CHAPTER VI
INVOLVEMENT AND AFTER
(i) "THE LOST GIRL"
(ii) "AARON'S ROD"
(iii) "KANGAROO"
(iv) "THE PLUMED SERPENT"
It is not hard to see that the controversies regarding *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* were rather too much for their writers; naturally, Lawrence's life evoked a changed, and even a profound, psychological phase, thanks to the varied reactions caused by the striking influences of his readers and critics alike—from enthusiastic approval to thoughtless rejections. All at once, Lawrence happened to find himself confronting a world peculiarly antagonistic to him. With it, his earlier ambition of striking an oceanic union with humanity underwent a considerable change, now that hatred and destruction prevailed in Lawrence's new psychology in which he became growingly "sick of humanity."

But, in spite of its causing considerable inner disturbances, Lawrence—let it be noted—gained psychic strength never to lose himself because of trifling hurts which might gather into an avalanche. With this new strength, he attempted to make it clear that it was not he but the world that had made the wrong choice. In a letter to Lady Ottoline Morell, he reflected it ironically:
"It is me, generations and generations of me, very complex, gleaming fibre of me, every lucid pang of my coming into being. And oh, my God, I cannot bear it. For it is not this me who am drowning shiftly under this last wave of time..."

This reflects Lawrence's consciousness that he in no way could be defeated by the self-defeating world; he seemed aware of the compulsion that he should never sink deep down if he meant to save the sinking mankind. Obviously, Lawrence's lessons emanating from the deepest stirrings of his despair and confusion caused by the misunderstanding world helped much in his gradual coming into a better and fuller self-realisation that ultimately tended to restore the mental health to mankind.

It was obviously such a realisation that developed Lawrence's stimulus for mastering new territories and forming new relations with different environments and thereby arousing the social interest intensified by his extreme illness from influenza epidemic.

Also, with this social interest as an elemental urge in him, Lawrence travelled widely observing closely

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peoples of different cultures, different religion associations and different socio-political orders. He experienced each changing journey on the face of the earth confronting new vital affluence, new vibration, new polarity—all within the ever-widening and deepening circuit of creativity, within the reality and spirit of the place. As Graham Hough rightly remarks:

"Lawrence sees the right relationship as a perpetual travelling from one pole to the other and back again. Complete consummation in the flesh for the moment annihilates spirit and transcends all duality. And at the same moment a new movement begins, towards the opposite pole, to be concluded by a complete consummation in the spirit. And it is only when man has had full experience of both that he can become himself or reach God ... The spirit is not to repent of what the flesh has done, or the flesh to deny the spirit. Fullness of being, the subjective realisation of God, is the simultaneous recognition of unity in duality."

It reveals the fact that a socially obscure and restless figure as he seemed, Lawrence's restless travels came to fulfil his inconstant search for 'wholeness' of being making him a worldly-aware man with totally new experiences that widened the dimension of his psychic

integrity. With it, what happened in Lawrence's psychological tendency was a transition from individual psychology to the socio-psychological acceptance of new values and new vital fulfilments.

This new acceptance tended to lead Lawrence towards the enduring facets of the new authenticity of human relationships in which he found "a matter of underworld development, development of new being in the roots of life, not in the head." Reflecting it Lawrence wrote in the same context:

"I am tired of this insistence on the personal element; personal truth, personal reality... I want some new non-personal activity... a genuine vital activity. And I want relations which are not purely personal, based on purely personal qualities; but relations based upon some harmony of purpose, rather than of personality... Let us be... trying to create a new life, a new common life, a new complete tree of life from the roots that are within us... and what we want is to create a new, good, common life, the germ of a new social life together."


4 Ibid., pp. 395-96.
Admittedly, by 1916, Lawrence's psychology was characterised by the involvement of new social relations which were drawn closer to a point where the isolated self of the individual could be maintained squarely. This also confirms the point that Lawrence, at this critical stage of his life, was inclined to view the practical aspect of reforming the society as the manifestation of his own psychological need that led him to involve himself physically in protesting and fighting rather than keeping silent and submitting entirely, uniting with other men rather than remaining engrossed in the narrow cocoon of his individual self.

Now it is safe to say that the socially involving self of Lawrence is markedly felt in most of his novels set in different backgrounds in the course of his ever-changing journey. The important novels of this phase—The Lost Girl, Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo, The Plumed Serpent and the incomplete Mr Noon—read like an important extension of Lawrence's curious search for man's place in the complex system of interpersonal and intersexual relations, a deliberate development of the novelist's exiled self.
involving into the cosmic mainstream, and above all, an involvement of the old psychic orders into the new values of inter-soci-al integrity.

It is really another matter that these novels under study are often treated "lesser" than or inferior to Lawrence's early achievements on which the novelist's full creative potentiality is firmly based. Even then, it should be worthwhile to mention that it was *The Lost Girl*, "the first novel of Lawrence's to come out after the banning of *The Rainbow*" that won him "James Tait Black prize in December, 1921", the only prize of official recognition during Lawrence's lifetime.

Referring to *The Lost Girl*, Lawrence wrote to Lady Cynthia Asquith:

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8 First written in November, 1912 with Scargill Street as its possible title, then renaming it *The Insurrection of Miss Houghton*, and then again *Mixed Marriages*, Lawrence rewrote it in 1920 and published under the title *The Lost Girl* in the later part of the year.
"I have actually finished my new novel, *The Lost Girl*: not morally lost, I assure you ... I think *The Lost Girl* is quite passable ... She is being typed in Rome."  

In another letter to Catherine Caravelli, hes expressed a similar idea: 

"I have done my new novel, *The Lost Girl*. I think it's quite amusing and quite moral. She is not morally lost, poor darling."  

In fact, what happens in the novel is the fact that Alvina Houghton is the lost girl in the sense that Paul Morel is the lost boy. Both face the same birth and imbalanced parentage. But in *The Lost Girl* Lawrence seems to undergo a new experiment so as to project a daughter's dilemma at the surrogation of the father as opposed to a son's dilemma at the surrogation of the mother as in *Sons and Lovers*.  

Born during the crux of her father's inner crisis, Alvina happens to live in the illusion caused by the superficialities of James Houghton, her father, who is a  

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10 Ibid., p. 630.
victim of a capricious commercial world. Unknowingly, he is the manifestation of his wife's nervous heart-disease and his daughter's nervous tremblings. The governesses, Miss Frost and Miss Pinnegar, prove fatal to the Manchester house, the usual Laurentian background projecting the collapse of human relationship as a result of decaying psychic values. Thus James Houghton becomes so overwhelming in Alvina's life that "she and her mother were the phantom passengers in the ship of James Houghton's fortunes."  

The consequence fumbles awkwardly. Alvina's acquaintances and intimacies with Graham, Headley, Young, James, Lottie, Albert, Arthur and May tend to be short-lived, thanks to their being abstract and mental intellectuals, always sensual and selfish having their own special feelings. Through her love-making affairs with each of these bits of man Lawrence presents Alvina's struggle between self-actualising organism, inherently ready to respond to everything in the phenomenal field, and a self involved in selections and rejections as a result of the values determined by the socio-psychological

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roots. In this sense, Alvina's whole problem must be the problem of coming into being out of the pressures of a lost society, the problem of psychic adjustment to the social life and, above all, the "intricate and terrible problem of choice".

It is inevitable that Alvina, like Moll Flanders, undergoes a series of privileged ways but, here in her case, to be a maternity nurse or a prostitute is not the question - "Morality is her strongest point".12

It is only gradually that the moralising intention of Lawrence becomes obvious when Alvina has shaken the "actual unrealities" off by accepting the physical aspect of relationship with Cicio, an Italian actor. The question of Cicio's low standard following another question of leaving England for Italy is brought within the consciousness of Alvina as an inconstancy and an illusion of the human psyche. Indeed, what had happened to the high standards?

"Really, she had come down in the world, conforming to such standards of life. She evoked the images of her mother and Miss Frost: ladies, and noble

women both. Whatever could she be thinking of herself."

This is a great consciousness of the upper class mentality and it is only through this consciousness that Cicio can break Alvina's psychic injury, the inward trembling "in the dim back regions of consciousness."  

"Alvina was aware of nothing - only the presence of Cicio. It was his physical presence which cast a spell over her. She lived "within his aura. And she submitted to him ... she lived mindlessly within his presence, quivering within his influence, as if his blood beat in her... The depth of his warm, mindless, enveloping love was immeasurable. She felt she could sink forever into his warm, pulsating embrace."  

It reveals that Alvina is polarized to Cicio when she sees his body. This is what happens in most of Lawrence's writings - the submission of the mind to the body so that both may exult in a psychic balance.  

The Lost Girl not only contains a psychological insight but also broadens this point of view to a remark-

13 *The Lost Girl*, p. 252.  
able extent. In this novel, Lawrence projects human soul not as a mere realm of abstractions but as an integer of scattered psyche. "The soul", Lawrence writes in the novel:

"The soul itself needs its own mysterious nourishment. This nourishment lacking, nothing is well." 16

The soul, to be very particular, implies the psychic essence of Alvina, which is nourished by Ciclo's sexual attraction — thereby representing the genuine Italian consciousness commanding superiority over the distorted English mentality. James Houghton, in this respect, is symbolic of the English consciousness of a class as his death marks the end of Alvina's abstract outlooks (which, in return, tends to mark the beginning of a new life altogether).

This ghastly aspect of a female betraying a male undergoes a new experiment in *Aaron's Rod*, 17 a novel of

16 *The Lost Girl*, p. 370.

17 Beginning in the early part of 1918, Lawrence finished *Aaron's Rod* at the end of May, 1921, which came out on 14 April, 1922.
great psychological significance. Having almost the same
social setting of the English midlands, the uncertain
destiny of man is outwardly experienced by Aaron Sisson,
a miner's checkweighman and professional flautist.

Failing to continue his married life, Aaron, like
Siegmund of The Trespasser, leaves his wife, Lottie, and
children for a doubtful inner state of mind beyond his
own comprehension. Lawrence presents the similar occasion
in his tales Two Blue Birds, The Woman Who Rode Away, Glad
Ghosts etc., in which the wife and the husband, no matter
what the reasons may be, happen to live in seclusion.

Now it is curious enough that Lawrence does not
suggest any convincing cause of Aaron's resolute deter-
mination to get rid of the household responsibilities
over and above his sympathy for the two daughters. Here
F.H. Leavis seems to be providing some highly sensible
commentary, while referring to "a familiar kind of life-frustrating deadlock," and goes on
to add: "The presenting of it transcends ordinary moral
judgements; to judge Aaron selfish and irres-
ponsible for leaving his wife in the lurch with
the children on her hands, or to say that ...
plainly the domineering, demanding, complaining woman was at fault, and has made his wife intolerable, wouldn't be to the point ... the moral concern goes far deeper than the level of those judgments."\(^{18}\)

As a matter of fact, Aaron's denial of normal feelings and emotions is a clue to his psychological ambivalence of accepting abstractions by emphasizing the self-importance rather than co-existence. As a man, Lawrence puts it in *Twilight in Italy*, Aaron "wanted more and more to become purely free and abstract. Pure freedom was in pure abstract."\(^{19}\)

As a lover of the abstract freedom, Aaron's curiosity to shut himself off from his wife to live quietly in utter isolation is conveyed as inevitable. In Lawrence's world, Aaron tends to be one of the death-incarnates. He himself remarks that he has left his wife just as he will leave the earth when he dies. Obviously, it is also an abstract idea.

In a somewhat different sense, Aaron's tragedy may be looked upon as the tragedy of shattered love disturbing

\(^{18}\) F.R. Leavis, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

the whole of his psychic organism. Separation in love disintegrates him for love as a process of integration has no meaning to Aaron. As a result, he cannot go to bed, "alone, in his own cold bed", nor can he sleep with his wife Lottie:

"I am married to Lottie. And that means I can't be married to another woman. It isn't my nature. And perhaps I can't bear to live with Lottie now, because I am married and not in love. A husband is not a lover."²⁰

From this quotation it becomes evident that Aaron's sex life with his wife is a failure as love as a never attaining process turns to be a disease. It perhaps exposes the terrible psychological split of Aaron as a result of a profound anxiety to get away from the wife, the terrible subjugation to sex. As Chaman Nahal examines:

"It is a new form of inertia, the effortless inertia of not fighting the reality of existence, however unpleasant the realities may be, that overcomes him (Aaron)."²¹


Taking note of this highly unresolved psychic tendency it is not hard to assume that Aaron's undergoing a series of rejections, like those of Alvina, naturally takes a course along the wrong nerves.

Thus the first rejection of the principle of marriage-relationship drives him into three disastrous affairs with three different women culminating in the homosexual relationship with an Italian, Rowdon Lilly, a homosexual propagandist having his own marital problems. But there is a break in this drama of illusion for

"Aaron, crossing a certain border-line and finding himself alone completely, accepted his loneliness or singleness as a fulfilment, a state of fulfilment. The long fight with Lottie had driven him at last to himself, so that he was quiet as a thing which has its root deep into life, and has lost its anxiety." 22

This really suggests the merit of the Aaron-Lilly relationship essentially in terms of the psychological need of Aaron's realizing his vital self, "to become duly conscious about what has gone wrong between him and his

22 Aaron's Hop, p. 163.
wife - to arrive at a diagnosis. It is only through a series of bitter psychological consequences that the sexual life of Aaron and Lottie emerges at last. Thus this novel in no way deviates much from the usual Laurentian theme, the theme of how sexual urge turns into a mental disease and how the disease is psychoanalysed in the form of diagnosis so that the sexually diseased mankind may be fully cured.

Now it was under this pressing pull of isolation that Lawrence wrote *Kangaroo*, his only socio-political novel of psychological importance. Here, in the novel, the Aaron-like character Richard Somers Lovat, instead of leaving his wife Harriet, breaks off from the icy-cold hand of isolation and undergoes the self-searching journey along with his wife to Australia, the newest country on the globe.

Himself being a writer, Somers perceives the new world aesthetically and emotionally; he feels the sen-

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23 F.K. Leavis, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

suous beauty of the country, but he cannot transfer his psychological dissatisfaction to the sphere of artistic interpretation of his own world outlook; the ever-deepening experience - and comprehension of his psychological radiation linked up with his artistic interpenetration - lead him to an acute reaction against the world-order. Of course, it reflects a genuinely felt experience that every new country tends to have more socio-political crises than the old ones. Somers, like Laurence, seems to have a deeper and more fundamental notion of social order than of truth, for truth, to him, is before all to be found in order.

With this fundamental notion experienced from the war-weary Europe, Somers comes to Australia with a view to renewing life altogether so as to fulfil his anxious search for psychological balance through an inner processes of self elaboration. Perhaps it was much too ambitious of him: small wonder then that a psychological failure ensues. There is a shattering contrast between what was hoped and what is attained. For now that he is in 'young Australia' he cannot feel himself settled or sheltered; he rather feels his stay in the changed social
milieu "a new crucification" for leaving Europe:

"He felt a long naval string fastening him to Europe, and he wanted to go back, to go home. He would stay three months. Three months' penalty for having forsown Europe... Cross indeed! A new crucification. And then away, homeward!" 25

This sense of nostalgia fills the "vacant spaces" of Somers's psychology. There are times when he, feeling himself self-exiled, comes to prefer death to exile. But again, there are also times when he comes to feel the psychological sense of release from the old pressures and controls, for the illusion of European life has "no real magic in Australia". Thus Somers decides to conclude it by deeply receiving the fact that all these multi-faceted aspects of "to be or not to be" tend to arise from his own psychological problems of confronting his inner isolation, and this, for his part, will always involve him deeply.

Keeping this mental point of view aside, Somers tries to bring within the sphere of his consciousness the Australian way of life and marriage as distinct

from the rest of the world. It is interesting to note that Somers's friendship with Jack, and Harris's with Victoria develop through their gradual understanding of their different identities. Considering the married life of Jack and Victoria, an Austrian couple, Laurence writes through the understanding of Somers:

"Such marriage is established on a very subtle sense of honour and of individual integrity. It seems as if each race and continent has its own marriage instinct ... each people must follow its own instinct, if it is to live, no matter whether the marriage law be universal or not."

It certainly reveals Laurence's understanding that the marriage instinct that develops in Australia may not be the same instinct that develops in other continents of the world. Australia, "the newest country", tends to demand a certain quality, not necessarily of higher stage, but of the order that binds the people together.

Likewise, the man-man relationship between Somers and Jack takes a new form in Kangaroo, thanks to the prevailing difference in the young country. Reflecting

26 Kangaroo, p. 40.
the very experience of Lawrence himself, Somers finds each individual being treated as pledged to keep himself aside, to cut himself at least out of count. Under such circumstances, it becomes inevitable to develop almost a puzzling sort of relationship between Somers and Jack with a markedly strange tendency of making each of them go blank in his withheld self:

"There was a curious battle in silence going on between the two men ... The communication in silent and involuntary, the give and take flows like waves from person to person ... Each one knows in silence, reciprocates in silence, and then talk as a rule just bubbles on, on the surface."

This shows that the Australian inhibition of homosexual tendency comes to such an extent that, despite of the two men's knowing each other by instinct, the verbal communication almost collapses. The awkward situation makes Somers feel tired of the "manly man", the "manliness" of Jack Callcott, mainly because he has had the impression that it takes more than "manliness" to make man manly. Accordingly, within Somers's psychic crises the rejection or acceptance of Jack as a mate becomes a problem of real importance. As a result, he cannot decide

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27 Kangaaroop, pp. 42-43.
whether he will involve himself or not in the male
comradeship as proposed by Jack’s psychological gestures
in spite of his long craving for it.

Somers’s "unresolved state of uncertainty" is due
to Englishman’s yearning for intimate comradeship combined
with a sensitive delicacy, perhaps finer than a woman’s. But the trouble is that when Somers is privileged
to get what he has been yearning for, he comes to realise
that in his innermost soul he has never wanted it; and what he wants is

"Perhaps the thing that the dark races know that
one can still feel in India: the mystery of lordship. That which white men have struggled so long
against, and which is the clue to the life of the Hindu ... The mystery of innate, natural, sacred
priority ... the joy of obedience and the sacred
responsibility of authority."

It marks the birth of a revolting spirit in the
mind of Somers. As examined in the above quotation, Somers’s perception of the dire necessity of a social change
under the pressure of the prevailing social conditions
calls for his own involvement in a powerful authority containing a concrete whole of living to which all the vari-

28 Kanparg, p. 120.
ous aspects of man's relationships and activities ought to be submitted.

This perhaps was the cult of Lawrence himself. Some of the letters written during his stay in Australia reveal that Lawrence, like Somers, was alive to this urge for real political power in order to serve mankind by stimulating the inner experience of individual life process, thereby elaborating the frontiers of mass-consciousness. Like Somers, Lawrence highly hoped that this must harmonise the diverse psychic contradictions bringing about a unique integrity of the mental and practical assimilations.

In this respect, Kangaroo, the leader of a quasi-fascist force called Diggers can impress Somers deeply. To Somers, Kangaroo looks endowed with creative instincts desirous of forming a new way of life. As he remarks:

"The Kangaroo is a fighting beast having a fire of love in his heart."29

29 Kangaroo, p. 139.
In fact, there is no illusion at the very outset of their acquaintance; they grow wanting each other. Someone is deeply moved by this "extraordinary man's" long and emphatic speeches related to social reforms. For example, in one of his speeches, Kangaroo expressed himself:

"If a man loves life, and feels the sacredness and mystery of life, then he knows that life is full of strange and subtle and even conflicting imperatives.

The secret of all life is obedience, obedience to the urge that arises in the soul, the urge that is life itself, urging us on to new gestures, new embraces, new emotions, new combinations, new creations ..."

Men again need a father — not a friend or a brother — a sufferer, a suffering Savior. Man needs a quiet, gentle father who uses his authority in the name of living, the name who is absolutely stern against anti-life ... I offer my consciousness ... I offer my mind and my will for the battle against every obstacle to respond to the voice of life, and to shelter mankind from the madness of the evil of anti-life."

In another context, he tells Somers:

"I love them (the Australians), they are my children ... Love makes the trees flower and shed their seed, love makes the animals mate and birds put on their

[Kangaroo, p. 126.]"
best feather, and sing their best songs ... I believe the sun's attraction for the earth is a form of love."

From these speeches, Somers sees a god-like personality in Kangaroo. Even then, Somers becomes fed up when he comes to understand Kangaroo's underlying motive, his passion for urging people's submission to his doctrine. With this consciousness Somers happens to perceive, as M.P. Home rightly remarks:

"Kangaroo's love (is) oppressive because it is love in the abstract, which denies individuality."

This marks the beginning of Somers's rejection of Kangaroo's utopian notion as having no practical value. Combined with it is another consciousness of Somers for

"blood is of different thickness on different continents, and with the difference in blood, the inevitable psychic difference! Different vision!"

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31 Kangaroo, p. 149.

32 Brackets mine

33 Marguerite Reed Home, The Art of Self in T.H. Lawrence, p. 94.

34 Kangaroo, p. 166.
Indeed, as an individual himself having his own scale of measuring the depth of human existence, Somers tends to find it hopelessly uninteresting to be in the existing norm of personal relationships in Australia. In spite of all the urgency of involving himself in the socio-political problems, Somers turns away in disgust:

"You are such a Kangaroo, wanting to carry mankind in your belly - pouch, cozy, with its long ears peeping out ... I don't like to be godlike, Kangaroo. I like to know the gods beyond me. Let's start as men, with the great gods beyond us." 35

Disappointed by Kangaroo's lack of corresponding to any coherent feelings of human relationships, Somers turns away from the organized fascists and faces out all his ambitions and memories "like a nightmare in the night". And now he is hopelessly left to see:

"In most people the soul is withered at the source, like a woman whose ovaries withered before she became a woman, or a man whose sex-glands died at the moment when they should have come into life. Like [sexed] people the mass of mankind is soulless." 36

35 Kangaroo, p. 233.
36 Ibid., p. 294.
In other words, Somers returns to his isolated self. The question posed by Ursula to Birkin in *Women in Love* is repeated by Harriet to Somers: "Who is there that you feel you are with, besides me or who feel themselves with you?" Somers's answer is not Birkin's "another man" but seriously "No one". This indeed is a great departure from Lawrence's commonly acknowledged doctrine.

What is important here is the fact that the undisguised Lawrence, Somers, attains a higher inner experience enabling him to reject the homoerotic tendency that tended to take an existential form in *Women in Love* and *Aaron's Rod*. But what is still more crucial on his part is his unavoidable acceptance of individual psychology under the impact of isolation, for, to quote Lawrence himself:

"The only way to make any study of collective psychology is to study the isolated individual. Upon your conception of the single individual, all your descriptions will be based, all your sciences established."

Here it may be particularly emphasized that Somers's ultimate submission to man's isolation as "a supreme truth

37 Kangaroo, p.
38 Ibid., p. 324.
and fact results from his involvement in the interaction between his conscious and unconscious selves that gives birth to his own creative potentials. No doubt, this involving sphere gradually acquires new layers of life activity - so vast a source that only the sea stands symbolizing it. But this sea is nothing but woman's sex with which Solomons communes as the life-furthering vitality in him:

"The only thing one can stick to is one's isolate being, and the God in whom it is rooted. And the only thing to look to it is the God who fulfills one from the dark. And the only thing to wait for is for men to find their loneliness and their God in the darkness. Then one can meet as worshippers, in a sacred contact in the dark."  

Thus, strictly speaking, *Kaneaerog* strikes the vital chord of Lawrence's psychology of sex. This novel, written at a time when Lawrence's psyche was within the crux of isolation, reflects the novelist's attainment to a psychic strength that leads him on within the realm of his own consciousness.

This artistic placing of isolation at the centre of undisturbed sexual involvement another experiment in

39 *Kaneaerog*, p. 361.
The Plumed Serpent as Lawrence here applies the whole formula to a Somers-like female, Kate Leslie, the so-assumed Frieda Lawrence.

It will be worthwhile to mention that this novel was also written under the same impact of loneliness at a time when Lawrence was expected to have brooded over going back to England, (but avoiding the idea he went to and stayed in Mexico). Considering this psychological disposition of Lawrence, Frederick Carter examines:

"He stayed abroad for a long time: the lack of sun in England he hated, the damp he feared. He liked the south and for the time liked America. Mexico was the place he most admired. There, he declared, was the coming centre of the new world civilization. In Mexico was being consummated the blood interfusion which came from the free mixing of all races, South-European, American-Indian and African - Negro ... He desired to see a book appear on the dragon and the man, telling of the myth of the olden things and having the root, as he felt, of a deep principle psychology in it."  

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40 In Mexico, Lawrence completed the first draft of The Plumed Serpent in the early part of June, 1923, but rewrote and revised it thrice before its first publication in January, 1926.

As summed up in this quotation, the pressure of the excessively oppressive restlessness as a socio-psychological factor governing life must have inspired Lawrence in his decisive effort to solve the universal problem of death in life. This perhaps is the reason why the novelist regards *The Plumed Serpent* his most important novel, so far; "... nearer my heart than any other work of mine." 42 But treating the novel as the "most important" one, or not, is entirely a different matter. For the immediate purpose what is of real importance is to analyse what is worth in it.

So far as the plot of the novel is concerned, *The Plumed Serpent* may be closely associated with *Kangaroo*. Kate Leslie happens to weather a series of psychological sufferings, and involves herself in religious associations, before she becomes conscious of her womanhood in sexual fulfilment. But this is not all. As Lawrence's intention demands, the novel becomes replete with the whole of graduation-consciousness that a life tends to undergo.

The plot, at a glance, develops through Kate's rejection of her first husband. An Irish woman, aged forty, she, after being divorced by her husband who took their children with him, remarried James Joachim Leslie, who died "fighting to change the world, to make it freer, more alive". With it, "the first half of her life was over." 43

As much as a woman can love a living husband, Kate loves her dead husband, who, while dying, told her, "when I'm dead I shall be able to do more for you than I have done while I was alive." 44 Incidentally, this perhaps reflects Lawrence's desire to teach a lesson to Frieda as he was sure that she would outlive him. No doubt, the whole psychic drama of Kate may be assumed as Lawrence's visionary and mystical projection of the life Frieda would lead after his death. This again is a great irony.

But what is more ironical is Kate's "hopeless antagonism" between herself and humanity. As done in most of his writing, Lawrence portrays Kate as a woman who has lost all the yearnings for the love of man. This is why she comes

43 D.H. Lawrence, The Plumed Serpent, p. 56.

44 Ibid., p. 78.
to Mexico along a mystical journey towards God so that she may get rid of all the "worldly contacts":

"I shall never, never love another man. I couldn't. I have lost the power." 45

The irony is that Kate comes to perceive that Mexico is not

"an easy country for a woman to be alone in. The felt like a bird round whose body a snake has coiled itself. Mexico was the snake."

The underlying idea is that Kate, in search of the ultimate God, tends to join Don Cipriano and Don Ramon, the two leaders of the Aztec Cult of Quetzalcoatl which is the Plumed Serpent. 47 But Kate's consciousness hates them underneath, for Don Cipriano, a pure Indian, and Don Ramon, a pure Spaniard, represent the Mexicans of mixed-blood, of which she is "hopelessly detectful".

It is important to mention here that the serpent is associated with the most ancient cosmogonies. According to

45 The Plumed Serpent, p. 177.
46 Ibid., p. 78.
47 In the novel Lawrence indicates that Quetzal is a bird of tropical mountains, and Coatl is a serpent.
ancient theories, it is the oldest being that even precedes the creation of the earth. It is phallic, rising from the ground, "the burning bowels of the earth" as Lawrence writes in Snake. The serpent is, therefore, a symbol of the phallus, the life-restoring dynamic forces springing from sex, the female earth, and hence a symbol of resurrection.

In this sense, The Plumed Serpent may rank with The Rainbow and Women in Love especially on the religious plane, but in essence, it is much more mystical, and in treatment it is much more symbolical than the novel preceding it. Thus Lawrence's gospel of the blood has an important relevance to the novel under study. Kate's inhibition of further sexual union with a man may be said to be precisely the fear of blood: she is "blood-afraid." In a sense, she is the pure product of the Mexican way of living in which

"Men and women had incomplete selves... Men... were half-made, and women were half-made. It was a world full of half-made creatures on two legs, eating food and degrading the one mystery left to them, sex."

This reflects Lawrence's anguish at the masturbatory consciousness of the Mexicans. In the novel, Lawrence exposes

48 The Plumed Serpent, p. 115.
that the Mexicans tend to get excitement out of sex as they do out of the red pepper but after the excitement they don't care a bit. As Lon Ramon says, "It is a country where men despise sex, and live for it." Henceforward, therefore, "Jesus is no Saviour to the Mexicans. He is a dead god in their tomb."

Such a psychic degradation leads almost reasonably to the need of a new religion to revive the mental world and psychological features of the primitive man. Lawrence put the matter on fundamentally new lines, and draws on some concrete observations of the newly evoked religion, Quetzalcoatl, "the Lord of two ways". Lawrence deliberately lends this new religion a universal appeal. M.R. Hume rightly remarks:

"The drums of Quetzalcoatl echo the heartbeat of the universe, and besides the cosmic heartbeat that thuds through the novel, there is universal inspiration and aspiration in the swelling and waning sense of life, there is circulation and concentration of waters, 'blood' and 'lymph' which behave like the fluids of life."

49 The Plumed Serpent, p. 140.

50 Ibid., p. 145.

51 Marguerite Reed Home, The Art of Self in U.H. Lawrence, p. 111.
The important essence of this new religion is thus not only the universal appeal for renewing life but also the fusion process of all opposites. In a word, the sexual union of male and female is the doctrine of the living religion of Quetzalcoatl.

This doctrine is illuminated by the marriage of Ketz, the eternal woman Malintzi, and Don Cipriano, the living fire - god Huitzilopochtli - "the Lords of the Day and Night". This marriage, though only in the world of Quetzalcoatl, represents the gradual purgation of Ketz's virginial self. By and by, Ketz comes to open up her innate psychic properties merged into the ritual hymns and sermons:

"Men and women alike danced with faces lowered and expressionless, abstract, gone in the deep absorption of men into the greater manhood, women into the greater womanhood. It was sex, but the greater, not the lesser sex."

This may be linked up with the marriage chanting of Don Ramon:

"the marriage is the meeting ground, and the meeting ground is the star. If there is no star, no meeting ground, no true coming together

52 The Plumed Serpent, p. 140."
of man with the woman, into a wholeness, there is no marriage. But if there is no marriage, there is nothing but an agitation. If there is no honourable meeting of man with woman and woman with man, there is no good thing come to pass. But if the meeting come to pass, then whosoever betrays the abiding place, which is the meeting ground, which is that which lives like a star between day and night, between the dark of woman and the dawn of man, between man's night and woman's morning, shall never be forgiven, neither here nor in the hereafter... the star that is between two people and is their meeting-ground shall not be betrayed."

This is one of the fullest expressions on marriage Lawrence has ever written and this perhaps is the whole message of The Plumed Serpent. For a balanced sexual consummation is the underlying idea of the Quetzalcoatl religion, a true marriage of sexes must be the abiding force in which all the opposites are reconciled. Here 'star' symbolises sex; the Morning star represents male sex, and the Evening star female sex. The power of Quetzalcoatl lies in the involvement of the two stars as the manifestation of a true marriage:

"When the snake of your body lifts its head, be aware! It is I, Quetzalcoatl, rearing up in you, rearing up and reaching the bright day,

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53 The Plumed Serpent, pp. 346-47.
to the sun of darkness beyond, where is your home at last."

This suggests the boundaries of the new religion. From such expressions it is evident that Lawrence must have thought the evolution of Quetzalcoatl as an expression of man's psychological needs. The implication is that though the sex relation is an instance of the polarity that runs through the universe it is primary for man. No doubt, man's being is the outcome of a sexual involvement, and in the sexual involvement he returns to his origins and finds his complete fulfiment, God. Thus Quetzalcoatl, the divine twin, symbolizes the life-giving union of the male and the female sexes, "the two earthly rulers, the living representatives of the gods."

Now it is important to point out the fact that Kate's denial of the civil marriage proposed by Don Cipriano no doubt reveals her abstract thought of 'blood-contact'. Yet her abstract thought is a conditioning kind; she has been radically influenced by the abstract world of Mexico. She fears the Cipriano - Ramon Business - the

54 The Plumed Serpent, pp. 132-33.

man to man relatedness having some homoerotic significance. Moreover, seeing the married life of Ramon and Carlota, Kate doubts if "marriage itself would always be a casual thing."

Of course, the married life of Ramon and Carlota ends in a fiasco. It is interesting to assume that Carlota, whose blood is fixed in the pure spirit, may be Lawrence's extension of the married Miriam as projected in _Women in Love_ as Hermione. In Lawrence's doctrine, Carlota's denial of the flesh signifies her own death which is not a new incident to her husband, Ramon.

Ramon's marriage with Tereza after a couple of months of Carlota's death tends to restore the lost balance in the consciousness of Kate. This marriage is the completest sexual union Lawrence has projected in the novel. It is mainly from this union that Kate becomes conscious of one thing:

"the clue to all living and to all moving—on into new living lay in the vivid blood—relation between man and woman. A man and a woman in this togetherness were the clue to all perfect living and future possibility. Out of this clue of togetherness between a man and a woman, the whole of the new life arose. It was the quick of the whole."

56 _The Plumed Serpent_, p. 414.
This indicates the importance of sexual involvement in the occurrence of human generations. It is a new consciousness to Kate for the acceptance of which she has to erase the old ones. Naturally, a bit of reluctance lingers in her mind. But before long, she can no longer bear the sight of Ramon in love with Teresa, who makes the remarks of her husband:

"He is my life. His soul also comes to me - here in my womb. He never betrayed his own blood." 57

And she goes on to remark in return:

"Until a man gives you his seed, the seed of your womb is nothing. And a man's seed is nothing to him. - And until you give your soul to a man, and he takes it, your soul is nothing to you ... what I am to Ramon, I am. And what he is to me, he is." 58

Such deeper expressions of Teresa make Kate feel smaller than Teresa. Now Kate becomes conscious that Ramon as a man is "a column of blood" whereas Teresa as a woman is "a valley of blood" and "the stream flows into him from the heart of the world; and from her."

57 The Plumed Serpent, p. 425.

58 Ibid., p. 426.
There is no complexity in the purgatorial process of Kate's consciousness within the "mindless communion of the blood". It is only gradually that Kate comes to realise her psychic suffering as rooted from the sex-suppression by holding individualism at the centre of her ego. With this consciousness she abandons herself in submission to Cipriano to fulfil her generic womanhood:

"After all, when Cipriano touched her carressively, all her body flowered. That was the greater sex, that could fill all the world with lustre, and which she dared not think about, its power was much greater than her own will."

Thus Kate's individual consciousness merges into the cosmic consciousness. The contact with the primitive savage instinct infuses her with a new passionless consciousness that does not let her go away from the male sex of Cipriano. In this way, in her sexual involvement with Cipriano, Kate's life is resurrected finding her dead husband, Joachim, in Cipriano.

Before this involvement, Kate, like most of Lawrence's protagonists, is not a sex-maniac but is sex-suppressed. Her psychic tragedy is characterized by the purity

59 The Plumed Serpent, p. 457.
conception of womanhood in a sex-inhibited tradition in which her personality tends to develop gradually. As a result, the plot of the novel centres round Kate's psychic struggles towards getting involved into a fully sexual relationship.

Involvement, in this sense, implies submission to sex. Without it, death prevails. "Death", to Lawrence, "is psychic disintegration"; and "life, the converse: the self made whole."60 Thus Lawrence's deliberate purpose of writing the novels under study is perhaps to bring life in the process of creating psychic integrity. In a word, life to Lawrence, is the end of abstract ideas about sex.

Lawrence strongly feels about man's ever-increasing urgency of a psychological need to face death in order to get reborn. Mind's preoccupation with abstract ideas is a death-dealing process through which life must be resurrected, as in The Man Who Died death tends to save the protagonists from their own life — starvation.

Finally, The Lost Girl, Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo and The Plumed Serpent seem to represent this process. These

60 Marguerite Neede Home, op. cit., p. 299.
novels not only elaborate Lawrence's concept of psychology but also project the socio-psychological maladies of mankind in the fundamental settings of modern as well as primitive worlds.

Also, Lawrence firmly believes that mankind deserves a better life. But before attaining to what is worthy life tends to undergo the purifying flames of sex in order to accomplish its catharsis, the involvement after the ultimate realisation at a purely physical level. The complexities in the individual psychology have much to do with the social forces because these forces consciously or unconsciously tend to hinder the individual psyche seeking and finding the power of sex as the time-tested truth of human relationships. Perhaps in these novels, Lawrence attains to this revelation:

"It is sex. How wonderful sex can be, when men keep it powerful and sacred, and it fills the world!"61

This is extremely satisfying, particularly at Lawrence's level, and above all, this reflects Lawrence's celebra-

61 The Plumed Serpent, p. 453.
tion of sexual involvement as both the seat and the
vehicle of emergent life. Sexuality is the guide to
the social life, within which the self realizes
itself and ascends into being — into a paradisal state
of individuality. The world is well sexed with the
involvement of woman, as the principle of stability,
and man, as the principle of motion. As sex fills the
world, Lawrence wants man and woman to fill the world
beautifully and religiously.