Conclusion
CONCLUSION

So far in this work, I have tried to be focused on the end of the Freudian dialectic, or the end of psychoanalysis - always arrived at by the subject to discover, rather confront, the joint of life and death - in terms of the subject’s words as well as the overwhelming silence that causes the words to be and not to be. Psychoanalysis after Lacan ought not to forget that Freud had not discovered the signifier without the unconscious. It is true that Lacan has not ignored the completely silent real order which the joint points at, but it is also true that his emphasis is not on it. Lacan’s emphasis is neither on the silence nor on the rupture in it that structures all speech. Rather, his emphasis is on speech that silences silence, shuts the real mouth, by attributing a name to it. Nevertheless, I have tried to argue in the first part of the work, that it is possible to restore the significance of the real order in Lacan’s writings by means of a simple shift of emphasis from language which the unconscious is structured like, to the unconscious that structures language.

The significance of the real order as un-conscious is dramatically represented by Marlowe in Doctor Faustus in terms of a misrecognising hero who persistently resists the ‘realisation’ of his deepest wish from
taking place, with all his might, knowing neither that his words constantly regressed towards the most primitive site of language, nor that, as a result of the regression, the words uttered by him only expressed the wish that he most resisted. The signifier that is occulted by the mechanism of metaphor and metonymy in the play-text does not signify the primacy of language, but signifies the gap on which language is originally founded, the gulf is represented as a word, and the gape into which it will recede in the end.

The contiguity of these two parts, consisting, in essence, of reading two different kinds of writings - psychoanalytical and literary - gives rise to a third issue involving Lacan's teachings and the task of reading literature: How does one employ the insights of Lacan to analyse literary artefacts? Almost all existing psychoanalytical literary criticism - the bulk of which is of the non-semiotic Freudian variety - is disturbed in various magnitudes by the question of relation between the two disciplines at the level of criticism. In the Preface to a book on psychoanalysis and the text, Geoffrey Hartman perceives a 'masterful relation' of psychoanalytical studies 'to language and literature' - one that he considers a 'fruitful complication'. However, in the Preface to another book on a similar

1 *Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Text*, edited by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Baltimore and London: The John's Hopkins University Press, 244
project, Shoshana Felman is far less comfortable with the word 'master'. As a matter of fact, she seeks to 'deconstruct the very structure of the opposition, mastery/slavery': 'In an attempt to disrupt this monologic, master-slave structure, we would like to reverse the usual perspective, and to consider the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature from the literary point of view'. Any answer to the question as to how to read literature after Lacan must first seek to address the problem of the struggle for power inherent to, perhaps, all inter-disciplinary pursuits.

One of the persons whom Felman refers to by the collective 'we' in the said Preface is Lacan. The first of the essays to have been collected in the book is Lacan's seminar on *Hamlet*, entitled 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*'. But, instead of considering the relationship 'from the literary point of view' as Felman considers it to be, Lacan, right through the essay, 'masterfully' expects the reader of *Hamlet* to have the writings of Freud at the top of his mind. 'Our purpose...is to show the tragedy of desire, *that is, such as we are concerned with in psychoanalysis*, says Lacan, adding, that 'we distort this desire and confuse it with other terms if we fail to locate it in reference to a set of co-ordinates that, *as Freud showed*,


establish the subject in a certain position of dependence upon the
signifier.' The 'seminar' goes on exactly in this vein right up to the end,
always hinging the argument relating to Hamlet's desire on Freudian
psychoanalysis. To what extent would the reader of *Hamlet* who is not
familiar with the writings of Freud be enriched by Lacan's interpretation
of the play? Most probably, not to a great extent, because, Lacan very
soon conjures up a 'topological system' - not one but a set of three
schemas which he employed more extensively in another context to
explain the relationship between the subject and desire in the Freudian
unconscious – which he considers fundamental to his enterprise, one
'without which all the phenomena produced in our domain would be
indistinguishable and meaningless.' To the non-Freudian reader of the
seminar - as well as to the reader who is a Freudian - the unglossed
cryptical diagrams at the foot of the page that are supposed to be
constitutive of the interpretation contained in the essay, are bound to
appear opaque, even, entirely meaningless. In other words, Lacan's
seminar, by addressing the text not from the literary point of view but
from a formidably esoteric psychoanalytical one, deconstructs not the
master/slave opposition between the two disciplines but Felman's own

---

3 Please see Lacan's 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of
intent to deconstruct the same.⁴

It is true, that, to elude the trap from both sides, is difficult; nevertheless, I would like to propose that a reading of literary texts after Lacan, particularly on the lines of deciphering the signifier, need not be implicated by the struggle for power among the concerned disciplines, nor is there any need for the reading to take after the mode of interpretation of literary texts by Lacan himself. For the purpose, it is sufficient to incorporate a factor that is integral to psychoanalysis, to the process of reading literature psychoanalytically, namely, the factor of ignorance.

The story of Oedipus was well known to the contemporaries of Sophocles, mainly through Aeschylus’ trilogy that, like most of the plays of the latter, has not survived. One of the reasons why Sophocles could forgo the detail in his rendition of the story is that everyone knew the chronology of Oedipus’ fate, and Sophocles knew that. The only person who did not know the story of Oedipus was Oedipus himself, and by not knowing his story that was common knowledge, he kept the analysis of

⁴ Ibid., pp. 11-52. This essay on Hamlet is based on the transcripts of Lacan’s seminars delivered on 15, 22 and 29 April 1959, and translated by James Hulbert from French.
his case going. Everything about Oedipus has been determined before his birth. But he will come to realise it only when it will unfold before him in course of his life, always in present time. At the end, after he has realised the story of his life completely, he no more wishes to - he ceases to - exist. In between, it is the ignorance of Oedipus that sustains his life, the same ignorance that sustains the literary renditions of it.

Ignorance does not oppose knowledge but leads to it. It is integral to the structure of knowledge. Speaking on teaching, Lacan said - 'the only genuine teaching is one which succeeds in awakening an insistence in those who are listening', and that 'this desire to know' 'can only emerge when they themselves have taken the measure of ignorance as such - in so far as it is, as such, fruitful.' Ignorance could be fruitfully employed in psychoanalytical literary criticism, as a condition, so as to avoid the comparison-trap as well as the struggle or opposition for supremacy of the two disciplines involved. By ignoring psychoanalysis exactly as desired of a psychoanalyst by Freud as well as Lacan, the opposition between literature and psychoanalysis could be defused.

Ignorance could also be employed to retain the novelty innate to the enterprise known as psychoanalysis by not reducing it, as it often has

---

been the case, to a search in the text for Freudian themes. Even though the mode of operation of Freud, and of Lacan as well, has been to begin a study by identifying the Oedipus in the subject, and to end it with the arrival at the moment of the subject's identification with his death-wish, the enterprise is not to be, accordingly, considered to be, an entirely predictable and hence dead exercise. Psychoanalysis teaches precisely the opposite of it. To psychoanalyse a subject or a text is to ignore all that the critic, or the analyst, has been taught by his previous experience of analysing, and to newly discover the play, like Oedipus, in each new text.

The following is a 'Lacanian' reading of a sketch written by D. H. Lawrence, entitled, 'The Spinner and the Monks', that, in its employing the condition of ignorance, is only unconsciously psychoanalytical.

'The Spinner and the Monks' is a sketch written in 1912-13 by D. H. Lawrence during his stay in Italy. Even though the narrative is apparently an un-systematic recording of what Lawrence most freely saw and thought, it follows, at the immanent level of it, a reasoning, and in a systematic way at that. The following is a recapitulation of the sketch:

The sketch begins with Lawrence setting out to find the church of San Tommaso, because its physical location - although the church had become a ‘living connection’ to him by virtue of the fact that it indicated the passage of time by the sound of its bells at various hours of the day - was unknown to him.

This church, that ‘perched over the village’, owing to the dark, ‘tortuous, tiny, deep passages of the village’, proves to be extremely arduous to arrive at. At the end, Lawrence arrives at the foot of the church, but he fails to ‘get up to’ it. [p.212].

Another day he discovers a broken staircase, and running up the same he finds himself, ‘as if by a miracle’, on the platform of San Tommaso. From there, Lawrence could see ‘the roofs of the village’, the ‘pale blue water’ of the lake beyond and the ‘snow of the mountains’ across the lake that appeared to stand at ‘level’ with him. He enters the church. [p.213].

The ‘thick, fierce darkness’ pervading inside, which is evocative and sensuous, makes his soul to shrink, and so he comes out again. Turning to the other side of the terrace, he perceives ‘a little grey woman’ whose fingers were busy. She took no notice of anyone. She was just spinning. [p.214].
'You are spinning', the author says to her, climbing down. But, being one who is too engrossed in herself to apprehend the existence of anyone else, she takes no interest in the invitation to dialogue. Most of her replies in the text are in single words. In her silence, she appears to the author as the 'substance of knowledge', who, as such, did not know that. 'How could she be conscious of herself when all was herself?' Lawrence asks. [p.216].

The author's perseverance pays off, as this woman who is 'eternal, unchangeable' begins to spin something more, namely, a tale of 'a sheep that had died', talking 'as if...to her own world in me', in a dialect that the author could not follow. [pp.216-7].

But as soon as there is a hint of praise in the words of the author - 'But you do it quickly' - she looks at him 'suspiciously and derisively', and 'cutting off her consciousness from him', moves away towards the piece of cloth drying on the wall. The cutting off of her consciousness so frightens the author that he runs away, 'taking the steps two at a time'. [p.217].

He climbs up the stairs once again, and remembers to find 'snowdrops' that 'the school mistress' had told him he should find behind San
Tommaso. In the sketch, the natural surroundings have been described by Lawrence, both from close quarter and afar, in unobtrusive detail.

As the 'four o’clock steamer was creeping down the lake', he sees, just below him, in the 'wintry garden of bony vine and olive trees', two monks walking, 'their heads always together in a hidden converse'. [p. 219].

In the final analysis, Lawrence distinguishes between the world of the monks and the 'exquisite dawning' high above that they did not or could not see:

> Across, above them, was the faint, rousing dazzle of snow. They [the monks] never looked up. But the dazzle of snow began to glow as they walked, the wonderful faint, ethereal flush of the long range of snow in the heavens, at evening, began to kindle. Another world was coming to pass, the cold, rare night. It was dawning in exquisite, icy rose upon the long mountain-summit opposite. The monks walked backwards and forwards, talking, in the first undershadow. [p.220].
Lawrence begins the sketch: 'The Holy Spirit is a Dove, or an Eagle. In the Old Testament it was an Eagle; in the New Testament it is a Dove.'

The Holy Spirit is, as in Matthew and Corinthians, the Third Person of the Triune Godhead. It is the Spirit that informs us. It is a power, an influence. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is a Person who is a promise of the Son and proceeds from the Father. He is one who had appeared in the shape of a Dove to Christ. After the passing away of Christ, the Holy Spirit appeared to his disciples as cloven tongues of flame.

As far as the two birds are concerned, it would perhaps be wise to sidestep all critical heroics that they could incite, and take note of no more than the element of contrast that they bring into play - because, birds to be cited in the Holy Bible are around fifty in number, of which, apart from the Dove and the Eagle, the other birds to have received special mention are chicken, cock, crane, crow, cuckoo, falcon, fowl, hawk, hen, kite, ostrich, owl, partridge, peacock, pelican, pigeon, raven, sparrow, turtledove and vulture, to list some of them alphabetically. Lawrence is not really speaking about birds here. Rather, Lawrence is speaking about — the Holy Spirit that these two birds variously represented, and he is

---

consistent in this. Throughout the narrative, Lawrence evokes duality only in order to bring out the meaningless neutrality to which it is always reduced in the end.

In another essay, called 'Love' (1917), Lawrence writes the following on the Holy Spirit: 'God as we know Him is either infinite love or infinite pride and power, always one or the other, Christ or Jehovah, always one half excluding the other. Therefore, God is forever jealous. If we love one God, we must hate this one sooner or later, and choose the other. This is the tragedy of religious experience. But the Holy Spirit, the Unknowable, is single and perfect for us.' Thus, God is conceived here as forever split into polar opposites - Christ and Jehovah - while the Holy Spirit is beyond duality, and is 'single' and 'perfect'. The Holy Spirit is perfect probably because it is 'unknowable'.

The last lines of 'The Spinner and the Monks' is devoted to a similar notion of duality: 'Why do we not know that the two in consummation are one; that each is only part; partial and alone forever; but that the two in consummation are perfect, beyond the range of loneliness or solitude?' [p. 222] In other words, Lawrence's question is: 'Where is the

---

transcendental knowledge in our hearts uniting (everything)? Where is the Holy Spirit that 'surpasses' both 'love' and 'hate'?

But, first of all, the narrative ends 'interrogatively', that is, with an impassioned appeal. The intention behind such appeals is usually to exhort conformation from the listener. But, what is it that D.H. Lawrence is so passionate about?

At the end, according to Lawrence himself, he is passionate about 'consummation'. In the section preceding it, he calls it 'transcendental knowledge'. A further step back, it has been referred to as 'supreme ecstasy' in mankind. Going back by five paragraphs, one finds, that the 'ecstasy of consummation' to Lawrence, is the 'rosy snow that shone'. The snow that shone with the rosy setting sun belonged to the order of ecstasy, the 'rosy snow of ecstasy', of which the monks knew nothing because they were neutral and average. In the monks one saw: 'The flesh neutralizing the spirit, the spirit neutralising the flesh'. [p.221] The other point involved here is the manner in which Lawrence articulates the view that the monks are average and neutral, which is one that pertains to the law of chiasmas. It produces the effect of writing crossing out writing itself, and through it, the effect of nullity.
But, what does Lawrence mean by ‘the rosy snow of ecstasy’? By the ‘ecstasy of consummation’? In short, by ‘supreme ecstasy’? The answer to this question is a little difficult to arrive at, because Lawrence has left it almost unexplored in the sketch in question.

The context of the sentence is as follows: ‘Meanwhile, on the length of mountain-ridge, the snow grew rosy-incandescent, like heaven breaking into blossom .... In the rosy snow that shone in heaven over a darkened earth was the ecstasy of consummation’ [p.220]. Here, Lawrence is trying to argue, that the opposites become one ‘in the moment of ecstasy’. If one ignores the word ‘ecstasy’ for the time being and concentrates on the word ‘blossom’, a word that is not unrelated to the ‘rosy’ aspect of the said ecstasy, then one finds how, in terms of the word ‘blossom’, the argument is related to an important message of Lawrence regarding ‘love’, which in turn serves to clarify it:

We know that the rose comes to blossom. We know that we are incipient with blossom. It is our business to go as we are impelled, with faith and pure spontaneous morality, knowing that the rose blossoms, and taking that knowledge for sufficient.⁹

⁹ Ibid., p. 30.
This ‘rosy’ love is, to Lawrence, the sensual love between man and woman. By going back to the essay ‘Love’, one could comprehend what Lawrence might have meant by the words ‘two in consummation’ in the present sketch:

We are like a rose. In the pure passion for oneness, in the pure passion for distinctness and separateness, a dual passion of unutterable separation and lovely conjunction of the two, the new configuration takes place, the transcendence, the two in their perfect singleness, transported into one surpassing heaven of a rose-blossom.

But the love between a man and a woman, when it is whole, is dual. It is the melting into pure communion, and it is the friction of sheer sensuality, both. In pure communion I become whole in love. And in pure, fierce passion of sensuality I am burned into essentiallity. I am driven from the matrix into sheer separate distinction. I become my single self, inviolable and unique, as the gems were perhaps once driven into themselves out of the confusion of earths. The woman and I, we are the confusion of earths. Then in the fire of their extreme sensual love, in the friction of
intense, destructive flames, I am destroyed and reduced to her essential otherness. It is a destructive fire, the profane love. But it is the only fire that will purify us into singleness, fuse us from the chaos into our own unique gem-like separateness of being.\(^\text{10}\)

Lawrence is all for such love, such consummation, which is why he is opposed to the monks who are 'average' and 'neutral'. The monks, who are described as 'almost like shadow creatures', are the 'shadowless light of shadow'. They lived in the shadow of light and under the belief that the shadow was light. Or so Lawrence came to write in 1917, four years after the composition of the piece in question.

In another essay written about 11 years later - entitled 'Sex versus Loveliness' - Lawrence calls the ecstasy 'sensual', even 'sexual'. There, Lawrence states that anything which is not rosy blossom or the ecstasy of consummation is 'dead ash'. Notably, the conclusion is no more of the pleading sort. Rather, it is affirmative, even assertive.\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{10}\) Ibid., p. 27.

\(^{11}\) 'If only our civilization had taught us ... how to keep the fire of sex clear and alive.... Whereas, what a lot of dead ash there is in life now'. Ibid., p. 18.
It is not to suggest that, in the present piece, Lawrence’s notion of sexuality is all that rudimentary, tacit and esoteric. For, what does Euridice in the arms of Orpheus, or Persephone embraced by Pluto, imply, other than the ecstasy of sexual consummation? [pp.221-22]. It qualifies to be regarded as *ecstasy* in Lawrence’s terms, because the risks involved in such consummation were very high for all four of them.

‘Consummation’ is also the theme of a certain free play of numbers in the text. The New Testament points to the number 3: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In terms of a free association in the text, 3 is represented not as 2+1, but as, loosely, 2=1, or two becoming one, which is nothing but consummation numerically expressed. It is in terms of such a consummation at the end of it all that all the textual oppositions - between the Old Testament and the New Testament; between the insiders and the outsiders; between height and depth; between the closed world of the spinner and the monks, and the author’s endlessly open and free world in the midst of nature; and a whole lot of others, including the most important one between light and darkness - are put to rest.

After re-examining the material constituent of the last two oppositions in particular, it appears that, unlike the spinner or the monks, the author is free to move up and down, to turn left and right, to look ahead and to
look behind. Whenever he exercises his freedom to see, he sees *nature* - nature as the image of life, freedom and growth. Also, Euridyce was a tree-nymph, Orpheus possessed life-saving music, Persephone symbolizes vegetation (the burying of the seed and the growth of corn) and Pluto is the god of fertility.

In the sketch, there is the hill, the stream, the sky and the lake. There are also the gardens, the trees and the bushes. Above all, there are the flowers. It is highly significant that the author had stepped out in the midst of nature while looking for snowdrops or Christmas Roses. [p.217] The ‘rosy blossom’ is, thus, not a matter of random choice but an integral part of a complete structure. But, exactly where does the ‘spinner’ and the ‘monks’ figure in this broader structure of fertility, life and growth, that is the question.

To answer the question, one must go back to the etymology of the word ‘spinster’: A ‘spinster’ is a ‘woman who spins’.\(^{12}\) I am not trying to suggest by this, that the spinner in the sketch is a spinster. Whether she is or she is not one really does not matter. All that I am trying to suggest is that the Anglo Saxons left the job of spinning to the spinsters. Thus

receiving their name, these spinsters who did not have the social assent to channelize their natural, creative energy to sexually productive ends, sought to successfully redirect the same towards such asexually creative ends as spinning and needlework. Even today, the sewing machine is a common spectacle in many a Church building, just as it is not really unique that Mary Lamb, a spinster - who has been so good at abridging the comedies of Shakespeare for children - was extremely efficient at needlework as well.

That is how spinning is associated with one form of sexual abstinence, just as sexual abstinence in another form is associated with the monks. In ‘The Spinner and the Monks’, abstinence as the symptom of a neutralising culture is contrasted with the ‘supreme ecstasy’ that nature left to itself tends towards. It is this supreme ecstasy that D.H. Lawrence, naturally, never refrained from advocating all his life.