). Again, Lawrence identifies with Heraclitus, and uses the Pre-Socratic concept of "opposites" to supply and support the balance in life. In this case, Lawrence shows life and death in one scene, one image and one body.

Another nature imagery in the *Last Poems* is the sea, as vast, elemental and powerful. It is used to suggest the way in which everyone has to cross to the afterlife through oblivion. There are many poems that deal with the symbol of the sea, especially those which connect with the Greek gods, like Dionysos and Aphrodite. Expressing his relation with the sea, Lawrence writes in his letter, after arriving to Bandol, (France) on 4 October 1929: "I still love the Mediterranean, it still seems young as Odysseus, in the morning" (qtd. in Bethan Jones, 2010 ,127).

Nature becomes vividly the main imagery in Lawrence's *Last Poems*, and the sea is no exception. The image of the sea unifies the old and modern cultures because they all live by the same sea, the Mediterranean. As it is mentioned in the Introduction, Lawrence wrote these poems while living in a hotel overlooking the Mediterranean. F. B. Pinion comments that "the Mediterranean symbolizes the life-

source" (Pinion, 122), as its name, in Latin, suggests to the middle world. The eternal life of the sea and the many myths that are tied up with it, make it the constant background of the *Last Poems*. However, he adopts nature's free will and tries to connect to nature.

In the poem "The Man of Tyre" (Pinto and Roberts, 692-93), Lawrence underlines such characteristic of the sea. He says:

And a woman who had been washing clothes in the pool of rock
where a stream came down to the gravel of the sea and sank in,
who had spread the white washing on the gravel banked above the bay,
who had lain in her shift on the shore, on the shingle slope,
who had waded to the pale green sea of evening, out to a shoal,
pouring sea-water over herself
now turned, and came slowly back, with her back to the evening sky
(4-10).

In this poem, Lawrence compares the sea to a woman, especially when he is talking about Greek gods, like Aphrodite. Aphrodite, according to Greek mythology, represents beauty and sexuality and she was born from the foam of the sea. From the Greek background, the man returns from death when he merges with "the waters of oblivion". So, the sea represents the source of life. In the poem "Change" (Pinto and Roberts, 726), Lawrence says: "Do you think it is easy to change? /Ah, it is very hard to change and be different. / It means passing through the waters of oblivion" (1-3). So, the image of the sea depicts the idea of endless life, timeless time, it is oblivion.

The sea is again depicted in the image of "dark oblivion" (14) in the poem "The End, The Beginning" (Pinto and Roberts, 724), when Lawrence says: "but dipped, once dipped in dark oblivion / the soul has peace, inward and lovely peace" (14-15). Lawrence also refers to "oblivion" as a sea, in the poem "Difficult Death" (Pinto and Roberts, 720-21):

So built your ship of death, and let the soul drift
to dark oblivion.
May be life is still our portion

after the bitter passage of oblivion. (8-11)

The idea of death represented by the sea is borrowed from the Holy Bible. Lawrence, who was brought up in a Christian family, uses the sea of death as it is in the *Revelation*: "And the sea gave up the dead who were in it: and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they judged every man according to their works." (The Holy Bible, Revelation. 20:13) But Lawrence does not accept the idea of judging after life.

The sea also has a "mana" which the poet may gain. As in the ancient civilizations, the power, the energy, and the soul of the sea can be transferred to the man who is devoted to it. In this sense, Lawrence says in the poem "Mana of the Sea": "And is my body ocean, ocean / whose power runs to the shores along my arms. (Pinto and Roberts, 705, 15-16) The power of the sea is traditionally adopted by the persona in order to supply his soul with strength. Then the persona says "I am the sea, I am the sea!" (19), to focus on the idea of ancient Greek, getting the mana of other non-human creatures.

The sea is the source of hope for Lawrence because he admires the return of the Greek gods and builds his imaginary journey of the ancient eternal gods through the imagery of the sea. In the poem "Return of the Returns" (Pinto and Roberts, 702), the poet claims that through the sea the ancient heroes and gods are returning. As in "The Ship of Death" (Pinto and Roberts, 716-20), the soul which is prepared with the correct vessel (the correct attitude to life and death) will return through the sea, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Apart from the sun-moon and sea imagery, most of Lawrence's poems personify animals and he builds up the themes by making a comparison between two opposite worlds, the world of life and the world of death. For instance, "Butterfly" is one of the poems which focuses on some elements of nature in the context of a meditation on death. The persona asks a question to the butterfly: "why do you settle on my shoe?" (2). He refers to the shortness of life through the symbolism of the butterfly. He warns the butterfly of the coming of autumn, October, the season of death for nature. The butterfly faces the strong wind which blows seaward, the sea being Lawrence's frequent image of the immense oblivion of death.

If one thing can be said to be characteristic of Lawrence's earlier poems, it is

their repeated use of animals as a source of inspiration and imagery. Animals, which play an important role in our encounter with nature, frequently appear in the *Last Poems* also. Here, however, they are often associated with images of Greek mythology. Lawrence modifies his response to animals and places them within the ancient civilizations, where their importance is mentioned by Murray:

Animals have all been adopted into the Olympian system. They [seem frequently] as the 'attributes' of particular gods. Zeus is merely accompanied [by] a snake, an eagle, a bull, or at worst assumes for his private purposes the forms of those animals. The cow and the cuckoo are as sacred to Hera; the owl and snake to Athena; the dolphin, the crow, the lizard [and] the bull, to Apollo (qtd. in Gilbert, 1972, 164).

In the second and the third stanzas of this poem, there is a contrast of the weather circumstances outside and inside the garden, between the coldness of outside and the warmth of the garden. The butterfly travels from human life on earth, "the garden", which may be considered as modern life because the garden is surrounded by a fence. In the third part, the question the persona poses, "Will you go, will you go from my warm house?" (10), is a proof of the departure of the soul from the "warm house" of the speaker's body. Lawrence's ultimate purpose is to describe the butterfly's journey: "Will you climb on your big soft wings, black-dotted, / as up an invisible rainbow, an arch / till the wind slides you sheer from the arch-crest" (10-12). Lawrence describes the motion of the butterfly, going upward, fluttering until it gets to the highest point of the rainbow arch when the wind takes it sliding far away. The motion is both upward and downward.

Finally, the butterfly flies lonely, he says: "Farewell, farewell, lost soul! / you have melted in the crystalline distance, / It is enough! I saw you vanish into air." (15-17) It is notable that the speaker is not depressed as he says "farewell" to the butterfly, but is reconciled with his impending death. Oblivion, as will be discussed later in this chapter, is a positive aspect of death, and Lawrence is unhappy above all to see the end of the individualist self-awareness of modern man, who is rationally used to live his life. This is because, to Lawrence, the garden represents the modern

life and the sea-side represents the free will, and natural life. Sandra Gilbert also mentions that the ways Lawrence treats the problems of death and separation can currently be "less ambitious and more realistic" (Gilbert, 1972, 291) than in the other works.

"Whales Weep Not!" (Pinto and Roberts, 694-95) is another poem in which Lawrence uses animal symbolism. This poem depicts the concept of life being a combination of opposites in nature. He contrasts the "cold" sea with the "hottest blood" of the whales (1-2).

In this poem, Lawrence presents the sea differently from the other poems of this collection, where he concentrates on gods who cross or re-cross the Mediterranean sea and the gods who live in it. In this reference to the sea, we do not find a historical perspective, but an emphasis on its great size and power. The creatures in the sea have huge bodies, "and they rock, through the sensual ageless ages [. . .] / and in the tropics tremble they with love /and roll with massive, strong desire, like gods" (1-12). Such creatures, including whales, are god-like.

A similar message of the positive power of the sea, and the force of nature is represented in this poem. The sea imagery is related to sexuality like the sun-moon imagery in Lawrence's poetry. Sexuality is one of Lawrence's main themes in his works, being the epitome of the attractive power of life. Bethan Jones suggests that the "sea-power might imply a force that related to the power of sexuality" (131). The size and power of whales, and the sea as a whole, has sexual overtones. The poet refers to the relationship among the whales saying: "then the great bull lies up against his bride/in the blue deep bed of the sea," (11-14). On this subject, Bethan Jones says, "the poet offers a perception of the sea's depth in which the heat of procreation is seen to engender a living potency" (192). Also in the *Last Poems* it is the act of love-making which demonstrates life, energy, and positive view of the forces of nature as a whole. The bride, Lawrence describes, Aphrodite, the wife of the whales (23-25). She is very happy after she interacts with the male whales. Lawrence alludes to Aphrodite, who the Romans called Venus, the goddess of love, pleasure, and procreation, because it was believed that she came from the foam of the sea as a result of Cronus cutting off Uranus's genitals. The poem thus connects to old beliefs that the continuity of life comes from nature and this is the main reason for the renewal and the eternity of the world.

These creatures and others present, pure and unreflected relationships. They live unaware of death, so they are happy:

And over the bridge of the whale's strong phallus, linking the
wonder of whales
the burning archangels under the sea keep passing, back and forth,
keep passing, archangels of bliss
from him to her, from her to him, great Cherubim (21-25).

Commenting on the last line, Sandra Gilbert says that because "Lawrence's religion fuses elements of Christianity and paganism into new synthesis" (Gilbert, 1972, 282), his "great heaven of whales includes not only the standard Christianity paraphernalia – cherubim, seraphim, archangels, but also, a deity of ancient Greece" (Sandra Gilbert, 1972, 282).

One of the reasons why Lawrence chooses the elements of nature to depict his theme of death, or life after death, is the purity of the animals and plants. Purity in Lawrence's terms means freedom from the distortions of human society. Creatures are pure in their actions, i.e. they do their actions unconsciously, but they behave naturally, without the limitations of modern life and human laws.

Lawrence talks about the idea of death and renewal of life in the second half of the *Last Poems*, more frequently, in "Shadows" (Pinto and Roberts, 726) which can be described as a poem of new attitudes to death and new life. Here the persona is more optimistic. There is both the oblivion he frequently associates with death, but there is also the hope of coming back from death. The journey in this poem is through time, it has no end, because "there is nowhere to go to in that sense. [modern man is] deepening in consciousness, consciousness being an end in itself" (Lockwood, 198). The journey is to the unknown, it is a shadowy journey. Lawrence describes this journey of the soul, as:

And if tonight my soul may find her peace
In sleep, and sink in good oblivion,
And in the morning wake like a new-opened flower
Then I have been dipped again in God, and new created (1-4).

Lawrence uses "if" clauses, to suggest a conditioned journey. He says that if he sleeps peacefully at night, then the effect will make him "dipped" into a god, to be a new creature. In the next "if" clause, the poet says that he and his god are close to each other when "the moon's in shadow" (10). The poet consistently depicts the afterlife as a place of shadows and strangers. Here implicitly, but in other poems, like "All Souls' Day", explicitly, afterlife is the shadowy and alien world of the underworld, which the Greeks considered as inhabited by shadows. As Edith Hamilton discusses: "In Homer the underworld is vague, a shadowy place inhabited by shadows. Nothing is really there. The ghost's existence, if it can be called that, is like a miserable dream" (Hamilton, 41). Everything in this journey is shadowy, the place, the inhabitants, the passengers, and even the vehicle (in the *Last Poems*, the ship of death), is shadowy. D.H. Lawrence uses time as one of the main sources of symbolism in all of his work, and the *Last Poems* is no exception. As he states in "Shadows", autumn months are frequently mentioned in the poems to refer to death, because it is a "grey" season. In this poem, the period of time people spend before and after death because it and "the changing phases of man's life" (21), are measured out in the movement of the planets, a major theme of this poem. The persona says that he may meet his end in peace at night. He symbolically uses night to refer to death, and the span of the day is compared to the span of life. Lawrence uses the concept of waking in the morning, which is like "a new-opened flower" (3). As in other poems, Lawrence uses autumn to represent the end of life with the falling leaves. It is the time of deepening "darkness", the time of death.

The third if clause is related to the darkness of autumn. He expects that it will pass soon and he will continue life after this season. The persona has now passed the difficult period of time, now he describes the afterlife. Again Lawrence, symbolically, uses the nightingale to refer to the Greek mythology of "Hermes' son, Pan, the goatherds' god. [A]nd [there is a] shepherds' god, upon his pipe of reed he played melodies as sweet as the nightingale's song" (Hamilton, 41-42). The nightingale is the ancient symbol of poetry, thought to be the metamorphosis of the raped Philomela, who told of her pains through art. Pan would play this music at the autumn "solstice". For the poet, anybody's soul can be renewed just by crossing or being soaked in "the deep oblivion". This part has some of the most optimistic lines

in the *Last Poems*. In this part the poet willings his coming death. Surely one of the attractions of this poem is the honesty with which Lawrence writes about his forthcoming death.

In the last if clause, Lawrence declares his attitude to his illness and coming death. He says that if he becomes ill,

then I must know that still
I am in the hands [of] the unknown God,
he is breaking me down to his own oblivion
to send me forth on a new morning, a new man (22-35).

He makes his hope of immortality clear, which conditionally will not come unless the dying spirit goes through god's oblivion. The idea about death expressed in "Shadow" is one of the dominant features of the *Last Poems*. According to his view, death is mysterious and dark, the realm of "unknown Gods" (33).

Together with nature imagery, *Last Poems* is replete with Greek heroes to suggest Lawrence's wish to go back to ancient civilizations. The poem "The Greeks Are Coming" (Pinto and Roberts, 687), refers to the coming of the Greek heroes, and this suggests the greater influence of ancient thought upon him. The poem is an introduction to the collection, showing many symbols and imageries that are discussed in this collection. "Little islands out at sea, on the horizon / keep suddenly showing a whiteness, a flash and a furl, a hail / of something coming, ships a-sail from over the rim of the sea" (1-3). The poet welcomes the sight of ships from Cnossos and the Aegean, and also the return of the Olympian gods, which may be considered a key theme of the *Last Poems* as described by Sandra Gilbert. Cnossos refers to the ancient city of northern Crete, the traditional palace of King Minos, one of the old king-gods who "fulfill[ed] the double role of magistrate and leader in the sacred mysteries" (Tracy, 445). In his essay, *D. H. Lawrence and "The Fall"*, Steve Taylor shows how Lawrence is interested in the ancient world as reflected in modern life:

Lawrence witnessed [such society] at the first hand in his encounters with the Indian culture in New Mexico. He recognized

that the Hopi Indians experienced the world through a completely different kind of consciousness to Europeans. And the essential difference, again, was that they did not experience a sense of separateness to the cosmos. The phenomenal world was as sacred and divine to them as it was to the Etruscans, (Taylor).

As mentioned in the Introduction, Lawrence visited New Mexico in 1922, and he lived there for less than two years, and he admired the Indian tribe, Apache. For the poet, the Indians lived in a state of connecting, directly, to the cosmos. Thus, in this chapter we examine how Lawrence was led to rethink his cosmology and his approach to individuality on the basis of meditations on the past based on Greek myths. The value he gave to the body is present in his work from the start, but this chapter shows how in his later works he sets it in a wider historical and cultural context. The archaic men are again described in the poem, "Middle of the World" (Pinto and Roberts, 688), where Lawrence says:

I see descending from the ships at dawn
Slim naked men from Cnossos, smiling the archaic smile
Of those that will without fail come back again,
And kindling little fires upon the shores
And crouching, and speaking the music of lost languages. (11-17)

The reference to coming back brings us to the other strong theme, the eternity of life.

Lawrence depicts the Mediterranean sea filled with ships as "every time, it is ships, it is ships" ("The Greeks Are Coming", 4) which keep memories of the past alive. The sailors are "men with archaic pointed beards" (6), and they are sailing "out of the eastern end" (7). This image and other images, as argued by Hagen, are "establishing that life is energy in motion and that openness is the defining feature of living entities" (Hagen, 99). For Lawrence, "the men of the old world are godly, heroic, and he wishes through the use of these people, to explore the nature of their heroism" (Gilbert, 1990, 272).

These positive images of ships, sea, and dynamic Greek figures are used again in the second poem, "The Argonauts" (Pinto and Roberts, 687), as is mentioned before.

Again, the scene of the Greeks in the *Last Poems* is shown in the poem "Return of Returns" (Pinto and Roberts, 702). The poem is from a sequence directly concerned with scientific ideas, and ancient science was never far from mythology. The poem recalls the style of Greek gods, such as those found in the "Homeric Hymns":

Come then, as I say, in a week,
When the planets have given seven nods
"It shall be! It shall be!" assented seven times
By the great seven, by Helios the brightest
And by Artemis the whitest
By Hermes and Aphrodite, flashing white glittering words,
By Ares and Kronos and Zeus,
The seven great ones, who must all say yes. (5-12)

Here the poem refers to "seven" important gods: Helios, Artemis, Ares, Hermes, Zeus, Aphrodite, and Kronos. The persona wants these gods to come back. This reflects Lawrence's rereading of the books of Burnet in 1929, saying:

Even the way of reckoning time changed under the influence of the Planets. Instead of the old division of the month into three periods of nine days, we find gradually establishing itself the week of seven days in which each day is named after its planet, the Sun, Moon, Ares, Hermes, Zeus, Aphrodite, Kronos. . . It was the old week of Babylon, the original home of astronomy and planet-worship. (qtd. in Bethan Jones, 1998)

Here the focus is on the number seven, stressing the original divine importance of the number. Lawrence notes that, according to the old cultures, the week was considered to have nine days rather than seven. He shows the same idea in the poem was addressing the gods:

Come in a week
Yes, yes, in the seven-day week!
For how can I count in your three times three
Of the sea-blow week of nine (1-4).

The poem is illuminated by references to passages in *Apocalypse*, where Lawrence refers to "the magical number", and "three-and-a-half years". According to Lawrence, "it is supposed to represent the half of a sacred week - all that is ever allowed to the princes of evil, who are never given the full run of sacred week of seven days" (Lawrence, 1980, 137-38). In the book Lawrence also says "the Greeks of the sea had a nine-day week. That is gone" (Lawrence, 1980, 138). But the sense of hope in this poem is announced by the return of the Greeks.

The seven-day week is described in the last stanza as "ancient river week, the old one" (20). The "ancient river week" refers, according to *Apocalypse*, to "the great river civilizations of the Euphrates, the Nile and the Indus with the lesser sea - civilization of the Aegean" (Lawrence, 1980, 90). It is clear that the idea of a connection between, and even unity of, science and religion was dearer to Lawrence. The characteristic modern divide between the arts and sciences is part of a modern malaise. Lawrence, in the *Apocalypse*, says that:

Today, it is almost impossible for us to realize what the old Greeks meant by god, or *theos*. Everything was *theos*; but even so, not at the same moment. At the moment, whatever *struck* you was god. If it was a pool of water, the very watery pool might strike you: then that was god; or a faint vapour at evening rising might catch the imagination: then that was *theos*; or thirst might overcome you at the sight of the water: then the thirst was god . . . Even to the early scientist or philosophers, the "cold," "the moist," "the hot" "the dry," were things in themselves, realities, gods, *theoi*, and they *did things*. (Lawrence, 1980, 84-85)

Lawrence attempts to bring back the worshipping attitude of the archaic man. Billy T. Tracy says that "the vitality of this religion seemed to Lawrence more desirable than later religions" (Tracy, 443), because it encourages man to worship the world, the universe, or creation with his whole body, rather than only spiritual ideas.

In this poem the persona is concerned with the theme of time and the shadows of the sun and moon, as discussed in the sun-moon section. Night is the shadow when the other side of the earth is shining. Here the night symbolizes the shadow of death because it is the opposite of the day, which represents life. In this sense, the moon represents the continuation of life after death:

When the moon from out of darkness
has come like a thread, like a door just opening
opening, till the round white doorway of delight
is half open. (13-16)

In this quote, Lawrence, optimistically, emphasizes the opening of the door of life after it is closed by the darkness of night, and the cyclical pattern of life, death and the resurrection after death refer to the continuation of life-force. When the sun goes down and the darkness invades and fills the sky, the persona starts seeking an alternative light even if it is dim. Commenting on this line, Bethan Jones says "the moon's exaltation is thus used by Lawrence to correspond with the autumn of life because it is seen in the evening and night, and simultaneously with the rebirth" (Jones, 337). The moon at night, refers to the time of calmness, quietness and the time after death. On the other hand, the sun represents the activeness, and life. Richard Aldington says: "late in life Lawrence dreamed up some half-serious symbolism about the moon not really being a planet of stone, but composed of some unknown phosphorescent materials" (1950, 52). And then Aldington expresses the importance of the moon to Lawrence saying: "there is plenty of evidence to show that [Lawrence] did sometimes experience a powerful influence, or, at any rate, stimulated the "dark" repellent side of him" (1950, 52). Here, the importance of the moon comes from the importance of its darkest time.

In "They Say the Sea is Loveless" (Pinto and Roberts, 693-94). Lawrence rejects the idea of Plotinus, for whom love is always directed to living beings. The

poet says that the sea is alive through the many creatures that live in it, like the "dolphins" and the "small and happy whales". One god mentioned in relation to the sea is Dionysos, the most attractive mythological hero in Lawrence's works, who renews nature and takes his power from the sea, woods and mountains. As Gilbert Murray writes:

In the Greek mythology, he appears during the Anthesteria feasts, to conduct a sacred marriage for the purpose of being born again, to begin a new life during the great spring festival. The new births of the tribe, the babies, are considered to be the old ones returned to the earth (1951,10).

In "They Say the Sea is Loveless", Lawrence uses the imagery of the sea, as has been shown before, to show his belief in hylozoism, the continuity of life in nature, saying:

They say the sea is loveless, that in the sea
love cannot live, but only bare, salt splinters
of loveless life.
But from the sea
the dolphins leap round Dionysos's ship. (1-4)

The poet insists that the sea is alive with love because of the sea creatures, like dolphins. The sea is personified as having human characteristics, saying:

And up they come with the purple dark of rainbows
and flip! they go! with the nose-dive of sheer delight:
and the sea is making love to Dionysos
in the bouncing of these small and happy whales. (7-10)

In these lines, Lawrence refuses to accept that the sea lacks feelings of love. By contrast, according to Lawrence's philosophy, the whales make love to Dionysos. For him the sea is alive and as well the moon, the sun, the plants and the planets.

Lawrence ends "They Say the Sea is Loveless" by saying: "I am the sea, I am the sea!" (18). Bethan Jones describes this poem as one of "the mana poems" (241), in other words a nature poem where the poet acquires the power of what he describes. She writes that these poems "seem to suggest the primacy of the living, fecund cosmos in which the most significant realization is that of aliveness of the natural world" (Jones, 241). The poet wants to say that he has become unchanging and elemental like the sea.

In "Lord's Prayer" (Pinto and Roberts, 704), the persona says:

For thine is the kingdom
the power, and the glory__

Hallowed be thy name, then
Thou who art nameless__ (1-4)

The poet wants to gain god-like characteristics by repeating the god's kingdom, power and glory. Then, Lawrence generalizes god-like quotations, saying everybody/everything is god-like, whether he is animate or inanimate:

Like the kingdom of the nightingale at twilight
whose power and glory I have often heard and left.

Like the kingdom of the fox in the dark
yapping in his power and his glory
which death to the goose.

Like the power and the glory of the goose in the mist
honking over the lake. (6-12)

The main point for the poet is to be god-like, as shown in these lines, the purity of the animals, like a nightingale or a fox. But even so, the goose has its power and its dominance "over the lake", and thus it is god-like.

In the last part of this poem the persona offers his godly characteristics: "And I, a naked man, calling / Calling to thee for my mana, / My kingdom, my power, and my glory" (13-15). Such poems imply life, his main purpose, and show the insistence of the poet on immortality in life because, like a god, he will never die.

The *Last Poems* set out religious beliefs, which Lawrence claims were related to the ancient ones, but his views sometimes appear to present a new religious perspective. In fact two tendencies are found in the *Last Poems*. The ancient gods are symbols of abstract concepts, and this way of thinking is found in many authors. But Lawrence towards the end of his life went further. He finds and celebrates the wisdom of ancient science, nature and mythology, preferring them to the intellectual and skeptical modern approaches of science.

As has been mentioned in the Introduction, for Lawrence, insisting on the idea of immortality, gods and men are not to be separated. The divine extends to man, and particularly to men of those cultures where there is a union of mind and body. Ancient man has become his model in the last works, as the one who is truly aware of the cosmos. Deep reverence is given to nature in the poem "For The Heroes are Dipped in Scarlet" (Pinto and Roberts, 688-89), the ancient man is part of nature:

So now they come back! Hark!
Hark! The low and shattering laughter of bearded men
with the slim wasted of warriors, and the long feet
of moon-lit dancer (10-14).

In these lines, Lawrence describes the ancient man. They were like naked giants, with huge bodies, long beards and rough voices. Lawrence starts the poem "For the Heroes Are Dipped in Scarlet" by referring to the civilizations before Plato, saying that: "Before Plato told the great lie of ideals / men slimly went like fishes, and didn't care" (1-2). In the next lines, Lawrence does not go far from the Mediterranean Sea. In this poem he talks about some heroes from Palestine to connect the ancient Greeks with the Jewish tradition: "They had long hair, like Samson, /and clean as arrows they sped at the mark /when the bow-cord twanged" (1-3). The ancient heroes, and the ancient men in general, were like tools in the hand of the god.

Moreover, if one were to search for Lawrence's man in his earlier works, he would find a man who can move easily between two worlds, the modern world and the ancient world, like Somers in *Kangaroo*, Lilley in *Aaron's Rod*, Birkin in *Women in Love*. These are men who are free because they are unbound by social conventions.

He describes the ancient man as more natural or closer to nature than the modern man. "They knew it was no use knowing / their own nothingness: / for they were not nothing" (6-8). By contrast, in the late poems, Lawrence's hero is strongly associated with pre-history and has a supra-social, timeless character.

Lawrence rejects the modern man's way of life and modern religions as well. Thus Lawrence believes that life is a "perpetual miracle, a process of eternal creation, a continual striving for new incarnations, new worlds. It is the process that keeps the world alive" (qtd. in Glicksberg, 1951, 100). Lawrence in the *Last Poems* shows the differences between the man who lives in close companionship with nature, and the civilized man who lives so far from nature.

The ancient man responds directly to desires and needs. Lawrence distances himself from the "egoists, the chimaeras of self-importance and sphinxes of self-consciousness" (Lockwood, 176). As is mentioned in *The Hostile Sun* by Joyce Carol Oates:

Lawrence was correct in believing that the excessively self-conscious artist seeks to exalt over his subject; and that the highest role of the artist is to proclaim not his own ingenuity and superiority over the men but his sympathy with them (Oates).

Thus, the ancient man becomes Lawrence's subject, especially in his last days, and also, the importance of the body dominates Lawrence's thinking, which leads him to the greater reality of bodies rather than minds. This is clearly stated in the poem "Demiurge" (Sola and Roberts, 689):

Even the mind of God can only imagine
those things that have become themselves:
bodies and presence, here and now, creatures with a foothold in
creation (8-11).

The importance of the body emphasizes, the presence of everything, even god. In the last stanza, it is notable that Lawrence says "Religion knows better than philosophy" (12). On this issue, Lockwood says "religion, meaning the ancient Greek cults and pre-Socratic philosophy of Greece, knows better than Platonic and all subsequent neo-Platonic philosophy, including Christianity" (Lockwood, 178). Addressing Christianity directly in the poem, Lawrence writes:

Religion knows that Jesus was never Jesus
till he was born from a womb, and ate soup and bread
and grew up, and became, in the wonder of creation, Jesus,
with a body and with needs, and a lovely spirit. (13-17)

In these lines Lawrence does not accept "Jesus" as an eternal God. His divinity is only accepted when he is presented with a body and it starts with the physical world. To be born to eat food and to have a body and life needs. Unlike other poems, this poem emphasizes the idea of the continuity of life not of death. And also this poem shows Lawrence's optimistic mood, the poet who did not accept the idea of death as his oncoming end.

Finally, in his prose work *Phoenix*, Lawrence shows his point of view on the ancient men, saying:

It may be ancient to you, but it is still alive and kicking in some people. And "ancient life" is far more deeply conscious than you can even imagine. And its discipline goes into regions where you have no existence. (qtd. in Mackey, 71)

Ancient men represent the wisdom of life that transfers and passes through the present and into the future.

The so-called God poems in the *Last Poems* deal with what Lawrence declares to be god(s). In general terms his god, and the poems of god, can be said to be nature or the force of nature. God in the *Last Poems* is the god of everything beautiful in the human and non-human creatures, as Bethan Jones suggests: "God in

Last Poems exists as a single creator-god yet has multiple or infinitely plural manifestations" (Jones, 1998, 125). However, more precise characteristics can be identified in his depiction of the divine.

"Pax" (Pinto and Roberts, 700), is one of D.H. Lawrence's *Last Poems* which shows one sort of Lawrence's god(s). Here the predominant symbol is a cat, which represents the speaker seeking something lost. The theme of this poem is depicted in the first two lines, "All the matter is to be at one with the living God / to be a creature in the house of the God of life" (1-2). The last phrase is a reference to the Psalms,⁴ but here a cat seeks peace in the presence of the "master". And also, Lawrence writes that "the knowledge of God" to a Christian saint is a familiarity, like living in the same house as God:

Like a cat asleep on a chair
at peace, in peace
and at one with the master of the house, with the mistress,
at home, at home in the house of the living,
sleeping on the hearth, and yawning before the fire. (3-7)

Symbolically, Lawrence uses the cat to refer to the idea of being in the monarchy of the god. Here the poet emphasizes the main theme of the *Last Poems*, being in contact with everlasting god, the god who is described in the other poems as an endless and timeless god, oblivion. The persona depicts the image of the cat referring to all creatures including human beings. He says that to be alive you need to live close to god, or being on contact with god.

feeling the presence of the living God
like a great reassurance
a deep calm in the heart
a presence
as of the master sitting at the board

⁴ Lawrence borrows this symbol from a Psalm, sung by the Jews, and attributed to David. But the sheep is replaced by a cat. This originally comes from the Bible and the poet has reversed it. See The Holy Bible, (Psalm 131: 1-7).

in his own and greater being.

In the house of life. (10-16)

The being "in touch" with the god is what Lawrence emphasizes in most of his religious poems, and he considers it the condition of being alive. He interprets touching in this poem by being close to god.

One of the poet's main criticisms of the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition is what he perceives to be their rejection of the body. In the poem "Bodiless God" (Pinto and Roberts, 691) Lawrence depicts the body of god to criticize some contemporary religious ideas of god: "Everything that has beauty has a body, and is a body; / Everything that has being in the flesh: / And dreams are only drawn from the bodies" (1-3).

In this poem, Lawrence asks if it is right to say that god has a body and emotions and desires, or he has human characteristics which enable him to hate or love his creatures' actions. For him, if god has no human characteristics, he will not be "mighty and glorious".

And God?

Unless God has a body, how can he have a voice
and emotions, and desires, and strength, glory or honour?

For God, even the rarest God, is supposed to love us
and wish us to be this that and the other.

And he is supposed to be mighty and glorious. (4-9)

Whenever Lawrence uses the word "god", he refers to life, because according to the poet god means life after death, and the everlasting life. And also, God, according to Lawrence and the modern religions as well, means immortality, the one who does not have a beginning and no end. One can compare the idea of god with a body in this poem to the idea in his essay "The Risen Lord", in which he says:

Christ risen in the flesh! We must accept the image complete, if
we accept it at all [. . .] It is only the image of our own experience.
Christ rises, when he rises from the dead, in the flesh, not merely

as a spirit. He rises with hands and feet, as Thomas knew for certain: and if with hands and feet, then with lips and stomach and genitals of a man. Christ risen, and risen in the whole of His flesh, not with some left out. (qtd. in Gutierrez, 1978, 175-76)

Here, Lawrence links the god in the *Last Poems* with Christ, sometimes he accepts and borrows some of the Christian God's features, and sometimes rejects him at all. For Lawrence god has to be in flesh, has a body, otherwise he is not a god

Elsewhere he writes: "Spirit and matter are not two things; they are one or, rather, spirit has no existence until the vague demiurge of the universe expresses itself in a material form that is both spirit and body" (qtd. in William, 77). In "The Body of God" (Pinto and Roberts, 691), Lawrence goes further, and asserts that the divine is closely associated with sexual urges: "God is a great urge that has not yet found a body / but urges towards incarnation with the great creative urge" (1-2). These urges are vital for on-going life.

Lawrence is fundamentally against monotheism, and we find in him the nature of pagan or pantheist beliefs. "Nature" or the "Nature-force", Lawrence's "creative godhead is the life force of the universe" and "the center of all things" (William, 77). As Bethan Jones points out, when Lawrence uses the word god with a capital (G) it refers to the Christians God, who is only one god, but when he uses god with a small (g) he refers to the other gods around, or the gods of the other peoples, or other religions, of other creeds, (Bethan Jones, 243). A clearly pantheist message is in the poem "The Body of God", (Pinto and Roberts, 691):

There is no god
apart from poppies and the flying fish,
men singing songs, and women brushing their hair in the sun.
The lovely things are god that has come to pass, like Jesus came.
The rest, the undiscoverable, is the demi-urge. (8-12)

This poem is related to those poems which have animal imagery and plant imagery because Lawrence sees god in animals and plants. So Lawrence does not believe in one god but believes in the manifestations of god's plurality and capacity to

metamorphose, although he often expresses his beliefs in images consistent with monotheism.

The poem "Maximus" (Pinto and Roberts, 702), has much to say about the nature of god. As Gilbert suggests, this god "incarnates himself in a host of fleshly messengers" (1990, 278). In this poem the dialogue between the persona and Hermes, when the speaker talks with him and asks him many questions. The poet gives that man a divine characteristic, like calmness, wisdom, quietness, specifically, when he utters just his name. Sandra Gilbert and Bethan Jones as well, point out that Lawrence uses a series of paradoxes to describe his god (Sandra Gilbert, 1972, 278). This is quite clear in this poem, which can be compared in this regard with the poem "Bodiless God" (pinto and Roberts, 700). Lawrence first argues that his god is nameless and unseen, but then in this poem, god has a body, and names him: "God is older than the sun and moon / And the eye cannot behold him / Nor voice describe him" (1-3). Then the paradox comes in the following lines:

But a naked man, a stranger, leaned on the gate
with his cloak over his arm, waiting to be asked in.
So I called him: Come in, if you will!-
He came in slowly, and sat down by the hearth.
I said to him: And what is your name? -
He looked at me without answer, but such a loveliness
entered me, I smiled to myself, saying: he is God!
So he said: Hermes! (4-11)

As has been shown before, Lawrence uses more than one contradictory feature to describe his character. He says, in some poems that god is nameless, bodiless, and timeless, then he paradoxically offers his god as having a body and he gives him a name, like Hermes. And also, Lawrence depicts the character as a human being who has the features of god. Hermes is described in the old Greek mythology as a god of transitions and boundaries. He is quick and sly, and moves freely between the worlds of the divine and mortal, as a representative and messenger of the gods, the intercessor between mortals and the divine, and conductor of souls into the afterlife. Lawrence says he stood "with his cloak on his arm" (5), exactly as Hermes is

described in the Greek myth. Hermes, is, in the *Iliad*, called the source of good luck, or director and guardian of man in all his actions. He was a divine ally of the Greeks against the Trojans.

Lawrence frequently argues against the God of the Bible. He wrote *Apocalypse*, in part as a critical commentary on the biblical book of that name. Revelation is, according to Lawrence, "antipathetic" because of its "complete unnaturalness" (Lawrence, 1980, 46). The Bible does not have the idea of being free afterlife, without judging.

But a God who judges his creatures after death, according to their works is not favorable for Lawrence.

Animals also share the divine power, as is clear in the "Fox". This animal is, according to Lawrence, a god-like creature, using its power like a king in his kingdom. He says that " like the kingdom of the fox in the dark / yapping in his power and his glory / which is death to the goose" (12-14). In this poem and as it is usually known in the *Last Poems*, Lawrence depicts the idea of god and he considers every tree, rainbow, river, and man, as a god.

A naked man or woman is god-like, just as the Greeks saw beauty in the naked body, and their gods are often portrayed naked. In the poem "The Man of Tyre" (Pinto and Roberts, 692-93), the meeting between a man of Tyre and a woman, who comes up from the sea, is described by the poet:

The man of Tyre went down to the sea
pondering, for he was Greek, that God is one and all alone and ever
more shall be so. (1-3)

The woman is discussed as:

Oh lovely, lovely with dark hair piled up, as she went deeper,
deeper down the channel, then rose shallower, shallower,
with the full thighs slowly lifting of the wader wading shorewards
and shoulders pallid with light from the silent sky behind
both breasts dim and mysterious with the glamorous kindness of
twilight between them

and the dim blotch of black maidenhair like an indicator,
giving a message to the man
.....
..... But here in the twilight
godly and lovely comes Aphrodite out of the sea
towards me! (11-23)

Aphrodite is the goddess who comes as a result of cutting Uranus's genitals. Aphrodite appears, in this poem and in the Greek mythology, as a naked woman, a Goddess of beauty, love, and sexuality. According to Lawrence, nakedness reflects life in union with the cosmos, we have to live as "naked breast to breast with naked cosmos" and in ritual, in "naked superb ritual alone taking from the cosmos life, validity, potency, prowess, and power" (Lawrence, 1980,180).

The terms of renewing and coming back from death start the poem "The Ship of Death" and it continues till the last poem of this collection "Phoenix". "The Ship of Death" (Pinto and Roberts, 716-21), is one of the most important and the longest poems in D.H. Lawrence's *Last Poems*. It is mainly constructed by groups of images and symbols that are dominated by the theme of death. First of all, the idea of the ship which accompanies death comes from Lawrence's interest in the Etruscan tombs where there is a ship, made of bronze, put beside the dead. This idea may have given Lawrence the inspiration to write the poem. This poem begins when the persona motivates the readers to build their ship of death, then in the middle of the poem the persona says that he is dying. He feels that everything is gone, "[a]nd everything is gone, the body is gone /completely under, gone, entirely gone" (VIII:1-2). In the second part, the persona asks everybody to prepare for the oncoming death. "[h]ave you built your ship of death, O have you?" (8). This poem ends with the attitude of life after death, the life of oblivion. Lawrence encourages humans to be aware of the coming death and they should prepare well: "For the voyage of oblivion awaits you" (X:11).

In this poem, Lawrence is interested in nature and he uses features of nature to build his images, Now It is harvest time, fruit falls, so he has no more time to live. There is a "long journey", the journey in the dark to the underworld, to loneliness, to "oblivion". In the first stanza, there is a simile of falling "apples". Lawrence uses the

fruit and especially "apples" because, an apple is an allusion to the creation myth, life and apple. Lawrence finishes this long journey with the same fruit. The image of falling apples shows maturity and death.

The sea symbolism is peaceful and dark, but it is, as suggested by Lawrence, hard to pass. That made the poet interested in preparing well and building the "ship of death". In this poem the sea is used as a symbol for the journey to death. The persona says: "Already the dark and endless ocean of the end /is washing in through the breaches of our wounds, /already the flood is upon us" (35-37). The sea is used as a medium through which the dead are transformed from individuals to something more elemental, which will return to life.

In the fourth stanza of the poem, Lawrence underlines peace after a miserable life. In this issue, the influence of the ancient Etruscans gave him, as suggested by Billy T. Tracy, "what the religion of his youth never could the ability to face death courageously" (440). This suggests Lawrence's criticism of Christianity is because he wants a way to save himself from the idea of being punished or rewarded and he looks for a more peaceful and safe way to depart this world.

In the fifth part of this poem, Lawrence emphasizes the importance of this journey, saying "you must take / the longest journey, to oblivion" (V, 1-2). The poet experiences an imaginary journey, and in spite of this imaginary journey after death, he really did this journey when his dead body was transported from France to New Mexico, two years after his death. So what he dreams in his life is done, but not as he desired. Moreover, this ship had to sail in "the dark" going deep down to the unknown, endless and ultimate peace. This travel has to be furnished well, because it is the "longest journey" to oblivion. But here the journey after life is the journey of the soul not of the body. Lawrence shows the "departing soul" (VII, 6), as it "Swings the heart renewed with peace / Even of oblivion" (X, 7-8). He emphasizes the life after death.

Again, in the fifth part, the flood rises, and now he shows his interest in the past time and the ancient stories. The ship that should be built should be as strong as the Ark of Noah, which is considered as a strong ship. Any sailor should supply his ship with "food, cakes, and wine", just like the ancient Egyptian myth according to which the dead bodies are sent to the west side of the sea, filled with, symbolically, all that has been good in life and necessary. In other words, "the ark of faith is

stocked with the stuff of everyday existence, founded upon a belief in the goodness of moral existence and rightness of natural cycle" (Hagen, 125). These ships sail to the endless, to "oblivion". So man has to be faithful and accept death.

In the sixth part, Lawrence moves from describing the ship of death to describing the dying body. And the "dark" death raises the mast of the ship and "floods" to start the journey. The repetition of "We are dying" raises the gloom of his poem, to tell the reader that death is our reality and no one escapes from death.

In the seventh part, the persona is dead, and the soul begins its real departure on the small ship of death. The time is the time of departure, a proper time for the longest journey of the soul:

Upon the flood's black waste
Upon the waters of the end
Upon the water of death, where still we sail
Darkly, for we cannot steer, and have no port. (VII:12-15)

This sailing is endless, timeless, placeless, soundless and with an unknown direction, the only known direction is "deepening black" (VII: 11).

In the eighth part, the ship has vanished and so is the body, everything is gone, The conclusion of this section is: "It is the end, it is oblivion." Here the persona depicts the idea of immortal life, he has gained his renewal, and he is alive.

In the poem, Lawrence displays the new life and tries to offer some details of this life in order to portray the end of this very long journey. The "little ship" is "flood-dawn" and "beneath the deathly ashy grey" (IV: 11). He calls the passengers of the ship to wait everything will change. In this place everything "starts again", the body looks "lovely" and "strange". Then, he orders the ship to go back home and flood on "pink flood" because he has reached his renewal. So, he hopes to be back again. It is a reference to the change of attitude from depression and sadness to hope and being immortal, of being god-like.

In the last lines the persona finds "peace". The ship should move backward and forward in order to "renew" the heart with the peace of oblivion. So, the ship has to go back to its shore "home". Optimistically, at the end, the ship of death should go backward to its shore, through "the voyage of oblivion".

The idea of oblivion is not only represented by death and the life after death, but also by using some examples from life to show that oblivion, as mentioned before, is the condition for renewing, and for being changed. Towards the end of this collection, Lawrence underlines the three steps of life, life before death, death and the life after death, which is described by Lawrence as oblivion. In the *Last Poems*, the poet offers oblivion through many symbols and imageries, for instance, in the poem "Sleep" (Pinto and Roberts, 724), Lawrence depicts the image of sleep, as "the shadow of death" (1), or as "Death's second self" (Lawrence, 1980, 67). In the second line of this poem, the poet depicts another definition of sleep, "a hint of lovely oblivion". Here, sleep is compared to death, which suggests that death is not the end. So, sleep is not only shadow of death, but oblivion which leads a person out of his daily problems, out of consciousness, to the world of calmness, emptiness and peacefulness. As mentioned by Burnet, Heraclitus comments on the effects of sleep. He says:

In sleep we forget, but at our waking we become conscious once more. For in sleep, when the openings of the senses close, the mind which is in us is cut off from contact with what surrounds us, and only our connection with it by means of respiration loses the power of memory that it had before. When we wake again, however, it looks out through the openings of the senses, as if through windows, and coming together with the surrounding mind (1920, 111-12).

Through sleep, there is the unconscious departure from life. The poet wants to say that sleep gives the same quietus and peace of death. In this matter of sleep, Lawrence refers to the Greek myths. Edith Hamilton mentions:

Sleep and Death, his brother, (two rivers), dwelt in the lower world. Dreams too ascended from there to men. They passed through two gates, one of horn through which true dreams went, one of ivory for false dreams (Hamilton, 41).

Sleep makes the persona completely "lapsed and gone" (3) from the pain he lives in real life. Sleep is used as a drug which "heals" souls by this oblivion even for a short time. So, oblivion is used as an alternative by the poet, as a drug which may heal him from, the fake life of modern man.

Lawrence starts his poem "Sleep and Waking" (Pinto and Roberts, 725), with sleep, and the same theme of the previous poem is implied. As the title of this poem suggests the poem is divided into two parts, the first part is "Sleep", which leads to the second part, "Waking". Like the previous poem "Sleep", in this poem the persona underlines how lovely a state sleep is and he compares it to other states in life, saying: "Dark, dreamless sleep, in deep oblivion! / Nothing in life is quite so good as this" (1-5). Sleep guides man to unconsciousness which has become Lawrence's main theme.

The action of waking from sleep, on the other hand, is considered to be holy. This gift of god is to renovate the world:

Yet there is waking from the soundest sleep,
Waking, and waking new.
Did you sleep well?
Ah yes, the sleep of God!
The world is created afresh. (6-10)

As always, Lawrence tries to show everything as a heavenly matter. Here oblivion is described as "the sleep of God", it is soundless and dreamless. After such sleep one can get his fresh body and a new mood.

In the poem "Fatigue" (Pinto and Roberts, 725), the poet seeks for oblivion to comfort his soul from the hardness of modern days, "my soul [. . .] is seeking her oblivion" (1, 3). However, it is impossible to find peace and solace, as the man destroyed it: "for man has killed the silence of the earth / and ravished all the peaceful oblivious places / where the angels used to alight. (14-9). In this poem oblivion represents quietness and calmness of the soul which "has had a long, hard day" because "she is tired" (1).

This poem, as Bethan Jones suggests, presents "a way to evade the modern world" (211), which interrupts the calmness of life and more specifically the life of

people of previous cultures. In these cultures, and more frequently the ancient Greek culture there are some rivers that separate the underworld from the world above. One of these rivers is "Lethe", "the river of forgetfulness":

Anchises led Aeneas to Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, of which the souls on their way to live again in the world above must all drink. 'A draught of long oblivion' Anchises said. And he showed his son those who were to be their descendents, his own and Aeneas', now waiting by the river for their time to drink and lose the memory of what in former lives they had done and suffered (Hamilton, 335).

And also everybody, according to the old beliefs, has to be dipped in the river of oblivion in order to transform into a new body. The image of oblivion and others imply Lawrence's rejection of the modern man, and he thinks that the ancient cultures adapt the ideas that are shown in the *Last Poems* better than the modern cultures.

Concerning Lawrence's rejection of the modern man, Lawrence says in the poem "Know-All" (Pinto and Roberts, 726), "man knows nothing / till he knows how not-to-know" (1-2). The second part of this line focuses on the idea of being able to forget, and unconsciously live the life of nothingness. In this poem, the poet adds something new to his poems about oblivion. To solve the confusion of words, the "knowing" is life, and unknowing is oblivion. So, man's life, according to Lawrence, is nothing till he accepts the idea of unknowing death. And he supports this idea when he says that "the great teachers", gods, said that "the end of all knowledge" is oblivion. Oblivion is the "dark oblivion", and alienation, even from the self. And thus life and death are two opposite faces in the life of everybody, they balance each other.

In the poem "Temples" (Pinto and Roberts, 726), Lawrence makes a comparison between life and death and oblivion (2). According to him oblivion is better, because it means "silence" and "forgetting", the end of "knowing" and of "being". It is the "sweet wholeness of oblivion" (5). Again Lawrence shows his hostility to the subject of "knowing" considering it as a fashionable modern aspect,

which separates man from the cosmos.

Significantly, Lawrence links the temples, he depicts in this poem, with the Greek temples, saying:

Myself, I like to think of the little wooden temples of the early Greeks and of the Etruscans: small, dainty, fragile, and evanescent as flower. We have reached the stage where we are weary of huge stone erections, and we begin to realize that it is better to keep life fluid and changing, than to try to hold it fast down in heavy monuments. Burdens on the face of the earth are man's ponderous erections. (qtd. in Jones, 2010, 58)

In oblivion, which is the ultimate purpose of Lawrence after death, nothing progresses up or down. This leads to the endless, to the ever-changing world where things are flexible and alive.

In the last poem of this group, "Change" (Pinto and Roberts, 727), Lawrence puts a condition on everyone who is willing to change. Inspired by the Heraclitan idea that "all things are passing, both human and divine, upwards [life] and downwards [death] by exchanging" (Burnet, 1920, 111), Lawrence suggests that one should pass "through the waters of oblivion" (4). This is a reference to the mythological river, "Lethe". Everybody who wants to change has to dip in this water. Oblivion is the sweetest period of time, and Lawrence believed so firmly in "the Etruscan's optimistic outlook on death that hypothesized an outside influence to account for this change" (Tracy, 444). Finally oblivion is the locus of change, and the peace of soul.

In order to get "renewal" of the heart, it may be done upward and downward, like a "swing", like the ship in the sea, which is shown in the "Ship of Death". Another related word with oblivion is silence found in the poem under this name. (Pinto and Roberts, 689-99). In "Silence" Lawrence personifies silence as the "great bride of all creation".

Come, holy silence, come
Great bride of all creation.

Come, holy Silence! reach, reach
From the presence of God, and envelop us. (1-4).

Lawrence in this poem refers to the seven days of creation "seven great laughs of God" (Pinto and Roberts, 698-99). He depends on the belief that says that God created the world in seven days. So, according to this belief, the seventh day is the greatest day because it is the day of rest. The reference to the days of creation leads us to Lawrence's own thought about life and the beginning of the creation in some other beliefs.

Oblivion, as expressed in these short poems, discusses human connection with the cosmos, as Lawrence always depicts, which "is pitted against the robotic nonexistence associated with the triumph of the machine" (Jones, 2010, 119) as Lawrence always rejects. And also oblivion as shown in the *Last Poems* is represented by different symbols and imageries: the sea and the sky usually refer to oblivion. Third, oblivion is the sleep, but the dreamless sleep, then oblivion is forgetfulness, and where god dwells, in the holiest place. The poet attempts to build temples for oblivion where one meets the god, who is oblivion. Also, the condition of being changed into a peaceful existence is "how not to know" ("Know-All", 2), which is the difference between modern man, who knows, and ancient man, who does not know. Thus, according to Lawrence, life with rational thinking has no value. The poet puts this condition for renewal and rebirth.

Through the *Last Poems*, it is clear that Lawrence not only rejects the man of his time, or the modern man, but his rejection extends to all thinkers from Plato to the modern world. This is obvious in the poem "Demiurge", (Pinto and Roberts, 689). At the beginning of the poem Lawrence characterizes the Neo-Platonic point of view about the nature of reality, the body and matter. Lawrence rejects and reverses the theory of forms:

They say that reality exists only in the spirit
the corporal existence is a kind of death
that the pure being is bodiless

that the idea of the form precedes the form substantial. (1-4)

Here he makes a sweeping critique of Plato and all thinkers since Plato, all of whom he finds to be tainted by the separation of mind and body. He was not the first to make such claims, for Nietzsche had famously pioneered this worldview. Nietzsche not only condemned the founder of Western ethics, Socrates, and Christian morality, but all the post-Christian philosophers, like Hegel and Feuerbach, who, in his view, did not see that the rejection of Christianity demanded radical revisions of social and religious approaches. The *Last Poems* embody a similar radicalism. Ramesh Karki says that Lawrence "like Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, attacks the barbarous and the absurd of modern civilization" (244). He attacks everything that separates man from his "animal delights" (Karki, 244).

Lawrence attacks modern life in the poem "In the Cities" (Pinto and Roberts, 703-04), and sheds light on the negative side of modernity. Modern cities are polluted and dirty:

In the cities
there is even no more any weather
the weather in town is always benzine, or else petrol fumes
lubricating oil, exhausted gas
as over some dense marsh, the fumes
thicken, miasma, the fumes of the automobile
densely thicken in the cities, (1-7)

Lawrence compares the modern life with the old civilizations of his favorite period. The poet compares these ancient cities with the largest cities of modern life, with their unclear air of the factories:

In London, New York, Paris
in the bursten cities
the dead tread heavily through the muddy air
through the mire of fumes
heavily, stepping wearing on our hearts. (19-23)

Lawrence's anxiety about England and the pollution and squalor engendered by the Industrial Revolution depicts the miserable ambience at the time. Lawrence describes these cities as breeding corrupted souls. Clearly, the problem is not above all pollution. Modern man is degenerate because he has personalized everything in the universe. However, the pagan creates real, vital connections with the cosmos.

In the poem "Evil is Homeless" (Pinto and Roberts, 711-12), the poet tries to clarify that evil dwells in the modern man's soul, leading to his weakness and fear of death. He says: "Evil has no home, /only evil has no home,/ not even the of demonical hell" (1-3). They are evil souls, "lost souls", who have no place but "hell". In the next line, Lawrence shows that the opposite image to "souls lost in darkness", is "souls lost in light", which are dwelling in "heaven". God is found, not in the Christian tradition, but in the archaic world:

... like Persephone, or Attis
there are souls that are at home in both homes.
Not like grey Dante, colour-blind
to the scarlet and purple flowers at the doors of hell. (6-9)

The comparison is made between the Greek gods and the modern God, and Lawrence's point of view is towards the ancient and primal ones. In this regard Lawrence, in the *Apocalypse*, says:

Human heart needs [. . .] splendor, gorgeousness, pride, assumption, glory, and lordship. Perhaps it needs these even great king makes every man a little lord in his own tiny sphere, fill the imagination with lordship and splendor, satisfies the soul. The most dangerous thing in the world is to show man his own paltriness as a hedged in male. It depresses him, and *makes* him paltry. We become alas, what we think we are, men have been depressed now for many years in their male and splendid selves, depressed into dejection and almost into dejection. Is not that evil?

Then let men themselves do something about it. (Lawrence, 1980, 71)

Lawrence thinks that the solution for man is when he thinks in images, not in rational and reasonably linked arguments pointing towards regular conclusions. For the pagan consciousness, god enters and permeates all matter, is "present in water and rock".

What brings evil is symbolized above all by the modern life of machines:

And men that sit in machines
among spinning wheels, in an apotheosis of wheels
sit in the grey mist of movement which moves not
and going which goes not
and doing which does not
and being which is not:
that is, they sit and are evil, in evil,
grey evil, which has no bath, and shows neither light nor dark,
and has no home, no home anywhere. (15-24)

In a vision which recalls Rousseau and the Romantics, all that separates man from his primal desires and emotions, is evil. The body and its desires are the highest life-affirming impulses.

Finally, "Phoenix" (Pinto and Roberts, 728), is the last poem of D.H. Lawrence's *Last Poems*. It is constructed of symbols to bring to the mind the image of death, which is the dominant theme of the *Last Poems*. The poem "Phoenix" seems to continue the theme of the poem "Change", which is the change of the phases of life and renewal.

In this poem the poet claims that oblivion enables everybody to sponge out, to erase, cancel, and "to be made nothing" (3). All of these characteristics are achieved only when one dips in oblivion. Nothingness is the main feature of oblivion, since, as described in the oblivion poems, it is the endless, timeless, and shadowy world. Then, Lawrence says that oblivion is the only way of renewing and "if not, you will never really change" (5).

In the last stanza the poet depicts the imagery of phoenix, and personifies this bird of immortality as she cannot "renew her youth / only when she is burnt" (6-7). Here renewal is not as in the previous poems, which was death, here it comes through the fire and "when she [phoenix] is burnt, burnt alive, burnt down / to hot and flocculent ash" (7-8). Then she "is renewing her youth like the eagle, / immortal bird" (11-12). Lawrence ends this collection with the idea of immortality. There are two messages about death in this poem: First, man must be willing to accept death, because death is the beginning of new life. Secondly, the ultimate end of death is oblivion.

To conclude the oblivion theme, Lawrence shows that science, materialism, industrialism and logic are the enemies of health and true belief. The intellect, separated from the body, is the supreme foe of life.

Lawrence had two main complaints about modern human beings. One was the "mind-body" duality, or human being's separation from his own bodies and instincts. As Lawrence expresses it in his poem "Ego-Bound", we are like plants who are "pot-bound" instead of rooted in the earth. Man is, he says, enclosed in his own limited mental consciousness and as a result, he is only half-alive, and cannot feel any more or love, or rejoice or even grieve any more. This "I" sees the body as something "other" to it, and because of this separation, the body is thought as a kind of enemy. People consider it as something base, so they want to dominate the body.

Lawrence's second main contribution concerns a different kind of separation: the separation between beings and the cosmos. Rather than a part of the world, we are part of it, detached observers who look at it as something "other" to just as we do our bodies. The "flow" of life between human being and the cosmos has been broken. And because of this separation the phenomenal world is an unreal and dreary place.

The purpose behind Lawrence's death poems and others that appeared in the *Last Poems* is not fear. He allows his "subject a certain measure of freedom, it will spring forth" (Oates). That leads him, in spite of his circumstances, to seek for the immortality of art not of life. This is why Oates says that to Lawrence, the new and the fresh moment stayed the one "bright book of life" because of its "dramatic rendering" (Oates), of the multipart interconnectedness of life.

Chapter Three

CONCLUSION

It has been argued that *Last Poems* show Lawrence's inspiration and approach had changed considerably around the time of his death. Through his study of the ancient cultures, Lawrence came to believe that his long-held views on morality and the intellect, his honour for the body, were prefigured in ancient civilizations, like the Minoans and Etruscans. *Last Poems* shows that he puts his beliefs in a new, broad historical perspective, and that his deepening interest in archaic beliefs provides him with inspiration and symbolism. Lawrence's attraction to these civilizations came as a result of his travels and reading. He read Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and Jane Harrison's *Ancient Art and Ritual*, and in 1916 he read about the early Egyptian history also the *Voice of Africa*.

Another remarkable source was *History of the East* by Leo Frobenius. Lawrence read other books about Egypt, India, "the iron age", the Etruscans. Thomas Belt's *The Naturalist in Nicaragua*, Adolph Bandelier's *The Gilded Man*, Bernal Diaz's *Conquest of Mexico*, Humboldt's *Vues des Cordilleres*, and many essays and volumes of the *Anales del Museo Nacional* of Mexico, were among Lawrence's reading (Tindall, 198- 211). These books suggest that Lawrence became interested in early civilizations, leaving the modern life, thinking that these cultures and their relation towards nature is the salvation, the true life. These civilizations did not care for death because they, like nature, can renew themselves, so they are immortal.

The most attractive idea in *Last Poems*, borrowed from the early civilizations and nature, is death. As mentioned by Patricia L. Hagen "death, as viewed in *Last Poems*, is not a matter of transcending the condition of life; rather, it is one of the conditions of life, without which we would have only mechanism" (103). The events which surround Lawrence's death are included in the themes of the *Last Poems*. After

his death, Lawrence's body was "taken for re-burial to Taos⁵" (Aldington, 1950, 353). Aldington adds that he is buried in a place "where it lies in a memorial chapel on the slope of the Rockies just behind his ranch and almost shadowed by the great pine tree" (Aldington, 1950, 353). The place, to some extent, was his desired place, it is the "peaceful oblivious place" (Aldington, 1950, 353). At the beginning of the last decade of his life, Lawrence travelled to Bandol, but his wish was to go farther, to America, where his place for two years was New Mexico: "for him, and mankind in general, [the future] lay in the active life of the west" (Lockwood, 164). In 1921 he wrote, "the glamour for me is in the West not in the fulfilled East" (Lockwood, 164). However, in *Last Poems*, we find him engaging with the roots of civilization, more frequently, those who live by the Mediterranean Sea like the Etruscan places, the early Egyptians, and the Babylonians.

Many of the beliefs that marked *Last Poem*, where the poet's concern already before this collection. For example, Lawrence emphasized death as oblivion when he told his sister Ada in 1919: "When [you die you] would be like a raindrop falling back into the sea the big shimmering sea of unorganized life which we call God, and that, though we are then lost as individuals, we count in the whole" (Ellis, 67).

These long-held beliefs find a new depth and focus, however, in his late works. The concepts of death and life after death come through the ancient beliefs that are described by Murray, Burnet⁶ and others, which led Lawrence to believe in life simplicity, purity and endlessness. On this subject M. J. Lockwood mentions in *A Study of the Poems of D.H. Lawrence* that "Lawrence's senses are fully awake, but [it is] a more private vision [. . .] If Lawrence cannot make himself different, he will remake the world in his own image instead" (Lockwood, 190). He is conscious of the imaginative world to establish a new religion. As Lockwood says: "in the *Last Poems* [. . .] the religion [is the] sense of connection with the cosmos, with

⁵ In New Mexico.

⁶ The collection of the *Last Poems* "contains a number of quotations, chiefly from John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*, (3rd Edition, 1920). Lawrence seems to have first read Burnet's book (which is given to him by Bertrand Russell) when he was in Cornwall in 1916. According to Richard Aldington, he was "delighted in this work [Burnet's book], and was influenced by it considerably". Russell must have given him the 1st Edition (1892) or the 2nd (1908). The quotations in [the *Last Poems*], however, seem to come from the 3rd Edition, as they refer to a passage that does not occur in the two earlier ones" (Jones, 195).

something which is non-human, non-vocal, [religion] is only felt when one is alone, when one has learnt how to be alone" (Lockwood, 167). Then he continues and says: "all people can never be alone, because paradoxically, they are too wrapped up in their own idea of themselves" (Lockwood, 168). In the last days, Lawrence seems to have lived in a condition of hanging, removed from the earth, floating, transfigured by the arrival of death, as shown in the previous chapter as life must swing in order to get its renewal.

In his essay *The Reality of Peace*, Lawrence describes death, he says that "Death, beautiful death searches us out, even in our armor of insulated will. Death is within us, while we tighten our will to keep him out. Death beautiful, clean death, washes slowly within us and carries us away" (qtd. in Ansell-Person, 42). Lawrence, at the end of his life, accepted the reality of death, and he courageously faced this fate, considering that it suggests the beginning of immortal life. In "The Crucifix Across the Mountains", dated 1912, Lawrence says:

There was no solution, either, in death. Death did not give the answer to the soul's anxiety. That which is, is. It does not cease to be when it is cut. Death cannot create cannot be destroyed [. . .] Death is the complete disillusionment, set like a seal over the whole body and being, over the suffering and weariness and the bodily passion (Lawrence, 1950, 163-64).

So, according to Lawrence, death does not mean the absolute solution, and thus he starts thinking about another world which enables him to find his ultimate purpose. According to this thesis, the other world that Lawrence finds is nature, and the so-called cosmos. The cosmos, to Lawrence, means free life, and thus the ancient Greek gods and heroes and the features of nature have considerably become his subject.

Some critics describe Lawrence as a "primitivist" (Kessler, 467). The primitivistic theory is defined by Webster and Lovejoy as "the greater excellence of ancient man because he was closer to nature than his descendents" (qtd. in Tindall, 198). Lawrence's primitivism leads him to be closer to nature and he revolts against "reason, materialism, science, and the other misfortunes of our civilization" (Tindall, 198). As we have seen, one important event was his visit to the Etruscan tombs. He

said: "Now, we know nothing about the Etruscans except what we find in their tombs [. . .] we have nothing except what the tombs offer. So to the tombs we must go" (Lawrence, 1932, 2). Such cultures, according to Lawrence, "release the imagination", and thus the released imagination "renews our strength and our vitality, makes us feel stronger and happier" (Lawrence, 1995, 47). They do not separate themselves from the natural world, they live very close to cosmos, as suggested by Lawrence describing the ancient man: "naked tribal man [lives] breast to breast with naked cosmos, pouring his consciousness collectively into cosmos, and in ritual, in naked superb ritual alone taking from the cosmos of life, vitality, potency, prowess, and power" (1980, 181-82).

Following his ideas about nature which distances him from modern man, he was too aware that "the modern man could not return to the condition of savages or even of Chaldeans, but he felt that the world might be reborn by a fusion with the past, by a return to the living worshipful universe of early man" (Tindall, 198-99). According to Gutierrez, "the mind of ancient man did not make the 'inner-outer' or 'subject-object' divisions, basic to our thinking" (Gutierrez, 1981,185). So human world and nonhuman world are not distinguished and did not separate.

Lawrence's poem "Song of Death" (Pinto and Roberts, 723-24) summarizes the main themes of the poet's last works:

Sing then the song of death, and the longest journey
and what the soul takes with him, and what he leaves behind,
and how he enters fold after fold of deepening darkness
for the cosmos even in the death is like a dark whorled shell
whose whorls fold round to the core of soundless silence and pivotal
oblivion
where the soul comes at last, and has utter-peace.
Sing then the core of dark and absolute
oblivion where the soul at last is lost
in utter peace.
Sing the song of death, O sing it! (1-14).

Lawrence celebrates the oncoming death in this quote by saying that we must "sing the song of death" (14). Death is "utter peace", it is oblivion, where everybody may find his ultimate peaceful soul, where every soul unifies with the cosmos. "It is also an expression of the absolute divine otherness of god" (Gilbert, 294). Lawrence offers that he is like a passenger in a very long and endless journey. But the journey differs from one person to another according to his relation to the cosmos. And thus this thesis recognizes two journeys in the *Last Poems*: the upward journey, represented by nature symbolism, to the heaven, where god dwells in the sky. On the other hand, the downward journey, which is shown through using the symbols of Greek mythology and plants. According to the last journey, the poet deals with the shadowy underworld livings and souls. Both of these journeys are endless and timeless, they are directed to the unknown, they are shadows of the shadowy passengers, they are oblivious.

D. H. Lawrence plays with the horrible idea of death and makes it more amusing. According to him, in death one will not be human, and through death, one will not know, he is not human. "That death entails the particular inhumanity of 'not knowing' does not, in other words, mean it is subhuman [. . .] Death signifies our 'majority' because only through death can human beings participate in that inhuman of being which is divine" (Gilbert, 294). The last works are used as a spiritual drug which comforts his ill body, and this idea makes him a more hopeful man, and also it leads him, imaginatively, to live individually.

For Lawrence, death means life, since he uses different symbols and imageries from nature and Greek mythology in order to show everlasting life. For instance, the sun-moon imagery represents life and death. Moreover, the sun-moon follow each other, so life will not stop with the disappearance of the sun because there is a moon, which lights the night, death.

Moreover, Lawrence's close relation to nature and early Greek mythology, leads him to become hostile to modern man and modern religions. He thinks that modern man and religions corrupted and spoiled pure life, and because of that modern man lost his connection with the cosmos, the real god. Death, to Lawrence, is sacred, so he wants such temples to be rebuilt.

Finally, death is the condition which balances life. "Death is not easy to pass" so one needs a medium to get the ultimate peaceful end of the chaos, and this could

be achieved by using, in the *Last Poems*, the sea or the sky. The journey through oblivion is just like the journey of the butterfly in the air, and of the dolphins and the ships in the sea, it is upwards and downwards, "swing" till the soul gets its renewal. Lawrence sometimes uses some examples from life, like sleep, unknowing and forgetting, in order to show his idea of oblivion. He says that sleep and others can give the sense of oblivion because through them one can get his renewal. Sleep, unknowing, and forgetting are used as a drug which may heal the diseased poet and take him out of the rational life. Lawrence translates this concept of death into a more powerful and hopeful concept of life.

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