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Eros in the Sick Room: Phosphorescent Form and Aesthetic Ecstasy in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*

By Kimberly Coates

[The infant] gathers [the mother's] mould into itself and transfer[s] her mould forever into its own deep unconscious psyche. (Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* 31)

The novel is the one perfect medium for revealing to us the changing glimmer of our living relationships. The novel can help us to live as no other utterance can help us. It can also pervert us as no other can. (Lawrence, "Morality and the Novel," First Version 245)

Soon after beginning D.H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* (1913), readers are taken to a moonlit garden in the heart of a dark coal-mining neighborhood called "the Bottoms" (9). There, a mother with child struggles against a "feeling of slight sickness" as she registers the intense beauty of the scene before her. Within this mother's womb, the yet-to-be-born artist Paul Morel merges with his mother's body, moonlight, and a darkness heavy with the scent of Madonna lilies: "After a time, the child too melted with her in the mixing-pot of moonlight, and she rested with the hills and lilies and houses, all swum together in a kind of swoon" (34). As the novel will attest, Lawrence imagines the unborn Paul's immersion

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in his mother's "swoon," in a place called "the Bottoms," as the moment marking the birth of the artist's aesthetic consciousness.

Lawrence repeats this figurative apposition of womb and "bottom(s)," linked by a mother's illness, in the last third of the novel where Paul Morel, the artist as a young man, moves between two sickrooms: one belonging to his dying mother Gertrude and the other to a feverish man by the name of Baxter Dawes, with whom Paul has shared a "peculiar" relationship. Begging for our attention is the fact that Lawrence juxtaposes Dawes' illness with Paul's mother's more serious illness. This juxtaposition asks us as readers to consider the relations between these two bodies and the young artist who equivocates between them—relations that, as this essay will discuss, exceed the psychoanalytic narrative within which we might be tempted to situate them. What I hope to make evident here is that if Paul's oscillations between these two sickrooms dramatize his erotic identifications with both figures, far more compelling is the manner in which they in turn impart Lawrence's aesthetic aspirations for the future form of the novel.

In this regard, what *Sons and Lovers* ultimately offers readers is not a well-made novel per se, but instead what Lawrence refers to as a "phosphorescent" form—an organic, embodied form—where indeterminacy and possibility are privileged over formal constraints and fixed definitions of either literary genre or character. This "phosphorescent" form finds its expression within the erotically and aesthetically charged sickroom, a space that may be described, to borrow Judith Halberstam's words, as a "queer time and place." Counterintuitive though it may seem, the sickroom becomes a "queer" space, one in which hetero-normative representations, be they social or artistic, are exchanged for "new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space" that "develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification" (Halberstam 1). While Lawrence has played with the sickroom elsewhere in his work as a site of deviant or "perverse" desire, most specifically in *The White Peacock* and *Aaron's Rod*, it is only in *Sons and Lovers* that the sickroom and the libidinal energy circulating within it speak significantly to his desire to "smash" old narrative forms.

Beginning with its first publication by London's Duckworth Press in 1913, *Sons and Lovers* found itself, much to Lawrence's dismay, interpreted almost solely through the lens of Sigmund Freud's Oedipus Com-

plex.¹ Such interpretations are hardly surprising given Paul's erotic attraction to his mother and the homoerotic tensions at work beneath the novel's seemingly heterosexual narrative. What is more surprising is that, despite recent developments in queer theory and masculinity studies, there has been a paucity of scholarly work available to move us beyond these interpretations. Although several critics have critiqued the problems with reading the novel exclusively through an Oedipal lens, there have been few efforts to reevaluate the significance of the homoerotic attraction between Paul and Dawes.² In fact, as Mark Kinkead-Weekes notes at length in his 1996 volume of the authoritative Cambridge biography, scholarly efforts to address the issue of homosexuality in Lawrence's work generally, with the exception of a few, have not progressed far beyond speculative assumptions about his inability to embrace his own homoerotic feelings:³

[Lawrence] had long acknowledged homoerotic feelings, but that is the beginning of a complex question, and no categorical conclusion. [. . .] The word 'homosexual'—especially if opposed to 'heterosexual' as though these were categorically exclusive—is of confusing span, and hence intolerable crudity. [. . .] Lawrence himself seems far wiser, more honest, and more humane, though he was so much a child of his Englishness as to have been probably rather physically inhibited than otherwise in his relations with other men.⁴ (329, 381)

Refusing the “categorical conclusions” lamented by Kinkead-Weekes, I argue in this essay that neither an Oedipal reading of *Sons and Lovers* nor a reading exploring its latent homoeroticism move us towards a new critical understanding of one of British modernism's most well-known Künstlerromans, written by an author, who, as Sandra Gilbert and John Worthen have recently remarked, seems to have disappeared from the academy's radar screen.⁵ Rather than fixating on either the Oedipal or the homoerotic aspects of the narrative exclusively, I am contending that as readers we should instead heed, as the novel itself asks us to do, the way *Sons and Lovers* reaches past the psychoanalytic dynamics it might be said to reference, towards a radically new aesthetic vision for the novel.

Indeed, in the world of Lawrentian aesthetics, it is not characters and

their relations that should be considered “perverse,” rather it is the traditional form of the novel that has “immorally” perverted life by “nailing [it] down” in an effort to “to get stable equilibrium” (“Morality and the Novel” 172). By contrast, a novel is a “moral work” if it “reveals true and vivid relationships [. . .] no matter what the relationships consist in. If the novelist *honours* the relationship in itself, it will be a great novel” (174). Hence, in *Sons and Lovers* those relations deemed perhaps most “perverse” move us, aesthetically speaking, away from the “immorality” of stasis and towards a “morality” of form, which is “that delicate, forever trembling and changing balance between [a self] and [its] circumambient universe, which precedes and accompanies a true relatedness” (172).

Lawrence’s new vision for the novel, self-consciously crafted in essays like “Morality and the Novel,” “Why the Novel Matters,” and “The Novel and Feelings,” presents an aesthetic ideal anchored in his own version of psychoanalysis, which he elaborates in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Fantasia and the Unconscious* (1922).⁶ For Lawrence, the novel’s “truth,” and by extension the regeneration of its form, lies deep within the body’s darkest realms—what has been called the womb beyond the womb—or, as he characterizes it in his essay “The Crown,” “a dark beyond the darkness of the womb” (372). Lawrence refers to this site as the place where the alimentary canal reveals itself not only as a harbinger of waste and decay but also as a generative womb that will prove the origins of a “phosphorescent” form. In Lawrence’s lexicon, the word “phosphorescent” points to his belief that the human body’s site of decomposition harbors a “coloured flame,” or what he also refers to as the “inner flame” (*Selected Letters* 136). It is from this luminescent decay that art itself must emerge.

According to Fiona Becket, Lawrence’s notion of “phosphorescence” suggests that “he is searching for ways (in metaphor) of reminding us that language gives us a sign or a ‘shape,’ some form, but not the thing that essentially is that shape, or form. [. . .] [W]riter and reader alike are urged to remember that language is a trace, like a clot of light on a radar screen, revealing the presence of something hitherto undetected and not yet directly ‘visible’ (*D.H. Lawrence: The Thinker as Poet* 79). Significantly, Paul is an aspiring painter rather than a writer; by designating him as such, Lawrence indicates his own desire to bend language away from the literal ‘thing’ towards a ‘shape’ or ‘form’ that might hint at, without directly sig-

nifying, that which cannot yet be directly perceived. In this sense, rather than being only about Paul's inability to detach from his mother or his inability to consummate his homoerotic desire, *Sons and Lovers* asks instead to be read as Lawrence's effort to find the "phosphorescent" form that best captures the archaic energies the yet-to-be-born Paul Morel feels at the moment when his aesthetic consciousness first comes into being—in his ill mother's womb, in a garden, in "the Bottoms."

By foregrounding the radical nature of the novels erotic and aesthetic indeterminacies, I hope to reinvigorate discussions not only of *Sons and Lovers* specifically but also of Lawrence more generally as a modernist writer whose work continues to be deserving of our scholarly attention in the twenty-first century. Indeed, with regards to contemporary psychoanalytic criticism and gender/queer studies, his work can be seen as prescient in two ways: first, in light of past critical and feminist readings of the Oedipal, and second as anticipating more current theoretical efforts to "queer" Freud's prescriptive narrative of sexual development. To illustrate the first, in spite of past feminist dismissals of Lawrence's work as misogynistic, his efforts to incorporate the mysterious physiological sensations of the body into his aesthetic conception of language and the novel certainly are suggestive of what we might call a *l'écriture masculine*. Similar to the notion of *l'écriture féminine* articulated by French feminists like Hélène Cixous, Lawrence's *l'écriture masculine* disarms language of its linear, logical, and/or progressive constraints in favor of more fluid, experimental narratives that take into account the body's physical experience of sexuality.⁷

Recognizing a kinship between Lawrence's writing and the work of these feminists does not necessitate denying textual moments that remain problematic in terms of their gender assumptions. Instead, as Hilary Simpson suggests, recognizing this kinship asks readers to move beyond taking Lawrence only at "face value" (14). For Simpson, taking Lawrence at "face value" means applying his own terms without examining how/why he uses them and also means interpreting his works exclusively from a psychological or biographical perspective. Simpson effectually argues that both tendencies, though they have their merits, have led to "a state of near stagnation in Lawrence criticism."⁸

In an effort to move beyond this stagnation, I turn to my second point regarding Lawrence's prescience, which is that his work begs to be con-

sidered as well in relation to contemporary theorists who are “queering” psychoanalysis. Here I am thinking, for example, of Judith Butler’s recent work in *Undoing Gender*, where she imagines a post-oedipal triangularity that might move us beyond Freud’s Oedipal triangle and its heterosexual implications for gender. Butler complicates the heteronormativity of the familiar dyad by asking how we might account psychoanalytically for the crossings of homosexual and heterosexual passions that are braided through relationships between, for example, transsexuals in transition—crossings that “cannot be understood as stable achievements” or be represented by old psychoanalytic parables of sexual development and desire (142).

Libidinal crossings that refuse to be contained in predetermined narratives lie at the very heart of *Sons and Lovers*. Such libidinal crossings, along with their aesthetic ramifications, position Lawrence as a precursor to the queer theoretical redescrptions Butler sees herself actively engaged in producing. Addressing the impossibility of determining whether the sexuality of the transgendered person is homosexual or heterosexual, Butler writes: “The term ‘queer’ gained currency precisely to address such moments of productive undecidability, but we have not yet seen a psychoanalytic attempt to take account of these cultural formations in which certain vacillating notions of sexual orientation are constitutive” (142). In what follows, I hope to make clear that in both his aesthetic-psychological theories and his novel *Sons and Lovers*, D.H. Lawrence had already moved us in the direction of just such a psychoanalytic attempt.

Freud’s Head, Lawrence’s Body: Sublimation

D.H. Lawrence’s two vitriolic and phantasmagoric outcries against psychoanalysis, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), can be read in part as a response to Freud’s inability to adequately explain sublimation. Typically, Freud defines sublimation as the transformation of instincts, most frequently those sexual in nature, into higher cultural achievements like art. He then asserts that such transformations are beyond the realm of psychoanalysis and should instead be addressed by biologists who study the “organic foundations of character” (*Leonardo* 86). Ostensibly restricting himself to psychoanalysis as elaborating the psyche only, Freud labels sublimation as a physical

process that necessitates the expertise of biological scientists. Hence, at this moment anyway, he splits psyche and soma and remains content to discuss sublimation as only an abstraction.

Lawrence, on the other hand, wants us to *experience* the mystery of this transfer from bodily sensation to symbolic construct rather than to explain and abstract its occurrence:

The process of transfer from the primary consciousness to recognized mental consciousness is a mystery like every other transfer. Yet it follows its own laws. And here we begin to approach the confines of orthodox psychology, upon which we have no desire to trespass. [. . .]

The process of transfer from primary consciousness is called sublimation, the sublimating of the potential body of knowledge with the definite reality of the idea. And with this process we have identified all education. [. . .] Of course it should mean the leading forth of each nature to its fullness. But with us, fools that we are, it is the leading forth of the primary consciousness, the potential or dynamic consciousness, into mental consciousness, which is finite and static. (*FU* 106–07)

According to Lawrence, if sublimation is indeed a process of transfer, which implies energy and mobility, Freud fails to say how that transfer occurs because he allows the term “sublimation” as an abstraction to take over for the dynamics of the process itself. As Lawrence perceives it, Freudian sublimation merely becomes one of many surgical tools with which psychoanalysis claims to effect its cure: “Once all the dream horrors were translated into full consciousness, they would sublimate into—well, we don’t quite know what. But anyhow, they would sublimate. Such is the charm of a new phrase that we accepted this sublimation process, without further question” (*PU* 6). So far as Lawrence is concerned, Freud’s primary sin is that he reduces the great affective passional functions and emotions, which cannot be *known* but only *felt*, to sexual impulses that he then claims to be able to explain. As such sex becomes only a mental object. Thus, the analyst prostitutes the flesh to the word, whereas the artist knows that the flesh always precedes and gives rise to the word.⁹

However, had Lawrence looked more closely at Freud’s attempts to de-

fine sublimation, he may have found a surprising affinity between himself and the psychoanalyst whom he, as well as many of his contemporaries, narrowly perceived as being obsessed with the “slimy serpent of sex” (*PU* 5). In general, it is true that when Freud refers to sublimation he is addressing the sexual instincts’ ability to “replace its immediate aim by other aims which may be valued more highly and which are not sexual” (*Leonardo* 28). In *Leonardo*, he waxes vague about the exact nature of these “sexual instincts.” However, elsewhere, Freud is much more specific. In *Three Essays on Sexuality*, for example, he writes that sublimation, along with reaction formations, are “employed for effectively holding in check perverse impulses which have been recognized as being unutilizable. The multifariously perverse sexual disposition of childhood can accordingly be regarded as the source of a number of our virtues [. . .]” (104–105). Sublimation, as Freud describes it here, becomes the means of reining in all of those polymorphously perverse desires he spends the entire body of *Three Essays* explicating, a way of recuperating wayward instincts for the benefit of society at large. In a previous and more extended appeal to our toleration of “sexual perversions” on the basis of their capacity for virtuous transformations, Freud has this to say:

We surely ought not to forget that the perversion which is the most repellent to us, the sensual love of a man for a man, was not only tolerated by a people so far our superiors in cultivation as were the Greeks, but was actually entrusted by them with important social functions. [. . .] The perversions are neither bestial nor degenerate in the emotional sense of the word. They are a development of germs all of which are contained in the undifferentiated sexual pre-disposition of the child, and which, by being suppressed or by being diverted to higher, asexual aims—by being sublimated—are destined to provide the energy for a great number of our cultural achievements. (*Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* 43)

Despite his earlier disavowal, notice that Freud seems in this passage very clearly to specify the “organic foundations of character”: we are to consider perversions not as sexual acts per se but rather in their “emotional sense,” which in this context curiously means that we must consider them

as “germs”—germs being those small masses of protoplasm or cells from which a new organism or one of its parts might develop. Freud, always the biologist in spite of himself, thus tells us that these “germs,” harbingers of perversions to be, when “sublimated” generate the energy responsible for creating “great cultural achievements.” Quite inadvertently perhaps, Freud asks us to dispense with *knowing* our perversions, which inevitably leads to naming them as “bestial and degenerate.” He instead asks us to focus on *feeling* them deep in the protoplasm of our cells and to acknowledge their propensity for creating something astonishing and new.¹⁰

Oblivious to Freud’s own confession that perversions may be the felt germs of art, Lawrence portrays him as having sacrificed a physiology of feeling for the vocabulary we have come to know as psychoanalysis. If Freud abandons his attempt to explain unconscious mechanisms like repression in concrete neurological and physiological terms, as he had tried to do in *The Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Lawrence unabashedly embraces a philosophy of feeling by arguing, to borrow Herbert Read’s words, that “not only are the cosmic and biological processes continuous and co-extensive” but that “the mental processes in man are also part of the same dynamic unity” (*Education* 192). This psychic activity, happening always below the level of consciousness, can only be experienced; it cannot be explained or analyzed. In other words, as far as Lawrence is concerned, art is not just a substitute behavior for another socially unacceptable behavior. Rather, sublimation is about transfiguring a deeply felt sensual and emotional experience into a symbolic construct that is capable of embodying and communicating that experience. We might say that sublimation has a meaning more akin, given Lawrence’s definition, to the romantic notion of the sublime because it refers to heightened moments of connection as they occur across and between bodies. The vibrations created by these heightened moments of connection, because they are so subtle and refined, do not merely find imaginative expression in an image that represents the subjective experience but, at least in Lawrence’s case, in prose that wants its reader to tremble with corresponding sensations.¹¹

Lawrence’s “Dark Continent of the Body”

Lawrence’s reference to the “darkest continent of the body” predates Freud’s use of the metaphor as referring to female sexuality and instead

invokes the “lower first-mind” as lodged in his elaborate psychic anatomy behind the solar plexus: “. . . the solar plexus is the first and main clue to the alimentary-sexual activity in man, an activity at once functional and creatively emotional . . .” (*PU* 36). The Lawrentian body, divided into a fourfold psychic activity, vibrates with the correspondences and oppositions produced by the objective center (the cardiac plexus) and the subjective center (the solar plexus) each of which is in turn comprised of sympathetic (object relations) nerve centers and voluntary (self-realization) nerve centers. For Lawrence, consciousness and unconsciousness, a distinction he deliberately blurs by using the terms interchangeably, resides in the “living continuum” between these four polarities: “Paradoxical as it may sound, the individual is only truly himself when he is unconscious of his own individuality . . . when he is not split into subjective and objective, when there is no *me or you*, no *me or it* in his consciousness, but the *me and you*, the *me and it* is a living continuum, as if all were connected by a living membrane” (“John Galsworthy-Fragment” 249). This “living membrane” is broken when “individual consciousness is supplanted by the social consciousness,” thereby provoking a radical split between objective and subjective consciousness.

True knowledge—“true pristine consciousness” and the “pristine unconscious”—for Lawrence is always anterior to mental conceptualizations. The creative productive center of this “pristine” consciousness and unconsciousness resides in the “quick” of the child’s relation to its mother while still in the womb, a relation that depends on a knowledge exchanged only through the bowels:

Here the child knows beyond all knowledge. It does not see with the eyes, it cannot perceive, much less conceive. [. . .] Yet from the belly it knows, with a directness of knowledge that frightens us and may even seem abhorrent. The mother, also, from the bowels knows her child—as she can never, never know it from the head. [. . .] From the passionate nerve-centre of the solar plexus in the mother passes direct, unspeakable effluence and intercommunication, sheer effluent contact with the palpitating nerve-centre in the belly of the child. (*PU* 21–22)

In Lawrence's schema, this vital magnetism behind the navel provides the creative center towards which the artist must bend his or her medium.

It is this truth inherent in the darker alimentary realms of the body that Lawrence felt his critics had not grasped. In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, Lawrence dismisses these critics as "thin-minded idealists" who had failed to heed the novel's "appeal to the bowels of their comprehension" and thereby reduced it instead to what they perceived to be the universal truth of the Oedipus complex (43). In a letter to the psychoanalyst Barbara Low, dated September 11, 1916, Lawrence declares:

I hated the *Psychoanalysis Review* of *Sons and Lovers*. You know I think 'complexes' are vicious half-statements of the Freudians: sort of can't see wood for trees. When you've said *Mutter*-complex, you've said nothing—no more than if you called hysteria a nervous disease. Hysteria isn't nerves, a complex is not simply a sex relation: far from it.—My poor book: it was, as art, a fairly complete truth: so they carve a half lie out of it, and say "Voila." Swine! (qtd. in Tedlock 32)¹²

Like his contemporary Virginia Woolf, Lawrence felt that the most egregious error made by psychoanalysts was their relentless tendency to invent diagnoses to which they then attributed cause and effect relations.¹³ He also abhorred what he perceived to be science's general proclivity for shoving the vital, kinetic, alive body into the deadening limitations of intellectual constructions. Guilty of this offense, psychoanalysis fails to get at the "truth" of an individual's experience of any given illness or so-called complex. Accordingly, diagnostic labels like the Oedipus complex, when applied to fiction, negate the art and leave merely a litany of symptoms that subscribe to a preordained complex.

In order to appreciate Lawrence's declaration that *Sons and Lovers*, as "art," is a "fairly complete truth," we must understand how he defines "truth" in relation to the novel. Lawrence unequivocally rejects "truth" if defined as a "dazzling revelation" or "supreme" absolute: "We should ask for no absolutes, or absolute. Once and for all and forever, let us have done with the ugly imperialism of any absolute. [. . .] All things flow and change, and even change is not absolute" ("Why the Novel Matters" 196).

For Lawrence, truth lies in the felt experience. Although anyone can feel, artists are in the unique position of being able to feel and to transmit what they feel. The truth of those feelings does not reside in the representation of an object but rather in the reverberations that occur as a result of the relation between two beings: “[A] painting of sunflowers—by Van Gogh at least—is neither man-in-the-mirror, nor sunflowers-in-the mirror, but a reality in the fourth dimension, the creative dimension, which is neither up nor down nor across, but in-between. It is a revelation of a perfected relationship between man and the circumambient universe” (“Morality and the Novel” 241). D.H. Lawrence names the tension between regression and progression, stimulus and response, reaching and touching the fourth dimension.¹⁴ A novel succeeds for Lawrence when it is “in that place of the fourth dimension, where there is no forwards nor backwards nor higher nor lower, nor even better or worse” (243). And it matters because as a living tissue comprised of words that know their origin to be the flesh, it asks us, to borrow E.M. Forster’s famous phrase, to “only connect.”¹⁵

How, then, is the novel’s “truth” as it resides in these quivering relations to be reconciled with the “pristine unconscious” as found deep within “the darkest continent of the body”? Does *Sons and Lovers*, as “art, a fairly complete truth,” show us the way? Do the perverse relations—a love for a mother that both conceals and reveals a love for a man—merely find their sublimation in the form of a novel or do the tremulations inherent to those relations themselves propose a new form for the novel, a form whose origins can be found only “in our own forests of dark veins” (205)? If, as Lawrence’s readers, we follow the lead of his contemporaries and pursue what they perceived to be Freud’s truth, then we indeed walk the former path. Alternatively, if we follow Lawrence’s version of “truth,” we will discover that rather than sublimating its perversions, the novel exposes them and exploits them (however covertly) as absolutely essential to the development of Paul Morel’s aesthetic consciousness. Thus, rather than theory unveiling the truth of the art, it is art that returns theory to the felt germs of its perversions.¹⁶

Eros in the Sickroom

From the beginning of *Sons and Lovers*, it is clear that illness facilitates a physical and emotional bond between Gertrude Morel and her chil-

dren: "She was very ill when her children were born" (42). As if the umbilical cord were never severed, William, her eldest son, suffers intensely whenever his mother is ill, which is frequently. Despite his mother's admonitions that her pain is not his pain, he seems entirely unable to differentiate himself from her suffering: "She laughed in spite of the pain. But sometimes, when she was suckling the baby, it was so bad she could scarcely move. Then her eldest son would be found lying weeping bitterly to himself in the front room" (44). Similarly Paul, even as an infant, is marked by a "peculiar knitting of the brow" and a "peculiar heaviness of the eyes, as if [he] were trying to understand something that was pain" (50). As the children grow older (there are three: William, Paul, and Annie), this feeling of shared suffering only intensifies: "From her, the feeling was transmitted to the children. She never suffered alone any more: the children suffered with her" (85).

This transmission of affect is especially intense for Paul, who shares his mother's propensity for illness. An episode of bronchitis becomes the opportunity for him to revel openly in his maternal obsession. Like a lover gazing longingly at his beloved, he lays in bed absorbed by her every move: "Paul loved the way she crouched and put her head on one side. Her movements were light and quick. It was always a pleasure to watch her" (91). Inevitably this passionate intensity between mother and son becomes less acceptable as Paul matures and tries to form adult relationships with other women. However, the sickroom continues to provide the space in which Mrs. Morel and Paul can return to physical expressions of their unusually intense affection for one another. When he is sixteen years old, Paul suffers a bout of pneumonia, following the death of his brother William, that dissolves the boundaries between mother and son to the extent that Mrs. Morel becomes welded to Paul: "He put his head on her breast, and took ease of her, for love. [. . .] The two knitted together in perfect intimacy. Mrs. Morel's life now rooted itself in Paul" (171). In turn, when Mrs. Morel herself falls seriously ill at the end of the novel, the sick room becomes a haven for what appear to be two young lovers: "As she lay, she looked like a girl. And all the while her blue eyes watched him" (428). As he goes about his work he finds himself "conscious of nothing but her. It was a long ache that made him feverish" (428). In the evening, he returns to the sickroom and, calling her "Pigeon" and "Little," caresses her, braids her hair, and loses himself in her "forget-me-not blue eyes":

“His face was near hers. Her blue eyes smiled straight into his, like a girl’s warm, laughing with tender love. It made him pant, with terror, agony, and love” (429). Illness, it seems, transfigures Mrs. Morel into the young girl Paul relentlessly seeks for elsewhere and can never find.

Nevertheless, during his mother’s long illness and following her death, Paul finds comfort not while in the company of women but instead while in the presence of one man—Baxter Dawes. If illness transfigures a mother into a girl, it also transfigures a masculine brute into a far less intimidating womanly male. Dawes works with Paul at Jordan’s, a manufacturer of surgical supplies: “Baxter Dawes he knew and disliked. The smith was a man of thirty-one or two. He came occasionally through Paul’s corner: a big, well set man, also striking to look at, and handsome” (223). Although he is aesthetically pleasing, Dawes harbors darker, more primitive impulses that Paul finds disconcerting but also undeniably fascinating: “His eyes, dark brown and quick-shifting, were dissolute. They protruded very slightly, and his eyelids hung over them in a way that was half hate. His mouth too was sensual. His whole manner was of cowed defiance, as if he were ready to knock anybody down who disapproved of him—perhaps because he really disapproved of himself” (223–24). Attention is drawn to Dawes’ “sensual mouth,” a mouth that if we read too quickly becomes “too sensual” when in fact Lawrence’s subtle inversion of the adjective and verb—“His mouth too was sensual”—asks us to apply it to Dawes’ supposedly less attractive qualities as well. Hence, not only is his mouth sensual but so “too” are the heavily lidded, shifty “dissolute” eyes that emanate hate. To further the point, the speech issuing from this “sensual mouth” is “dirty, with a kind of rottenness” (224). In addition, Dawes’ attitude of “cowed defiance” marks him as someone who has something to hide, something of which, as the text implies, he should be ashamed: “perhaps [. . .] he really disapproved of himself” (224).

Although he claims to dislike Dawes, Paul is nevertheless fixated on gaining access to the more sensitive man he believes must be hiding behind an exterior of burly masculinity: “Paul often thought of Baxter Dawes, often wanted to get at him, and be friends with him. He knew that Dawes often thought about *him*, and that the man was drawn to him by some bond or other” (386). As if he senses Paul’s desire to disarm him, Dawes greets the other man’s overtures with increasing hostility. The two lapse into patterns of altercation that seem to refer to the fact that Paul is

sleeping with Dawes' wife Clara but which, in actuality, are rife with homoerotic tension. At Jordan's, before Paul has even begun his affair with Clara, he consistently and coyly provokes Dawes by fixing his "cool, critical gaze" on the other man's face: "The smith started round as if he had been stung. 'What'r yer lookin' at, three hap'orth o' pap?' he snarled" (224). Similarly, an altercation between the two in a bar one night during which Dawes refuses Paul's offer of a drink by spitting "'Nowt wi' a bugger like you,'" (386) leaves Paul feeling a "curious sensation of pity, almost of affection, mingled with violent hate, for the man" (388).

Dawes' aggressive masculinity, largely a defense mechanism, makes him unapproachable for Paul. Hence, Paul's barely suppressed excitement when he learns that Dawes has been laid up in the fever hospital suffering from typhoid. Ill and emasculated, Dawes appears more attractive to Paul: "Dawes was thinner and handsome again, but life seemed low in him. . . . The sick man was gaunt and handsome again" (424–25).¹⁷ Lawrence's repetition here intensifies our awareness of Paul's emotions and stretches his desire across the page rendering the words the two men speak merely a pretext for the libidinal energy flowing between them: "The strong emotion that Dawes aroused in him, repressed, made him shiver" (426).

However, if we follow Lawrence's erotic clues—reverberating metonymically along body parts (hands, necks, throats, legs)—as they signal unconventional desire, we shall find that Paul's strong emotion is not repressed but most definitely expressed. The energy radiating between body parts, which on Paul and Dawes may never actually touch, is made palpable by Lawrence's repetition of those parts as they extend towards one another across the surface of his text. In the sickroom and the convalescent home, Paul's hands, which had during his fight with Dawes "dug in the throat of the other man" possessed by a desire that "was anguish in its strength," become instead the source of the invalid's renewal: "Dawes, who mended very slowly and seemed very feeble, seemed to leave himself in the hands of Morel" (431). If Paul's "small and vigorous" hands do not explicitly caress Dawes, they nevertheless are consistently there waiting to make contact with those of the other man. Dawes, in turn, extends his hands with less and less reluctance: "Listless and pale, the man rose to greet the other, clinging to his chair as he held out his hand" (432); 'Did you?' said Dawes, shrinking, but almost leaving himself in the other's

hands”; “. . . Dawes, with rather shaky hand, continued to mix the drink” (446).

Unlike in the bar or during the fight scene, in the sickroom Paul’s more feminine hands clearly have the upper hand: “Dawes glanced at [Paul] . . . perhaps a trifle dominated by him” (446). Expressing his own despair over his mother’s illness while gazing at “the wrist and white hand of the other man gripping the stem of [his] pipe,” Paul finds himself subject to the verbal caresses of the smith whose sensual mouth had previously spoken words that were “dirty, with a kind of rottenness” (224): “‘I know—I understand it,’ Dawes said nodding. ‘But you’ll find it’ll come all right.’ He spoke caressingly. [. . .] The eyes of the two men met. They exchanged one look. Having recognized the stress of passion each in the other, they both drank their whiskey” (446–47). When Paul attempts to dilute “the stress of passion” by bringing up Clara, the two men experience a resurgence of the old “instinct to murder each other,” which curiously takes them almost immediately to the bedroom. Suggesting the old dance of aversion and attraction that had characterized the relationship between the two men prior to Dawes’ illness, Lawrence renders the transition abrupt but in its abruptness all the more provocative: “They almost avoided each other. They shared the same bedroom” (448). What follows is hardly an explicit sex scene. Hands reaching towards hands become hands touching legs, a tender gesture that is permissible due to Dawes’ status as an invalid:

Paul reluctantly got out of bed and went to look at the rather handsome legs of the other man that were covered with glistening dark-gold hair.

“Look here,” said Dawes, pointing to his shin. “Look at the water under here.”

“Where?” said Paul.

The man pressed in his finger-tips. They left little dents that filled up slowly.

“It’s nothing,” said Paul.

“You feel!” said Dawes.

Paul tried with his fingers. It made little dents.

“Hm!” he said.

“Rotten, isn’t it?” said Dawes.

“Why?—it’s nothing much.”

“You’re not much of a man with water in your legs.”
“I can’t see as it makes any difference,” said Morel.
“I’ve got a weak chest.” (448)

Lawrence appears here to move as close as he dare towards suggesting there may be explicit sexual desire between Paul and Dawes. Symptoms clearly facilitate the caresses the two men are able to exchange and allow their otherwise reticent sentiments to be expressed. Although their passion is never consummated, Lawrence’s prose benefits from its suspension. For it effectively vibrates with restraint at the same time that it exudes the tremblings of a desire heated rather than satiated by the slightest contact.

In *Sons and Lovers*, then, the sickroom denudes homoerotic desire of its shame while simultaneously allowing it to enter the text as at least a possibility. The power of this desire, and the sickroom’s role as enabling its suspension, becomes much clearer when we realize that Lawrence has already flirted with more explicit homosexual relations between Dawes and Paul earlier in the novel. Although cut from the first published edition of the novel in 1913, by Lawrence’s editor Edward Garnett, this flirtation indicates that Lawrence’s idea for the passions the novel should embrace extend beyond those deemed socially acceptable at the time. Granted, the fact that this flirtation is in fact between Dawes and Paul is not immediately discernible as it happens via the body of a woman, a literary phenomenon Eve Sedgwick details in her now classic study *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. However, once exposed as Lawrence originally intended it to be, this flirtation clearly gestures towards a broader definition of sexuality than what Garnett’s preferred edition makes apparent.¹⁸

Prior to the flirtation between Paul and Dawes as we have seen it played out in the sickroom, Paul had already been touching Dawes through Clara and had been touched by Dawes through Clara. It is not insignificant, then, that Baxter Dawes and Clara Dawes enter the text simultaneously. Rather than being separate entities, in Paul’s mind at least, they comprise a composite character of sorts: “There was a peculiar similarity between himself and his wife. He had the same white skin with a clear, golden tinge. His hair was soft brown, his moustache was golden. And he had a similar defiance in his bearing and manner” (223). The “peculiar” similarities between Dawes and his wife persistently reassert themselves

until it becomes clear that Paul's infatuation with Clara is, in part, an infatuation with Baxter Dawes. Like Dawes, Clara incites both attraction and aversion for Paul: "There was something in Clara that Paul disliked, and much that piqued him. If she were about, he always watched her strong throat, or her neck upon which the blonde hair grew low and fluffy. There was a fine down, almost invisible, upon the skin of her face and arms, and when once he had perceived it, he saw it always" (305–06). If Clara's body arouses Paul with its hints of masculinity, it also foregrounds Paul's own body as decidedly girlish. In contrast to Clara's strong masculine throat, Paul's throat is instead "young . . . almost like a girls" (296). Similarly, whereas Paul's hands are "small and vigorous," Clara's are "large, to match her large limbs . . . white and powerful looking" (316).

In the scene that Edward Garnett cut from the novel's first publication in 1913—the only edition available between 1913 and 1992—the similarities between Clara and Dawes and the gender confusion between Paul and Clara are made much more explicit. Following a night at the theatre, Paul misses his train and Clara invites him to stay over night at her mother's house. Clara gives Paul a "sleeping suit" to wear, which, as we learn from Clara's mother, was given to Dawes by Clara but abruptly rejected: "'Said he reckoned to do wi'out trousers in bed.' She turned confidentially to Paul, saying: 'He couldn't *bear* 'em, them pyjama things.'" (380). To this Paul replies, "'My mother loves me in them. She says I'm a Pierrot,'" prompting Mrs. Radford to bellow back, "'I can imagine they'd suit you'" (380). This pithy exchange foregrounds Paul's status as a girlish man as well as the fact that Mrs. Radford perceives him as such: Paul apparently looks just enough the girl to wear Baxter's bottoms.¹⁹

With Dawes' bottoms in hand, Paul enters Clara's bedroom where he is to sleep for the night. It has been arranged that Clara will sleep in her mother's room. It is this specific passage that Garnett cut from the first published edition. Here we find Paul, who has already expressed his willingness to be feminized by accepting the pajamas Dawes refused to wear, trying on a pair of Clara's stockings that just happen to be flung over a chair in her bedroom:

It was a small room with a large bed. Some of Clara's hair-pins were on the dressing table—her hair-brush; her clothes and some skirts hung under a cloth in a corner. There was

actually a pair of stockings over her chair. He explored the room. [. . .] He undressed, folded his suit, and sat on the bed, listening. Then he blew out the candle, lay down, and in two minutes was almost asleep. Then click!—he was wide awake and writhing in torment. It was as if, when he had nearly got to sleep, something had bitten him suddenly and sent him mad. He sat up and looked at the room in the darkness. Then he realized that there was a pair of her stockings on a chair. He got up stealthily, and put them on himself. Then he sat still, and knew he would have to have her. (381)

As if for emphasis, Lawrence has Paul registering the presence of Clara's stockings in the room twice: the first time as a peripheral side-glance—though the “actually” seems weighted with portent—and the second time when he fully “realizes” their presence and puts them on, an action that immediately arouses his desire for Clara. Paul exits the bedroom in search of Clara—presumably with the stockings still on as we never see him take them off. Although the text does not specifically show us Paul putting Dawes' sleeping suit on, we can assume he is wearing that as well because the “cord of his sleeping suit” later dangles suggestively against Clara. Thus, we have Paul in Clara's stockings and Dawes' bottoms approaching Clara whom he finds “kneeling naked on a pile of white underclothing on the hearthrug, her back towards him, warming herself. She did not look round, but sat crouching on her heels, and her rounded, beautiful back was toward him, and her face was hidden” (382). This masquerade becomes somewhat vertiginous. It would seem that Paul performs his own fantasy of female embodiment by taking on Clara's persona through her stockings while simultaneously assuming Dawes' rejected effeminacy in the form of the sleep suit. He then approaches Dawes' backside through Clara, a plausible scenario since Clara's more masculine beauty has been so clearly aligned with that of her husband in Paul's mind.²⁰

Astonishingly, it is this love scene between Paul and Dawes, incognito as Paul and Clara, which closes the chapter entitled “Passion.” That chapter, then, is significantly followed by the chapter entitled “Baxter Dawes,” in which, incidentally, Clara accuses Paul of not really attending to her during their love making: “I feel [. . .] as if I hadn't got you—as if all of

you weren't there—and as if it weren't *me* you were taking" (407). Thus, Edward Garnett's removal of the previous love scene, with all of its gender confusion and libidinal complexities, effectively restored the narrative to the heterosexual imperatives of the traditional Edwardian novel. With the scene reinstated, especially given its close proximity to the "Baxter Dawes" chapter, the multiple libidinal crossings of Lawrence's narrative become much more apparent as does his desire for a different kind of novel that might allow these to circulate unconstrained.

Clara is, of course, not the only woman between Paul and Dawes. The intensity of their desire is fueled in the last third of the novel by Gertrude Morel and, most specifically, by her illness. Lawrence's choice to end *Sons and Lovers* with Paul moving between his mother's sickroom and that of Baxter Dawes signals the way in which the sickroom provides a safe haven, a place wherein unconventional Eros can be if not fully consummated at least intensely felt. In this sense, illness serves as a conduit of erotic energy linking the bodies of Mrs. Morel, Paul, and Baxter Dawes. Following his fist fight with Dawes, Paul's desire for the man resonates through his body as an acute episode of bronchitis: "He had a dislocated shoulder, and the second day acute bronchitis set in. His mother was pale as death now, and very thin. [. . .] There was something between them that neither dared mention" (412). Lawrence seems quietly to imply that between Paul's ill body and that of his dying mother there is Dawes, reverberating like a struck chord between mother and son. Similarly, between Paul and Dawes, there is always Mrs. Morel: "Morel went to see Dawes once or twice. There was a sort of friendship between the two men, who were all the while deadly rivals. But they never mentioned the woman who was between them. Mrs. Morel got gradually worse" (428). Ostensibly, Clara (Dawes' estranged wife who is also Paul's lover) is the woman between the two men. However, Lawrence strongly suggests, once again with an abrupt transition, that it is Gertrude Morel who provides an energetic and erotic link between them just as it is in turn her illness that eases them into a relationship with one another.

Lawrence's manipulation of the intense feelings resonating among Paul, Mrs. Morel, and Dawes is most overtly signaled by the novel's concluding structure. In the chapter entitled "Baxter Dawes," within which we recognize the homoerotic attraction and aversion between the two men, we are also introduced to the fact that Mrs. Morel is dying of cancer. Sim-

ilarly, in the chapter entitled “The Release,” which immediately follows, Dawes significantly reappears with typhoid fever and Mrs. Morel’s illness intensifies, ultimately resulting in her death. The bridge between the two chapters recapitulates the visceral connection among the three: “Baxter Dawes” ends with a mother returning home to die and “The Release” opens with Baxter Dawes lying, utterly alone, in the fever hospital. Paul’s journey between the sickrooms of Dawes and Mrs. Morel signifies that each of them have erotic importance for him, but it also points to an intersection between the two, which has powerful aesthetic consequences. These consequences become clear when we compare two moments of aesthetic ecstasy, one associated directly with the mother and the other more indirectly with Dawes. In these particular scenes, aesthetic ecstasy refers not to those “white peaks” of artistic inspiration Lawrence had mocked in the work of Bloomsbury art critic Clive Bell. Rather, Lawrence’s notion of aesthetic ecstasy more precisely resembles Herbert Read’s definition of aesthetic perception as that which precedes conceptual knowledge in human development.²¹ In each of the scenes to follow, aesthetic ecstasy is not that which takes one out of the body and towards a transcendent form of knowledge, but rather a state of being rooted firmly in the body enabling extraordinary perceptual acuity.²²

Aesthetic Ecstasy Take One: The Madonna Lily

I began by suggesting that Paul’s aesthetic consciousness is forged in the crucible of his mother’s womb. This odd assertion makes perfect sense according to Lawrence’s “biological psyche” given that the “creative dynamic” arises from the “quick” of the child’s relation to the mother while still in the womb. Mrs. Morel, pregnant with Paul and locked out of the house by her drunk husband, wanders deliriously in the garden while seething with a passion that comes as much from within her as from without. In a move that typifies his later work, most especially *The Rainbow*, Lawrence fuses language and emotion by rendering the symbolic objects he portrays as animated beings who, like the figures interacting with them, are charged with an energy that is distinctly sexual but also indicative of the body’s general capacity to fuel aesthetic vision. “Seared with passion,” Mrs. Morel walks out into the garden, the “child boil[ing] within her” and finds herself engulfed by a beam of white light:

She hurried out of the side garden to the front, where she could stand as if in an immense gulf of white light, the moon streaming high in face of her, the moonlight standing up from the hills in front, and filling the valley where the Bottoms crouched, almost blindingly. [. . .] She became aware of something about her. *With an effort, she roused herself, to see what it was that penetrated her consciousness.* The tall white lilies were reeling in the moonlight, and the air was charged with their perfume, as with a presence. (34; my emphasis)

Aroused by this luminous penetration of her consciousness and dizzy with the perfume emanating from the “tall white lilies,” Mrs. Morel moves toward the flowers: “She touched the big, pallid flowers on their petals, then shivered. They seemed to be stretching in the moonlight. She put her hand into one white bin: the gold scarcely showed on her fingers by moonlight” (34).

Rippling with the same sensations moving across Mrs. Morel’s body, Lawrence’s prose knits mother, child, and the steamy, florid environment together with the potency of the white light beaming from the moon overhead. Although Lawrence frequently figures the moon and the lily as feminine entities, in this scene they are emboldened with a distinctly phallic energy. Mrs. Morel feels her consciousness pierced by the white light of the moon. As the scene continues, the “tall, white lilies,” which have also been set “reeling” by the delirious moonbeams, stretch towards her as if desiring that they too might enter mother and child. However, rather than the lilies touching Mrs. Morel, it is Mrs. Morel who reaches down into the depths of the lilies, putting her hand into “one white bin: the gold scarcely show[ing] on her fingers.” When she returns to the house, she smiles “faintly to see her face all smeared with the yellow dust of lilies” (34).

If the white light piercing Mrs. Morel’s consciousness is distinctly phallic, we must not fail to mark it as emanating from a feminine source whose energy moves through the mother before reaching “the bottoms.” “Panting” and “gasp[ing] slightly in fear,” Mrs. Morel nevertheless finds herself vitalized by the intense luminosity of white on white generated by the lilies as they reflect the moon’s sheen (34). The extension of her hand through the moonlight and on into the depths of the lily suggests a potent autoerotic self-encounter less about sexual ecstasy than it is about aes-

thetic ecstasy. While there is no questioning the fact that Lawrence most frequently aligns artistic creativity with the masculine phallus, at this particular moment we are asked to acknowledge the phallic mother as both the recipient and the progenitor of the visionary scene placed before us.²³ “Boiling” inside his feverish mother’s womb, the yet-to-be born Paul shares her aesthetic ecstasy. Later, as a young artist, Paul Morel unconsciously seeks to replicate this aesthetic ecstasy, which had allowed him to curl suspended in his mother’s ill body between a world animated by a white light and the dark world of the “lower first-mind” behind the navel. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, we learn that this “lower first mind” is the source of what Lawrence famously refers to as “blood consciousness”: “The blood-consciousness and the blood-passion is the very source and origin of us” (210). The source of our most “dynamic self,” blood-consciousness, located deep in the bowels of the body where womb and alimentary canal are intimate, is also for Lawrence the source of our most creative selves. Thus, as Paul’s aesthetic consciousness develops he seeks two things: a moment that physically aligns him with the deeply visceral experience he had while in his mother’s womb and an art form capable of capturing that experience.

Illness, drawing his mother near as it does, seems to move Paul towards envisioning that form. For illness promotes an intense cellular awareness of the body, an awareness reminiscent of what Paul had felt while still in his mother’s womb: “Paul was very ill. [. . .] One night he tossed into consciousness, in the ghastly, sickly feeling of dissolution, when all the cells of the body seem in intense irritability to be breaking down, and consciousness makes a last flare of struggle, like madness” (171). The crisis of an illness inspires in Paul an awareness of what Herbert Read refers to in his art criticism as the body’s “proprioceptive sensations,” those sensations emanating from “internal phenomena of some kind that have a basis in the physiology of consciousness” (187).

Hence, when Paul attempts to explain his own art work to Miriam—the beautiful young farm girl who Paul wishes his mother could be—he locates what she refers to as its “truth” in its ability to move beyond surfaces into the depths of interiority: “It’s . . . shimmery—as if I’d painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not the stiffness of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real living thing. The shape is a dead crust. The shimmer is inside, re-

ally" (*Sons and Lovers* 183). We are told that Paul "loved to paint large figures, full of light, but not merely made up of lights and cast shadows, like the impressionists; rather definite figures that had a certain luminous quality, like some of Michael Angelo's people" (345). Able as he is to see beyond forms into the "shimmering protoplasm" of objects, Paul in turn vivifies the perceptions of others with whom he spends time. While listening to Paul talk about Michael Angelo, Miriam trembles not so much with unspent erotic energy as with aesthetic ecstasy. She feels as if she "were fingering the very quivering tissue, the very protoplasm of life, as she heard him. It gave her the deepest satisfaction" (232). Like the illness that provoked Paul's awareness of his body's cells, his art and aesthetic sensibility carry his viewers and his listeners into their own body's depths.

Paradoxically Paul's aesthetic vision, though clearly rooted in a physiological consciousness, nevertheless renders the body's borders in relation to other objects surrounding it negligible. Paul has moments in which his own body seems to evaporate into its surroundings. Speaking with Miriam one afternoon he declares: "Even now, I look at my hands, and wonder what they are doing there. That water there ripples right through me. I'm sure I am that rippling. It runs right through me, and I through it. There are no barriers between us. [. . .] I feel as if my body were lying empty, as if I were in the other things—clouds and water—" (232). Although in conversation Paul accuses Miriam of waxing philosophical so as to "disembody" him and to "disseminate" his consciousness, it is in fact an intense awareness of his body as a sentient being in the universe that enables what he describes as a paradoxically disembodied experience.

Paul's awareness of a self whose borders can dissolve into the materiality of external objects refers back to an illness he suffered as a young boy with his mother nearby: "In convalescence everything was wonderful. The snowflakes, suddenly arriving on the window-pane, clung there a moment like swallows, then were gone, and a drop of water was crawling down the glass. The snowflakes whirled around the corner of the house, like pigeons dashing by" (92). Because it intensifies Paul's relation to his body, illness, as it ebbs into convalescence, facilitates metaphor. In other words, "seeing" an affinity between unlike things—"snowflakes and swallows"—necessitates "feeling" a bodily consciousness that momentarily eradicates physical being so as to unite self with other. If metaphor necessitates a disembodied state of embodiment so to speak, then illness, which

induces an awareness both of the desire to be beyond one's body as well as a painful cognizance of the body's irrevocable reality, places Paul at the crux of the paradox he must learn to inhabit as an artist.²⁴

Aesthetic Ecstasy Take Two: The Iris

In order for the "shell" that is form to be transfigured into the luminosity of the "living self," Paul must forgo the mother's mediation and embrace the darkness thereby relocating the generative source of his art in the darker realm beyond the maternal womb. At this point returning to Lawrence's geography of the body will help to clarify exactly what role the mother ultimately must play in Paul's aesthetic consciousness. In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, Lawrence explains that a child's awareness of its mother when it leans against her breast does not constitute an erotic desire for her so much as a "primal awareness of *her—not of itself as desiring her or of partaking of her—but of her as she is in herself*" (31; my emphasis). The child, then, gathers its mother's "mould into itself and transfer[s] her mould forever into its own deep unconscious psyche. This is the first acquiring of objective knowledge, sightless, unspeakably direct. It is a dwelling of the child's unconscious in the *form of the mother*, the gathering of a pure, eternal impression" (31; my emphasis). As form, the mother nurtures the dynamic development of the infant self. The physiological connection between that developing self and its mother in turn yields "its own tissue of [. . .] treasure, the tissue of the developing body, each cell stored with creative dynamic content" (31).

Lawrence's account invokes Freud's own rehearsal of the child's intense narcissistic identification with its mother early in life but with this difference: Lawrence deliberately wrenches his incorporation of mother by child out of a narrative driven by Oedipal desire for the mother and re-situates it in his own schema of the biological psyche. There, remember, the libidinal energy moving between tissues of contact yields a "creative dynamic." Thus, this contact between mother and child, between child and a form of physical energy called mother, yields aesthetic riches that are not to be merely subsumed into an Oedipal narrative of desire.

In Lawrence's model of the biological psyche, then, mother is the form holding and nurturing the "child's unconscious." Her conscious awareness and her body mediate between the blind unconscious potential of the child

(which for Lawrence is always a metaphor for the self in its larger sense) and its outside world:

But certainly from the passional conscious-centre of the breast goes forth the first joyous discovery of the beloved, the first objective discovery of the contiguous universe, the first ministration of the self to that which is beyond the self. So, functionally, the mother ministers with the milk of her breast. But this is a yielding to the great *lower* plexus, the basic solar plexus. It is the breast as part of the alimentary system—a special thing. (32)

Consider the hierarchy that begins revealing itself here: whereas mother both shapes and constitutes the form in which the dynamic circuit between the cardiac plexus and the solar plexus (the upper and the lower divisions of the body) conducts itself, she ultimately “yields” to the great “lower plexus”—always connected as she is to the alimentary system—“a special thing”—but a special thing that indicates she may not be the ideal generative force. For Lawrence, the danger inherent in the mother, and by extension in all women, is that while “the true polarity of consciousness in woman is downwards,” she has the capacity to “polarize her consciousness upwards,” to become, as it were, too self-conscious and too “mental” (*FU* 215). Gertrude Morel’s autoerotic self-encounter, read in this light, suddenly becomes a potential obstacle to the downward thrust necessary for a Lawrentian self-consummation.

Despite the mother’s association with luminosity and vitality, as the novel progresses her proximity to Paul seems to put him at risk of falling into conventionality. Until the moment of her death, Mrs. Morel constitutes the form containing the light and as such moors Paul: “I can do my best things when you sit there in your rocking chair, mother” (190). Illness, then, enables a regressive return to mother as form. In addition, the feverish intensity of an illness proves reminiscent of his mother’s aesthetic ecstasy in the moonlit garden. Hence, as Mrs. Morel’s illness intensifies at the end of the novel, Paul finds himself able to do his best work: “At night he often worked in her room, looking up from time to time. And so often found her blue eyes fixed on him. And when their eyes met, she smiled. He worked away again mechanically, producing good stuff without know-

ing what he was doing" (429). However, Lawrence makes it clear that this equation of mother with form risks entrenching the young artist in the dregs of conventionality and, more importantly, in the potentially static beams of conscious perception: "It was not his art Mrs. Morel cared about, it was himself and his achievement" (179). The space that provides the true creative impetus is instead a "dark beyond the darkness of the womb" ("The Crown" 372).

It is toward this "dark beyond the darkness" that Lawrence pushes his artist figure Paul Morel. Nowhere does this alternative womb assert itself more clearly than in a scene Lawrence almost certainly intended as a parallel to Mrs. Morel's luminous ecstasy in the garden. This scene occurs later in the novel when Paul finds himself objecting more and more intensely to Miriam's overtures and spending more time instead with Clara. In addition, he has been feeling his mother's desire that he be hers and hers alone pressing oppressively against him. As he paints "feverishly and mechanically" one night, he experiences the heat of his mother's desire as the scent of Madonna lilies entering the open door "stealthily, [. . .] almost as if it were prowling abroad" (337). The phallic mother appears to have taken on quite ominous proportions in Paul's *déjà vu*. The lilies seem to stalk him with their "heavy scent," threatening to overwhelm and even consume with their soporific perfume. "Calling" to him, "leaning" towards him, "panting" their musky odor into the atmosphere, the "great flowers" are charged with Mrs. Morel's desperation to have and to hold her son. In Paul's imagination, the pungency of their scent and the intensity of their "white" constitutes a "barrier" to something else, to the encroaching darkness "beyond."

Whereas during Mrs. Morel's swoon, the intensity of "white light" predominated and intoxicated, here that "white light," though not without its power, has significantly dimmed. Its source, the moon, has turned "dusky gold" and is yielding to a dull purple sky that is soon overwhelmed by darkness. Turning his back on the lilies, Paul heeds another odiferous call, "raw and coarse," which had previously come from behind him. There he finds the "purple iris," phallic in its "stiff" proportions, and caresses it as he has perhaps longed to caress Dawes. Indeed, the flowers "fleshy throats" and "their dark, grasping hands" carry us forward to the hands of Dawes and Paul, which, as I have previously suggested, reach tentatively towards one another in the sickroom and convalescent home.

Reaching with their “dark, grasping hands” and extending their “fleshy throats,” the irises herald the entry into the womb beyond the womb. Paul reenters his mother’s house with “the male [. . .] up in him, dominant”:

Breaking off a pink he suddenly went indoors. [. . .]
 He stood with the pink against his lips.
 “I shall break off with Miriam, mother.” [. . .]
 He was white. The male was up in him, dominant. She did not want to see him too clearly. [. . .]
 “On Sunday I break off,” he said, smelling the pink. He put the flower in his mouth. Unthinking, he bared his teeth, closed them on the blossom slowly, and had a mouthful of petals. These he spat into the fire, kissed his mother, and went to bed. (338)

Paul’s mastication of the pink blossoms further drives home his rejection of the feminine and his embrace—“at any rate he had found something”—of a potency rooted in the darkness.

The iris, as a symbol for a new aesthetic forged within the darkness of the womb beyond the womb, plays an important role in Lawrence’s own imagination. Metaphorically speaking, the iris, as a flower, invokes the iris of the human eye thereby suggesting that the flower is quite powerfully connected for Paul with a new way of seeing and feeling: a new aesthetic vision. In Lawrence’s essay “The Crown,” the iris symbolically refers to what he perceives as an ideal interpenetration of darkness and light:

In the beginning, light touches darkness and darkness touches light. Then life has begun. The light enfolds and implicates and involves the dark, the dark receives and interpenetrates the light, they come nearer, they are more finely combined, till they burst into the crisis of oneness, the blossom, the utter being, the transcendent and timeless flame of the iris. (378)

In Lawrence’s parable of the origins of the self, light, marked as feminine, “stirs with eternal procreation,” and the “infinite” and masculine “sea of darkness” lies deep in the loins of the body full of “unconceived creation” (372). As Lawrence arranges it here, the feminine principle provides a

“procreative” spark, but it is the masculine sea of darkness that becomes the crucible for creative consummation. Deep within the dark seas of this masculine womb, the iris emerges as an exultation of a darkness that now contains the light: “My source and issue is in two eternities, I am founded in the two infinities. But absolute is the rainbow that goes between; the iris of my being. [. . .] These [the lights of the rainbow] are little portions of special darkness, darkness transfigured, these lights” (378–39). Darkness transfigured for Lawrence is the arc of a rainbow that has its base always in the loam and whose iridescence is also always a phosphorescence: “the rainbow, the iridescence which is darkness at once and light, the two-in-one; the crown that binds them both” (373).

The Womb Beyond the Womb: The Birth of Phosphorescent Form

At the end of *Sons and Lovers*, Paul, having touched the iris, faces his own “crisis of oneness.” Following the lead of Lawrence’s own title for his last chapter, “Derelict,” few critics have read Paul Morel as a figure of artistic promise. However, the previous chapter entitled “The Release” within which Paul intensely *feels* his perversions, signals his transfiguration, as the artist figure, into a masculine mother who harbors within himself an “unconceived creation.” Gripped by the “agony” of his love for his mother and the “stress of passion” he feels for Dawes, Paul moves between their two sickrooms “hunting” for something he cannot name. Behind Mrs. Morel’s “white uplifted form,” which seems to be melting away “like wax,” are the “dark eyes” of the invalid Dawes with whom Paul has felt an increasingly “peculiar” affinity (426, 431). While erotically he must relinquish them both, his mother to death, Dawes to the arms of his wife, aesthetically, according to Lawrentian lore, he must embody each so as to become the creator of a phosphorescent arc that shimmers the “two-in-one.”

As his mother becomes increasingly ill, Paul feels her suffering as intensely as he once did as a child. Her illness becomes his illness: “[H]e felt sick and trembled in his limbs” (430). Similarly, indicative of the “blood consciousness” forged only by the connection between mother and child, it is the anguish running through Paul’s “blood and his body” that Lawrence describes: “It was his blood weeping” (421). Ill with his mother’s pain, his veins pulsing with the blood that once connected him to

her, Paul struggles to deny the darkness leaching through the increasingly ashen light of her form: "They were both afraid of the veils that were ripping between them" (429). With his world threatening to implode, Paul turns to the "dark eyes" of the typhoid stricken Dawes. For a time, moving between these two seems to be enough. His painting flourishes as he sits in the firelight of his mother's sick chamber. Nevertheless, as he leaves Dawes one night, Paul realizes that the sickroom, however safe a haven it has been, will never allow anything but a stagnant struggle between two necessary but opposing forces: "The furnaces flared in a red blotch over Bulwell, the black clouds were like a low ceiling. As he went along the ten miles of high-road, he felt as if he were walking out of life, between the black levels of the sky and earth. But at the end was only the sick room. If he walked and walked forever—there was only that place to come to" (434). Caught between a mother who refuses to die and a man who seems on some level to refuse to heal, Paul has to become the agent of his own "release." Hence, in the chapter entitled "The Release," he pushes his mother on to her death and plunges himself into a "bath of darkness and extinction" (*FU* 211).

If Paul's deliberate decision to end his mother's life preserves her as the young girl he wishes she could be, it also speaks to Lawrence's concerns about the mother's predilection for a consciousness that can become too easily fixated in the cardiac plexus. The "white light," then, associated throughout the novel with Mrs. Morel, comes to signify the cerebral as estranged from the body and the dangers of self-consciousness. By giving his mother white milk laced with morphine, Paul essentially renounces this "white light" and by extension an aesthetic form centered in the upper realms that threatens to become mechanical, conventional, and worst of all for Lawrence, too mental. Poisoning his mother with the whiteness inherent to the very milk that nurtured him as an infant, Paul forces her to "yield to her own unconscious self" (218). The Madonna lily is thus forsaken for the iris.

Mrs. Morel's death plunges Paul into a state of formlessness: "Everything seemed to have gone smash for the young man. He could not paint. The picture he finished on the day of his mother's death—one that satisfied him—was the last thing he did" (454). Initially, this descent into darker realms following his mother's death seems to take him away from the rest of the world, away from what he had perceived as the source of

truth and light. He longs to be back in the sickroom, where darkness was a mere shadow contained in the light of his mother's form: "And he saw again the sick room, his mother, her eyes. [. . .] He wanted everything to stand still, so he could be with her again" (455). Without her physical form near him, his surroundings appear profoundly strange in their familiarity and all at a distance he cannot bridge:

Sometimes he was mad: things weren't there, things were there. [. . .] Everything suddenly stood back away from him. [. . .] He could not get into touch. [. . .] He felt he couldn't touch the lampposts, not if he reached. Where could he go? There was nowhere to go, neither back into the inn, or forward anywhere. [. . .] The stress grew inside him, he felt he should smash. 457

Lawrence places Paul at an extreme aesthetic distance from his surroundings, a distance that vibrates with the dark reverberations of emotional pain so something can be "smashed." Although Paul feels as if it is he himself who will "smash," for Lawrence it is the form of the novel as it had been defined up until the early twentieth century that must be destroyed: a form "hag-ridden, by such a stale old 'purpose,' or idea-of-[itself], that [its] inspiration succumbs" ("The Novel" 418). Lawrence thus intentionally leaves his artist figure unable to move backward or forward so he may feel the perverse forces of a darkness having the capacity to "smash" the old and generate the new.

The novel ends with Paul feeling the "vastness and terror of the immense night," a night captured in prose that waivers with the intensity of a Van Gogh painting:

There was no Time, only Space. Who could say his mother had lived and did not live? She had been in one place, and was in another, that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and he was with her still. They were together. But yet there was his body, his chest leaned against the stile, his hands on the wooden bar. They seemed something. Where was he?—one tiny upright speck of flesh, less than an ear of wheat lost in the field. [. . .] Night, in which everything

was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror and holding each other in embrace, there in a darkness that outpassed them all and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness, and yet not nothing. (464)

Although it is true Paul turns away from “darkness” as it signifies death—“He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her”—and turns instead towards the “city’s gold phosphorescence [. . .] towards the faintly humming, glowing town,” it is the darkness of the seemingly infinitesimal night that already harbors the phosphorescence he ultimately chooses.

The vast space in which Paul feels himself lost—a darkness that supercedes light but holds it just the same, a darkness within which the sensation of a mother’s touch can be felt even in its absence—is nothing less than Lawrence’s creative cosmos, a place constituted by decomposition: “The cosmos is nothing but the aggregate of dead bodies and dead energies of by-gone individuals. The dead bodies decompose as we know into earth, air, and water, heat and radiant energy and free electricity (*Fantasia of the Unconscious* 182–88).²⁵ Caught in this energetic spiral of decomposition, Paul turns to the matter of his flesh—“But yet there was his body [. . .] and himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness, and yet not nothing”—and it is there he finds the strength to move forward (*Sons and Lovers* 464). His body, the energetic link to a world within which all matter incorporates the heat and energy of by-gone bodies, moves forward into a luminescent decay. He has incorporated a mother’s light—“She is—in you”—and is now rooted in the depths of the “darkest continent” with his own body as the generative source of all future vision: “Oh yes, my body, me alive, *knows* and knows intensely. And as for the sum of all knowledge, it can’t be anything more than an accumulation of all things I know in the body, and you, dear reader, know in the body” (“Why the Novel Matters” 194).

It is this definition of literary form—“the body [. . .] being the bottle”—that Lawrence struggled to articulate against complaints, most specifically from his editor Edward Garnett, that *Sons and Lovers* was essentially a “formless” novel: “Your letter has just come. I hasten to tell

you I sent the MS. of the Paul Morel novel to Duckworth, registered, yesterday. And I want to defend it, quick. I wrote it again, pruning it and shaping it and filling it in. I tell you it has got form—form: haven't I made it patiently, out of sweat as well as blood" (*Selected Letters* 49). Lawrence follows his assertion that the form of his novel has come from within, that it is the deeply felt organic and visceral product of his labor, with an attempt to define the structure of *Sons and Lovers*. In doing so, he reduces the complexities of his own work down to the essentials of plot, revealing his contemporaries' prejudice for form as a mental construct that should structure and control the lives of its characters. It is his wife Frieda who dares to defy the English definition of literary form. In defense of the novel's so-called "formlessness," Frieda dashes off a note to Edward Garnett in which she praises her husband for refusing to succumb to the stultifying constraints of English literary form defined as such:

I don't think he has no form [. . .]. I think anybody must see in "Paul Morel" the hang of it. I think the honesty, the vividness of a book suffers if you subject it to form. I have heard so much about 'form' [. . .] why are you English so keen on it? Their own form wants smashing in almost any direction, but they can't come out of their snail house. I know it is so much safer [. . .]. [A]ny thing new must find a new shape, then afterwards one can call it art. (qtd. in Salgado 28)

Although Lawrence acquiesced to many of Garnett's demands—cutting sections that revealed too distinctly the perverse depths of the novel—he held to his belief in literary form as a tissue emerging from the "blood consciousnesses" of his characters. These characters, more forces of energy than discrete individuals, suggest that sensation itself is a language and that the form of the novel, in part, emerges from the "trembling balance" created by the sinuous contact between their linguistic figures. Characters and language alike in Lawrence, as Fiona Becket argues, pose a challenge to "algebraic designations." Privileging mobility, flow, vibration, transfers, and transformations, Lawrence's *modus operandi* was to break down "rigid explanatory models and fixed psychic structures" (*D.H. Lawrence: The Thinker as Poet* 67). In their place, he left us figures and

forms constantly in process the likes of which stand still only if we insist on pinning them down.

My intention in this essay has not been to apply Freudian psychoanalysis, contemporary revisions thereof, or queer theory to *Sons and Lovers*. I have instead hoped to invoke in my reading of his characters and his aesthetic-psychological theories the D.H. Lawrence who Deleuze and Guattari celebrated so enthusiastically and so frequently in their own theoretical writing:

Let us keep D.H. Lawrence's reaction to psychoanalysis in mind, and never forget it. In Lawrence's case, [. . .] his reservations with regard to psychoanalysis did not stem from terror at having discovered what sexuality was. But he had the impression—the purely instinctive impression—that psychoanalysis was shutting sexuality up in a bizarre sort of box painted with bourgeois motifs, in a kind of rather repugnant artificial triangle, thereby stifling the whole of sexuality as production of desire so as to recast it along entirely different lines, making of it a 'dirty little secret,' the dirty little family secret, a private theater rather than the fantastic factory of Nature and Production. Lawrence had the impression that sexuality possessed more power or more potentiality than that. (49)

If, as Deleuze and Guattari urged us to do years ago, we remember this D.H. Lawrence, then perhaps we can put aside erroneous and hostile readings of a writer who arguably anticipates post-structuralist notions of identity and sexuality as inherently unstable; a writer who creates a language and style radically at odds with predetermined meanings and fixed categories as they plagued his time and continue to plague our own.

Notes

1. Lawrence's contemporary John Middleton Murry published the first book length Oedipal reading of Lawrence's work entitled *Son of Woman: The Story of D.H. Lawrence*. Thirty years later, Daniel Weiss published *Oedipus in Nottingham*. For early critical discussions of Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and its Freudian connections, see Alfred Booth Kuttner, Frederick J. Hoffman, Daniel A. Weiss, and Graham Hough. For more

recent criticism addressing Freud and Lawrence, see all of the following: James Cowan, Rick Rylance, Barbara Ann Schapiro. Anne Fernihough, David Seelow, and Fiona Becket. For those interested in Lacanian readings of *Sons and Lovers* see Earl G. Ingersoll and Robert Burden.

2. As Barbara Ann Schapiro has noted, Paul's relationship with Dawes is easily absorbed back into the Oedipal narrative with Dawes being read as a substitute father figure for Paul. Although she discusses Paul and Dawes' relationship only briefly as raising issues that she believes find fuller expression in "The Prussian Officer" and *Women in Love*, she does recognize a more "primary, elemental desire at work" between the two men that resists Freud's Oedipal framework (51).
3. The most egregious example of this type of reading is done by Jeffrey Meyers who argues that Lawrence was a repressed homosexual whose puritanical ethos and "intellectual scruples" prevented him from embracing relations with men (137). Frank O'Connor reads the relationship between Paul and Dawes as evidence that something is "wrong" with Lawrence and even goes so far as to suggest that the "pathology" evident in the relationship is responsible for destroying the novel's formal coherence (274–275). For more contemporary and nuanced readings of homosexuality in Lawrence's work see the following: David Seelow, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Barry J. Scherr, Jonathan Dollimore, Christopher Craft, and Barbara Ann Schapiro.
4. Similarly, David Seelow has remarked that Lawrence's response to homosexuality "occupies a more fluid space than his critics allow" (87).
5. Sandra M. Gilbert writes the following regarding Lawrence's sudden disappearance from the groves of academe: "This year my own department interviewed a number of candidates for a position in the 'field' known as 'twentieth-century British literature' and even among the finalists only a few could respond to serious questions about the author of what used to be considered those twentieth-century British masterpieces *Sons and Lovers* and *Women in Love*. Nor were most members of the search committee particularly scandalized. 'Lawrence has dropped off the map,' observed one, a sophisticated theorist, while another responded blankly to the dissertation description proffered by one of the few candidates who'd worked on this once canonical modernist" (9). Similarly John Worthen begins his recent biography of Lawrence by noting that the writer's canonical status seems to be a thing of the past and that few English departments across either Britain or the United States teach him anymore. He speculates that the reason for this decline has much to do with a political climate that has led to dismissive readings of his work as both sexist and racist.

6. For the remainder of the article, when I cite from these works, I will refer to *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* parenthetically as *PU* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* as *FU*.
7. Regarding l'écriture feminine, see Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. For cogent feminist critiques of Freud's Oedipus complex see the Italian born Teresa De Lauretis.
8. For another excellent reevaluation of women in Lawrence's work and of past feminist criticism regarding it, see Carol Siegel.
9. Lawrence's unpublished 'Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*' replaces the statement made in the Gospel According to John, 'The Word was made Flesh' with his own assertion 'The Flesh was made Word' (467).
10. See Jonathan Dollimore and Kaja Silverman for provocative discussions of Freud's notion of perversion and its radical connotations.
11. In her discussion of Lawrence's notion of "art speech" as put forth in *The Symbolic Meaning* ("Art communicates a state of being" 19), Fiona Becket, in *D.H. Lawrence: The Thinker as Poet*, makes a similar point in that she suggests Lawrence's medium to be directed at playing "fruitfully across the centres and plexuses of the body of the reader" (29).
12. Tedlock notes that Lawrence most likely was referring to Alfred Booth Kuttner's critical review in the July 1916 issue of the *Psychoanalytic Review* Volume 3, No. 3, the reprint of which is included on pages 76–100 of *D.H. Lawrence and 'Sons and Lovers': Sources and Criticism*.
13. See Virginia Woolf's "Freudian Fiction."
14. Barbara Ann Schapiro articulates this tension in psychoanalytic terms through the lens of intersubjectivity as it has been defined in the work of D.W. Winnicott, Jessica Benjamin, and Daniel Stern. She effectively argues that Lawrence's work anticipates insights into relational psychology that psychoanalytic theory has only recently caught up to: "that identity is profoundly relational, that the self cannot be realized outside the context of the other; that affects are inextricably entwined with the body; and that the spontaneous expression of affective, bodily life is essential for healthy living; and finally that both psychological and moral life, at the deepest level, concern shifting dialectical tensions" (1).
15. "Only connect" is Forster's famous epigraph to his novel *Howards End* first published in 1921.

16. Rick Rylance also questions whether subjecting literary texts to non-literary theories can be done without “distorting reduction. [. . .] In this sense, *Sons and Lovers* might be thought to put as many questions to Freud, as Freud’s essay provides ways of ‘explaining’ the novel” (7).
17. When Paul first visits Dawes in the hospital he finds the nurse taunting her patient by calling him “Jim-crow” and repeating “Caw! Caw!” a mockery that plays on Lawrence’s choice of names for the smith by implying that Dawes, like the “jackdaw” in borrowed plumes, has been suddenly stripped of his braggadocious masculinity. Lawrence’s play on “jack daw” and of course “Jim-crow,” alluding as it does to the nineteenth-century minstrel shows performed in black face, leaves readers with a character whose darkness has been exposed and who must now wear his shame openly: “The man’s dark eyes were afraid to meet any other eyes in the world” (426).
18. For an interesting discussion of the editorial relationship between Edward Garnett and D.H. Lawrence as it effected *Sons and Lovers* in its entirety, see David M. Thompson.
19. In a conversation I had with Carol Siegel regarding this scene, she suggested that Dawes rejects the idea of wearing “trousers” to bed not because they are feminizing, but because he intends to have Clara sexually accessible to him; therefore, he doesn’t want either of their genitals confined in nightclothes. Although I appreciate her point, I still would argue that the exchange between Mrs. Radford and Paul, as well as Paul’s remark that his mother thinks he looks like a “pierrot” in pajama bottoms (hardly a comparison invoking masculinity) deliberately contrasts Paul’s ambiguous gender identification with Dawes’ hyper-masculine self-presentation. Mrs. Radford seems to be having fun comparing the two at Paul’s expense.
20. Angela Carter reads this scene in reference to what she calls Lawrence’s art of “female impersonation,” which she in turn interprets as evidence of his misogyny. Linda Williams reads the stockings as a Freudian fetish: a symbolic phallus that wards off the anxiety associated with the castrated woman. Barbara Ann Schapiro argues that Paul’s desire to be a girl references a fantasy that occurs in much of Lawrence’s work: the desire to be “ravished by a powerful animalistic male,” a desire which is inherently ambivalent as with it comes the fear of annihilation (48). Keeping in mind Judith Butler’s desire to queer the Oedipal triangle, I am much more interested in how difficult Lawrence makes it to determine whether Paul’s desire is homosexual or heterosexual. I am arguing that it is this very indeterminacy Lawrence seeks to privilege.
21. See Clive Bell’s *Art* and Herbert Read’s *Education Through Art*.

22. For a complex discussion of Lawrence's aesthetic theories in conversation with Bloomsbury figures like Clive Bell, see Anne Fernihough (1993).
23. Ingersoll and Burden also read the mother as associated with the phallic or symbolic register in this scene.
24. See Fiona Beckett, Earl G. Ingersoll, and Gerald Doherty who also suggest that metaphor in Lawrence's work signifies a focus on the body and privileges the ideas of transfer and transformation.
25. The word "decomposition," aside from its scatological reference, also suggests that Lawrence is de-composing the novel as it has been previously known—taking it apart or "smashing" it so that he might recompose it according to his aesthetic vision.

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