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POSTCOLONIAL LAWRENCE: THE MEXICAN CONNECTION

por

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In memory of
my father and my mother

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A map can tell me how to find a place I have not seen but have often imagined. When I get there, following the map faithfully, the place is not the place of my imagination. Maps, growing ever more real, are much less true.

Jeanette Winterson

In the late twentieth century, whether one uses *primitive* with or without quotation marks often implies a political stance - liberalism or conservatism, radicalism or reaction, shame over what the West has done to non-Western societies or the absence of shame. When we put *primitive* into quotation marks, we in a sense wish away the heritage of the West's exploitation of non-Western peoples or at least wish to demonstrate that we are politically correct. But the heritage of Western domination cannot be abolished by wishing or by typography. In fact, funny things begin to happen when *primitive* goes into quotation marks. The first thing is that all other constructed terms - especially terms like the *West* and *Western* - seem to require quotation marks as well, a technique that despite its seeming sophistication ultimately relieves writers of responsibility for the words they use.

Marianna Torgovnick

ABSTRACT

POSTCOLONIAL LAWRENCE: THE MEXICAN CONNECTION

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2006

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This work deals with D.H.Lawrence's production while the British author resided in Mexico in 1923 and 1924, the novel *The Plumed Serpent*, and the essays of the collection *Mornings in Mexico*, from a postcolonial perspective. It starts from the premise that it is the job of the postcolonial critic, as Edward Said has it, to render visible the hidden ideology in canonical and imperial texts. It would be simplistic to claim, however, that the material I analyze, in spite of the colonial structures Lawrence necessarily inhabits, is "uniformly imperialistic." The complexities and ambivalence of *The Plumed Serpent* reside precisely in the fact that there is, on the one hand, an undeniable effort by Lawrence to side with the victims of the Spanish Conquest, as he assumes a platonic "anti-imperialist stand," reversing the roles of historical figures such as Cortés (creating a native Mexican protagonist who bans Christianity, and reinstalls the Aztec religion in Mexico) and Malinche (Cortés's lover and interpreter); on the other hand, as a subject arrested in his culture, he is utterly unable to cross the bridge towards the Mexican other, and the issue of cultural incommensurability presents itself infinitely more complex than he could have ever dreamed. The result of his attempt is that the

more he verbalizes his anti-eurocentric positions, the more eurocentrism manifests itself in his discourse. That is carefully looked into in the chapter on race issues (in which I address the relationship between Kate and Juana), in the chapter called "Utopian politics of resistance/orientalism," and in the chapter I call "Barbaric Mexico." Chapter III, "Pattern of role reversals: Fickle attempt of deconstruction" presents a rigorous analysis of the historical roles Lawrence reverses in his fiction. Finally, in Chapter V, I present a closer analysis of the social context of Mexico when Lawrence was residing there, and how it got reflected on the novel. The dissertation concluding remarks address, again and in the context of previous chapters, Lawrence's double allegiance: on the one hand, his desire to "unlearn Europe" and his willingness to rescue "forgotten histories," his genuine, if uneasy, effort to explore cultural difference; and, on the other hand, his heavy reliance on historical assumptions of the very Western culture he was trying to challenge, and how little aware of his own limitations as a subject of his time and culture he was, as discussed in my analysis. As an unsettled and divided person, he engages in an attempt of resistance to aspects of imperialist ideology, but he simultaneously fails to avoid the pitfalls of the rhetoric of colonialism.

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RESUMO

LAWRENCE PÓS-COLONIAL: A CONEXÃO MEXICANA

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Este trabalho lida com a produção de D.H.Lawrence enquanto o escritor inglês residia no México em 1923 e 1924, o romance *The Plumed Serpent* e os ensaios da coleção *Mornings in Mexico*, analisados de uma perspectiva pós-colonial. O projeto parte do pressuposto de que é tarefa do crítico pós-colonial, como Edward Said argumenta, tornar visível a ideologia contida nos textos imperiais e canônicos. Seria reducionista, no entanto, alegar que o material aqui analisado, em que pesem as estruturas coloniais que Lawrence necessariamente habita, seja "uniformemente imperialista". A complexidade do romance *The Plumed Serpent* reside precisamente no fato de que se pode observar uma ambivalência problemática: por um lado, um esforço inegável de Lawrence para tomar o partido das vítimas da Conquista Espanhola, o que leva o escritor a assumir uma postura "anti-imperialista", ainda que platônica, quando reverte papéis de figuras do episódio histórico, quais sejam, a figura de Hernán Cortés (criando um protagonista nativo mexicano que promove a reinstalação da religião Asteca, banindo o Cristianismo do México) e a figura de Malinche (amante e intérprete de Cortés); por outro lado, como qualquer sujeito imbricado em sua cultura, ele é inexoravelmente incapaz de atravessar o abismo que o separa do outro mexicano, e a questão da incomensurabilidade cultural se apresenta de forma infinitamente mais complexa do que

ele poderia ter sonhado. O resultado de sua tentativa é que quanto mais ele verbaliza suas posições anti-eurocêntricas, mais o eurocentrismo se manifesta em seu discurso. Esse fenômeno é cuidadosamente analisado no capítulo sobre a questão racial (no qual investigo a relação entre Kate e Juana), também no capítulo intitulado "Utopian politics of resistance/orientalism", e ainda no capítulo que chamei "Barbaric Mexico". O capítulo III, "Pattern of role reversals: Fickle attempt of deconstruction" apresenta uma análise sistemática dos papéis históricos que Lawrence reverte em sua ficção. Por fim, o capítulo V apresenta uma análise rigorosa do contexto social do México enquanto Lawrence lá residiu e como ele se reflete no romance. A conclusão do trabalho aponta, à luz dos capítulos anteriores, para a dupla condição de Lawrence: por um lado, seu desejo de "desaprender a Europa" e sua vontade de resgatar "histórias esquecidas", seu genuino esforço, ainda que perturbado, de explorar diferença cultural; e, por outro lado, sua intensa dependência de construções históricas da própria cultura ocidental que ele tenta desafiar, e quão pouco consciente de suas limitações, enquanto sujeito de seu tempo e de sua cultura, ele foi. Como uma pessoa não-estabelecida e dividida, ele envereda pela tentativa de resistência a aspectos da ideologia imperialista, mas simultaneamente não consegue evitar as armadilhas da retórica do colonialismo.

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I - "BARBARIC MEXICO"

> If we rethink culture … in terms of travel, then the organic, naturalizing bias of the term culture - seen as a rooted body that grows, lives, dies, etc. - is questioned. Constructed and disputed *historicities,* sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view.
>
> James Clifford

> Representation: that which simultaneously speaks for and stands in for something else.
> These meanings are often run together because the notion of mediation underscores them both. As a consequence, the ethical and political motivation behind questions of representation in both its senses will similarly concern the possible conflict of interests between the mediator and the mediated. This expresses an obvious political asymmetry that is considerable because unavoidable.
>
> Vicki Kirby

Postcolonial theory has been instrumental in illuminating the dialectic between Western self and non-Western "other" that served to construct European identity in the modernist era. In *Gone Primitive : Savage Intellects, Modern Lives*, Marianna Torgovnick provides a comprehensive study of what she calls "primitivist discourse," a discourse fundamental to the Western sense of self and Other, which, of course, has affinities with the orientalist discourse described by Edward Said, and the disciplinary and hegemonic discourses described by Michel Foucault. Her book asks some hard questions about the relationship between the primitive and the modern as they have variously been conceived, and it addresses both the high modernism of the years before World War II and the postmodernism firmly in place by the sixties: "Why did

modernism / why do we desire the primitive? How did modernism / how do we use the primitive to bolster our own ends? How did modernism / how do we project and seduce with versions of the primitive? Was modernism / are we ultimately seduced by our own projections?" are some of these questions.[1]

In her study of Malinowski's *The Sexual Life of Savages,* she observes that to study the primitive is to "enter an exotic world which is also a familiar world" (8). That world is structured by sets of images and ideas which have slipped from their original metaphoric status to control perceptions of primitives (images and ideas that she calls "tropes"[2]). The tropes will say that primitives are like children, primitives are "our untamed selves, our id forces - libidinous, irrational, violent, dangerous. Primitives are mystics, in tune with nature, part of its harmonies" (8). In the metaphors of stratification and hierarchy commonly used by Malinowski and others like him, primitives exist at the lowest cultural levels, and the Euro-American[3] at the highest. The ensemble of these

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[1]Torgovnick is profoundly aware of the (often unsuspected) pitfalls involved in the usage of the term "we". As she explains, "Malinowski's 'we' refers to the populations he considers normative and empowered - European or of European ancestry, white, literate, educated, of or above the middle class. The 'we' as I use it in this section basically denotes the 'we' that imagines a primitive 'them', a cultural 'we' that often, but not always, overlaps with Malinowski's conceived audience. I use the 'we' strategically, to prevent myself and my reader from backing away, too easily, from the systems of us/them thinking that structure all discourse about the civilized and the primitive. But at times, as here, for me, as a female writer suspicious of Malinowski's level of interest in primitives, that 'we' is intended to produce a sense of discomfort or misfit. The 'we' is necessary to produce a shared illusion: the illusion of a representative primitive 'them' as opposed to a monolithic, unified, powerful 'us'. It is necessary to reveal the 'us' as fragmented along lines of gender, national origin, class, political sympathies, race, and dozens of other categories and preferences that will determine individual reader's resistance to being part of the cultural 'we' " (4).

[2] Torgovnick explains that the word *trope* is especially apt for her purposes since it includes images and ideas, and both visual and verbal modes of expression, and adds that the use of the term resembles Hayden White's in *Tropics of Discourse.*

[3] The term *Euro-Americans* denotes Europeans, Americans of European ancestry, and others of European ancestry who may be citizens of countries outside Europe. This usage corresponds to that common today and is more inclusive than older uses of the term.

tropes, albeit many times contradictory, forms the basic grammar and vocabulary of "primitivist discourse".

The affinities of this discourse with the "orientalist discourse" stem from the very definition of the term presented by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, first published in 1978, and generally understood today as the founding manifesto for postcolonial studies. Said writes:

> Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (3)

Said explains that the concept, as he uses it, derives from Foucault's notion of discourse, as elaborated by the French historian and philosopher in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish.* He adds:

> My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. (3)

The polemical nature of Said's book has attracted criticism from many sides. James Clifford, for one, in *The Predicament of Culture*, criticizes it for presenting a monologic version of Orientalism, and Steve Clark, editing *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, compiles essays whose main concern is a shift away from what he calls a "homoglossic" obsession with Empire present in postcolonial theory, as sequel to Said's influential *Orientalism*. In spite of the more recent criticism, however, the core of the concept remains valid and profoundly influential in the development of new research. Critics revisiting *Orientalism* agree that if, on the one hand, it has been exemplary in its protest against the representational violence of colonial discourse, addressing the fact that in describing the Orient such texts were actually "constructing it" for the West, on the other hand, it is often theoretically naïve in its insistence that the Orientalist stereotype invariably presupposes both a unified imperialist discourse, as well as an essentialization of the resultant "Other", through the tendency to dichotomize the relationship between the "Occident" and the "Orient" into an us-them contrast. One should not forget, however, that, if, indeed, the concept of "orientalism" leads to an essentialization of the "Other", Said could be making use of a "strategic essentialism", as a kind of defense mechanism, and one could say that what critics today do is to choose to cast some light on what Said, *strategically*, chose to forget (as I claim in my review of Steve Clark, *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*).

While keeping in mind the inherent limitations of *Orientalism* alluded to above, it is however imperative to maintain the importance of the concept for a better understanding of the analogy Marianna Torgovnick makes in the discussion and analysis of the production of the "primitive" by the European culture. Writing in 1990, though,

and aware of the vulnerabilities of Said's work, she is cautious to explain that she tries to avoid making either primitive societies or the West seem monologic, and tries to acknowledge the different accents given primitivist discourse in different countries, and times, and by different writers.

Using the conceptual framework briefly outlined above as part of my theoretical basis, the object of my study is to look at the 'encounter'[4] of D.H.Lawrence with Mexico, in the time he spent in that country (between March 1923 and April 1925). The immediate result of this period spent in Mexico was the writing of the novel *The Plumed Serpent* (in the first version, called *Quetzalcoatl*) and the essays that compound his *Mornings in Mexico*. My interest and concern will be, as is the effort of postcolonialism, more with the marginal than with the central issues of the novel itself, a concern which has also motivated postcolonial studies of novels by Jane Austen, Joseph Conrad and so many others, but not D.H.Lawrence, so far. More specifically, I will attempt to use the method proposed by Edward Said as "contrapuntal reading", in which the critic suggests that we must read the great canonical texts, and perhaps also the entire archive of modern

[4] I use the word 'encounter' strategically, not unaware that it may mitigate colonial violence. The several layers of dissonant meanings for the term, though, which may imply a greater or lesser degree of invasion, incursion, interference, abuse, domination, subjugation, and, less often, the desirable peaceful meeting with balanced interaction which benefits both parts, should be kept in mind. As Peter Hulme shows, in his review of Anthony Pagden's *European Encounters with the New World* (1993), whose own use of 'encounter' in his title, by the way, seems to Hulme quite inappropriate to his subject-matter, Pagden reminds us of Las Casas's insistence that 'conquest', for instance (term chosen by Todorov in *The Conquest of America*), is itself part of the vocabulary with which colonizers attempted to glorify their deeds, and should therefore be rejected (p.79). Hulme adds that "Perhaps Francis Jennings's *The Invasion of America* (1976) is still the most accurate and economical phrase" (p. 70), in "Old Worlds for New", in *Bulletin Latin American Research*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1995. Of course, it is worth remembering that Hulme himself had published his 'encounters' as *Colonial Encounters : Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* in 1986, a book which he describes as being more of a case study rather than a theoretical work on the subject of colonial discourse, but which, obviously, presupposes theoretical frameworks. He intends the colonial discourse studied in his book to be seen not as a set of merely linguistic and rhetorical features, but to be related to its function within a broader set of socioeconomic and political practices, which is to say, to be read as an ideology, and starts his book with the sentence: "Europe encounters America. Clothed and armed Europe encounters naked America".

and pre-modern European and American culture, with “an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented in such works” (66). The idea of what is silent or marginally present in a text is brilliantly elaborated by Pierre Macherey in *A Theory of Literary Production*, where the author, anchored in Althusser's account of the relationship between literature and ideology, investigates the laws of literary production, and addresses issues such as the fact that the writer is no longer the creator of a text (the proposition that the artist or writer is a creator belongs to a humanist ideology), but rather the producer of a text. For Macherey the word *creation* is systematically replaced by *production*, since the artist produces works under determinate conditions, which make him/her not a subject centered in his/her creation, but an element in a system. Macherey also draws upon the Freudian theory of the unconscious, to develop the notion that every text has the implicit as well as the explicit, the latent as well as the manifest, the unspoken as well as the spoken. In fact, in his chapter 15, "The Spoken and the Unspoken", the author proceeds to suggest that it is not only useful but also legitimate "to ask of every production what it tacitly implies, what it does not say" (85). The explicit always hides the implicit, because in order to say anything, there are other things which must not be said. Hence, meaning is in the relation between the explicit and the implicit, between what the text says and what it hides. Following that line of thought, Said's "contrapuntal reading" is instrumental to enable us to identify those gaps and silences, contradictions and absences, which deform the text and reveal the repressed presence of those ideological materials which are transformed in the labor of literary production. In an attempt to use the method, I propose to look at *The Plumed Serpent*, trying to determine where the contradictions show up, and to unveil, in a

rigorous study, the textual inconsistencies. It is my project to dive precisely into the contradictions between the novel's pretensions to reclaiming a lost Mexican past, and the limitations of an Englishman to do so, because he is arrested in the prison-house of his language/culture.

As a postcolonial critic, determined to render visible the hidden ideology in the imperial texts, Said gives us the classic example of *Mansfield Park*: Jane Austen refers to Antigua without any thought of possible responses by the Caribbean or Indian natives resident there. The slave plantations in the British possessions are not looked upon as countries, but simply as agricultural estates, the place where England finds it convenient to carry on the production of sugar, coffee, and a few other tropical commodities. The colonies are nothing more than a convenience, an attitude confirmed by Austen, who in *Mansfield Park* sublimates the agonies of Caribbean existence to a mere half dozen passing references to Antigua.

Of course, Jane Austen lived a hundred years before Lawrence, and was writing during a period of Europe's largely uncontested imperialist enthusiasm. The context of modernism, in which Lawrence writes, is different. One can detect an undeniable, yet painful, effort by Lawrence to forget, so to speak, the European discursive formations. He declared in letters his disgust with European civilization, and that the Indians appealed to him as a possible source of renewal for the white Western world. On a surface level, *The Plumed Serpent* naively tries to promote forgotten histories, and has a pseudo anti-colonial attitude when it comes to the attempt of reviving the Aztec culture, religion, and belief system. Lawrence was not alone, however, in his disgust with European civilization in modern times. Neither was he alone in exploring Mexico as an alternative

to Europe. Graham Greene, Malcolm Lowry, B. Traven and Aldous Huxley were also in a similar frame of mind, just to mention a few European authors of famous novels which take place in Mexico, written in the early decades of the twentieth century. These novels are, respectively, *The Power and the Glory, Under the Volcano, Die Baumwollpflucker,* and *Eyeless in Gaza* (in this case, a section of the novel concerns a hazardous trip through southern Mexico. Huxley visited the area in 1933).[5] One must also mention Bataille, for whom the Aztecs were a central locus of "the primitive," chiefly because of their rituals of human sacrifice, as he expresses in "Extinct America", in 1928. Mexican critic Jose Joaquin Blanco explores the famous obsession with indigenous Mexico in writers such as Artaud and Bataille, who "with a tourist's Spanish, rudimentary and second-hand anthropological concepts, no knowledge of Mexican history, and no understanding of indigenous languages, imagine and create a Mexico that fits their preconceived notions" (26; my translation). We are aware that modernism believed that it knew what primitive meant and that it had established the best possible relations with primitive societies. As late as 1984, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) opened a major exhibition called "'Primitivism' in 20th-century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern", and Marianna Torgovnick mentions in *Gone Primitive* that she was astonished to realize that all that mattered, for the director of that exhibition, William Rubin, was the "Western conception of the primitive" (12). It is worth quoting here, at some length, Torgovnick's elaboration on versions of the primitive created/constructed by the West through literature:

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[5] Drewey Wayne Gunn identifies more than 450 novels, plays, and narrative poems on Mexico by British and U.S. writers between 1805 and 1973, in *Mexico in American and British letters: a Bibliography of Fiction and Travel Books, Citing Original Editions*. Metuchen, N.J. : The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1974

> In Conrad, as in Bataille, Lawrence, Eliot, and others of their generation, the creation of specific versions of the primitive often depends on and is conditioned by a sense of disgust or frustration with Western values. The primitive becomes a convenient locale for the exploration of Western dullness or degeneracy, and of ways to transcend it, and thus functions as a symbolic entity. As so often in the West's encounters with the primitive, the primitive responds to Western needs, becoming the faithful or distorted mirror of the western self. (153)

Western thinking frequently substitutes versions of the primitive for some of its deepest obsessions, and this becomes a major way in which the West constructs and uses the primitive for its own ends. In "D.H.Lawrence and Mexico", Rossman reminds us that Lawrence's imagination creates, in *The Plumed Serpent*, "a Chapala/Sayula that did not exist outside the novel" (197).

The twentieth century claimed to establish new relations with the primitive and indeed fostered an array of disciplines devoted to it. A case in point, anthropology, will be addressed next, in a sub-section of its own. It is important, however, to note that the insights developed by anthropology are not unrelated to Torgovnick's perceptions of the relation of modernism, and even postmodernism, with the primitive:

> … in modernism and its sequel, postmodernism, the relations are often not new enough and sometimes not really new at all. We have become accustomed to seeing modernism and postmodernism as opposed terms marking differences in tone, attitude, and forms of economic and social

> life between the first and second halves of the twentieth century. Yet with regard to views of the primitive, more similarities exist than we are used to acknowledging. (9)

In a similar fashion, Debra A. Castillo suggests, in her essay called "Postmodern Indigenism: 'Quetzalcoatl and All That', " that even an author like Mario Vargas Llosa, who is deeply suspicious of the "sed de exotismo" ("thirst for the exotic"), which has created a European market for Latin American cultural artifacts, distances himself very little if at all, in *El hablador* (*The Storyteller*), from what he condemns.

One of the complexities and ambivalence of *The Plumed Serpent*, as I see it, resides in the fact that there is, on the one hand, an effort by Lawrence to do precisely what Austen had failed to do: to acknowledge other histories, other cultures, other aspirations; on the other hand, he is, of course, a victim of his culture, and the effort towards understanding the other is a lot more complex than he could have ever dreamed. This complexity, in fact, is still with us today and we end the twentieth century and begin the twenty-first century still trying to understand, apprehend, and study the problem of cultural incommensurability.

The Anthropological Moment

The notion of the 'barbaric' goes back to antiquity. As we know, the Greeks called all foreign peoples "barbarians". Civilization has been understood, since then, as a life lived in cities. European culture was founded on the concept of the *oikos*, the *domus*, the household. For Aristotle, in the fourth century BCE, there were only beasts beyond

the city. To be civilized meant to be a citizen of the city (preferably walled), as opposed to the savage (wild man) outside or to the more distant barbarian roaming in the lands beyond. This was the basis for the later ideological polarity between the country and the city. When Europe discovers America, the inhabitants of the New World fit neatly the definition of 'savage' held so far, and even Bartolomé de Las Casas (who in the sixteenth century was the most vigorous defender of the rights of the Native peoples of Central and South America, condemning vehemently the practices of the Spanish colonizers) regarded America as having been immerse in darkness until Columbus 'stumbled' on it. One of the myths to compound this darkness was the belief that these 'savages' were cannibals. In the classic essay "Of the Cannibals", remarkably, written as early as 1580, Michel Montaigne is critical of his own society, in the light of reports brought back of the habits of the natives of the "New World". He was the first to use non-European peoples as a basis for engaging in a critique of his own culture:[6]

> I do not find that there is anything barbaric or savage about this nation, according to what I've been told, unless we are to call barbarism whatever differs from our own customs. Indeed, we seem to have no other standard of truth and reason than the opinions and customs of our own country. There at home is always the perfect religion, the perfect legal system, the perfect and most accomplished way of doing everything. (259)

Towards the end of the essay, Montaigne judges the allegedly cannibalistic Native Americans to be preferable to Europeans, when he argues that eating men is no more "barbarous" than certain Western practices, such as torture. Montaigne is describing the tortures frequently carried out by the Holy Inquisition against heretics:

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[6] That his evaluation of the natives is sometimes romanticized is indisputable and his ideas are the ones which Jean-Jacques Rousseau would later call "the noble savage".

> I am not so concerned that we should remark on the barbaric horror of such a deed, but that, while we quite rightly judge their faults, we are blind to our own. I think it is more barbaric to eat a man alive than to eat him dead, to tear apart through torture and pain a living body which can still feel, or to burn it alive by bits, to let it be gnawed and chewed by dogs or pigs, under the pretext of piety and faith, as we have not only read, but seen, in recent times, not against old enemies but among neighbors and fellow-citizens, and that, in fact, is a lot worse than roasting and eating him after he is dead. (262)

His favorable impressions of the inhabitants of the New World, as well as of the Africans, against French ethnocentrism, deal with the issue of cannibalism in an illuminating way. More recently, critics go a step further, suggesting that the obsession with cannibalism in the European mind probably shows that whites were far more addicted to *tales* of cannibalism than the Africans or Native Americans ever were to cannibalism itself. Its prevalence was taken for granted. And they agree that the discourse of cannibalism was fundamental to the workings of the discourse of European colonialism, and that the rhetoric of Columbus's reports on the New World consolidated the tradition of cannibalistic discourses. His letters established a complex network of binary oppositions, the first, evidently, being between Us and Them, the second, between the monstrous Carib against the gentle Arawak, which served as a pretext for exploitation and eventual genocide. The tales of cannibalistic practices were part of the foundation for an eventual justification of the "civilizing missions".

Attempts to define "civilization" start, in English, with Scot James Boswell who in 1772 recorded a dispute with Johnson while the latter was preparing the fourth edition of his folio Dictionary. Boswell writes that Johnson would not admit *civilization* but only *civility,* whereas he (Boswell) thought *civilization*, from *to civilize* was better in the sense

opposed to *barbarity*, than *civility*.[7] In the next century, Matthew Arnold elaborated on the distinction between savages and barbarians (the OED cites him as the first person to do so in English, in 1835), and J.S. Mill's essay "Civilization" (1836) formalized the trio "savagery, barbarism and civilization" not as general categories but as a hierarchy of the historical stages of man, bringing geography and history together in a generalized scheme of European superiority that identified civilization with race. Two decades later, in France, Gobineau publishes the infamous "Essay on the Inequality of Races", and from then on, as Said puts it, "every major novelist, essayist, philosopher, and historian of note accepted as fact the division, the difference and, in Gobineau's phrase, the inequality of the races".[8] Racist assumptions remained the foundation of the Western thinking and the Western sense of self.

The twentieth century, as suggested earlier in this chapter (when dealing with the relation of modernism with the primitive), brings an uneasiness with eurocentrism, and a disgust with European civilization and the sense of European alleged superiority. As a way out of this schema, the "primitive" peoples of the American continent start drawing the attention of European writers and intellectuals, as mentioned above with the case of the several writers visiting, moving to, and writing about Mexico, in the first half of the twentieth century, Lawrence included.

Of course, one does not get rid of "consolidated visions", to use Said's terms, overnight, and all the vocabulary, grammar and discourse constructed in centuries still apply. As Neil Roberts, in *D.H.Lawrence: Travel and Cultural Difference*, points out,

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[7] In the chapter "Culture and the History of Difference", in Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race.*

[8] In his introduction to the Penguin edition of *Kim*, 1989 (1901).

"Lawrence makes habitual and unembarrassed use of the word 'savage' to describe the indigenous peoples of both the United States and Mexico". Roberts, justifyingly, proceeds to say that "in this he is of his time," and goes on to cite Malinowski's foreword to *The Sexual Life of Savages*, in which he makes a "comment on the title, but it was the word 'sexual' that he felt the need to explain: 'savages' evidently needed no explanation" (146). Though this vocabulary was still in use, the drive of the time was to start challenging European assumptions. At this moment writers and intellectuals were interested in the *peoples* of the New World, as opposed to intellectuals of the previous century, such as Alexander Von Humboldt, who were coming to this continent to assemble their "classifications" of plants and the like, as if the continent were not inhabited. Humboldt reinvented America as nature because it was first invented by Columbus, Vespucci and others as nature, without civilization; a world whose history was going to begin only then and there, with the arrival of Europeans. Recognizing or inspecting new territories, renaming, drawing maps, charting climates, topographies, flora and fauna, one conquers and dominates Indian persons and nations. According to Mary Louise Pratt, from Humboldt's *Views of Nature,* European reading publics selected the basic repertoire of images that came to signify "South America", that being encapsulated in the iconic triad: mountain / plain / jungle - the standard metonymic representation of the New Continent to depict snow capped mountains, interior plains and tropical forests. "Where is everybody?" was not the question to ask. As David Spurr puts it, in the chapter "Negation" of *The Rhetoric of Empire*, the rhetorical strategy of negation was the tool by which "Western writing conceives of the Other as absence, emptiness, nothingness or death" (92).

Though Lawrence inherited a tradition of the 'savage' as the 'other' of the European, he has his own understanding of otherness which I will approach via Neil Roberts. In his section "Lawrence and Otherness," Roberts points out that for Lawrence, the concept of 'other' includes desire, mystery and, most important of all, the denial of knowledge. Using Lawrence's essay on Fenimore Cooper, in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Roberts claims about Lawrence's construction of otherness: "Otherness is 'recognised', 'acknowledged', but cannot be *known*: 'The present reality is a reality of *untranslatable* otherness' (*SCAL* 168, my emphasis)." (*DHL*: *Travel and Cultural Difference*, 18).

To get to modern anthropology, which is the ultimate purpose of this sub-section, and the interest of the twentieth century in the so-called "primitive", we have to start by addressing Claude Lévi-Strauss, who initially wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on the Brazilian tribe of the Nambikwara, finished in 1948. He later published books on the structural study of myths of the so-called "primitive" peoples in South America (besides the Nambikwara, other tribes included the Caduveo, the Tupi-Kawahib, and the Bororo). His books include *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, 1949, *Tristes Tropiques*, 1955, *The Savage Mind*, 1962, *The Raw and the Cooked*, 1964, and the classic *Structural Anthropology*, 1958, translated to English in 1967. In his determination to elaborate a critique of ethnocentrism, Lévi-Strauss ends up essentializing the Nambikwara people (object of his dissertation and also of the chapter "A Writing Lesson", in *Tristes Tropiques*), as a model of natural goodness.[9] Lévi-Strauss often presents himself as

[9] That is explained, in a sense, by the author himself, as a "product of remorse". In another chapter of *Tristes Tropiques*, "A Little Glass of Rum", Lévi-Strauss writes: "If the West has produced anthropologists, it is because it was so tormented by remorse" (449).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's modern disciple, reading the eighteenth-century French philosopher as the prophet and the founder of modern anthropology. Embedded in the concepts, schemata, and values which he inherits from Rosseau, is the belief that the referred "*natural* goodness" and innocence of the so-called "primitive" people were destroyed by the intrusion of violence and writing. Lévi-Strauss saw nothing but cunning, deception, and disorder in "culture", thus consolidating the opposition, also employed by Rousseau, between Nature (all goodness) and Culture (all debasement). In his *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* Rousseau conditions the states of society to stages of writing:

> These three ways of writing correspond almost exactly to three different stages according to which one can consider men gathered into a nation. The depicting of objects is appropriate to a savage people; signs of words and of propositions, to a barbaric people; and the alphabet to civilized peoples. (17)

Lévi-Strauss agrees with Rousseau's notion that the use of writing is a determining factor of the states of society, accepts the differentiation between peoples with and without writing[10], and relates writing to violence. In the chapter "A Writing Lesson", in *Tristes Tropiques,* the anthropologist describes what he calls an "extraordinary incident" during his stay with the Nambikwara. A people without writing, the Nambikwara were marked by great sweetness of nature, innocence and goodness as

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[10]To accept this differentiation (which is easy to accept at Rousseau's time, but more problematic at Lévi-Strauss's time) is to ignore other systems of writing not encompassed in the Western concept of writing, such as scripts that preceded the alphabet and so many other 'documents' in codes we are unable to decipher.

reported by the author, as well as "the most moving and authentic manifestations of human tenderness." He distributed pencils and paper among them and they did not know what to do with them. The fact that he was distributing tools that only made sense in the context of the Western concept of writing did not trouble the anthropologist. But that is not the worst of the problems. What he called the "extraordinary incident" is that a few days later, their leader, having apparently understood what writing was for, its role as sign, and the social superiority that it conferred, drew from a basket a piece of paper on which he had "written" and *pretended* (word used by Lévi-Strauss) to read from it, during two solid hours, to his companions, a list of presents that would go to so and so. In the anthropologist's view, the chief only wanted to amaze his companions and persuade them that his intermediacy was responsible for the exchanges. Lévi-Strauss's conclusion is that this inherently good man has immediately been corrupted by, after his very first contact with it, *writing*.

Jacques Derrida analyzes, in the chapter "The Violence of the Letter," in *Of Grammatology*, the possible truth contained in Lévi-Strauss's declarations and conclusions, and writes about the violence contained in writing: "I do not profess that writing may not and does not in fact play this role, but from that to attribute to writing the specificity of this role and to conclude that speech is exempt from it, is an abyss that one must not leap over so lightly" (133). Derrida digs among other passages of the *dissertation,* and finds examples which Lévi-Strauss apparently chooses to ignore. These examples show that the Nambikwara, before writing, were not so innocent, and there are reports on the use of poisons and assassinations in the tribe.

The author of *Of Grammatology,* here and elsewhere, as in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences," an early essay that Derrida presented at a conference on structuralism at Johns Hopkins University in 1966, develops a deconstructive critique of Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology and shows to what extent, in the texts of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss, the declared opposition between Nature and Culture is a constructed cultural artifact. Questioning the frontier between Nature and Culture, Derrida demonstrates that they are not two opposite clear-cut monoliths. The opposition between nature and culture has been passed on to these days as a whole historical chain which opposes "nature" to law, to education, to art, to the mind, at least since Plato. Derrida points out that Lévi-Strauss feels at one and the same time the need to employ this opposition, and the impossibility of making it acceptable. The case in point is what Lévi-Strauss calls a "scandal," precisely because it defies the opposition, the issue of incest-prohibition. Starting from the premise that everything universal in man relates to the natural order, and that everything subject to a norm is cultural, the anthropologist is then:

> confronted with a fact, or rather, a group of facts, which, in the light of previous definitions, are not far removed from a scandal: … [for] the prohibition of incest … presents, without the slightest ambiguity, and inseparably combines, the two characteristics in which we recognize the conflicting features of two mutually exclusive orders. (9) [11]

Lévi-Strauss's scandal consists in the fact that the incest-prohibition is universal, which would make him classify it as natural, but, at the same time, it is also a prohibition,

[11] Quoted in *Of Grammatology*, 104

belonging to a system of norms, in which sense he has to call it cultural. The anthropologist's solution is to justify the use of the opposition between nature and culture as a methodological tool. His solution is to preserve as an instrument that whose truth-value he criticizes. He goes back to contesting the value of the nature/culture opposition in *The Savage Mind,* in 1962, when he writes: "The opposition between nature and culture which I have previously insisted on seems today to offer a value which is above all methodological".[12] The unresolvable contradiction between using a tool as if its methodological value were not affected by its ontological non-value remains. The predicament the anthropologist is faced with can be described as follows: in spite of his desire to denounce ethnocentrism, he has to employ the resources of the heritage he is questioning and every particular borrowing drags along with it the whole of metaphysics, the metaphysical tradition of the opposition nature/culture included. Elaborating on the continuing power of this problematic metaphysical tradition, which includes the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the Freudian critique of self-presence, and the Heideggerean destruction of metaphysics, Derrida writes, in "Structure, Sign, and Play":

> …all these destructive discourses and all their analogues are trapped in a sort of circle. This circle is unique. It describes the form of the relationship between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics. There is no sense in doing without the concepts of the metaphysics in order to attack metaphysics. We have no language - no syntax and no lexicon - which is alien to this history; we cannot utter a single destructive proposition which has not already

[12] Quoted in "Structure, Sign, and Play," 236

> slipped into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest. (232)

The broader framework of the problem, therefore, encompasses the fact that ethnology, like any science, comes about within the element of discourse, and it is “primarily a European science, employing traditional concepts, however much it may struggle against them” (Structure, 234), so that the ethnologist ends up accepting into his/her discourse, whether s/he likes it or not (since s/he has no choice), the premises of ethnocentrism at the very moment s/he is attempting to denounce them. The ethnologist ends up being complicitous with the very epistemology s/he attempts to challenge.

A major implication of this recognition will connect this sub-section, which I called "the anthropological moment," with the situation of European novelists, Lawrence included, writing about the American continent, in the first half of the twentieth century. Given the power of the prison-house of metaphysical, eurocentric discursivity, how can the modernists claim to have established the best possible relations with the primitive? That does not mean, of course, to say that these relations are the same in all modernists, and that the degrees in which they tried did not vary.

Lawrence's endeavor

The whole structure of *The Plumed Serpent*, as I intend to show in subsequent chapters, evinces Lawrence’s effort to move in the direction of the "other." Arnold Odio, in "D.H.Lawrence Among the Mexicans," describes what he calls "Lawrence's Mexican adventure" in terms of "acculturation" (165), and goes as far as to say that "Like Kate, … Lawrence also went through a process of 'going native'" (170). Later on he claims that

"he was able to cross the monumental barrier of language, thus, in fact, becoming 'de-culturized' of some Western views and values" (171). Whereas I would not go as far as Odio (his own choice of the expression "Mexican adventure" brings inherently in itself a sense somewhat incompatible with the concept of "acculturation"), I will agree that the effort was there and the purpose of my work is to invest in the dialogue between the two propositions, namely, that there was a desire to reach the other and the impossibility of accomplishing such a task.

In a comment about Conrad's *Nostromo*, Said argues that though "it is true that Conrad ironically sees the imperialism of the San Tome silver mine's British and American owners as doomed by its own pretentious and impossible ambitions, it is also true that he writes as a man whose Western view of the non-Western world is so ingrained as to blind him to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations" (*Culture*, xviii). Lawrence scholars know that Lawrence's effort was serious in the attempt to learn about, study and rescue other histories, other cultures, other aspirations[13]; and one could argue that while Conrad was not exactly what could be called "open-minded" when it came to conceding that Africa (in *Heart of Darkness,*1902) or South America (in *Nostromo,*1904) could ever have had an independent history of their own, Lawrence went a step beyond, in 1923, when he studied, learned about and tried to promote forgotten histories. The Mexico he presents, however, derives more from his imagination, and

[13]As Rossman informs, in "Lawrence and Mexico", Lawrence read voraciously about Mexico during his first weeks in the country in 1923. In March, he read William Prescott's *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*. In April, he devoured *Life in Mexico* by Calderón de la Barca, *Viva Mexico!* by Charles Flandrau, *The Mexican People: Their Struggle for Independence* by Gutierrez de Lara and Pinchon, and Thomas Terry's *Terry's Guide to Mexico*, which Lawrence had begun in New Mexico and, according to Rossman, later found "maddeningly unreliable". Some time during this period he also read Bernal Diaz Castillo's classic *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* as well as *Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Religions* by Zelia Nuttall (an Americanist who delivered a paper to the twenty-second International Congress of Americanists in Rome, 1926, and carried studies on Aztec calendars and the Pyramids).

readings of Aztec mythology, than from any historically accurate perception of the country in the 1920s. His attempt to do justice to otherness is problematic in several aspects. To mention the first, being more open-minded than Conrad, and being open to admit (and even willing to promote) forgotten histories are not enough conditions per se to make him able to accomplish his project of understanding otherness. Other factors are involved, as elaborated in the sub-section above. The English writer's predicament is similar to the anthropologist's. Imprisoned in the straight-jacket of his language/culture, he cannot escape European binarism, eurocentrism, as well as the Western concepts and values handed down to him through history. Hence, even if one accepts Lawrence's willingness to denounce the European epistemology, one must also acknowledge that he (even more so than the ethnologist, since modern anthropology comes into the scenery a few decades after him) will have no option but to borrow from the European heritage the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself, thus unwittingly reinscribing eurocentrism. Just to make this abstract notion more concrete we could cite, as a first example, the fact that, despite *The Plumed Serpent*'s intended defense of an anti-colonial attitude (when it comes to the attempt of the revival of the Aztec culture, religion, and belief system, as a reaction to the European indoctrination), when Lawrence describes people like Juana (the servant), based on Mexicans that he had met in real life, his ingrained Western view surfaces, and he ends up, unwittingly, echoing the colonial doctrine on white supremacy and colonial accounts of lazy natives. Paradoxically, the pseudo anti-colonial stance becomes a reinscription of the colonialist mindset.

Lawrence may have read extensively on what was available, as mentioned above, but in spite of the evident effort to draw on several possible sources, the fact remains that

all these sources were (as every discourse is) biased and ideologically contaminated. The enormous problem of the "impossibility of delimiting contexts," which I will elaborate next, is revealed, in Lawrence's attempt, in the following elements which are worth considering: a) that among the authors he read (listed in the last footnote), one finds more English and French names than Mexican ones, b) naturally nothing registered, for instance, in Nahuatl, the native language of the Aztecs (which, evidently, even if recorded, Lawrence would not be able to read), c) one of the sources, Thomas Terry, must have gone to such caricatural extreme that even Lawrence, at his time and with his heritage, was critical of his views and found it "maddeningly unreliable". To be fair to Lawrence, however, one must stress that this critical perspective is more easily perceived today, in an age of post colonies and postcolonialism. Today, when the so called Third World, and especially Latin America, is clearly on the move to produce its own literary and political voice, we are in a better position to begin to appraise discourses that are offensive and caricatural in their many attempts to represent the histories of otherness from a eurocentric point-of-view.

The issue of representation deserves a sub-section of its own. Peter Hulme has reminded us of the problem of "epistemic violence," or authoritarian knowing, i.e., the difficulty in bridging the gap between European historical accounts and native sources, and of the inadequate use of historical accounts which are, in fact, tools of the colonial power. In *Colonial Encounters*, Hulme elaborates on this difficulty by referring to the work of historians who try to present a new version of the past, drawing on new sources (‘new’ in the sense that they had previously been repressed or marginalized by dominant historical accounts). He offers at least two reasons for this great difficulty: a) our

inability to read such 'documents' as do survive from the native Caribbean, and b) the devastating speed and scale of the destruction of its societies in the period following 1492. The only evidence that remains, he claims, are "the very European texts that constitute the discourse of colonialism" (8). He reminds us that, in conventional anthropological terms, the cultures of the native Caribbean were pre-historic in the sense that they had no writing, but that such a notion needs careful handling. To divide cultures by the presence or absence of writing is highly problematic, since what should count as writing is not self-evident. The Caribbean 'documents' would include both the omnipresent petroglyphs that are mostly undeciphered, and the stone and wooden carvings whose symbolism remains opaque to us. The problem becomes even more complex if we consider Derrida's notion of what he calls the "impossibility of delimiting contexts" which determine meanings. He defines this impossibility with rigor, for instance, in "Living On," when debating with Austin and Searle about speech acts. For Austin and Searle, language is used in a speech act not for the formulation of false or true assumptions, but for its performative power. The theory of speech acts, as we know, aims not at what the language says, but at what the language does (for instance, in a wedding ceremony), provided that the elements of the total context are adequate. For Derrida, this is precisely the problem of the theory, since no context can be completely exhausted, covered, saturated. Hence, even when one accepts that no meaning can be determined out of its context, one has also to acknowledge that no context permits saturation. No context can be defined, once and for all, in its totality. It is always lacking, always marked by something that had been overlooked before, and that needs explanation and investigation, in a potentially infinite process of expansion. In the process of

creating/relating something, something else inevitably gets left out. That is the reason why historical events (as recorded by eurocentric history) are always necessarily contextualized only in part. They are always passible of being changed once new data surface and alter previous interpretations. What to say, then, of the ‘instability’ of the context Lawrence was trying to delimit, stemming from his readings about Mexico during his first weeks in the country in 1923? Obviously, Lawrence’s Mexico could not but be just another version of it, inevitably contaminated by eurocentric perceptions, and by reports from unreliable narrators.

The problematic of representation

In his essay "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," Said reminds us that "it is now almost impossible … to remember a time when people were *not* talking about a crisis in representation" (205). As we know, with post-structuralism, and with the erosion of the classical consensus, words are no longer a transparent medium to represent reality. We live in a time when signs can no longer be perceived as "direct representations of the world", linked to it by secret, solid ties of likeness or affinity. They begin instead to "signify from within a body of knowledge," as linguistics and literary theory achieved the recognition that meaning is not simply something expressed in language, but rather produced by it. This is the historical moment when the awareness was reached that what we used to take for granted as "common sense" and "natural" are rather historical constructions, an awareness that language does not represent reality, but rather produces it. Given this radical change in the meaning of representation, it becomes, therefore, so complex and problematic to try to represent

what someone or something is. Deleuze rightly defines the significance of Foucault's role in understanding the crisis in representation. As he says, addressing Foucault: "You were the first to teach us something absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others." Said is acutely aware of the problem. In the essay mentioned above, he states that "today's anthropologists can no longer go to the postcolonial field with quite the same ease as in former times" (209). Of course, his reference here is to the debate, within the discipline of anthropology, during the last decades, related to the role played by Western societies in the representation of "primitive" or less-developed cultures. This representation has often paved the way to Western colonialism, the exploitation of dependence, the oppression of peasants and the manipulation of native societies for imperial purposes.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Gayatri Spivak introduces her distinction between two senses of representation by advancing a critique of Deleuze's argument that "there is no more representation; there is nothing but action - action of theory and action of practice which relate to each other as relays and form networks" (70). In her estimation, his articulation is problematic precisely because the two senses of representation are being run together: representation as "speaking for", and representation as "re-presentation", as in art, as "standing in" for something else. This is a differentiation which Spivak develops in terms of what she calls "proxy" and "portrait", or *vertreten* and *darstellen*. The two meanings are often run together because the notion of mediation underscores them both. The act of "representation" in both its senses necessarily implies violence and exclusion, in the "proxy" meaning, because when one speaks for someone else, the represented is silenced; in the "portrait" meaning, because when one paints, the

object of representation is gone! As a consequence, to use Vicki Kirby's words, "the ethical and political motivation behind questions of representation in both its senses will similarly concern the possible conflict of interests between the mediator and the mediated" (112).

At this point it seems also appropriate to address the problematic of the observer: Who speaks?, What for?, and Whom to? The constitutive role of the observer, the ethnographic "I" or subject, frequently has a status which carries problematic ties with the imperial relationship itself. These are problems associated with the locus of enunciation. There is a growing recognition today that *where* one speaks from affects the meaning of what one says. A speaker's location (which is, of course, not strictly geographical, but social, cultural, intellectual) has a significant impact on what the speaker says and can serve to either authorize or disavow his/her speech. Since representations are mediations, and the product of interpretations, and since no discourse is value-free, no discourse exists without some kind of biased advocacy. Given that contexts and locations are necessarily allied with determining structures, when these are structures of oppression, a subject inserted in such context cannot maintain a neutral voice. Linda Alcoff calls the attention to the effects resulted from attempts to "speak for others." Following Foucault, she reminds us that "Who is speaking to whom turns out to be as important for meaning and truth as what is said" (12). Rituals of speaking are made up of the meaning of the words spoken as well as the meaning of the event, and as Foucault recommends, an *event* includes speaker, words, hearers, location, language and so on. What Alcoff adds to this roll is precisely the "effects resulting from them." In this context, the crucial question to be asked is: "Whose interests is this discursive arrangement likely to serve?". The

example she gives relates to possible problems of communication between parties with different cultural backgrounds:

> For example, in a situation where a well meaning First World person is speaking for a person or group in the Third World, the very discursive arrangement may reinscribe the "hierarchy of civilizations" view where the United States lands squarely at the top. This effect occurs because the speaker is positioned as authoritative and empowered, as the knowledgeable subject, while the group in the Third World is reduced, merely because of the structure of the speaking practice, to an object and victim that must be championed from afar, thus disempowered. Though the speaker may be trying to materially improve the situation of some lesser-privileged group, the effects of her discourse is to reinforce racist, imperialist conceptions and perhaps also to further silence the lesser-privileged group's own ability to speak and be heard. (26)

We have evidence (as I intend to show in the next chapters) that Lawrence sincerely desires, in *The Plumed Serpent*, to side with the American Indian population oppressed by the Spanish conquest. In fact, he tries to assume their point-of-view, and presents protagonists with dissonant voices that profoundly challenge Christianity and other hegemonic discourses. But as he can hardly avoid the pitfalls of representation, his attempt to reach the other is partially frustrated. In representing the Mexican natives, he may also be silencing them.

In the chapters that follow I will firstly dive into Lawrence's ambivalent contribution, which I call "Utopian Politics of Resistance," in chapter II, which deals with Lawrence's "anti-imperialist stand" versus the colonial structures he necessarily inhabits; then, in chapter III I will deal with the novel's recurrent "Pattern of Role Reversals" and its implications; chapter IV will focus on Kate's and Juana's relationship, for a more systematic analysis of race issues in the novel; and, finally, chapter V will bring a closer analysis of the social context of Mexico when Lawrence was residing there, and of how this problematic context got reflected on the novel.

II - UTOPIAN POLITICS OF RESISTANCE / ORIENTALISM

Even among the rebel modernists, D.H.Lawrence is a case of its own. He was seen as an 'outlaw', both by his country authorities and by fellow modernists: John Middleton Murry for one, acknowledged Lawrence's profound difference from mainstream culture of his time, when he said: "About two years ago I wrote in an essay in an English review that 'Mr. Lawrence is the outlaw of English literature, and he is the most interesting figure in it'." (184), and T.S.Eliot's opinion about what he called Lawrence's strangeness and his attacks on the author (for instance, in *After Strange Gods,* and elsewhere, as reported by F.R.Leavis, in *D.H.Lawrence: Novelist*[14]) are well known of all Lawrence scholars. Considering he was such a contentious figure, a writer whose entry to the canon was late because he remained for a few decades one of the most controversial figures of English literature, what is of interest to me is to explore to what extent even a rebel writer such as D.H.Lawrence will not escape the "predicament of culture", but will rather be forced, by the straight-jacket of his culture, to engage in the

[14] Published in 1955, twenty-five years after Lawrence's death, *D.H.Lawrence: Novelist* was the book in which Leavis gave Lawrence a place of honor in The Great Tradition . The quarrel of a quarter of a century with T.S.Eliot is present in the book, from the moment the latter objects to E.M.Forster's praising of Lawrence in his letter to the *Nation and Athenaeum*, March 29, 1930, at the time of Lawrence's death; through all the years of the journal *Scrutiny*, started in 1932, during which Leavis (as its founding editor) had to face all the provocations of Eliot's attitude towards Lawrence; to the appendix of the aforementioned Leavis's book, titled "Mr. Eliot and Lawrence", which appeared as a review in *Scrutiny* (Vol. XVII, No. 1) of *D.H.Lawrence and Human Existence*, by Father William Tiverton (Foreword by T.S.Eliot), 1951.

primitivist discourse discussed in the previous chapter, when portraying Mexico and Mexicans.

Lawrence, of course, thought of himself as a rebel, and as a liberal with regard to race, always seduced by what he called the "dark races," and always interested in experiencing (as he thought it possible to) the "native point-of-view," in his trips to Italy, Australia and Mexico. Lawrence scholars, of course, thrive to quote passages from his essay “America, Listen to Your Own”, written in Florence, in September, 1919, in which he advises Americans to “ignore the monuments of [our] European past” and “catch the spirit of [their] own dark, aboriginal continent”, and proposes that Americans “must take up life where the Red Indian, the Aztec, the Maya, the Incas left it off”. He concludes that “They must catch the pulse of the life which Cortés and Columbus murdered”. How could one be more at odds with Western Eurocentric assumptions? Yet, as I suggested before, cultural constraints make this rebellion problematic.

In the opening essay of *D.H. Lawrence and Literary Genres*, Simonetta de Filippis stresses that "though he lived in a time in which the idea of Empire and colonial power was still an important issue in the affirmation of a supposed superiority of the European civilisation, Lawrence had a very positive attitude to different cultures and he admitted otherness in a surprisingly 'modern' way" (16). David Ellis notes, in the third volume of the Cambridge biography of D.H.Lawrence, that *The Plumed Serpent* is “firmly anti-colonial in its attitude to the effects on the Indian population of the Spanish Conquest” (219).

The question these views inevitably raise is how anti-colonial an attitude can D.H.Lawrence have, once he is speaking from inside the culture he is trying to question?

If culture is a structure that, to a large extent, molds our thoughts, speech, and behavior, and thus limits our perception of the world, how can we speak of other, perhaps incommensurable, cultures? However much we may desire to agree with some of the statements by Lawrence sympathizers above, they are, nevertheless, only part of the story. Focusing our lenses on some carefully chosen statements, without a rigorous analysis and comparison within the totality of what was written by the author, at least while in Mexico, will necessarily lead to a partial understanding only. One ought not to forget that in the process of creating something, something else inevitably gets left out. Quoting him out of the proper context can lead to the creation of incredibly different Lawrences, for he frequently subverts his own arguments. Like Whitman, he could certainly ask "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes)".

Lawrence was a deeply self-contradictory writer whom critics often fail to approach in a sufficiently dialectical manner, which has resulted, at different times, in labels that range from "the priest of love," to less commendable ones such as sexist, racist, or misogynist. On the other hand, as addressed in the previous chapter, in Arnold Odio's reading, in "D.H.Lawrence Among the Mexicans", Lawrence's experience in Mexico is described in terms of "acculturation" (165), and even as a process of "going native" (170). Now, one must be careful in reading these grave declarations. Being able to see Lawrence's desire to apprehend the culture of the other is one thing, but from that to describe his "adventure" in terms of "acculturation", there is an abyss that one should not jump over so easily. Such declarations appear to be biased in the perhaps all too easy and unproblematized application of concepts that may not be truthful in his case. After

all, Lawrence's total stay in Mexico between 1923 and 1925 amounts to less than two years, here and there interrupted by comings and goings. Examples of acculturation in history would involve cases such as that of Diego Durán who, according to Tzvetan Todorov, in *The Conquest of America*, was brought to Mexico at the age 5 or 6 and was raised in the New World. Unlike other Europeans in the sixteenth century, Durán could learn the Indian culture from within. Another example is that of Bernardino de Sahagún, who arrived in Mexico at the age 30, but stayed there until his death, at 90. He learned the other’s language and culture in depth, devoted his life to this task, and even in his case, the term "acculturation" is questionable, for he never renounced his way of life or his identity.

I want to suggest, therefore, that from one end of the spectrum (Lawrence, in the anti-colonial attitude of resistance) to the other (Lawrence as an imperialist, with the manifest orientalist attitude) there is room to invest in the dialogue between the two propositions, namely, that there was a desire to reach the "other" (the whole structure of *The Plumed Serpent* proposes to go in the direction of the "other"), and the cultural impossibility of accomplishing such a task, for even when Lawrence "understands" the Indians, he does so from a limited point-of-view which may, ultimately, erase them in the very act of representation from the perspective of a different culture.

When one reads *The Plumed Serpent* trying to "draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented" in it, as Said's lesson teaches, one is faced with Lawrence's ambivalence. Such ambivalence had already been pointed out by Charles Rossman, in his essay "D.H.Lawrence and Mexico," in which he provides an impeccable chronology of Lawrence's three trips to Mexico

between 1923 and 1925, and speaks of his reactions to the country and his vacillating moods during this period:

> His reactions were **intense**, **extreme**, and above all, **sharply ambivalent**, embracing both **exquisite sympathy** and **strident hostility**. Like Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene, and Malcolm Lowry, who made their own pilgrimages from England to Mexico over the ensuing fifteen years, Lawrence found the country, by turns, **irresistibly appealing**, **deeply unsettling**, and ultimately **nightmarish**.
>
> (180; emphasis added)

As Rossman's clear postulation suggests, Lawrence is far from being a monoglossic, fixed entity whom one could easily label either as an "anti-imperialist subject" or as an "imperialist, manifest-orientalist-type travel writer." He paradoxically contains both. Keith Cushman notes, in his essay in *The Reception of D.H. Lawrence Around the World,* that after all the different critical approaches applied to Lawrence's oeuvre in past decades, from the feminist attacks by Kate Millet in the 70s, through some scattered Lacanian interpretations of some of Lawrence's short stories and novellas[15] in the 80s and 90s, to essays on Lawrence from a Bakhtinian perspective[16], one should expect now that "the most fruitful Lawrence new criticism of the early twenty-first century will approach him from a 'cultural studies' perspective", and adds that "to this point the post-colonialists haven't really begun to catch up with Lawrence. These

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[15] Cushman includes among those Jane Nelson's reading of *The Fox*, and Lacanian analyses of "The Rocking-Horse Winner" and *The Escaped Cock.*

[16] The Bakhtinian approach is evinced in the essays written by Avrom Fleishman ("He do the polis in different voices") and Joan Douglas Peters , as well as Wayne C. Booth in "Confessions of a Lukewarm Lawrentian" .

theorists will find much to talk about in a writer who was *at once* such an anti-imperialist *and* an imperialist…" (161; emphasis added).

The desire of Lawrence (the author) to reach the other

One cannot deny that, at least on an ideal level, Lawrence had the question of imperialism very clearly in mind, and was deeply opposed to any expression of it, always wishing to side with its victims. Lawrence wrote about one of the first known examples of cultural imperialism in Western history: the extinction of the Etruscan culture and language caused by the Roman Empire. Lawrence's critical awareness is very explicit in the opening of "Etruscan Places":

> The Etruscans, as everyone knows, were the people who occupied the middle of Italy in early Roman days and whom the Romans, in their usual neighbourly fashion, wiped out entirely in order to make room for Rome with a very big R. They couldn't have wiped them all out, there were too many of them. But they did wipe out the Etruscan existence as a nation and a people. The Etruscans were vicious. We know it because their enemies and exterminators said so. … However, those pure, clean-living, sweet-souled Romans, who smashed nation after nation and crushed the free soul in people after people, they said the Etruscans were vicious. So *basta*! (p. 1,2)

The same awareness of how "culture" itself might be the agency of power gets reflected in the poem "Cypresses"[17], in which he invokes the spirits of the lost. As Virginia Hyde points out, in her essay "Mexican Cypresses: Multiculturalism in Lawrence's 'Novel of America'," Lawrence could see the Mexican people, as he did the Etruscans, as a "colonized" population, and in the case of Mexico, not only in the literal sense of the Spanish colonization, but also suffering from the neocolonialism perpetrated by the U.S.; in her words "A deep recognition of the 'lost' is part of Lawrence's more general theme of the subjection of native America by all encroaching forces" (195). The extract on the Etruscans and the poem "Cypresses" clearly reveal that for Lawrence the past is a series of lost languages and differences homogenized by a powerful, monolithic, imperial race (Roman or American). The awareness of silences and differences being suppressed appears again in *Aaron's Rod,* this time around, on English industrialization taking up Italy:

> But alas, the **one world** triumphing more and more over the **many worlds**, the **big oneness** swallowing up the many **small diversities** in its insatiable gnawing

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[17] What would I not give
To bring back the rare and orchid-like
Evil-yclept Etruscan?
For as to the evil
We have only the Roman word for it,
Which I, being a little weary of Roman virtue,
Don't hang much weight on.
For oh, I know, in the dust where we have buried
The silenced races and all the abominations,
We have buried so much of the delicate magic of life. (52-61)
They say the fit survive,
But I invoke the spirits of the lost,
Those that have not survived, the darkly lost,
To bring their meaning back into life again.
Evil, what is evil?
There is only one evil, to deny life,
As Rome denied Etruria
And mechanical America Montezuma still. (66-76)

> appetite, leaving a **dreary sameness** throughout the world, that means at last **complete sterility**. Aaron, however, was too new to the strangeness, he had no eye for the horrible sameness that was spreading like a disease over Italy from England and the north. (148; emphasis added)

The passage reveals that back in 1922 Lawrence was, remarkably, already foreseeing the effects of globalization, and anticipating vocabulary that would be used today by the anti globalization activists. Again, in a passage of *Sea and Sardinia*, although he is initially offended by the aggressive way he has been treated by some Italians, he eventually reconsiders:

> But, once more, in parenthesis, let me remind myself that it is our own English fault. We have slobbered about the nobility of toil, till at last the nobles naturally insist on eating the cake. And more than that, we have set forth, politically, on such a high and Galahad quest of holy liberty, and **been caught so shamelessly filling our pockets**, that no wonder the naïve and idealistic south turns us down with a bang. (40; emphasis added)

Having cited examples, in the last few pages, of Lawrence's critical awareness and "anti-imperialist stand", I will now explore further the colonial structures D.H.Lawrence necessarily inhabits. Evidently, regardless of his awareness, he is, like any other subject, a man arrested in the prison-house of his language/culture, pretty much in the same fashion as the image he himself presents, in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, of a

torn, divided monster, trying “to slough the old European consciousness completely” (57), and trying to grow a new skin underneath. Like a snake, he says, "which writhes and writhes" in the process of sloughing off the old skin. Of course, the sloughing off of a culture is a lot more complex than the natural process snakes go through, and yet, even with them, Lawrence significantly adds: “Sometimes snakes can’t slough. They can’t burst their old skin. Then they go sick and die inside the old skin, and nobody ever sees the new pattern” (58). Following this line of thought, *The Plumed Serpent* could well be read as another failed attempt by Lawrence (after the first version, *Quetzalcoatl*, in which different endings reveal even more intensely his heritage[18]) to exorcize himself as a European.

The hurdles for Lawrence (the author) to reach the other

Let us now cast a closer look at the predicament of this "divided monster" while in Mexico. In his disgust with European civilization and what it entails, Lawrence tries to side with the American Indian population oppressed by the Spanish conquest, and creates, in *The Plumed Serpent,* heroes who are native Mexicans struggling against the heritage of the Spanish colonization: Cipriano and Don Ramón. Evidently, his characters come from his own cultural heritage, the imagination of a European writer, reading myths about the other, with the tendency to perceive primitive peoples through the lenses of

[18] I refer to the fact that in the first version, *Quetzalcoatl*, after the whole novel deciding whether "To Stay or Not to Stay", Kate finally leaves for Europe. The main difference, in *The Plumed Serpent,* which certainly cost Lawrence a lot to digest and finally accept it, being that she stays and marries Cipriano, submitting to him completely, converting to the Aztec religion, and finally materializing her larger conversion, going native and accepting the natives' beliefs and system.

Western, "rational," "enlightened" values. Cipriano is described as a "pure-blooded Indian general in the Mexican army." He belongs to the upper class and the implication seems to be that in order to be a leader he could not be simply Indian, he had to have acquired some status, like that of a general in the army. Moreover, as will be discussed later, he had received Western education, for he speaks English impressively well, after being trained in Oxford. Despite his Western education, Cipriano has chosen to return to his roots and to revive the ancient, primitive Mexican religions. He plays the "living Huitzilopochtli" in the revival, the god of air and wind, life and death. His close friend and (not less problematic) leader, the charismatic Ramón, plays the role of Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent of the title, the chief god in the Aztec pantheon. Together, the two men plan to use the religious revival to gain popular support from the peasants and then to isolate all of Mexico from its colonialist past, fighting the Catholic church and the local government. This pseudo anti-colonial attitude is naïve: if, on the one hand, the novel aims at posing a commitment to indigenous America, on the other hand, this privileging of indigenous culture is loaded with the tropes that were fabricated by the eurocentric primitivist discourse, such as accounts of lazy natives, matched with bestial and brutish images of what Mexico and its people are. In "El Mexico de los novelistas ingleses," Jose Emilio Pacheco writes about the resentment Mexico has with the English writers, who, according to many, he says, are "calumniadores que han dado al mundo una imagen irrisoria y bestial de lo que es Mexico" (19) [calumniators who have given the world a derisory and bestial image of what Mexico is - (my translation)]. He, however, significantly adds:

> Recordemos, por otra parte, que nadie corre el riesgo de escribir un libro acerca de algo que no fue objeto de su amor o su dolor. Y que en toda oposición - bajo el desprecio, ante el orgullo - late un principio de solidaridad. (19)
>
> [Let us be reminded, on the other hand, that nobody runs the risk of writing a book about something that has not been the object of either his/her love or his/her pain. And that in all opposition - less for contempt, before pride - there is a principle of solidarity.] (my translation)

Bestial and brutish images are, in fact, present in Lawrence's "novel of America," for instance, when the leaders are performing an execution at Sayula church, in the "Aztec human sacrifice" style. The event takes place in chapter XXIII, "Huitzilopochtli's Night," following a well-crafted construction that had started in chapter XVIII, "Auto da Fé." This chapter has a metonymic force, since in doing away with the Christian images of that church, the protagonists are actually doing away with Christianity. I will go back to the chapter "Auto da Fé " in the next chapter of my work, "Pattern of Role Reversals". For now, what is of interest is that between the novel's chapters XVIII and XXIII Cipriano and Don Ramón actually embody the gods and become the Living Huitzilopochtli and the Living Quetzalcoatl. The resources for such accomplishment, which will be studied in a separate chapter, are many, including an exercise in one of the expressions of heteroglossia, for here Lawrence uses mixed genre, and introduces verse into *The Plumed Serpent*: in the form of the hymns which will prepare the narrative's atmosphere for the revival of the ancient religion. In the capacity of ancient gods, Ramón and Cipriano perform acts which are coherent with the Aztec

myths. By making Cipriano the general and the public executioner of assassins, Lawrence tries to reinscribe an indigenous leader as a warrior and guardian of his people's cause. It is worth mentioning here that, addressing the establishment of the Quetzalcoatl religion in the novel, Neil Roberts, in *D.H.Lawrence: Travel and Cultural Difference*, claims that

> [F]or the purposes of the novel, the most important myth concerning Quetzalcoatl is that of his departure. Quetzalcoatl is credited with having been an opponent to human sacrifice, which brought him into conflict with Tezcatlipoca, the Toltec god of war, who has many of the characteristics of the Aztec Huitzilopochtli. (140)

In the note for this paragraph (note 47), he adds that "the story of Quetzalcoatl's arrival among the Toltecs, transformation of their culture, defeat by Tezcatlipoca and departure to the east is told in the novel *Quetzalcoatl* by the former Mexican President José Lopez Portillo (1965)," and adds that "Lopez Portillo's novel emphasizes the Christ-like qualities of Quetzalcoatl, who is a human being in his story" (183). As interesting as all this information may be, even if we disregard our suspicion of what could be President Portillo's agenda and interests while writing his novel (though it is understood that he must have used elements from different existing versions of the myths) this certainly came after Lawrence. In Lawrence's sources, such as W.H. Prescott and Bernal Díaz Castillo, the horrors of the Aztec human sacrifice were not only present but emphasized to a maximum degree, almost as an obsession. The interest, later, by the modernists, on the so called "primitive" had this element as a major point of attention. For Bataille, for instance, the Aztecs were a central locus of "the primitive," chiefly because of their

rituals of human sacrifice. In "Extinct America" he quotes the monk Torquemada, for a detailed description of the sacrifice:

> … the grandeur, of the Aztec ghosts, the bloodiest ever to people the clouds of our earth. And they were, as we know, literally bloody. Not a single one among them but was not periodically spattered with blood for his own festival. The figures cited vary, but it is agreed that the number of victims annually numbered several thousands at the very least in Mexico City alone. The priest had a man held belly up, his back arched over a sort of large boundary marker, and with one fell blow of his knife of shining stone, cut open the trunk. The skeleton thus severed, both hands reached into the blood-filled cavity to grasp the heart, wrenching it out with a skill and dispatch such that the bleeding man continued for a few seconds to quiver … (7)

This vision which Bataille is describing (only four years after Lawrence wrote *The Plumed Serpent*) is the same vision of the Aztec people Lawrence had from his sources. Not only in *The Plumed Serpent*, but also in *The Woman Who Rode Away*, Lawrence dwells on the Aztec obsidian knives cutting chests to retrieve pulsating hearts. Hence, whereas I do agree with Roberts, that the myth concerning Quetzalcoatl's departure is important in Lawrence's novel, I would not go as far as to say that for the purposes of the novel, it is "the most important myth," disregarding the association of the Aztecs with human sacrifice, and even emphasizing a possible disagreement of Quetzalcoatl with the practice: in Roberts's words in the quotation above, "Quetzalcoatl is credited with having been an opponent to human sacrifice" (140).

The interference, however, of the author's European mind (and obvious disapproval of) what he means to be an Aztec practice is way too noticeable. The author's unstable role as a supporter of the subaltern subjects' belief system manifests itself in the way he constructs this event in the novel: the execution is partially attenuated by the fact that the victims of the blood sacrifice were criminals who had attacked Ramón, with the purpose of murdering him, and had ended up leaving seven men dead in his farm, in the process (in chapter XIX - "The Attack on Jamiltepec").

This is a solution Lawrence's European mind finds (in his ever present attraction/repulsion syndrome) in the effort to combine the execution with some kind of deserved punishment, to make it look, in his perspective, somewhat less barbaric and more digestible. His choice carries in it some reverberation of what Anthony Pagden calls, in *European Encounters with the New World,* "the principle of attachment". According to Pagden, this device consists in "translating varieties of experience from an alien world into the practices of one's own" (21). In *The Plumed Serpent,* Lawrence translates a practice that appears to him incommensurable (for, in the case of the Aztec myth of human sacrifice, the victim offered to the gods is pure and innocent) seem commensurable (as a deserved punishment for a violent crime). What follows from an act of attachment is an act of recognition and the problem is that this is done at the expense of detaching the original practice from its context. By making the victims of the sacrifice in Sayula church criminals, Lawrence makes the ritual there acceptable on *his* terms.

Lawrence's utopian politics of resistance consistently falls prey to, and is a result of, this difficult relation of his simultaneous attraction for and repulsion to Mexico.

Lawrence was the first of the many English writers who came to the New World in the first half of the twentieth century to go through the feeling of simultaneous fascination and horror towards Mexico. Both fascination and horror were inherited. The sense of "wonder" about the New World had dominated the European collective imagination since the Age of Discovery. As Stephen Greenblatt demonstrates, in *Marvelous Possessions*, the fantasy tales by voyagers who thought that they knew where they were going and ended up in a place whose existence they had never imagined permeated the discourse of travel in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, from *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, in the fourteenth century, to the verses of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Visions such as "headless men with eyes on their shoulders" present in Mandelville's tales were consolidated with similar creatures, in Milton's verses:

> Think onely what concernes thee and thy being,
> Dream not of other worlds, what Creatures there
> Live in what state condition or degree…
>
> Book viii. 174-6

In spite of the reported dangerous creatures, the unknown lands had always had the seduction of the "paradise lost" and the "promised land." Conquistadors in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries progressively consolidated the vision of their "wonder" towards the American El Dorado. The same cultural matrix shaped the language and perceptions of Christopher Columbus in his "*Diario.*" Greenblatt shows how the experience of the marvelous, central to both art and philosophy, was manipulated by Columbus and others to the service of colonial appropriation. Greenblatt suggests that not finding gold right away, and realizing that his marvels might not be all that marvelous

after all, Columbus, in a sense, decided that they needed to be rhetorically constructed. Here are some examples of his linguistic production of the "wonderful":

'la mayor maravilla del mundo' [the greatest wonder in the world], *Diario*, 89.

'que es maravilla' [that it is a marvel], *Diario*, 89.

'que es admiración verlas' [which are a wonder to behold], *Diario*, 89.

'pinares á maravilla' [marvelous pine groves], *Diario*, 89.

'con un amor maravilloso' [with extraordinary affection], *Diario*, 133.

'con un coracon tan largo ' [all so bigheartedly], *Diario*, 133.

'cosas maravillosas' [marvelous things], *Diario*, 113.

'parece aun mayor maravilla' [it seems to one the greatest wonder], *Diario*, 99.

Greenblatt sees the "production of wonder" in Columbus's documents as a "calculated rhetorical strategy": the marvelous would stand for the missing caravels laden with gold. The term "marvelous," as mentioned above, appears all too often, which would assure King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella that, even if he was not sending the ships loaded with gold right away, as he had expected, the possessions he was taking in their name were, for sure, a treasure many fold more valuable.

In addition to this "sense of the marvelous," as a tool of possession, Greenblatt also goes through the so called "wonder in tolerance" in men like Montaigne and Jean de Léry[19], who had assumed, remarkably, back in the sixteenth century, a tolerant recognition of cultural difference. Montaigne, in his essay "Of the Cannibals" (1580), already cited in my first chapter, shows remarkable understanding of the "other." As to

[19] Jean de Léry traveled to Brazil in 1556-58 and twenty years later published *l'Histoire d'un Voyage fait en la terre du Brésil.* translated as*: History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil.*

Jean de Léry, he was a member of the first and only Protestant mission to Brazil which lasted two years, between 1556 and 1558. He was a Calvinist. As Anthony Pagden explains,

> Unlike his Catholic counterparts Léry had no need to persuade the Indians that they had misunderstood God's purpose for the world, nor to demonstrate to them that their cultural and religious practices were the corruption of the innate ideas provided by the law of nature, or that their mental and social worlds were the outcome of the Devil's busy handiwork. For Léry, the Tupinamba had been since the Flood, and would remain until the end of time, utterly 'other'. … Yet what is truly striking about Léry's account is the degree to which he is conscious of his own presence, of his own gaze, as a significant part of what it is he is trying to describe. Unlike Sahagún, the dispassionate doctor attempting to cure the disease that was Aztec culture, through an objective and detached description of its symptoms, Léry is concerned with what it is to describe those symptoms. His narrative is not the detached account of the curious practices of some savages in a remote corner of the world. It is a history - in the precise sixteenth-century use of that term - of what it means, even if only in the imagination, to attempt to make fully commensurable what is necessarily incommensurable. And it is, albeit unselfconsciously so, the record of the impossibility of any such project. (43)

Léry was aware, striking as this may be for a man of his time, of the impossibility of trying to make the "other" as much like a possible "us" as one could, and his account of the Tupinamba is one of the most sensitive and detailed we have. In spite of that he

admits that the use of representation to make cultures mutually intelligible, however imaginative, however "fantastic," in the original sense of the term, will never amount to much more than drawing pictures of arrows, hammocks and pineapples. Commensurability demands that the observer and the observed share some cultural ground.

Returning, now, to the English writers who came to the New World in the first half of the twentieth century: they were fascinated, on the one hand, having carried with them this vision created and consolidated along history, and imprinted in the European collective imagination, and wanting, in a genuine effort, to deal with the "primitive" (even if they were seduced, as Marianna Torgovnick claims, by their own projections); on the other hand, their minds could not get rid of the inherited "horror" which had also been constructed and consolidated by the so-called British Imperial Literature, as the colonial fiction of Kipling and Conrad shows. As much as the English modernist authors try, they cannot lose their Britishness. This feeling can be detected in a letter Lawrence writes to his friend Witter Bynner, on October, 5, 1923, while going down the west coast of Mexico, from the California border to Guadalajara, which I will reproduce in its entirety:

> Dear Bynner
>
> Here I am wandering slowly and hotly with Gotzsche down this west coast. Where F[rieda] is I don't know.
> This west is much wilder, emptier, more hopeless than Chapala. It makes one feel the door is shut on one. There is a blazing sun, a vast hot sky, big lonely inhuman green hills and mountains, a flat blazing littoral with a few palms, sometimes a dark blue sea which is not quite of this earth - then little towns that seem to be slipping down an abyss - and the door of life shut on it all, only the sun burning, the clouds of birds passing, the zopilotes like flies, the lost lonely palm-trees, the deep dust of the roads, the donkeys moving in a gold-dust-cloud. In the mountains, lost, motionless silver-mines. Alamos, a once lovely little town, lost,

and slipping down the gulf in the mountains, forty miles up the awfullest road I've ever been bruised along. But somehow or other, you get there. And more wonderful, you get *out* again. - There seems a sentence of extinction written over it all. - In the middle of the little covered market at Alamos, between the meat and the vegetables, a **dead dog** lay stretched as if asleep. The meat vender said to the vegetable man: You'd better throw it out. The veg-man looked at the dead dog and saw no reason for throwing it out. So no doubt it still lies there. - We went also to haciendas - a cattle hacienda: **wild, weird, brutal, with a devastating brutality**: Many of the haciendas are in the hands of Chinese, who run about like vermin down this coast.
So there we are. I think, when we get to Mazatlan, we shall take the boat down to Manzanillo, and so to Guadalajara. It is better there. At **least there is not a dead dog in mid-market.**
Write me a line care Dr. Purnell - I am a bad correspondent.
Write to F. care Seltzer. She may be in America again by now.
There is a circus, and lions roaring all night.
This town is a busy new adobe nowhere under a flat sun of brass. The old town was washed out in 1915.
I have letters of introduction to people this way, and so see what it's like.
Greet the Spoodle. Tell him to send me a line. Don’t take any notice of my intermittency.

D.H.Lawrence

(emphasis added)

It is interesting to analyze briefly the vocabulary contained in the letter to describe Lawrence's perception of the surroundings of the west coast of Mexico. Even the landscape is personified as bestial: "this west is much wilder", "lonely inhuman green hills and mountains", with occasional "little towns that seem to be slipping down an abyss". Brutality comes together with the ideas of hopelessness and death, encapsulated by the dead dog in the middle of the market, in between the vegetables and the meat for sale, while the vendors are oblivious to it (at least from his perspective). The letter does not tell us how long they spent in the market, but it does give us his assumption that still, by the time he is writing to his friend, nobody has removed the corpse: "no doubt it still lies there," which tells us a lot of how he sees the natives. To go back to the definitions

and contrasts explored in my chapter I, "Barbaric Mexico," on the loaded words "civilization," "savagery" and "barbarism," Lawrence's European thinking would, no doubt, see as a sign of "civilization" to immediately take action and remove and bury a corpse (human or animal) from the open air. The fact that nobody is doing it confirms his opinion of them as "savage" and "barbaric," for the primitive don't bury their dead.

An atmosphere of horror pervades the opening chapter of *The Plumed Serpent*: "Beginnings of a Bull-fight." Lawrence had, in fact, attended a bull-fight in Mexico City, on April 1st., 1923, and was not very pleased with it, to the point of leaving before the end of the spectacle. His friend Bynner, who had been with him, reports that his revulsion against Mexico City had increased a lot, after that event, and that could be what made him take a train to Lake Chapala. On May 2nd, he sent a telegram to his wife, Frieda: "CHAPALA PARADISE. TAKE EVENING TRAIN." So, in spite of immediately falling in love with Lake Chapala (which he would use, and name it Sayula, in the novel), Lawrence did use the aversion and repulsion felt on that April, 1st, to open his novel, and used the bull-fight to establish the ugliness and horror which became a symbol for the degenerated Mexican situation in the novel. The first chapter of *The Plumed Serpent* opens on the Sunday after Easter (in the Christianized Mexico), and that means the last bull-fight of the season in Mexico City. Irish Kate Leslie, her American cousin Owen, and his traveling companion, Villiers, think it is a spectacle they should not miss, since they have never seen one. In spite of the initial excitement, encouraged mainly by Owen, for whom "never having seen one meant having to go" (a strange

"American logic"[20] in Kate's opinion), she has a "dark feeling" and hesitates about going. This "dark feeling" expands in page after page of this chapter, which is loaded with negative descriptions of the city and its inhabitants. To start with, "there was a fluster at the ticket place, and an **unpleasant individual** came forward to talk American for them" (1; emphasis added). After some uncertainty (and misunderstanding, for their Spanish is limited) at the decision between buying tickets for the "Shade" area or for the "Sun" area, they opt for the cheaper one, to the amazement of the ticket man and the onlookers (who, unlike these tourists, knew exactly what to sit "among the crowd" meant). That choice costs them tremendous aggravation later. To make their way to the arena they pass up the "**frightful** little Ford omnibuses called *camions*" (1; emphasis added). They choose, instead, to go by taxi, which is not pleasantly described either: "The **busted** car careered away down the wide **dismal** street of asphalt and stone and Sunday **dreariness**. Stone buildings in Mexico have a peculiar **hard, dry dreariness** (2; emphasis added). To add to the ugliness of the buses, cars, streets, and buildings, they approach the big iron scaffolding of the stadium, where "in the **gutters**, **rather lousy men** were selling pulque and sweets, cakes, fruit, and **greasy** food (2; emphasis added). At the ticket check-point, another horror:

> The man who took the tickets at the entrance, suddenly, as they were passing in, stood in front of Owen, put both his hands on Owen's chest, and pawed down the front of Owen's body. Owen started, bridled, transfixed for a moment. The fellow stood aside. Kate remained petrified. Then Owen jerked into a smiling

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[20] Lawrence seems to transfer to Kate his suspicion of the American logic of quantity, of the more the better, whether that refers to tourism or money. Curiously, that is also the logic of imperialism and of the conquest.

> composure as the man waved them on. 'Feeling for fire-arms!' he said, rolling his eyes with pleased excitement at Kate. But she had not got over the **shock of horror**, fearing the fellow might paw her. (2; emphasis added)

Finally, after emerging out of a tunnel in the hollow amphitheater, and after a "**real gutter-lout**" comes to check their counter-slips to make sure of the seats they had booked, they at last take their seats in the "big concrete beetle trap" (2).

As illustrated above, long before the beastly and bloody spectacle of the bull-fight itself starts, the atmosphere of horror, depicting an abject Mexico, is set. The bull-fight itself brings images that go from the slightly uncomfortable ones, such as "The picador pulled his feeble horse round slowly, to face the bull, and slowly he leaned forward and shoved his lance-point into the bull's shoulder" (9), through the irredeemably brutal ones, such as "The rider scrambled from under the horse and went running away with his lance…And the bull, with a red place on his shoulder welling a trickle of dark blood, stood looking around in hopeless amazement " (9), to the most repugnant ones, such as "watching a bull whose shoulders trickled blood goring his horns up and down inside the belly of a prostrate and feebly plunging horse" (9), or the situation of the horse, "walking out of the ring, with a great ball of its own entrails hanging out of its abdomen and swinging reddish against its own legs as it automatically moved" (9).

It is interesting to note that, approaching this chapter in a dialectical manner, one finds that the same Lawrence who produces a terrified Kate, who turns her face away to escape all the horror, who is almost overpowered by this shock, "a shock of amazement [which] almost made her lose consciousness" (9), a Kate who informs her cousin, before the end of the spectacle: "I am going! Good-bye! I can't smell any more of this stink!"

(12), also produces an Owen who is fascinated by the spectacle. He insists that viewing the bull-fight is viewing "life." He was "convinced that this was life. He was seeing LIFE …" (13). Here lies the germ of a project which will develop along the novel: a project of conversion. Kate is shocked when she arrives in Mexico, and hates it with a passion, yet she is already foreseeing being somehow seduced by it :

> She was afraid more of the repulsiveness than of anything. She had been in many cities of the world, but Mexico had an underlying ugliness, a sort of squalid evil, which made Naples seem debonair in comparison. She was afraid, she dreaded the thought that anything might really touch her in this town, and give her the contagion of its crawling sort of evil. (14)

If the repulsion were not simultaneous with attraction she could simply get up and leave the country. Yet, she will choose to stay and will receive an education in the alien culture. The subtext seems to show an awareness that what looks ugly and incomprehensible is simply unintelligible as a function of the different cultural backgrounds. Their present situation, in the first chapter, as the ridiculous tourists, who are usually inapt in their perceptions, is made clear, and even mocked at (self-mockery?), by the author, at least twice. As mentioned a few pages back, their inadequacy starts when they buy tickets for the "Sun" area. Not knowing the habits of the local people, they would have been safer in the more expensive and private area. Having chosen the cheaper tickets, they should be more open to whatever they would find in the middle of the crowd, and not be outraged by some banana peels, oranges and hats flying (note the derisive tone in the narrator's description of Villier's hat) :

> Where upon a banana skin rattled on Villiers' tidy and ladylike little panama. He glared round coldly, like a bird that would stab with its beak if it got the chance, but which would fly away at the first real menace.
>
> 'How I detest them!' said Kate. (4)

Here is another instance of their blatant inadequacy: in their ignorance of the local customs, they could not predict that "at some given signal," which, of course, they are unprepared for, the masses in the middle, unreserved seats (the cheapest of all) would suddenly burst and rush to their area: "It was a crash like a burst reservoir, and the populace … poured down round and about our astonished, frightened trio" (5). This will lead to one of the most humorous scenes in the chapter (although, of course, in Kate's eyes at this stage it was pure "insolence!") when some men began to take advantage of the ledge on which the foreigners had their feet, to squat there. While Villiers immediately pushes the guy sitting on his feet off, Owen cannot be as assertive. There follows a quarrel between Villiers and the Mexican in front of him, and here is the mocking comment of the narrator: "Oh, home of liberty! Oh, land of the free! Which of these two men was to win in the struggle for conflicting liberty? Was the fat fellow free to sit between Villiers' feet, or was Villiers free to keep his foot-space?" (6). At the end, Villiers manages to drive the guy off, to Kate's delight. At the same time, she is infuriated at Owen, for being so passive: "Can't you do the same, Owen?," to which he answers: "'Apparently not yet, unfortunately', he said, with some constraint, turning his nose away again from the Mexican, who was using him as a sort of chair-back" (7). What Kate considers "insolence," evidently, is what from her perspective is a lack of respect for the "sacredness" of individual and private spaces valued by the "advanced

society" she comes from, as opposed to the privileging of social spaces in more "primitive" societies.

The reader is faced, then, from the outset, with a dialogical, polyphonic situation. In portraying Kate's horror to Mexico city and its inhabitants - "How I detest them!" - and the visceral scenes of the bull-fight, the author is presenting the view-point of the stereotypical disdainful English newcomer. On the other hand, the opposing view-point, of those who have the awareness of the inadequacy and preposterousness of these foreign visitors' attitudes, is presented through the omniscient narrator's voice, especially in its mocking tone, e.g., in describing Villier's outrageousness in his "tidy and ladylike little panama," and his anger but inability to do anything about the banana peel thrown at it, and Owen having to put up with a stranger using his legs "as a sort of chair-back".

What is notable here is that even if the divided Lawrence (the author) has a project for the novel, a project of conversion, in which Kate will receive an education and will go through a metamorphosis, from the Mexico hater she is in chapter I, to the Mexico lover of the end, and even if he is able to mock the foreigners, through the voice of the omniscient narrator, in a truly comical way (which can be seen as an achievement for a subject of his heritage and time), the feelings Kate has in the novel's opening chapter were his own genuine feelings. As noted before, Lawrence himself had left the bull-fight in the middle of the spectacle, which constitutes a national offense. Even if the author manages, in the novel, to make his protagonist undergo a metamorphosis, he himself will not be as successful in his desired attempt. His own reluctance to embrace fully what he wants his protagonist to embrace never disappears. He, as a subject, is a lot

more arrested in the prison-house of language and culture than he makes the fictional Kate to be. The snake will not manage to burst its old skin. It will go sick and die inside the old skin, as we learn from a letter after he had left Mexico for good: "Altogether I think of Mexico with a sort of nausea: … really I feel I never want to see an Indian or an 'aboriginee' or anything in the savage line again".[21] Quoting this disconcerting view now, however, is not to do justice to his genuine effort to portray Kate's conversion. Hence, let us go back to the novel.

Her sympathy for the native people, and disgust with her own white race, starts to gain power in the second chapter, titled "Tea-party in Tlacolula." Kate receives an invitation from Mrs. Norris, a widow of an English ambassador of thirty years back, who lives in a "dead, massive house of the Conquistadores, with a glimpse of tall-grown garden beyond, and further Aztec cypresses rising to strange dark heights" (24). The conflicting picture is self-explanatory. The house, connected to the Conquistadores, is described as "dead." What is alive, however, are the trees in the garden. And these are Aztec cypresses, foreshadowing the need for revival of the Aztec religion. To top the analogy off, and to make use of the tropes Lawrence has in mind, the Aztec cypresses conveniently rise to "strange *dark* heights." Mrs. Norris will personify the English civilization Kate despises (and is running away from) and is described as "an elderly woman, rather like a Conquistador herself in her black silk dress and her little black shoulder shawl of fine cashmere" (24). Her invitation to the tea-party over the phone itself contains an implicit contempt of Mexico:

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[21] quoted by Charles Rossman, in "'You are the Call and I am the Answer': D.H.Lawrence and Women", in *The D.H.Lawrence Review, III*, Fall, 1975. 305

> 'Now, Mrs Leslie, won't you come out to tea this afternoon and see the garden? I wish you would. Two friends are coming in to see me, two Mexicans: Don Ramón Carrasco and General Viedma. They are both *charming* men, and Don Ramón is a great scholar. I assure you, they are both entirely the exception among Mexicans. Oh, but *entirely* the exception! So now, my *dear* Mrs. Leslie, won't you come with your cousin? I wish you would.' (22)

Besides the two Mexicans (plainly only invited because they are "both entirely the exception among Mexicans"), two other guests are present: Judge Burlap and his wife, "with the inevitable hat of her sort upon her grey hair: a stiff satin turned up on three sides and with black ospreys underneath" (25). The derision aimed at the couple can be felt not only in this description of Mrs. Burlap, but also in Owen's stream of consciousness, when preparing to answer Mr. Burlap's first question: " 'Been long in Mexico?' snapped the Judge; *the police enquiry had begun*" (25; emphasis added). The conversation, then, turns to politics, and Russia, and Bolshevism, and Owen's socialist inclination is not welcome. Mrs. Norris, as the "perfect hostess," detours the conversation when it starts pursuing dangerous ways, and brings it back to the safe and trivial terrain of the elite: trips, buying souvenirs, collections etc. The maneuver does not work, for even in this terrain, the clash lingers between the newcomers and the English established in Mexico for decades, evidently here as a synecdoche for the imperial power who took over in the New World. As a result, a simple comment about the 'jade' stone and its color creates a great uproar, when Kate, picking up one of the Aztec stone knives

on the parapet, asks: "Is it a sort of jade?," to which the Judge retorts: "Jade! Jade is green, not black!" and Owen does not waste his chance to confront the Judge:

> 'Jade *can* be black,' said Kate. 'I've got a lovely little black tortoise of jade from China.'
>
> 'You can't have. Jade's bright green.'
>
> 'But there's white jade too. I know there is.'
>
> The Judge was silent from exasperation for a few moments, then he snapped:
>
> 'Jade's bright green.'
>
> Owen, who had the ears of a lynx, had heard.
>
> 'What's that?' he said.
>
> 'Surely there's more than green jade!' said Kate.
>
> 'What!' cried Owen. 'More! Why there's every imaginable tint - white, rose, lavender -'
>
> 'And black?' said Kate.
>
> 'Black? Oh yes, quite common. Why you should see my collection. The most beautiful range of color! *Only green jade*! Ha-ha-ha!' (36)

In fact, the turbulence is more than an innocent squabble and serves a purpose. It pictures the judge as a stereotype of the unreasonable man who will not discuss or listen. He has his "truths" defined beforehand: 'Jade is bright green' and there is no other option. In the same category come his hatred of the Labor Party, his categorizing Owen as a "red rag," as well as all his other easily definable truths. Lawrence is certainly playing with stereotypes here. The judge's wife, for instance, is the submissive wife who follows her

husband, is unable to utter a word when the conversation is of any relevance, and only when Mrs. Norris changes the subject and asks about health, does she finally jump in, after the hostess had asked her husband:

> '…By the way! How have you been for walking, Judge? You heard of the time I had with my ankle? '
>
> 'Of course we heard!' **cried Mrs. Burlap, seeing dry land at last**. I've been trying *so* hard to get out to see you, to ask about it. We were so *grieved* about it.'
>
> (34; emphasis in bold added)

These are some of the elements which will lead Kate, in her disgust with her own white race, towards sympathy for the native people. Later, when the Burlaps leave, this is her thought: "'You common-place little woman!' said Kate aloud, looking after the retreating tram-car. 'You awful ill-bred little pair' " (38). The dominant tone of the white foreigners' conversation had, at last, changed when General Cipriano Viedma and Don Ramón Carrasco arrived. They are presented as more human (less archetypal) in tact, in sensitivity and intelligence than any of the other guests at the tea-party. It is almost as if the author had been stretching in his stereotyping, just to make a point. And with the arrival of the two Mexicans, intelligent conversations, and the debunking of stereotypes (in the author's mind) will begin. For instance, in Kate's first conversation with Cipriano, it is interesting to note his reaction to her (European) impressions of things Aztec. Referring to the obsidian knives, the idols in black lava, and a "queer thickish stone stick, or baton" that were placed on the low stone parapet (certainly displayed there as part of the "thirst for the exotic," rather than for any appreciation of their inherent meaning), she says, only to use unwittingly a common trope: "Aztec things oppress me"

(31). Owen, a minute earlier, in thought, had had the same trope in mind, while handling the baton: "it felt murderous even to touch" (31). Cipriano neither gets offended, nor tries to reply angrily; in fact, he does not even deny it. On the contrary, in an initial attitude of establishment of trust, he even agrees with her: " 'They *are* oppressive,' he answered" (31). He lets her speak, listens and subtly starts questioning her pre-assumptions and imported ideas. When she says "There is no hope in them" (31), he replies: "Perhaps the Aztecs never asked for hope." She does not like the comment, and adds: " 'Surely it is hope that keeps one going?, she said." Cipriano then introduces to her the notion that her eurocentric ideas may not apply to other cultures: "You, maybe. But not the Aztec, nor the Indian to-day" (31). All through this conversation, the center of consciousness, with it the sympathy of the reader, is directed towards Cipriano, and Kate is presented as the "willful European" with pre-conceived ideas about Mexico which do not hold water, as in her answer to Cipriano's question:

> 'And does everything in Mexico oppress you?' he added, almost shyly, but with a touch of mockery, looking at her with a troubled naïve face that had its age heavy and resistant beneath the surface.
>
> 'Almost everything!' she said. 'It *always* makes my heart sink.'
>
> (31)

Lawrence's anti-eurocentric effort is obvious, and he may have felt happy about sending not very comforting messages for most Anglo readers. But, perhaps, this is precisely part of the problem: first, he addresses himself to a white, largely Anglo-European audience; second, how can he accurately speak for the Indians? The result is that the more he verbalizes his anti-eurocentric positions, the more eurocentrism

manifests itself in his discourse. Hence, even when he gets to the end of chapter II, "Tea-party in Tlacolula," with the conversion project started - for a clear change has already manifested itself in Kate: she starts seeing the natives with sympathy, all her anger directed to the judge and wife, in their "nasty whiteness" - still, the vocabulary, grammar and discourse the author will use is pervaded by the tropes of primitivism, as explained by Torgovnick in my previous chapter. The natives, accordingly, will be described with the images and ideas derived from the discourse of primitivism, and will fulfill whatever needs the Western mind wants them to fulfill:

> She was a bit afraid of the natives, not quite sober, who were waiting for the car in the opposite direction. But stronger than her fear was a certain sympathy with these dark-faced silent men in their big straw hats and naïve little cotton blouses. Anyhow they had blood in their veins: they were columns of dark blood. Whereas the other bloodless, acidulous couple from the Middle-West, with their nasty whiteness…! (38)

This initial sympathy of Kate's towards the natives is thorny, for even in the attempt of praising them, the idea comes loaded with the images that the primitives are irrational, violent and dangerous, therefore unwittingly reaffirming the ideology that the "whites," although perceived as nasty at times, are neither dangerous nor violent. Biased as it may be, the conversion project goes on. Two chapters later, Kate's predicament is whether to go back home or to stay in Mexico. The title of chapter IV is "To Stay or Not To Stay," and one could argue that for a novel that is meant to forget the European discourse, maybe this title resonates a little too much of it, but it could also be seen as an appropriation with the anthropophagic drive. In this chapter Kate makes the decision to

stay in Mexico, and move to Lake Sayula, while her cousin Owen returns to the United States. In her first trip to the lake, her sympathy towards the local people grows: "This kind of frail, pure sympathy, she felt at the moment between herself and the boatman, between herself and the man who had spoken from the water" (81). This gradual process of growth, however, is not steady. There are ups and downs, and after having decided to stay, she vacillates once more, and back comes the horror:

> She felt there was doom written on the very sky, doom and horror.
>
> She wrote to Don Ramón in Sayula, saying she wanted to go back to Europe. True, she herself had seen no horrors, apart from the bull-fight. And she had had some exquisite moments, as coming to this hotel in the boat. The natives had a certain mystery and beauty, to her. But she could not bear the unease, and the latest sense of horror. (88)

Interestingly enough, Kate herself gets very close to admitting that the horror is manufactured by her culture in her mind: "she herself had seen no horrors," yet, she wants to go back to Europe. The desire to leave does not last long, though, and in the next boat ride, here she is again in love with the boatmen. This time there are two men steering the boat and reading the next passage one is faced exactly with the lessons of the primitivist discourse, for Kate is evidently projecting her desires onto the local men:

> She was afraid, mystically, of the man crouching there in the bows with his smooth thighs and supple loins like a snake, and his black eyes watching. A half-being, with a will to disintegration and death. And the tall man behind her at the tiller, he had the curious smoke-grey phosphorus eyes under black lashes sometimes met among the Indians. Handsome, he was, and quiet and seemingly

> self-contained. But with that peculiar devilish half-smile lurking under his face, the half-jeering look of a part-thing, which knows its power to destroy the purer thing. And yet, Kate told herself, both these men were manly fellows. They would not molest her, unless she communicated the thought to them. (93)

It is perhaps not so far-fetched to say, after all, that she is so attracted to them, she almost regrets that they are so self-restrained and nothing will happen "unless she communicated the thought to them." In her silent gazing at one of the boatmen, she thinks that there is in him "something very beautiful and truly male, and very hard to find in a civilized white man" (94), and she feels happy to be there, all traces of horror gone: "After all, it is good to be here. It is very good to be in this boat on this lake with these two silent, semi-barbarous men" (94). Evidently, once more, the European subject is using, gazing at, and fabricating the "primitive" in order to fulfill her own needs. The atypical thing is, precisely, that the European subject is a female. Kate's attraction to the Mexican men is clearly sexual, but she insists - and Lawrence insists - sex is not the point, is no more than a metaphor, a means to an end, an expression of larger, cosmic, meanings. At the end of this boat ride, Kate is "sorry to be cut off from them again" (95), and her final thought has all the classic tropes of the primitivist discourse (that the primitives are like children, our own untamed selves, our id forces - libidinous, irrational, violent, dangerous):

> There is something rich and alive in these people. They want to be able to breathe the Great Breath. They are like children, helpless. And then they're like demons. But somewhere, I believe, they want the breath of life and the communion of the brave, more than anything. (95)

After the silent communion with these natives, the next step in Kate's conversion is the first contact with the drums, in chapter VII, "The Plaza." By now she has rented a house, is living by the lake, and has a maid, Juana. While I will explore the relationship between Kate and Juana later, what is of interest here is that, on her first Saturday at the place, she hears the sound of a drum, and starts noticing the drift of the peons to the *plaza*. Lawrence transfers to Kate the experience which had been his own: "Kate, who had listened to the drums and the wild singing of the Red Indians in Arizona and New Mexico, instantly felt that timeless, primeval passion of the prehistoric races" (102). There follows a dialogue between Kate and Juana, in which she wants to know more about what is going on at the *plaza*. Juana explains vaguely and adds that it is not for women, but Kate feels more and more attracted by the "tom-tom" rhythm and approaches the area where there is a circle of men, a drum in the center of the clearing, and "the drummer standing facing the crowd… naked from the waist up, [wearing] snow-white cotton drawers, very full, held round the waist by a red sash, and bound at the ankles with red cords" (103). The sound and the visual ritual are the elements in the depiction of this sensual and anti-rational "other". Kate picks up a leaflet somebody is distributing, and finds in it a first hymn about Quetzalcoatl. The ritual she is witnessing involves preaching against Christianity, and a call for the return of Quetzalcoatl. Kate becomes more and more seduced by the call. When a dance starts, she overcomes her bashfulness and joins the dance, letting herself go, in a kind of trance. Little by little she feels herself newly energized, revitalized, sensing new centers of power within her. Lawrence portrays, through this dance, Kate's baptism into the mysteries of "primitive Mexican

life". In his European mind, not surprisingly, this baptism has to take place in a hypnotic, non-rational manner which lasts four full pages (111 to 115). The last lines show Lawrence at his best:

> Her feet were feeling the way into the dance-step. She was beginning to learn softly to loosen her weight, to loosen the uplift of all her life, and let it pour slowly, darkly, with an ebbing gush, rhythmical in soft, rhythmic gushes from her feet into the dark body of the earth. Erect, strong like a staff of life, yet to loosen all the sap of her strength and let it flow down into the roots of the earth. (115)

So here is how the British writer, in all his anti-eurocentric effort, depicts Kate's baptism. And to quote Torgovnick again: "The primitive does what we ask it to do. Voiceless, it lets us speak for it … The real secret of the primitive in this century has often been the same secret as always: the primitive can be - has been, will be (?) - whatever Euro-Americans want it to be" (8-9). Lawrence tries to penetrate, appropriate and apprehend the culture of the other. To a certain extent, he does all that, but he can hardly manage to free himself from his own fantasies.

III - PATTERN OF ROLE REVERSALS : FICKLE ATTEMPT OF DECONSTRUCTION

> "Malinalli-Tenepal, Malinche, Malintzin, doña Marina, mujer e indígena, madre y puta, traidora y útero symbolico de la nación mexicana, personaje ambiguo y desconocido, asi és como se nos presenta a la Malinche."
>
> Fernanda Nunez Becerra

Having concluded last chapter with Lawrence's portrayal of Kate's pretense baptism into the culture of the other (her conversion will go on, as will be seen later, and will get completed with her marriage to Cipriano at the end), I will now move on to the analysis of a recurrent pattern found throughout the novel: a pattern of role reversals. As mentioned in chapter I, Lawrence's effort was serious in the attempt to learn about, study and rescue other histories and other cultures. Though the Mexico he presents in *The Plumed Serpent* derives a lot from his imagination and his own projections, he was aware of the historical facts he read in William Prescott's *The History of the Conquest of Mexico,* Bernal Diaz Castillo's classic *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* as well as *Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Religions* by Zelia Nuttall. Moreover, apart from his readings on the colonial history of Mexico, Lawrence was in the country at a far from quiet moment. The immediate revolutionary history was all around him. The nation had been thrown into regional conflicts after the overthrow of Porfirio Díaz by popular insurrection in 1910. Since then until the moment Lawrence arrived (in March, 1923), the personal characters of the several leaders, rather than political programs, were the basis for people's hopes. Charismatic leaders such as

Emiliano Zapata (who had been betrayed and killed by the "fuerzas carrancistas" just four years before Lawrence's arrival in the country) and Pancho Villa were still in the collective minds of the Mexicans as saviors and heroes. Although Lawrence could not possibly fully understand the revolution, he was not unaware of its power either. As Jorge Ruffinelli points out, in *El Otro Mexico*:

> Lawrence no entendía la Revolución Mexicana aunque sintiera sus efectos sobre la piel, los huesos, los nervios; en su temprana carta a Murry declaraba - hay que notarlo - su desapego por las cuestiones políticas. Y, sin embargo, en *La serpiente emplumada* propone un autoritarismo de corte militar, basado en el fanatismo exclusivo de una religión autoctóna, del resurgimiento de los viejos "dioses" como Quetzalcoatl, de la cruel religión azteca. En L*a serpiente emplumada* Lawrence trazaria un ideario politico, pero, … no surgía este de un conocimiento profundo del país, de sus necesidades autenticas, vividas junto al pueblo, sino de las ideas irracionalistas que, para Lawrence, solamente podrían salvar al hombre, y no solo al hombre mexicano sino al hombre universal. (86)
>
> [Lawrence did not understand the Mexican revolution, even if he felt its effects in his skin, in his bones, in his nerves; he declared, in an early letter to Murry - and it has to be noted - his dislike for political issues. And, nevertheless, in *The Plumed Serpent,* he proposes an authoritarianism of military scope, based on the fanaticism of an autochthonous religion, of the revival of the old gods, such as Quetzalcoatl, of the cruel Aztec religion. In *The Plumed Serpent*, Lawrence would trace a political ideal, however, this ideal did not spring from a deep

> knowledge of the country, of its genuine needs, experienced with the people, but rather from irrational ideas which, for Lawrence, were the ones which could save men, and not only the Mexican but also the universal man.] (my translation)

Almost in parenthesis, it is ironic to note that, like Ruffinelli, who saw Lawrence as an alien to Mexico, incapable of blending in with the people, Lawrence, himself, had detected a similar alienation in his friend E.M.Forster, in relation to India. In July, 1924, immediately after reading *A Passage to India* for the first time, he wrote to Forster, apparently with a sympathetic understanding: "The day of our white dominance is over, and no new day can come till this of ours has passed into night." As is well known, in *A Passage to India,* Forster approached but then withdrew from the mingling of races. In a letter to Middleton Murry, written in October, 1924, although Lawrence praises Forster's "repudiation of [our] white bunk", he agrees with Murry that "Forster doesn't 'understand' his Hindu", and he adds that "India to him is just negative: because he doesn't go down to the root to meet it" (142-3). The difference being, of course, that Lawrence sees himself as able to accomplish what he condemns in Forster. He thinks he can understand the Mexican culture enough to encounter "the root" of it. And, for him, encountering "the root" means to go back to the Aztec religion and to the colonial history of Mexico. Hence, allowing for the fact that Lawrence "did not understand the revolution," and also allowing for the instability of the context he was trying to recreate, as explored in my chapter I, [22] the impossibility of delimiting such a context and, moreover, his imprisonment in the straight-jacket of his language/culture, he still engenders a quite ambitious project, namely, a utopian reversal of the history of the conquest.

[22] my pages 22 -24.

Aware of the instability of the context of the Mexican culture, as Lawrence perceived it with his readings, but also aware of the fact that it was the only conceptual framework he had access to, what I propose to do now is, firstly, to have a closer look at what Lawrence does with the information he gathers from all his readings on Mexico, and suggest that he follows a pattern, in *The Plumed Serpent* , which I will call a "pattern of role reversals;" and, secondly, try to examine the implications of his method. Substantially informed (to the maximum extent available to him) about Aztec mythology and the history of the conquest, Lawrence starts playing with the collected data, and proceeds in his attempt to reverse the polarities of colonialism. Three elements of the Mexican past (that linger strongly in the mind, character, and identity of Mexicans to these days, according to Octavio Paz, in *El laberinto de la Soledad*) will be included in his reversal: Quetzalcoatl, La Malinche, and the so called 'Autos da Fé'.

1. Quetzalcoatl

Quetzalcoatl (the feathered serpent god) is the principal deity of the ancient Mexican pantheon. The temple of Quetzalcoatl, and the Pyramid of the Sun, can still be visited today in Mexico. The discovery and conquest of the realm of the Aztecs, in the highland heartland of Mexico, is historically linked with the name of Hernan Cortés. When Cortés arrived, in 1519, there were, among the natives, several prophecies of the return of the god Quetzalcoatl, who had previously abandoned the Aztecs in a war with other gods. According to Tzvetan Todorov, in *The Conquest of America*, Cortés made use of this myth for his own benefit. It was not the first time that the Spanish conquistadors exploited Indian myths in their own interest. The Indian accounts of the

conquest, especially those collected by Bernardino de Sahagún and Diego Durán[23], according to Todorov, tell us that there was a moment in which Montezuma identified Cortés as Quetzalcoatl returning to recover his kingdom. The radical difference between Spaniards and Indians, and the relative ignorance of other civilizations on the part of the Aztecs led to the notion that the Spaniards coming from the sea were gods. This identification was one of the chief reasons for Montezuma's failure to resist the Spanish advancement, according to the priests' informants. Todorov acknowledges the fact that in the original version of the myth, Quetzalcoatl had a secondary role and his return was uncertain. There was a change in a second version which made Quetzalcoatl dominant and his return absolutely certain. That change was engineered by Cortés himself, who learned the Indian narrative and made use of it, even changing it, in his own favor. Todorov claims that the notion of an identity between Quetzalcoatl and Cortés certainly existed in the years immediately following the conquest, as is also attested by the sudden recrudescence of cult objects linked to Quetzalcoatl.

In one of Lawrence's own sources, *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*, William Prescott ponders the mystery of how the immensely sophisticated culture of the Aztec empire was conquered by a few hundred Spaniards. He explains this largely by the tensions within the empire that Cortés was able to exploit, but he also notes the curious fact that Cortés was actually taken to be the young fair god, Quetzalcoatl, who was expected to return. And Fray Juan de Torquemada, in *Monarquia Indiana*, quoted by Enrique Dussel, in *The Invention of the Americas : Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of*

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[23] Diego Duran was brought to Mexico at the age 5 or 6 and was raised in the New World. He understood Indian culture from within, like no other European in the sixteenth century. As to Sahagún, he arrived in Mexico at the age 30, but stayed there until his death, at 90. He learned the other's language and culture in depth, devoted his life to this task, but never renounced his way of life or his identity.

Modernity, reports Montezuma's spies informing him of the first two Spanish exploratory expeditions in these terms:

> All of us who were there saw gods arriving on the coast in great houses of water (which they call ships) … Motecuhzuma remained alone, pensive, and quite suspicious of this great novelty in his kingdom … and he called to mind his prophet's predictions … He began to believe that it was Quetzalcohuatl whom they once adored as a god … and who long ago had left for the far east.

Dussel proceeds to explain that "Cortés becomes aware for the first time that these people considered him a god and he begins to ponder his options" (40). He quotes Torquemada again:

> What are they trying to say when they say that he is their King and God, and that they wish to see him? Hernan Cortés heard this, and with all his people he thought carefully about the situation.
>
> …
>
> Cortés overlooked nothing when it came to how it might be possible to augment his own status. He ordered his armies to form in battle array, to fire their harquebuses, and to engage in cavalry skirmishes … but the thunder of the artillery was most impressive, since it was utterly new to these people.
>
> (40, 41)

Dussel concludes that the "pyrotechnic theatricalization was essential to arouse awe among the religious-symbol-oriented Indians" (41). This costly (for Montezuma) identification of Cortés with Quetzalcoatl would give the European ego a quasi-divine

superiority over the "primitive." As was customary among the conquistadors, Cortés carried a banner that said: "*We follow the cross and in this sign we shall conquer.*" In a footnote, Dussel points out that "Cortés evidently seemed to fancy himself the new Constantine, founder of the *New Christendom of the Indies*, as Toribio de Mogrovejo, archbishop of Lima, would write years later, although in a critical vein" (160).

What does Lawrence do with the information about the identification of Cortés with Quetzalcoatl and its use by the Spaniard? Learning about Cortés making use of the Aztec belief for his own benefit, Lawrence tries in his novel to reverse this action. He depicts native Mexicans reappropriating their own myth, against Christianity. This will be the tool, in the novel, for the natives to revive the ancient religion of Mexico, and to debunk Christianity. Curiously the reversal of what actually happened in history at the time of the conquest, when the ancient Mexican religion was systematically extirpated and replaced by Christianity.

Lawrence's protagonist, Don Ramón, constructs a narrative among his people, using the device of hymns (to which I will dedicate a chapter later), and a fair amount of theatricalization in sacred rituals, to make the peons believe he is the god Quetzalcoatl himself. Lawrence has the native Mexican Ramón stealing the deity back from the hands of Cortés, precisely to fight Christianity, which is the heritage of the colonizer. Ramón engenders a complex construction in order to set the atmosphere for preparing the people for his plan. Kate first learns about Quetzalcoatl in an article in the newspaper titled "The Gods of Antiquity return to Mexico," which tells the news of some women in the village of Sayula having had a vision, while washing their linen at the shore of the lake. These

women were "astonished to see a man of great stature rise naked from the lake and wade towards the shore" (46) . His face, they said, "was dark and bearded, but his body shone like gold" (46). The words he spoke brought them the announcement: "Why are you crying? Be quiet! … Your gods are ready to return to you. Quetzalcoatl and Tlaloc, the old gods, are minded to come back to you. … I have come from out of the lake to tell you the gods are coming back to Mexico, they are ready to return to their own home" (47). It is worth noting one more analogy: whereas in history, as seen in Fray Juan de Torquemada's account, Montezuma's men saw the "gods" coming from the water ("All of us who were there saw gods arriving on the coast in great houses of water"), here the announcement also comes from the water, albeit from a lake. The newspaper item ends with the mention of Ramón:

> The village is full of excitement, and Don Ramón Carrasco, our eminent historian and archaeologist, whose *hacienda* lies in the vicinity, has announced his intention of proceeding as soon as possible to the spot to examine the origin of this new legend . (47)

While I will dedicate a section, in another chapter, to the careful analysis of how Ramón will strategically use hymns to build up his legend, and lay the foundation for his plan, what is of immediate importance here is the accomplishment of his "incarnation," over a hundred pages later, of Quetzalcoatl (the feathered serpent god). If in history, as Dussel points out, Cortés made use of some "pyrotechnic theatricalization", as mentioned above; in the novel, Lawrence makes Don Ramón somewhat repeat the strategy, not exactly with pyro-technique, but with a whole apparatus of symbolism, visual images and optical

illusions, aided by his discursive construction, all of which essential to arouse awe among the religious-symbol-oriented Indians:

> Ramón put on his *serape*, whose scarlet fringe touched his knees, and stood motionless, with ruffled hair. Round his shoulders went the woven snake, and his head was through the middle of the blue, woven bird. (173)
>
> …
>
> Then he looked down at the ground.
>
> 'Serpent of the earth,' he said; 'snake that lies in the fire at the heart of the world, come! Come! Snake of the fire of the heart of the world, coil like gold round my ankles, and rise like life around my knee, and lay your head against my thigh. Come, put your head in my hand, cradle your head in my fingers, snake of the deeps. Kiss my feet and my ankles with your mouth of gold, kiss my knees and my inner thigh, snake branded with flame and shadow, come! and rest your head in my finger-basket! So!'
>
> The voice was soft and hypnotic. It died upon a stillness. And **it seemed as if really a mysterious presence had entered unseen from the underworld. It seemed to the peons as if really they saw a snake of brilliant gold and living blackness softly coiled around Ramón's ankle and knee, and resting its head in his fingers,** licking his palm with forked tongue. He looked out at the big, dilated, glittering eyes of his people, and his own eyes were wide and uncanny. (175; emphasis added)

Ramón and his right arm, Cipriano, the pure-blooded Indian, and Mexican army general, plan to use the religious revival to gain popular support from the peasants and then to isolate all of Mexico from its colonialist past. In the fantastic world of the novel, their plan succeeds: the Catholic church and the government try, but fail, to crush them. In Lawrence's imagination, with this first allegorical reversal, he has fiction and myth overcoming history. The second allegorical reversal involves La Malinche.

2. La Malinche

An introductory note to this topic, before we get to the figure of La Malinche herself, might prove instructive. Peter Hulme's first line in his *Colonial Encounters* is: "Europe encounters America. Clothed and armed Europe encounters naked America." Hulme displays in his book an engraving by Jan van der Straet which epitomizes the meeting of Europeans and their others that has been repeated over and over since its first appearance. The picture 'America' is in line with European graphic convention, in which the new continent is often allegorized as a woman. Poet John Donne's "Elegie: Going to Bed" is one of the best known literary illustrations of this vision:

> (…)
>
> O my America! My new-found-land,
>
> (…)
>
> How blest am I in this discovering thee!
>
> To enter into these bonds, is to be free;
>
> (…)

To teach thee, I am naked first : why then

Why needs thou have more covering than a –man.

The sexual dimension of the encounter has been explored and studied by many. David Spurr has a chapter in his *The Rhetoric of Empire,* called "Eroticization," in which he explains how the eroticization of the land, i.e., the construction of the land as a female body (and the unveiling of the female body) served the colonial enterprise, as a calculated rhetorical strategy: "The erotically charged language of these metaphors marks the entrance of the colonizer, with his penetrating and controlling power, as a natural union with the subject nation" (172). As Spurr explains, the purpose, then, of the strategy (anchored in the sexist view of the time) is the naturalization of the colonizing process. The New World would be, so to speak, begging to be taken. Colonial domination is thus understood as having a salutary effect on the natural excesses and the undirected sexual energies of the colonized. Colonization is naturalized as the relation of dominance between the sexes, the male colonizer "naturally" conquering the female colonized and her territory[24].

Anne McClintock also deals with the subject, in one of the most important and lucid elaborations on the connection between the feminization of the land and colonialism, by historical accounts such as those of Christopher Columbus, or by novels such as H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (the famous map to the mines

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[24] With the help of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, we can see that evidently the relationship of domination/subjugation between the sexes being understood as 'natural' is problematic. Far from being a 'natural' relation, the idea is produced by a range of social practices, 'discourses' or 'discursive practices' that produce a situation where you are defined by your sex. It has, for instance, produced the situation that defines a woman as someone whose fulfillment as a person is supposed to lie in a sexual relationship with a man.

resembles a female body including mountains named Sheba's breasts). In her chapter "The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism", in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, McClintock examines in detail what she calls the "European porno-tropics" rhetoric and its long tradition.

The discursive practice through which the Western colonizer represented the colonized world as feminine was also the foundation for countless tales and stories following the exotic romance type, which commonly depicts a white European male coming ashore on an exotic island and falling in love with a beautiful Indian girl. We could further illustrate this with what Sérgio Bellei, expanding on Hulme, calls "the savior damsel topos" (a "tópica da donzela salvadora"). In his essay "Uma história mal contada: Pocahontas e John Smith," in *Monstros, Índios e Canibais*, Bellei shows us how that story is just another sample, so to speak, of a traditional narrative which is so recurrent in history (the foreign adventurer, arrested by the king or chief of a nation of totally alien culture and religion, is rescued by his daughter, a princess, who subsequently renounces her own people, to convert to the foreigner's culture) that it becomes present as available narrative structure in what Foucault would call a historic 'archive'. These traditional narratives were treated by Thomas Skidmore as "Myths of National Origin".

Leslie Fiedler, in *The Return of the Vanishing American,* deals with three other myths besides "The Myth of Love in the Woods" in which he sees the Americas as an invention of Europe. He cites at least two other versions of the story of Pocahontas, in other countries of the American continent, which are, to borrow his words, "legends of the redemptive Indian girl which have been adapted to local conditions and to other

myths already shared by the peoples involved" (78): one in Canada[25] and one in Mexico (our La Malinche).

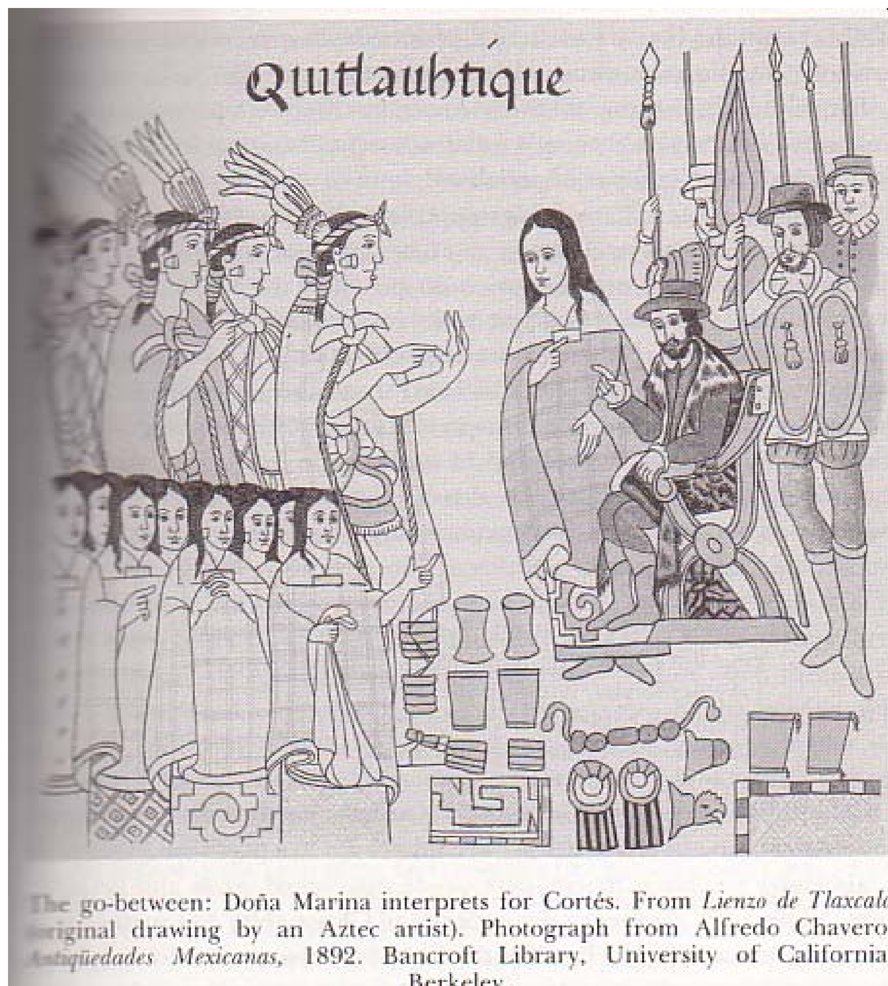
It is worth mentioning, following the line of myths of national origin, that, although Fiedler did not know about the Brazilian case, Alencar's *Iracema* (1865) does help to complete the view of the basic archetype of women in the Americas, as convenient European fictions to better enhance conquest and domination. As Bellei points out in another essay of the referred above collection, "A virgem dos lábios sem mel," Brazil also has its version of the legend in Iracema, who repeats the topic, and submits to the representative of the foreign race, willingly and for love, saving his life. Martim leaves her with child and absents himself at wars. Childbirth leads to Iracema's death, but, due to the idealized and romantic lenses, there is no rancor. She is meant to be the symbol of sweetness, and Martim is presented almost as a warrior without weapons, the benevolent civilizing missionary. The contradictions of the story end up by evincing the presence of violence in the "civilizing mission" and bitterness where "sweetness" was meant. In Alencar's scenario, Martim and Iracema represent Brazil's first case of miscegenation. Unlike La Malinche (our next and original interest), Iracema escapes any charge of having betrayed her people.

[25] According to Fiedler, the Canadian Pocahontas is the pious Mohawk maiden Catherine Tekakwitha, who was born in 1656 and died in 1680, still a virgin for the sake of Christ, and the victim of her own ascetic practices, self-disciplined, self-tortured, self-immolated (result of the French catholic mind imagining the Indian girl); "she had fasted, had beat herself until the blood came, had slept night after night in a blanket pricked by hundreds of thorns; and at last, on that Holy Wednesday, speech had failed her as she mumbled the names of Jesus and Mary. A little later she was dead, and a few moments afterwards, the French priest praying beside her cried out in astonishment because her face had turned white. White – (a miraculous bleaching) the complete conversion!" (79-80).

When citing the Mexican case, Leslie Fiedler argues that, for the Latin American, unlike his siblings of the United States and Canada, the Indian problem demands no sacramental or superhuman solution, only a standard sort of acceptance and accommodation. This is the reason why, in his view, this "Pocahontas-type figure" is neither a wife nor a saint, but rather an "exotic mistress," able to function as a go-between in matters of diplomacy and war. Albeit provocative, I think Fiedler's perception of La Malinche, as just another convenient myth used by the colonizer, driven by the desire of self-assurance and desperation to confirm the superiority of the white race, requires more critical attention. La Malinche's historical importance for Mexico goes somewhat beyond the status of legend, as I will attempt to show below.

In his eagerness to first understand, and then dominate, it is imperative for Cortés to have an interpreter. Geronimo de Aguilar is his first interpreter, but he speaks only the Mayan language. According to Todorov, the second essential figure in the conquest of information is a woman, whom the Indians called Malintzi, and the Spaniards Doña Marina, and, in Todorov's words, "without our knowing which of these two names is a distortion of the other, the form most frequently given is La Malinche" (100). Her mother tongue is Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, and she also speaks the Mayan language. Her importance was depicted in several drawings: in Todorov's book we have "La Malinche between Cortés and the Indians," today in Biblioteca Laurentiana, Florence; in Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions,* there is an illustration with the following subtitling "The go-between: Doña Marina interprets for Cortés" (original drawing by an Aztec artist), the book reproduction being from a photograph from Alfredo Chavero, in *Antiquedades Mexicanas*, 1892. One of the interesting things in this drawing

is that if one divides the scene in two, La Malinche is clearly inside Cortés's half, not right in the middle, as would fit an unbiased "go-between." And everything in her gestures shows what the title says: she is interpreting *for* Cortés, she is *not* a translator for both parts.



The go-between: Doña Marina interprets for Cortés. From *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* (original drawing by an Aztec artist). Photograph from Alfredo Chavero, *Antigüedades Mexicanas,* 1892. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

During the last five centuries, from the arrival of Cortés to today, the narrative/vision was consolidated which made her into a key-figure for the conquest, so much so that Mexicans, since their independence, have generally despised La Malinche as an incarnation of the betrayal of indigenous values, of servile submission to European culture and power. It is as if the original purpose of the myth, in Fiedler's terms (the underlying assumption that the Indian woman would prefer the white invader because of his superiority) had backfired: Mexicans did not buy that indoctrination and would today see her as a betrayer. Octavio Paz elaborates on that in the chapter "Los hijos de La Malinche" in *El laberinto de la Soledad.* He does not make any explicit connection with other myths of the continent, as Leslie Fiedler does, but the topic manifests itself unconsciously in the connection between his title (*los hijos de*, the children of, La Malinche), and the legend of Pocahontas, who has been called by Philip Young "the mother of us all," establishing the connection among myths of national origin. The incarnation of the betrayal of indigenous values is expressed by Paz as follows:

> El símbolo de la entrega es doña Malinche, la amante de Cortés. Es verdad que ella se da voluntariamente al Conquistador, pero éste, apenas deja de serle útil, la olvida. Doña Marina se ha convertido en una figura que representa a las indias, fascinadas, violadas o seducidas por los españoles. Y del mismo modo que el niño no perdona a su madre que lo abandone para ir en busca de su padre, el pueblo mexicano no perdona su traición a la Malinche. … De ahí el éxito del adjetivo despectivo "malinchista", recientemente puesto en circulación por los

> periódicos para denunciar a todos los contagiados por tendencias extranjerizantes. (77-78)
>
> [The symbol of the handing over is doña Malinche, Cortés's lover. It is true that she gives herself voluntarily to the conqueror, but as soon as she is not useful to him anymore, she is forgotten. Doña Marina has been converted into a figure who represents the Indian women, fascinated, violated, or seduced by the Spanish men. And as well as a son does not forgive his mother if she abandons him to go after his father, the Mexican people do not forgive La Malinche for her betrayal... From this derives the success of the derogatory adjective "malinchista", recently put in use by newspapers to expose those contaminated by foreign trends.] (my translation)

In this extract, Paz is evidently revealing one side of the figure in which La Malinche ended up being constructed symbolically (that of the traitor), which is challenged by many others, with the revival of interest in Malintzi among Chicana feminists, as in the quotation I started this chapter with, by Fernanda Nunez Becerra, in *La Malinche: de la historia al mito*.[26]

[26] In her instructive research findings, Nunez Becerra stresses the fact that the first great reports of the Conquest of Mexico were written some decades after the facts. Many of the witnesses were already dead. Moreover, many of the existing documents started being systematically studied only centuries later. The discovery and edition of all the letters of Hernan Cortés only happened in the beginning of the XX century, and reveal his total indifference toward La Malinche. Moreover, the several references to La Malinche by Las Casas, Francisco Lopes Gomorra, Gonzalo de Oviedo, Francisco de Aguilar and Diego Durán are all very contradictory. Also, very important to keep in mind, in the classic *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain,* Bernal Diaz Castillo had the need to build something like an epic, that followed the logic of the chivalry romance, therefore the portrayal of La Malinche with a noble origin is a necessity for him. Naturally, Nunez Becerra questions the status of truth in "Bernal Castillo's *True History",* and after all the constructions of La Malinche, consolidated throughout history, both as "madre y puta, traidora y útero symbolico de la nación mexicana", Nunez Becerra concludes her book with "Poor Malinche, little do we know about you".

La Malinche would eventually mother a child by Cortés, a son who is the "Latin American" properly speaking, the mestizo of a syncretist culture. Carlos Fuentes's narratives, in *Los reinos originarios,* depict the contradiction experienced by the mestizo offspring of this encounter:

> Marina cries: Oh, leave now, my son, leave, leave, leave from in between my legs … leave, son of a violated mother. … My adored son … son of two bloods at enmity with each other. … You will have to struggle against all, and your struggle will be sad, because you will be fighting against part of your own blood. … However, you are my only heritage, the heritage of Malintzin, the goddess; of Marina, the whore; of Malinche, the mother; … of Mainxochitl, the goddess of dawn; … of Tonantzin, Guadalupe, mother. (114-116)

What is of interest to us, here, however, is what Lawrence does with the information he could gather, in 1923, about La Malinche, stemming from William Prescott's *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*, and Bernal Diaz Castillo's *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*. The Aztec Goddess that Don Ramón and Cipriano, in *The Plumed Serpent*, convince Kate to 'embody' is called Malintzi. Scholars have pointed to the incongruity of an Irish character being one of the protagonists in the reclamation of a lost Mexican past (such as Rossman, 198), and that is a very valid point. Yet, could Lawrence not be attempting his second allegorical reversal of the novel? They are, of course, two opposite personas. Could he mean one to be precisely the "opposite double" of the other? One (the historical figure of La Malinche) is a native Aztec who betrays her people to be of service to the European Imperialism; the other (Kate, the

character in *The Plumed Serpent*) is a European trying to undress her culture to become an Aztec Goddess! The incongruity pointed out by some scholars could precisely be the tool used in the recurrent attempt of the novel to reverse the polarities of colonialism. Instead of the typical white European male coming ashore on an exotic island and falling in love with a beautiful native girl, in *The Plumed Serpent,* the author chooses to build a European *woman* going native, being attracted to *male Indian natives*, and renouncing her people (the opposite double of the historical figure of La Malinche). The reversal here occurs, not by chance, I want to suggest, on two levels. It is not only political, in the sense of the reversal of "colonizer/colonized" identities, but also one of gender roles. This is Lawrence's anti-colonialism at its most daring, when one compares his novel with the discursive practice elaborated above, which includes all the instances of narrative which depict the male colonizer arriving in the New World, and having a female colonized subject fall in love with him and serve him. Lawrence is, of course, also trying to consciously express his disregard by the British code against miscegenation (a code backed by the policy of bringing wives and families with colonists and administrators whenever possible; the code followed, for instance, by Conrad's Charles Gould, in *Nostromo*). In his mind, the divided Lawrence despises the notion of the code, even if "in his blood," as he would say, he himself will have to struggle hard to accept the idea of miscegenation. But struggle he does, and, in the second version, which became *The Plumed Serpent*, he writes a story of conversion, in which Kate begins hating Mexico and all the "horror" it means to her (one is inevitably reminded of the "horror" in *Heart of Darkness*), and receives an education by remaining in Mexico, after her American cousin and his friend leave, to end up going native. Moreover, Kate's conversion , unlike that of

her opposite double, the historical figure of La Malinche, goes from the degenerative to the regenerative, inasmuch as while La Malinche serves Cortés as an essential interpreter, and even has a son by him, only to be used, abused and forgotten later; Kate, on the contrary, leaves what the author sees as her degenerated civilization behind, to find herself, again as the author sees it, as the wife of Cipriano, converting herself to Ramón's and Cipriano's way of life and belief system. Whereas La Malinche became a traitor, Kate became a better person, accepting the beliefs of the New World.

Irish Kate Leslie, being converted to the native Mexican religion, and becoming an Aztec goddess can be, in Lawrence's utopian fiction, the second form of revenge the novelist uses to get even with the conversion perpetrated by the Christian enterprise in the New World.

3. Autos da Fé

The logic, throughout the novel, of reversing roles becomes explicit in the chapter "Auto da Fé." During the history of the conquest, autos-da-fé were a common practice of the Christian conquistadors. They consisted of the removal from a native holy place of local religious images, which were usually burned, to be replaced by Christian icons. In the chapter "Auto da Fé," in *The Plumed Serpent*, Lawrence reverses the situation, having Ramón and Cipriano remove and burn the Christian images from the Sayula church, before they install their own icons. The parody is self-evident. The irony Lawrence seems to be trying to expose lies in the fact that the Aztec religion was known to be based on human sacrifice. Aztec mythology has it that gods were appeased only

when offered the torn pulsating hearts of human victims; temples would have a specific 'table' for that practice to take place, and proper tools for that, like the 'obsidian knives,' which can be seen in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. No doubt these are cruelties and atrocities from the Christian perspective. Yet, the cruelty Cipriano and Don Ramón execute in the Sayula church is just a parody of the Christian practice of 'autos-da-fé.' If human sacrifice is no doubt an atrocity, what about all the acts of real violence perpetrated by the Christian colonizers, annihilating a whole race of people? Ramón, embodying the god Quetzalcoatl, and Cipriano, embodying the god Huitzilopochtli (the war god), were taking actions that were coherent with Aztec myths. As Octavio Paz explains, in *El Laberinto de la Soledad:*

> los dioses aztecas no son meras representaciones de la naturaleza. Encarnan también los deseos y la voluntad de la sociedad, que se autodiviniza en ellos. Huitzilopochtli, el guerrero del sur, es el dios tribal de la guerra y del sacrificio … y comienza su carrera con una matanza. (86)
>
> [the Aztec gods are not mere representations of nature. They also embody the desires and will of the society, which sacralizes itself in them. Huitzilopochtli, the warrior of the south, is the tribal god of the war and of the sacrifice... and starts his career with a slaughter.] (my translation)

Lawrence's characters, embodying these mythical Aztec gods, act accordingly, realizing the third allegorical revenge of the novel against Christianity. The author is evidently not advocating that hearts be torn from human victims to appease gods, but, rather, exposing

the fact that the atrocities were not one-sided, and, as is undisputable today, the Western atrocities have been far greater, reaching whole races of people. Lawrence's effort to side with the oppressed has been put, in the words of Mark Kinkead-Weekes, as follows:

> Lawrence is the only major English writer in his lifetime, with the exception of Kipling at his best, who tries seriously to imagine under the skin of a third-world culture and religion, a whole mode of being and perceiving that are quite alien to the European. (254)

As a point of curiosity, and almost in parenthesis, it is interesting to notice that, in his remarkable introduction to the Penguin edition of *Kim* (1989), Edward Said makes reference to Mark Kinkead-Weekes, in what he calls "one of the finest critical accounts of *Kim*" (21). There too, Kinkead-Weekes has the same attitude towards Kipling as he does towards Lawrence, i.e., the attitude expressed above, that Kipling can get into the skin of the other. As one could only expect, however, Said, evidently, has something to add to the notion that Kipling can "see, think and feel *beyond* himself." In his words:

> However much we may agree with some of the insights in this extraordinarily subtle reading, there is, in my opinion, too ahistorical an element in it to be accepted. Yes, the lama is a kind of anti-self, and yes, Kipling can get into the skin of others with some sympathy. But no, Kipling never forgets that Kim is an irrefrangible part of British India: the Great Game does go on, with Kim a part of it, no matter how many parables the lama fashions. (22)

By the same token, yes, Lawrence does have a powerful ability to "imagine" himself under the skin of others (not only human beings, but also animals and even trees, for those familiar with, for instance, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, as well as with some of the poems in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*). The fact remains, however, that his "imagining," whether corresponding or not to reality, once written down, and widely read, ends up becoming another historic archive. And the irony of it is that while Lawrence was making a great effort to side with the oppressed, the result of his novel, unwittingly, might well have been to consolidate the vision of Mexicans as "primitive." As Edward Said demonstrates, in *Culture and Imperialism*, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the Western powers built empires that stretched from Australia to the West Indies, Western artists like Jane Austen, J.Conrad, R.Kipling and others were creating masterpieces that were not at all separate phenomena from the political actions of the British empire. They were, in fact, through literature, helping to establish what Said calls a "structure of attitudes and references" which reinforced and in a sense absolved, albeit unsuspectingly, the actions of the empire.

Hence, in the capacity of a writer, Lawrence probably had his share in adding to the existing tropes, legitimating an ideological discourse, and consolidating the vision of the Mexican as "primitive," which is not irrelevant to the concrete consequences in the position of Mexico in the globe today.

* * *

Having covered the three elements in the utopian reversal, I will proceed now to the second move which I proposed, some pages ago, namely, the attempt to explore the implications of this "pattern of role reversals".

Theresa Thompson ends her essay “Unlearning Europe : Postcolonial Questions for teaching *The Plumed Serpent*” saying that “the sacred space constructed between Lawrence’s vision and the practices of south-west native populations provided a site that enabled the deconstruction – albeit fleeting and sometimes illusory – of dominance and submission models of cultural interaction” (225). The failure of success (or what she calls ‘fleeting and sometimes illusory’ deconstruction of dominance and submission models of cultural interaction) could reside in the complexity of the problem: simply to reverse polarities is to be complicit with the eurocentric view which reduces all meanings to a set of dichotomies (the Manichean allegory on which Western concepts are based, as Abdul JanMohamed argues). This is the case, for example of other movements claiming value inversion, such as Négritude[27], which end up being new versions of a derivative discourse.

The reversal of historic roles Lawrence engages in throughout the novel could be seen as an 'early attempt of deconstruction' (a genuine, if uneasy, effort to explore an alternative vocabulary/grammar/discourse of difference), but not problem free, since it is

[27] As is known, the concept proposed by the Martinican Aimé Cesáire, was the most pronounced assertion of the distinctive qualities of black culture and identity. In making this assertion it adopted stereotypes which curiously reflected European prejudice. Black culture was emotional, rather than rational, for instance. It soon became evident that the movement was just the antithesis of the thesis of white supremacy, falling into the same Manichean oppositions. The great flaw of the concept of négritude was that its structure was derivative and replicatory of the colonizing culture, and négritude, as it was first conceived, would find few totally uncritical followers today.

but a phase (precisely what Jacques Derrida calls the "overturning phase"), in the real process of deconstruction. Derrida points out that there is an "interval" between "inversion" within a binary system and the emergence of a new concept, "one that can no longer be, and could never be, reduced to the previous regime" (*Positions*, 42). In Lawrence's attempt, it seems he remained painfully entrapped within the horizon of the binary system that produced the eurocentric perspective which he was striving to surpass. It is worth having a closer look at Derrida's quotation in detail on what he calls "bifurcated writing":

> Therefore we must proceed using a double gesture, according to a unity that is both systematic and in and of itself divided, a double writing, that is, a writing that is in and of itself multiple, what I called, in "*La double séance*," *a double science*. On the one hand, we must traverse a phase of *overturning*. To do justice to this necessity is to recognize that in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. (41)

I want to suggest that Lawrence went through this overturning phase, in his "pattern of role reversals," and that is where he stopped and remained entrapped. The problem emerges when we look at the rest of the quotation, in Derrida's *Positions*:

> When I say that this phase is necessary, the word *phase* is perhaps not the most rigorous one. It is not a question of a chronological phase, a given moment, or a page that one day simply will be turned, in order to go on to other things. The necessity of this phase is structural; it is the necessity of an interminable analysis: the hierarchy of dual oppositions always reestablishes itself… That being said - and on the other hand - to remain in this phase is still to operate on the terrain of and from within the deconstructed system. By means of this double, and precisely stratified, dislodged and dislodging, writing, we must also mark the interval between inversion, which brings low what was high, and the irruptive emergence of a new "concept", a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime. If this interval, this biface or biphase, can be inscribed only in a bifurcated writing, then it can only be marked in what I would call a *grouped* textual field: in the last analysis it is impossible to *point* it out, for a unilinear text, or a punctual *position*, an operation signed by a single author, are all by definition incapable of practicing this interval. (42)

My argument is, trying to apply the Derridean lesson more specifically to *The Plumed Serpent*, that by simply remaining in the "overturning phase", Lawrence never left the terrain of the deconstructed system. He may have, in the fantastic world of his fiction, reversed polarities within the recorded eurocentric history, but he never released, for instance, the dissonance of a generative multiplicity that the culture of the other

would involve. He, as any other subject in his position, with the burden of his culture, would be incapable of practicing such advanced deconstructive exercise. The voice of the other would have to be speaking by itself as a point of origin, for the dissemination of meaning and the abandonment of the terrain of the deconstructed system to take place.

Stopping there, as he did, however, only reinscribes eurocentrism, because even if one accepts Lawrence's willingness to denounce the European epistemology, he has no option but to borrow from the European heritage the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself. It ends up being a structure both derivative and replicatory of the colonizing culture. This, of course, is not meant as a way of accusation, but simply to indicate some of the theoretical paradoxes and aporias involving every act of repudiation, in the movement of deconstruction.

Derrida, again, addresses the complexity of the problem in *Of Grammatology*:

> The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say, without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the *enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work*! (24; emphasis added)

By arresting itself in binary structures, *The Plumed Serpent* does fall prey to its own work of resistance to eurocentric discourses, insofar as it is another European version of what Mexico should be. To borrow from Rossman's "Lawrence and Mexico" again: "under the guise of resurrecting the Mexican "Gods of Antiquity", *The Plumed Serpent* documents, and is itself the agent of, the most recent instance in Mexico's long history of cultural imperialism" (198).

And yet, that is as far as Lawrence could go. The contradictions that are left unresolved remain so, because he could only go as far as he did. America might well have been, for Lawrence, a source of excessive meaning existing beyond his European limited power to control discourses.

IV - KATE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH JUANA: political and race issues

In this chapter I will examine some dimensions of, and possibilities for, the relationship between Kate (as the European woman arriving in the New World, hence, in the role of the colonizer) and Juana, her native *criada,* as the colonized subject. Citing Albert Memmi's *Dominated Man: Notes Toward a Portrait*, Leela Gandhi, in *Postcolonial Theory: a Critical Introduction*, elaborates on the ambivalent and symbiotic relationship between colonizer and colonized. She explains that Memmi's predication of this perverse mutuality between oppressor and oppressed is really an attempt to understand the puzzling circulation of desire around the traumatic scene of oppression. If, on the one hand, the desire of the colonizer for the colony is transparent and straightforward to understand, how to account for the inverse longing of the colonized? How, as Memmi inquires, "could the colonised deny himself so cruelly … How could he hate the colonisers and yet admire them so passionately?" (in Gandhi, 11).

Before we reach deeper into the core of the problem, a brief introduction of the first meeting between the two women is in order here. When Kate decides to stay for a while in Mexico, after her cousin Owen leaves, she is in search for a house to stay more permanently than she would in hotels. That is her primary need. And she has some demands:

> She wanted an old Spanish house, with its inner *patio* of flowers and water. Turned inwards, to the few flowers walled in by shadow. To turn one's back on the cog-wheel world. Not to look out any more on to that horrible machine of the

> world. To look at one's own quiet little fountain and one's own little orange-trees, with only heaven above. (91)

The description of the house she is looking for portrays exactly her mood and state of mind: her romantic need to cut herself from the world and get absorbed in her inner world, in search for the "greater mysteries," the higher power that this place, she fathoms, can give her. And she likes the house she finds: "a low, L-shaped, tiled building with rough red floors and deep veranda, and the other two sides of the *patio* completed by the thick, dark little mango-forest outside the low wall" (95). Clearly enough, the physical features of the house were of the greatest importance, and the next sentence shows the status as "accessory" that the people who would work for her have in her mind: "With the house went a Mexican Juana with two thick-haired daughters and one son. This family lived in a den at the back of the projecting bay of the dining-room" (95). These three lines have a plethora of information about how Kate (and Lawrence) really looks at the natives. We know, from Lawrence's letters, that characters like that of Juana are based on Mexicans that the author had met in real life. They are however contaminated by his ingrained Western views. Hence, the people, real owners of the place, are seen, firstly, as mere ornaments that "came with" the house; perhaps, even more than ornaments, as objects of use, as useful possessions, and as part of the property, as slaves used to be. Secondly, the fact that they will all be packed up "in a den, at the back of the projecting bay of the dining-room," while *la señora* will have all the rooms of the house for herself does not seem to disturb Kate (or Lawrence for that matter) at all. It is just "natural" that it should be that way. Indeed, they are little better than slaves, living in the

"*senzala*".[28] To pursue further the analogy with slaves, the omniscient narrator's words describing Juana's daughters, "with the house went a Mexican Juana with **two thick-haired daughters**" (emphasis added) bring a resonance of the materiality of describing humans as animals (in the sense that their physical characteristics are what matters), as in descriptions of slaves' good teeth. The master needs a strong slave as he needs a strong horse. The place where Juana and family sleep is described as "a sleeping-room where the family slept on mats on the floor. There the paltry chickens paddled, and the banana-trees made a chitter as the wind came" (95). Their animal-like status seems to be confirmed by their sleeping on the floor, in an open den, with the chickens.

In Lawrence's first description of Juana herself, one could argue that he merely echoes the colonial doctrine on white supremacy and colonial accounts of lazy natives, as she is portrayed mostly in negative terms (untidy, slovenly, stubborn and insolent) :

> Juana was a woman of about forty, rather short, with full dark face, centreless dark eyes, untidy hair, and a limping way of walking. She spoke rapidly, a rather plum-in-the-mouth Spanish, adding 'n' to all her words. Something of a sloven, down to her speech.
>
> *'No, Niña, no hay masn'* - *masn* instead of *mas*. And calling Kate, in the old Mexican style, *Niña*, which means *child*. It is the honourable title for a mistress.
>
> Juana was going to be a bit of a trial. She was a widow of doubtful antecedents, a creature with passion, but not much control, strong with a certain indifference and looseness. (96)

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[28] I use the word as defined by Gilberto Freyre in *Casa Grande e Senzala,* the Portuguese word for the accommodations where slaves slept.

It is interesting to note, however, that in spite of the rather stereotypical portrait, there are elements which seem to indicate that Lawrence does give it a thought, in order to justify Juana's so-called "insolence": "There was a bit of a battle to be fought between the two women. Juana was obstinate and reckless; she had not been treated very well by the world. And there was a touch of bottom-dog insolence about her" (96). Although the narrator is echoing the colonial doctrine of "inferior races," and parroting the negative characteristics traditionally assigned by white bosses to dark-skinned servants, the fact that there is a justification ("she had not been treated very well by the world") makes all the difference, and suggests the writer's awareness that her indifference, insolence or sloppiness are an outcome of her social condition, rather than her inherent qualities or vices. Moreover, expecting "a bit of a battle to be fought between the two women" is to put them both (boss and maid, *patroa* and *criada*, colonizer and colonized) at the same level, which effaces, even if momentarily, their relation of superiority and inferiority, thus indicating some of the complexities in Lawrence's treatment of racial issues. Such hierarchy, rather than being only effaced, in some sense, is even reversed at times. The title *Niña,* which, as the narrator explains, is the Mexican style for the mistress of the house, is, nevertheless, translated as "child", and Juana does use it, sometimes, with a "slight note of malevolent mockery" (96) in her voice, as if suggesting that her mistress does lack her wisdom (the wisdom of the natives), and acts as a spoilt child.

Juana knows how harmful foreigners have historically been to her homeland and to her people. And she even shares her knowledge with Kate:

> "*Usted sabe*, *Niña*, *los gringos, los gringuitos llevan todo* - you know, *Niña*, the *gringos* and the *gringuitos* take away everything…" … But Kate herself was

> included by Juana in the *gringuitos*: the white foreigners. The woman was making another sliding, insolent attack. (131)

Since Kate takes it as an attack and an offense, she shoots back: " 'It is possible', said Kate coldly. 'But tell me what I take away from Mexico' ." (131). A question which Juana evades right away, but not without a subtle smile of satisfaction hidden in her face:

> *'No, Niña, no*!' The subtle smile of satisfaction lurked under the bronze tarnish of Juana's face. She had been able to get at the other woman, touch the raw. 'I don't speak of you, *Niña* !'
>
> But there was too much protest in it. (131)

We have here, therefore, what Memmi calls the "ambivalent and symbiotic relationship between colonizer and colonized" that I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. Juana's awareness of the hierarchy (and of the rape of the oppressors) is strong. Yet, there is a fascination for *La Niña* that evinces itself throughout their relationship. Juana has an enormous pleasure to serve her *patroa*. She will drop her own family, just to run for whatever Kate needs: "No, no, the only one thing she did want, ultimately, was to serve her *Niña* (131). A hilarious example of this servitude takes place when Kate is taking a bath, with the door shut, and Juana is outside asking her what to cook for breakfast:

> *'Niña ? Niña ?'*
>
> 'What do you want?'
>
> 'Eggs boiled or fried or *rancheros*? Which do you want?'
>
> 'Boiled'.
>
> 'Coffee or chocolate?'

> 'Coffee'.
>
> 'Or do you want tea?'
>
> 'No, coffee.'
>
> Bath proceeds.
>
> *'Niña* ?'
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> 'There is no coffee. We are going to buy some.'
>
> 'I'll take tea.'
>
> 'No, *Niña*! I am going. Wait for me.
>
> 'Go then.' (124)

The irony (and emphasis), of course, besides the submission and desire to please, is placed on the inefficiency of the natives (as they are characteristically portrayed by the Western view), unable to keep track of their supplies, unable to control what is in storage and what they are short of. The desire to please, however, makes wonders and when Kate comes out to have breakfast on the veranda, "the table is set, heaped with fruit and white bread and sweet buns" (124). The admiration, desire to please, and, in a sense, almost *idolatry* border the absurd, when Juana refers to Kate's feet:

> 'Good Morning, *Niña* . How have you passed the night? Well! Ah, praised be God! Maria, the coffee. I'm going to put the eggs in the water. Oh, *Niña* , that they may not be boiled hard! - Look, **what feet of the Madonna**! Look! *Bonitos*! And Juana stooped down, fascinated to touch with her black finger Kate's white soft feet, that were thrust in light sandals, just a thong across the foot.
>
> (124-5; emphasis added)

To return to Memmi, "How could she hate the colonizers, and yet admire them so passionately?" Love and hate seem to be inseparably mixed here. And she does not seem to be just artificially flattering her *patroa*, with ulterior motives. She truly seems to veer between the two extremes: she is, at times, genuinely loving, submissive, deferential and courteous and, at other times, the feeling of being abused, or having been too often abused, surfaces and she becomes hostile, disdainful, resentful and ironic. Not, however, in the passage above. Here she is genuinely fascinated by Kate's white skin, which makes her see the *patroa* (in Juana's mind, as Lawrence thinks the conception of the natives whom he met) at the level of some divinity: the Madonna herself.

This picture of hate and desire, as elaborated by Memmi in *Dominated Man: Notes Toward a Portrait,* poses a problem for "oppositional" postcolonial theory, namely, how can the subaltern fight the oppressor, when his/her attitude is one of love and admiration also?; when the subaltern, as in *The Plumed Serpent*, sees the European as "the Madonna herself"?; when the implacable enmity between native and invader dims and fades away? According to Leela Gandhi,

> … the colonial archive mitigates these simple dichotomies through its disclosure of the complicating logic and reciprocity of desire. It shows that the colonised's predicament is, at least partly, shaped and troubled by the compulsion to return a voyeuristic gaze upon Europe. (11)

In real life, the crisis produced by this self-division in the "colonized's mentality" is at least as psychologically significant as those which refer to the more obvious contestations between colonizer and colonized. It is interesting to note that Lawrence could have captured such schizophrenia, before any germs of "post-colonial theory" having ever

sprouted. Leela Gandhi cites an Indian epic novel, *A Suitable Boy* (1993, though), which presents the postcolonial schizophrenia, as the Indian protagonist is always trying to impress his suitability upon the heroine's Anglophile brother. Gandhi explains:

> The Europe they know and value so intimately is always elsewhere. Its reality is infinitely deferred, always withheld from them. Worse still, their questing pursuit of European plenitude, their desire to own the coloniser's world, requires a simultaneous disowning of the world which has been colonised. Arun Mehra can only sustain his apprentice brown-sahibship by speaking in the language of his conquerors. (12)

In the case of *The Plumed Serpent*, Juana's curiosity and desire to learn about Kate's world surfaces in an ironic way. It is almost the reversal of the "monstrous tales" that Europeans held for so long about the New World, as reported by Stephen Greenblatt, in *Marvelous Possessions* (I discussed the issue in more detail in chapter II). Juana asks Kate if it is true that, in her part of the world, there are people with only one eye in the middle of their forehead (189). One could safely argue that Lawrence is echoing *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, in the fourteenth century, only he is reversing the agents. Here it is the native from the American continent that advances those fantasy tales about the European people. Kate denies the story and Juana insists: "Isn't it true? Do you know? Have you been to the country where they are, these people?" (190). Kate answers: "I have been to all the countries, and there are no such people" (190). Juana is absolutely "awestruck" to learn that no such people exist, and since they are on the

subject, she decides to get the confirmation from Kate (who knows it all, and has been all over the world) about another incredible story she has heard:

> "But in your country, they are all gringos? Nothing but gringos?"
>
> She meant, no real people and salt of the earth like her Mexican self.
>
> "They are all people like me," said Kate coldly.
>
> "Like you, *Niña* ? And they all talk like you?"
>
> "Yes! Like me."
>
> "And there are many?"
>
> "Many! Many!"
>
> "Look now!" breathed Juana, almost awestruck to think that there could be whole worlds of these freak, mockable people. (190)

Lawrence's provocative reversal makes the "freaks" not the one-eyed monsters, but the white people with their bizarre manners. Is Juana mocking Kate deliberately? Somehow, her innocence and lack of formal education would make it difficult for her to have a more precise perception of the world, of geography, of the distribution of the population on the planet. So, it is not impossible, at that time and in isolated areas, in villages, in areas where people were uneducated, to find those who lived in their little worlds and to be familiar only with their own place, failing to know about far away cultures. Could Lawrence have spent enough time with natives to grasp that this was the case with some of them? Or was he, once again, being influenced by the Western belief that all these natives knew nothing? Except, of course, for Don Ramón and Don Cipriano, but they are upper-class men who were educated in the West! Perhaps, what really matters in this passage is that Juana's view of Kate's strangeness (as an utterly incommensurable 'other')

accentuates the opposition between the two women, which will only be overcome (even if in an idealized way) with Cipriano's interference, later, marrying Kate and bringing on her conversion.

Also worth noting, as Gandhi does, in the hatred/desire relationship, is the notion of power we can borrow from Foucault. As Gandhi puts it, "to make theoretical sense of …the colonised's complicity in the colonial condition, we need to allow for a more complex understanding of the mechanisms of power" (14). The logic of power, as Foucault has it, is not exclusively coercive, but also, and perhaps mainly, frequently seductive. And it presupposes a web-like inclusiveness, since power is best able to disseminate itself through the collaboration of its subjects. There is no 'outside' to power - it is always, already, everywhere. To cite Gandhi again, "We could say that power traverses the imponderable chasm between coercion and seduction through a variety of baffling self-representations" (14). It is also important to remember that power, for Foucault, is not only a force that says "No!", but one which produces things, creates knowledge and produces discourses. While it may manifest itself in a demonstration of force, it is equally likely to appear as the disinterested supplier of cultural enlightenment and reform. Well before Foucault, Gramsci had grasped the idea that culture serves authority, and ultimately the national state, not because it represses and coerces, but because it is affirmative, positive and persuasive.

In the case of *The Plumed Serpent*, and particularly with the character of Juana, what can be noticed is that, in spite of the seduction Kate exercises on her, Lawrence portrays the Mexican woman making headway, even if in her simple-minded way, in the

direction of the decolonization of her own mind[29]: if, on the one hand, it is true that Juana is mesmerized, many times, by her European *patroa*, even seeing her as "the Madonna herself," on the other hand, her reasoning leads her to surprising conclusions. Here is what she elaborates on:

> 'And is it true,' asked Juana, 'that El Señor, El Cristo del Mundo, is a *gringo*, and that He comes from your country, with His Holy Mother?'
>
> 'Not from my country, but from a country near.'
>
> 'Listen!' exclaimed Juana, awestruck. 'El Señor is a *gringuito*, and His Holy Mother is a *gringuita*. Yes, one really knows. Look! Look at the feet of the *Niña*! Pure feet of the *Santissima*! Look! (200)

On and on she proceeds with her discoveries that "the Lord is a *Gringuito*" and then she moves on to the next step, asking Kate: "And, *Niña* - it was the *gringos* who killed El Señor? It wasn't the Mexicans? It was those other *gringos* who put Him on the Cross?" (200). As one can clearly see, Lawrence portrays Juana's world to be manicheistically divided into two categories: Mexicans and *gringos*. She does have a sub-category, though: "those other *gringos*" who killed El Señor. They are, nevertheless, *gringos*, white foreigners, and not a very honorable race to her, since they crucified their own. That lays the foundation for Juana and family to start thinking that maybe, these hymns that they have been listening to, which talk about the return of their own god,

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[29] Here I use the concept described in books such as Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy* (1983), or Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1981), in which the distinction between the two chronologically distinct types or genres of colonialism are elaborated: the first, focusing on the physical conquest of territories; the second, focusing on the conquest and occupation of minds, selves and cultures.

Quetzalcoatl, could be right. Maybe, they should forget about the foreign gods, and open their hearts and return to their native religion.

Whereas the issue of the hymns themselves will be treated in my next chapter, what is of relevance here is that, for Juana, the "colonized's complicity" and admiration/love/desire for the colonizer and her world end at this moment. Of course, to make this complicity end is easier to do in fiction than it is in life. If the problem in real life, in many ex-colonies, remains, as expressed by Memi in the question mentioned before ("how could the colonised deny himself so cruelly?") in fiction Lawrence can make this denial stop, for in the *The Plumed Serpent*, Juana does not deny her roots. She does not deny herself, her people, her beliefs. On the contrary, her reasoning about Jesus Christ and the foreigners leads her to the acceptance of, and return to, her native religion. One could argue that Lawrence was playing, in fiction, in 1923-4, with ideas related to the ones theorists such as Ngugi would advocate some decades later, for Africa, such as the abandonment of the colonizer's language and the return to the native language.

Of course, the abandonment of Christianity and the return to the Aztec religion can only happen in the fantastic world of Lawrence's fiction. In real life, as Jacques Lafaye explains, in *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe : The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness*, both entities are deeply ingrained in the Mexican collective minds and neither can be simply erased or forgotten. Octavio Paz, not without a grain of irony, states, in his foreword to the same book, that "the Mexican people, after more than two centuries of experiments and defeats, have faith only in the Virgin of Guadalupe and the National Lottery" (xi). Paz declares that:

> Lafaye's book is an admirable description of the beliefs of New Spain during the three centuries of its existence. Complex beliefs in which two syncretisms blend: Spanish Catholicism and the Aztec religion. The first, marked by its agelong coexistence with Islam, by its crusading spirit and obsession with the end of the world; the second, likewise the militant religion of a chosen people. The mass of believers was as complex as their beliefs: the Indian peoples (each with its own language and tradition), the Spaniards (also divided in race and language), the creoles, the mestizos, the mulattoes. (x)

Lawrence's sympathies with Native Mexican culture, his attempt to embrace a dark non-dominant culture, and his idealistic anti-colonialism did not stop him, however, from writing one of the most unambiguously racist passages in the novel, through the voice of the omniscient narrator:

> Ah the dark races! Kate's own Irish were near enough for her to have glimpsed some of the mystery. The dark races belong to a bygone cycle of humanity. They are left behind in a gulf out of which they have never been able to climb. And on to the particular white man's levels they never will be able to climb. They can only follow as servants. (130)

Again echoing the colonial doctrine, the natives are frequently compared to animals, and, in this novel, to reptiles (which is as low as one can get in Darwin's scale of evolution), with a surreptitious attitude. A village, for instance, is described as being "in that state of curious, **reptile apprehension which comes over dark people**" (117; emphasis added), and Juana is viewed as "a terror-struck **lizard**" (117; emphasis added). In Kate's stream of consciousness, animal-like imagery appears again:

> Like animals, yet not at all like animals. For animals are complete in their isolation and their *insouciance*. With them it is not indifference. It is completeness in themselves. But with the family there was always a kind of bleeding of incompleteness, a terrible stupor of boredom settling down. (128)

Later in the novel, close to Kate's marriage to Cipriano by Quetzalcoatl, after many changes and a hypothetical growth on her part, the idea surfaces again:

> For a pure moment, she wished for men who were not handsome as these dark natives were. Even their beauty was suddenly **repulsive** to her; the dark beauty of **half-created, half-evolved** things, left in the old, **reptile-like smoothness**.
>
> (272; emphasis added)

There is also ambivalence in her feelings towards Cipriano, even after having succumbed to him, to what she called his "mystery" and his "power," with which "the limitations ceased to exist" (277). After having accepted, in her mind, to marry him, even then, her ingrained conception comes back:

> Cipriano sat in silence in front of her. He had removed his tunic, and his neck rose almost black from his white shirt. She could see how different his blood was from hers, dark, blackish, like the blood of lizards among hot black rocks. She could feel its changeless surge, holding up his light, bluey-black head as on a fountain. (284)

Kate's relationship with Juana's family, and, particularly, with the daughters, evinces difficulties involved in racial/cultural encounters. Kate resents some of Juana's observations, such as when she says: "Ah, the rich people!," to which Kate immediately replies "I am not rich!," and Juana then reveals her irony: " 'You are not rich, *Niña?*'

came the singing, caressive bird-like voice: 'Then, you are poor?' - this was indescribable irony" (189). Kate resents such remarks because she evidently sees herself as a benefactor. Juana cannot read or write and her daughters, Maria and Concha rarely attend school, so Kate seems to think she could do something to improve their future. In the old and renowned style of the so-called "civilizing mission," Kate tries to help the girls with their reading, and also tries to teach them sewing, a skill that will be important in their future, as *she* sees it, that is, obviously as servants. Knowing so little about them, however, about their cultural background and their scale of priorities, Kate is ill-prepared for any educational task. How could it be different? To start with, the novel's perspective (and hers) is revealed in the first introduction of the girls, who are described in terms as negative as the ones used for their mother:

> Concha was fourteen, a thick, heavy, **barbaric girl** with a mass of black waving hair which she was always scratching. Maria was eleven, a shy, thin **bird-like thing** with big eyes that seemed almost to absorb the light round her.
>
> (123; emphasis added).

Moreover, coming from her cultural background, and unable to understand that notions of hygiene and sanitary practices are socially constructed, Kate is horrified by their lack of sanitary standards, their lice, and their habit of throwing trash on the ground. Lawrence can be hilarious in his indignation with this particular habit. In the words of the omniscient narrator, in free indirect speech, the natives are imagined to say: "Here's a piece torn off my dress! Earth, take it. Here's the combings of my hair! Earth, take them!" (123). Although it may be humorous, it does show his lack of understanding of cultural difference. Lawrence’s desire to understand cultural difference is, once again,

betrayed by his practice as a writer. In the words that precede the quotation above, for instance, his perception evinces powerful eurocentric prejudices:

> Themselves indifferent to their surroundings, they would live in squalor. The earth was the great garbage-bowl. Everything discarded was flung on the earth and they did not care. Almost they liked to live in a *milieu* of fleas and old rags, bits of paper, banana skins and mango stones. Here is a piece …. Earth, take it! (123)

The irony that, obviously, Lawrence could not foresee resides in the fact that this kind of behavior (which he attributes to the "savage ones") is far less damaging to nature than the polluting practices of industrial “civilized” societies: biodegradable fruit skins are of course less harmful than the toxic trash that would eventually increasingly pose a threat to nature.

Kate imposes her standards on the natives, and assumes that they have to sweep their patios, to which they willingly oblige, not because they understand her reasoning, let alone agree with it, but because, as Lawrence portrays it, it means a diversion in their routine, and, for them, it meant that she cared: "the family were quite glad, thrilled that she cared. They swept the *patio* with the twig broom till they swept the very surface of the earth away. Fun!" (123). Although these ideas of hers struck them as funny, they enjoyed doing things her way. Lawrence portrays her as a source of wonder and amusement to them. To this extent, I think he does grasp the cultural gap. He portrays, on the one hand, his protagonist exercising the colonizer’s perspective: "the natives are like children, they need a strong hand to guide them"; on the other hand, the writer does

cross the bridge and tries to put himself in the natives' point-of-view, seeing the European standards as something weird, amusing and incomprehensible.

As for Kate's attempt to "help" the girls with their school tasks, as mentioned before, it is a far from problem-free venture. Kate assumes, evidently, that as an educated woman she will have no trouble teaching them. She is unable to understand that this emphasis on formal schooling is not something that they can see as beneficial to them. Here is her initial thought:

> They were a strange puzzle to Kate. She felt something must be done. She herself was inspired to help. So she had the two girls for an hour a day, teaching them to read, to sew, to draw. Maria wanted to learn to read: that she did want. For the rest, they began well. (129)

The problems, though, did not take long to show up:

> But soon, the regularity and the slight insistence of Kate on their attention made them take again that peculiar invisible jeering tone, something peculiar to the American Continent. A quiet, invisible, malevolent mockery, a desire to wound. They would press upon her, trespassing upon her privacy, and with a queer effrontery, doing all they could to walk over her. With their ugly little wills, trying to pull her will down. (129)

What can be noticed here is that Kate is projecting on the girls' attitudes her own view. First, she expects the girls to behave as European students. When that does not happen, and the children show a certain resistance to stay put, and try to evade the subject matter of the lesson, Kate is helpless. Her justification of their action, however, is totally misguided. She attributes the girls' impatience to a "desire to wound," and moreover, she

generalizes it, and says that this is an "invisible jeering tone" which would be "peculiar to the American continent." Her Western assumptions are very evident in her European oriented reasoning. She is probably overreacting because she cannot handle their need for physical contact. That can be seen in the second part of the quotation above, when she says that they "press upon her, trespassing upon her privacy." This need for physical contact is of course cultural, and, especially in this setting (of a private teacher with two girls at a home environment), chances are that the children would get affectionate and close to her. Her European mind, however, cannot bear that, and she says in the next line: "No, don't lean on me, Concha. Stand on your own feet." Her discomfort reaches the climax when the girl, naïvely, asks next: "Do you have lice in your hair, *Niña*?" (129). That is the last drop, for Kate, and she cannot hold it anymore: " 'No,' said Kate, suddenly angry. 'And now go! Go! Go away from me! Don't come near me.' " (129). I think Lawrence is implying here that for Concha, asking *La Señora* if she had lice in her hair was something that she saw as natural, that meant no offense at all. But he also understands fully well his own description of Kate's feelings. In another passage, Kate is on the veranda with visitors drinking tea, while, at the other side of the *patio,* the following is taking place:

> … full in view, Juana, Concha, Maria and Felipa, a cousin of about sixteen, squatted on the gravel with their splendid black hair down their backs, displaying themselves as they hunted in each other's hair for lice. They wanted to be full in view. And they were it. They wanted the basic fact of lice to be thrust under the noses of those white people. (130)

It never crossed Kate's mind that, perhaps, all they wanted was the light of the sun, in order to be able to search better each other's hair, which could be the reason why they had to be out on the *patio*. They were at "the other side of the *patio*," close to the den where they lived, which makes the choice of words "thrust under the noses of those white people" sound like an exaggeration. In Kate's mind, however, they were doing it with the sole purpose of offending those white people who, God forbid, would never have lice, as if, biologically, only dark-skinned people could have them.

Hence, that is the end of the short-lived educational enterprise, or her private "civilizing mission." Kate was not prepared for her students' dependence, their non-European behavior, their physical closeness, and what she perceived as their insolent curiosity about her habits (as if when Concha asks if she has lice). Moreover, Kate seems to think that the task of education should focus on the subject matter to be taught, and is totally unaware of the fact that getting to know her students, understanding them better, trying to apprehend their cultural background and what drives them should be step one for any possible exchange of knowledge, in both directions. Kate, in other words, is unable to appreciate and respect the otherness of her students.

Lawrence's desire to encounter the other, and to show the beauty of Mexican civilization before the invasion of the Spaniards, is significantly betrayed by the burden of his cultural, deep-seated prejudice against the natives of the New World. The beauty that he sees in what he reads about the Aztec culture remains in the plan of the "ideal," but the real people he comes across on the streets of Mexico (whom Juana and her family are a representation of) are very different from his idealized, platonic view, and it is in

them, and in Kate's relationship with them, that he renders visible his inner inability to put what he dreams of - to reach the other - in practice.

V - THE ISSUE OF NATIONALISM AND THE HYMNS TO QUETZALCOATL

The novel's proposal of the resurrection of a pre-colonial religion as the basis for a new social order cannot be dissociated from the historical political situation of the early twentieth-century Mexico. The Mexico Lawrence encountered, in 1923, was still in the aftermath of a revolutionary turmoil, which needs to be looked into, more rigorously, now. The Mexican Revolution (1910-20), especially as evinced in the efforts of Emiliano Zapata, promoted socialist aspects tuned to the interests of the peasants. Although some segments and ideological currents have tried to downplay the "popular," agrarian side of the revolution, it is difficult to deny that it did involve massive, and extremely violent, rural rebellions. These "rural" social movements were not all of the same kind, of course, and some rural regions remained more peaceful than others during the revolution, until they were touched by the interventions of revolutionary armies from the outside. Some of the "quiet" regions, like the Yucatan, were places where vicious forms of exploitation of rural people took place. In other areas, the Indian *pueblos* were the most predominant. All in all, the scale and extensiveness of agrarian movements alone makes it difficult to sustain the "revisionist" view that the agrarian side wasn't really important. On the other hand, a purely "agrarian" model of the Mexican revolution seems equally unsatisfactory, for several reasons: there is the problem of the non-peasant leaderships who had such a prominent role in the affair; there is also the problem of actually describing some of the popular forces which fought in the revolution as peasants. Pancho Villa's popular army from the North, for instance, was made up of people who were very different from the Indian peasant villagers who formed the core of the forces of

Emiliano Zapata in the South. Local "revolutionary" bands, particularly in the North, could be made up of people from different social classes within a community – landowners, shopkeepers, miners etc. As a *New York Times* correspondent, John Reed writes, on April 27, 1914 [30]:

> Nos han contado todo sobre los antecedentes bandoleros de Villa, como si esto tuviera alguna relación con la manera en que se ha desempeñado como general y gobernador. Los corresponsables han hablado de la revolución de Madero, de la revolución de Orozco, de la revolución de Carranza y de la revolución de Zapata; pero hay y ha habido sólo una revolución en México. … Al comienzo fue lisa y llanamente una pelea por la tierra. (163)
>
> [We have been told all about (Pancho)Villa's unlawful antecedents, as if this had anything to do with the way in which he performed as general and as governor. The correspondents have talked about Madero's revolution, Orozco's revolution, Carranza's revolution and Zapata's revolution; but there is and there has been only one revolution in Mexico. … At the outset, it was purely and simply a struggle for the land.] (my translation)

Reed's position is an interesting one, since he is not only an American news correspondent. As a political activist, he had actually taken part in the Mexican Revolution along with the forces of Pancho Villa, and would, three years later, get known for defending, being present, taking part and writing about the Russian revolution of 1917

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[30] Reproduced by Jorge Ruffinelli, in *John Reed, Villa y la Revolución Mexicana.*

(he is the author of *Ten Days that Shook the World*). Reed,[31] as a result of his political stand, has a tendency to give emphasis to the agrarian character of the revolution, and the role of the peasants, denying any other forces:

> Han corrido ríos de tinta sobre el asunto y hay libros como el de Hamilton Fyfe, *The Real Mexico*. Nos cuenta que la Revolución es una revolución de la clase media, porque su agitador fue Francisco Madero. Esto es simplesmente una mentira. En primer lugar, no existe una clase media mexicana. En segundo lugar, toda la agitación campesina ha sido descrita y predicha diez años antes de que estallara la Revolución. (165)
>
> [There have been rivers of ink on the subject and there are books such as Hamilton Fyfe's *The Real Mexico*. It tells us that the Revolution is a revolution of the middle class, because its instigator was Francisco Madero. This is simply a lie. First of all, there is no Mexican middle class. Secondly, all the peasant uprising was described and foreseen ten years before the outbreak of the revolution.] (my translation)

31

As Ruffinelli explains: "La celebridad póstuma de Reed proviene ante todo de su participación en la revolución de 1917 y del espléndido libro que la registro: *Diez dias que conmovieron al mundo*. Pero antes de esa fecha, habia participado en los movimientos sociales y laborales de su país, habia sufrido al carcel, … y también habia participado en la Revolución Mexicana, en 1914, junto a las fuerzas de Pancho Villa. Todo eso aparece registrado en *Casi treinta*. (11)

[Reed's posthumous celebrity stems, first of all, from his participation in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and from the splendid book which has recorded it: *Ten Days that Shook the World.* Before that, however, he had taken part in the social and labor movements of his country, had been to prison, … and had also taken part in the Mexican Revolution, in 1914, along with the forces of Pancho Villa. All that is recorded in *Almost thirty*]. (my translation)

Although the initial political revolution of Francisco Madero was very much centered on the liberalism of Benito Juárez's time, historians today agree that the revolution did, eventually, lead to social and political change, but one could argue that very little of the ultimate outcome was what was envisaged or planned by any of the revolutionary factions. But, then, not many revolutions in history did accomplish what had been the dreams of their revolutionary agents, when we look at them in retrospect.

Ruffinelli gives us some interesting data about the real situation of the land in Mexico at the time, and the complexity of the terms, *hacendados*, *agricultores*, *jornaleros de campo* evinces the difficulty in trying to understand the situation:

> La situación de la tierra esta muy bien descrita por Silva Herzog[32], por ejemplo en el siguiente pasaje: "Segun el censo de población de 1910, havia en el país 840 hacendados, 411.096 personas clasificadas como agricultores y 3.096.827 jornaleros de campo. La población total de Mexico ascendia a 15.160.396 habitantes… Los 840 hacendados eran los duenos de la mayor parte del territorio nacional. Uno dellos, el general Terrazas, poseia en el norte millones de hectareas, seguramente el propietario individual de más extensas tierras en cualquier país y en todos los tiempos. Por eso, quando alguien preguntaba si Terrazas era de Chihuahua, la respuesta era: "no, Chihuahua es de Terrazas". (37)
>
> [The situation of the land is very well described by Silva Herzog, for instance, in the following passage: "According to the population census of 1910, there was in the country 840 *hacendados* (landowners), 411.096 people classified as

32 Jesus Silva Herzog, *Breve História de la Revolución Mexicana*, Mexico, FCE, 1965.

> *agricultores* (farm workers) and 3.096.827 *jornaleros de campo* (field day laborers). The total population of Mexico totaled 15.160.396 inhabitants… The 840 *hacendados* were the owners of the greatest part of the national territory. One of them, General Terrazas, owned millions of hectares in the north, surely the individual owner of the most extensive piece of land in any country at all times. For that reason, when somebody asked if Terrazas was from Chihuahua, the answer was: "no, Chihuaha belongs to Terrazas" (the play on words in Spanish works because the prepositon *de* indicates both origin and possession).] (my translation)

Apart from the disparity and inequality of the distribution of land (greatly highlighted by the General Terrazas example), and the obvious need for land reform, a question that catches the eye is: if the three mentioned categories make roughly 3,5 million people, where were the other 11,5 million? They surely could not all be shopkeepers and miners. There certainly was a significant portion of Indian population, excluded not only from land ownership but also from the labor market. In the first years of the Mexican revolution, Villa, in the condition of "governor," started the land reform in his own way:

> Pero Villa, con la aprobación de su jefe o sin ella, comenzó a confiscar las propiedades de los grandes terratenientes y a repartirlas entre la gente. Por ejemplo, en el estado de Chihuahua dio 62 acres a cada varón adulto, con la prohibición de venderlos en el lapso de diez años. … Los tres años de Revolución han educado al pueblo mexicano más que los 35 años del gran "Educador" Porfirio Díaz. (166)

> [But Villa, with or without his boss's approval, started confiscating the great landowners' properties and distributing them among the people. For instance, in the state of Chihuahua he gave 62 acres to each adult man, with the prohibition of selling them in a period of ten years. … The three years of Revolution have educated the Mexican people more than the 35 years of the great "Educator" Porfirio Díaz.] (my translation)

The Mexican revolution presents peculiar aspects, considering the composition of its population, its colonial past and also the syncretism of beliefs discussed in my previous chapter, which makes it very difficult to analyze it in terms of the kind of teleological, "world historical" formulation so deeply ingrained in Western thought about social revolutions. This can be easily seen in a famous analysis presented by Adolfo Gilly in *La Revolución Interrumpida.*[33] Gilly subscribes to the Marxist model of the "necessary movement of history" (the bourgeois revolution follows from feudalism, and leads to the proletarian revolution), but, as he is forced to acknowledge, Mexico does not fit neatly into either the "bourgeois" or the "proletarian" slot. The revolution outcome is not a transition to socialism, but it is equally hard, Gilly suggests, to see pre-revolutionary Mexico as "feudal," and interpret the revolution as "bourgeois." The solution Gilly finds is to describe the Mexican revolution as "mixed," a kind of "half-way house" between bourgeois and proletarian revolution: it failed to secure the breakthrough to a new social order, because the masses had a very different character to

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[33] Late in 1971 Adolfo Gilly's *La revolución interrumpida* was published in Mexico. The book is an interpretation of the Mexican revolutionary movement (1910-1920), and in the final chapter the author discusses the situation of the country at the moment he is writing.

anything which had happened in history before. Of course, what *he* failed to see is that he was doing the wrong move, as he tried to classify the Mexican revolution following models of the Western societies. Instead of starting by analyzing precisely this peculiar character of the Mexican masses, and what their goals and needs were, which would involve understanding the Mexican Revolution from its roots, he was trying to impose on it a model from different societies (the Western model of a social revolution) which would not, of course, apply to Mexico.

Addressing Gilly in a letter[34] reproduced at the end of *The Other Mexico: Critique of the Pyramid*, Octavio Paz confronts him by saying that “the theory of a single process of development is an ethnocentric theory whereby the historical model of the West is indiscriminately applied to all societies” (140).

When even sociologists, historians and theoreticians have trouble apprehending what this turmoil in Mexico, between 1910 and 1920, really was, what to say of an English novelist (not favorably disposed toward anything "socialist"[35]), living in the country for a couple of years (1923-24)? Evidently, Lawrence projected, in his fiction, his perception of what was around him: the need for the establishment of a new social

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[34] Gilly is an author with Trotskyist tendencies, and his book was written in Lecumberri Prison in Mexico City. He was eventually liberated, as most political prisoners of the previous regime in accordance with the policy of “apertura democrática” (“democratic liberalization”) announced by the then President of Mexico, Luis Echeverría. Octavio Paz sent him a letter still in prison, after reading his book. The letter was first published in the monthly review *Plural* (no. 5, February, 15, 1972).

[35] Socialist references are present from page one in the novel, when Kate's cousin, Owen, is introduced as "a great socialist". The discussion appears again through the voice of Henry (a minor character, and a guest at the Tea-Party offered by Mrs. Norris in the novel's chapter II). He said: "I'm an American, and I may any day turn bolshevist, to save my pesos, so I can repeat what I heard a man saying yesterday. He said there are only two great diseases in the world to-day - Bolshevism and Americanism; and Americanism is the worse of the two, because Bolshevism only smashes your house or your business or your skull, but Americanism smashes your soul" (35). Though this point of view evinces the evil of what it calls "Americanism", it does not treat Bolshevism with any sympathy either.

order, but in his own terms. The path he chose, however, was more platonic than in the case of other writers: the resurrection of a pre-colonial religion.

One particular scene, in the novel, portrays well and encapsulates Lawrence's difficulties with the so called "socialist" ideals of the time and could be seen as an explanation for his choosing the path of the revival of the Aztec religion. Lawrence had met, in real life, Diego Rivera[36], renowned painter and a member of the socialist party in Mexico then, and had gotten acquainted with his art, which often conveyed his political beliefs (favoring labor rather than capital). In the scene of the novel I am referring to, Kate is still a newcomer to Mexico city, and is visiting the University of Mexico, escorted by a professor, young Garcia. This is how Lawrence portrays his reaction to Rivera's frescoes, through Kate:

> Kate had seen the reproductions of some of Ribera's frescoes. Now she went round the *patios* of the University, looking at the originals. They were interesting: the man knew his craft. But the impulse was the impulse of the artist's hate. In the many frescoes of the Indians there was sympathy with the Indian, but always from the ideal, social point of view. Never the spontaneous answer of the blood. These flat Indians were symbols in the great script of modern socialism, they were figures of the pathos of the victims of modern industry and capitalism. That was all they were used for: symbols in the weary script of socialism and anarchy. (42)

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[36] The cover illustration of the edition of *The Plumed Serpent* used as reference in this dissertation is a 'detail' from *The Market at Tenochtitlan*, by Diego Rivera (1886-1957), National Palace, Mexico City.

It is clear that there is here an approval of the "sympathy with the Indian," however, when they are used as "symbols in the great script of modern socialism" or simply depicted as "victims of modern industry and capitalism" they become "flat Indians." Lawrence's critique to Rivera's view (which is an expression in art of the view of the socialist party in Mexico, i.e., the view of Marxist activists such as John Reed, as discussed before in this chapter) is not entirely unsubstantiated. One could argue, from the poststructuralist perspective of the critique of Western epistemology, that Lawrence was managing to capture, in his own way (even if he had no means for theorizing it), "difference," something that Marxism, as Edward Said claims,[37] has never been able to do. This is the reason why Lawrence saw it as "weird" to try to force the portraying of the Mexican Indian population in the exact same role as the factory workers of the Western social revolutions. He could see that they did not belong in that "script." In his mind, this was all indoctrination of the communist and socialist parties. And he portrays the professor of the University of Mexico, Garcia, as a "tedious" spokesman for that belief:

> … There was something fresh and soft, petulant about him. Kate liked him. He could laugh with real hot young amusement, and he was no fool. Until it came to these maniacal ideas of socialism, politics, and La Patria. Then he was a mechanical mousetrap. Very tedious.
>
> 'Oh no!' said Kate in front of the caricatures. 'They are too ugly. They defeat their own ends.'

[37] Edward Said was the first to claim, in *Orientalism* (1978) and later, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), that Marxism failed to address otherness and difference. For Said, the radical failure of Marxist theory resides in its inability to accommodate the specific political needs and experiences of the colonized world. It had no means for the theorization of cultural alterity and cultural difference. And few would dispute the fact, today, that eurocentrism is inherent in Marxist thought.

> 'But they are meant to be ugly,' said young Garcia. 'They must be ugly, no? Because capitalism is ugly, and Mammon is ugly, and the priest holding his hand to get the money from the poor Indians is ugly. No?' He laughed rather unpleasantly. (43)

Later in the conversation, Kate reaffirms what is, in fact, Lawrence's critique:

> 'But after all,' said Kate, 'what about the twelve million poor - mostly Indians - whom Montes talks about? …They don't understand the very words, capital and socialism. They are Mexico, really, and nobody ever looks at them, except to make a *casus belli* of them. (44)

The argument, of course, does have a point. As mentioned in my last footnote, the grand narrative of Marxism had to classify these Indians in a familiar category (the proletariat), and was utterly unable to accommodate the specific political needs and experiences of these people of the colonized world. Lawrence understands that much, but where he betrays himself, however, and shows his colors blatantly, is when he puts "socialism" and "anarchy" together.

Given Lawrence's disbelief in political parties, it is not surprising that he would engender a totally different way out, in his fiction, for the establishment of a new social order in Mexico. The traditional political way is even considered (but refused), when Cipriano suggests to Ramón to take that avenue: "Why should you not be Secretary in a few month's time? And follow to the Presidency?" (170), to which Ramón answers:

> 'You know that I don't want that. I must stand in another world, and act in another world. Politics must go their own way, and society must do as it will. Leave me

> alone, Cipriano. I know you want me to be another Porfirio Díaz, or something like that. But for me that would be failure pure and simple.' (170)

The solution envisioned entailed reproducing the nation in a narrative that would redefine the natives' identity, a narrative that would make the Indians "real Indians" with a return to their own culture, their language, their religion and beliefs, instead of the "flat Indians" of Rivera's paintings. In Lawrence's terms, mentioned above, Indians with "the spontaneous answer of the blood." Lawrence knew that the Mexican national identity had nothing to do with ideas of European socialist or communist parties. As he had suggested, in his essay "America, Listen to Your Own," written in 1919, he believed Americans (and here he meant all people from the American continent, to emphasize the difference between the people of the New World and the Old World Europeans) should "pick up the life-thread where the Red race let it fall. They must catch the pulse of the life which Cortés and Columbus murdered" (90). He concludes: "To your tents, O America. Listen to your own, don't listen to Europe" (91). And that is, evidently, what he has his protagonist, Don Ramón, do in *The Plumed Serpent*.

Let us now have a closer look at the process devised for the resurrection of the Aztec religion, which, though naïve and platonic, as discussed in previous chapters, is elaborated in detail in the novel. For Lawrence, "catching the pulse of the life which Cortés had murdered" meant to bring back the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl and to defeat Christianity. As mentioned in my chapter III, Lawrence's protagonist, Don Ramón, constructs a narrative among his people anticipating the return of the old gods which the Spaniards had murdered. Being a *hacienda* owner, and part of the elite in Sayula, it is not difficult for him to get a story published in the local newspaper (in which Kate first learns

about Quetzalcoatl) titled "The Gods of Antiquity return to Mexico." From there Ramón engenders a complex construction in order to set the atmosphere for preparing the people for his plan. At this point, in the novel, the reader is not yet given any hint of Ramón's degree of manipulation behind the scene. The piece of news in the paper tells about the story of some women in the village of Sayula having had a vision, while washing their linen at the shore of the lake. These women were "astonished to see a man of great stature rise naked from the lake and wade towards the shore" (46) and later this man announces: "Why are you crying? Be quiet! … Your gods are ready to return to you. Quetzalcoatl and Tlaloc, the old gods, are minded to come back to you. … I have come from out of the lake to tell you the gods are coming back to Mexico, they are ready to return to their own home" (47). The connection with Ramón comes casually at the end of the article:

> The village is full of excitement, and Don Ramón Carrasco, our eminent historian and archaeologist, whose *hacienda* lies in the vicinity, has announced his intention of proceeding as soon as possible to the spot to examine the origin of this new legend . (47)

This newspaper item is the device to introduce Kate and the reader of the novel to the subject of the return of the gods. The device works for Kate, who can read. For the illiterate people of the village, however, Ramón will have to think of something else. The calculated strategy he uses is one commonly known in oral cultures. As Walter Ong explains, in *Orality and Literacy*, primitive oral cultures had their devices to retain and articulate thought. According to Ong, in a primary oral culture, with orally based thought and expression, in order to solve effectively the problem of retrieving and retaining

carefully articulated thought, one had to do his/her thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence. Thought had to come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions, in proverbs which were constantly heard by everyone so that they came to mind readily and which themselves were patterned for retention and ready recall.[38]

As in traditional oral stories and traditional oral narrative back in ancient Greece, which depended on formulaic expressions, rhythm and songlike blocks to be remembered, the device Don Ramón cunningly visualizes to construct and consolidate his narrative of the return of the gods of antiquity among the illiterate mass involves hymns to be performed in public according to the socially oriented ways of the oral tradition described by Ong. Lawrence uses the episode, in the history of the conquest, when Cortés stole the Indian myth of the return of the god Quetzalcoatl for his own benefit (as addressed in my chapter III), and portrays the Mexican Don Ramón kidnapping the myth back, now against Christianity. By way of the dissemination of these hymns, Ramón strategically revives in people's minds the atrocities committed by the colonizers, and creates the expectation, among the people, of the return of the Aztec

[38] In a chapter called "The Homeric question", Ong talks about studies that would show evidence that *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were actually collections of rhapsodies created by the people. Some scholars even question whether indeed there was a man named Homer, and others, acknowledging his existence, question if he could write, and suggest that the various songs that he "wrote" were not put together into the epic poems until about 500 years later. The Italian philosopher of history Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) believed that there had been no Homer but that the Homeric epics were somehow the oral creations of a whole people! These Bardic songs were rhythmically organized with great formal mastery into metrical patterns which insured that everyone was psychologically attuned to memorization and to easy recall. There was no ear illiteracy in pre-literate Greece. One way or another, it seems that oral heritage, traditional oral stories, and traditional oral narrative did depend on formulaic expressions, rhythm and songlike blocks to be remembered. Oral discourse has commonly been thought of as weaving or stitching (the origin of the word rhapsody – Greek rhapsoidein - means 'to stitch songs together').

god, who will eventually be, evidently, embodied by none but himself. The apparatus he creates to construct and consolidate his narrative is highly sophisticated. First, naturally, he writes the hymns himself as he pleases, and he has bundles of copies made, to be distributed as extensively as possible. Each village has an ‘official reader’ of the hymns to convey the message to the illiterate masses:

> Six soldiers of Cipriano's command took the bundles of hymns by train; one to the capital, one to Puebla and Jalapa, one to Tampico and Monterrey, one to Torreon and Chihuahua, one to Sinaloa and Sonora, and one to the mines in Pachucha, Guanajuato, and the central region. Each soldier took only a hundred sheets. But in every town there was a recognized Reader of the Hymns; or two, or three, or four, or even ten Readers in one city. And readers who went round to the village. (232)

New hymns come out at regular intervals. This fact is important for the construction of ritual periodicity. As Walter Ong points out, oral communication unites people in groups whereas writing and silent reading are solitary activities. The creation of the "self," as we know it, is the result not only of writing but also of print: without these technologies the modern privatization of the self is impossible. It is worth mentioning that in the novel the use of the oral tradition comes, of course, after the invention of print, which involves the use of print by an elite to produce the effect of the oral tradition in the illiterate. The ritual of hymn reading becomes a kind of church service, when the whole village gathers, in the common social performances of oral communities:

> Everywhere, in all the towns and villages, at night-time the little flames would be seen flickering, a cluster of people was seen, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting upon the ground, listening to the slow voice of some Reader. (232)

The first hymn appears in the novel in the episode described in my chapter II, when Kate asks Juana about the sound of the drums she can hear, coming from the *plaza.* She is intrigued by it, and she goes to watch what is going on. She gets completely drawn by the ceremony and the dance. Lawrence portrays, through this dance, as discussed before, Kate's baptism into the mysteries of "primitive Mexican life":

> Kate knew it at once, like a sort of fate. It was no good resisting. There was neither urge nor effort, nor any speciality [sic]. The sound sounded in the innermost far-off-place of the human core, the ever-present, where there is neither hope nor emotion, but passion sits with folded wings on the nest, and faith is a tree of shadow. (111)

Kate had already been inclined "not to resist" when she refused to take the hotel manager's estimate of Quetzalcoatl:

> 'Quetzalcoatl!' exclaimed the manager, giving a little click of the final 'l', in a peculiar native fashion. 'That's another try-on of the Bolshevists. They thought socialism needed a god, so they're going to fish him out of this lake. He'll do for another pious catchword in another revolution.' … 'They're trying to start a new thing, that's all. They've got this society on the lake, here, of the Men of Quetzalcoatl, and they go round singing songs. It's another dodge for national-socialism, that's all.' (89)

Curiously Lawrence portrays the hotel manager's skepticism towards the idea of a revival of the native religion, leveling it with just another political move. And portrays Kate not to be receptive to that. She had met Ramón and Cipriano and she believed they wanted "something beyond." It was not pure "sordid politics," as the hotel manager wanted her to believe.

The contents of the hymn itself amount to an introduction to Ramón's plan: it talks about the re-awakening of Quetzalcoatl putting Christianity, in the figure of Jesus Christ, to sleep (for the complete hymn, see appendix I):

> In the place of the west
> In peace, beyond the lashing of the sun's bright tail,
> In the stillness where waters are born
> Slept I, Quetzalcoatl .
> …
> The star that was falling was fading, was dying.
> I heard the star singing like a dying bird;
> *My name is Jesus, I am Mary's Son.*
> *I am coming home.*
> *My mother the Moon is dark.*
> *Oh brother, Quetzalcoatl*
> *Hold back the dragon of the sun,*
> *Bind him with shadow while I pass*
> *Homewards. Let me come home.*
>
> (103-4)

Sandra Gilbert, in her essay "Hymns in a Man's Life: Stylistic Elements in *The Plumed Serpent* Poems," claims that Lawrence's major reason for introducing verse into *The Plumed Serpent* was "to enable him to deal more purely - less ironically - with the greater manhood he believed Cipriano and Ramón would achieve in becoming Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl" (201). She believes that, in changing the genre, Lawrence confers to Ramón and Cipriano a state of divinity. As she explains: "the verse statements of Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli exist on a transcendent plane which has

almost nothing to do with the personas of Ramón and Cipriano" (203). That can be seen in the hymns, when they embody the gods: "out of the depths of the sky, I came like an eagle/ Out of the bowels of the earth like a snake" (308). Whereas she may have a point, the fact remains that Ramón is aware that he is creating what he sees as a "necessary fiction" and he sees the hymns as a necessary and useful tool to indoctrinate the illiterate masses. His hymns are the device for an artificial reconstruction of a religion, and the awareness is present in his mind, that religion is the opium of the people:

> Because there was a strange, submerged desire in the people for things beyond the world. They were weary of events, and weary of news and the newspapers, weary even of the things that are taught in education. Weary is the spirit of man with man's importunity. Of all things human, and humanly invented, we have had enough, they seemed to say. And though they took not much active notice of the Hymns, they craved for them, as men crave for alcohol, as a relief from the weariness and *ennui* of mankind's man-made world. (232)

The second hymn brings the figure of the Lord of the Morning Star, naming, so to speak, his "representatives" on earth. The poem is an assertion that this god is always present, whether seen or unseen, and though the multitudes "see me not," he will say, he declares those few who perceive him, the "Lords of the Way Unseen" (for the complete hymn, see appendix II):

> …
> Lo! I am always here!
> Far in the hollow of space
> I brush the wing of the day
> And put light on your face.
> The other wing brushes the dark.

But I, I am always in place.
…
The multitudes see me not.
They see only the waving of wings,
The coming and going of things.
The cold and the hot.

But ye that perceive me between
The tremors of night and the day
I make you the Lords of the Way
Unseen.
…
(158-159)

Ramón rushes, after the performance of this hymn, to make sure it is understood that *he* is the appointed one, the messenger of god: "I am the Morning and the Evening Star, and lord of the day and the night. By the power that is put in my left hand, and the power that I grasp in my right , I am lord of the two ways" (159), he says.

The next hymn, "Quetzalcoatl Looks Down on Mexico," is a long leaflet which brings the actual departure of Jesus, as if flying up and away, making room for the return of the native religion (for the complete hymn, see appendix III):

Jesus had gone far up the dark slope, when he looked back.
Quetzalcoatl, my brother! he called. Send me my images,
And the images of my mother, and the images of my saints.
Send me them by the swift way, the way of the sparks,
That I may hold them like memories in my arms when I go to sleep.

And Quetzalcoatl called back: I will do it.

… (214)

In this first stanza, the hymn has Jesus himself ask Quetzalcoatl to send his images, as well as the images of his mother and saints (all icons of Christianity) to him by "the swift way, the way of the sparks" which is, of course, preparing the atmosphere for the next chapter in the novel, "Auto-da-fé," in which the Men of Quetzalcoatl will

remove and burn the Christian images from the Sayula church, before installing their own icons. As argued in my chapter III, this is the reversal of the autos-da-fé of the history of the conquest. They were a common practice of the Christian conquistadors, and consisted of the removal from a native holy place of local religious images, which were usually burned, to be replaced by Christian icons.

Instances of several pieces of vision consolidated throughout history are present in the following stanzas. The eroticization of the land, for example, discussed in my chapter III, is present when Quetzalcoatl looks down from his cloud, and sees "Mexico lying like a dark woman with white breast-tips," the European graphic convention, in which the American continent is often allegorized as a woman. Next, there is the stereotyping of the natives, as drunks ("He saw the men that were blind, reeling with *aguardiente"*), dirty ("He saw the women that were not clean"), and full of hatred ("He saw the hearts of them all, that were black, and heavy, with a stone of anger at the bottom"). Apart from that, the hymn also presents images of the Old Testament, as divine breath blown into human nostrils, or the Divine Wrath sending plagues (the biblical image of the ten plagues, supernatural events caused by God in order to punish Egypt), as earthquakes shaking the earth and swallowing the people and their cities, fires and ashes smothering them, their very blood turning sour, and their very bones crumbling. All these images mixed up with pagan beliefs that give so much power to, and even personify, the elements: earth, wind, fire and water:

> For the sun and the moon are alive, and watching with gleaming eyes.
> And the earth is alive, and ready to shake off his fleas.
> And the stars are ready with stones to throw in the faces of men.
> And the air that blows good breath in the nostrils of people and beasts
> Is ready to blow bad breath upon them, to perish them all.
> (216)

Manipulation can be detected throughout. The hymn could be described as a divine command to those who are asleep, convincing them that they need somebody (the mediator between them and god), the only one who had heard the call from above, the First Man of Quetzalcoatl, to wake them up and be their leader. Don Ramón, actually, anticipates he will need his right arm, Cipriano, in this endeavor, so, the hymn talks about two men looking up:

> So he tossed it awhile in his hand, and played with it.
> Then suddenly he spied the old lake, and he threw it in.
> It fell in.
> And two men looked up.
>
> *Holalá!* he said. *Mexicanos!*
> Are there two of you awake?
> (215)

It is in the next hymn, "What Quetzalcoatl Saw in Mexico," that Ramón engenders the connection with the evils brought on by colonization, involving all the exploitation, and all the injustice of the superimposition of the Christian beliefs onto the natives' own (for the complete hymn, see appendix IV):

> *Who are these strange faces in Mexico?*
> *Palefaces, yellowfaces, blackfaces? These are no Mexicans!*
> *Where do they come from, and why?*
>
> Lord of the Two Ways, these are the foreigners.
> They come out of nowhere.
> Sometimes they come to tell us things,
>
> Mostly they are the greedy ones.
> … (228-9)

The initial drive, as seen above, is against all foreigners, "palefaces, yellowfaces and blackfaces," bordering a dangerous xenophobia, both in the first and second stanzas. The third stanza lists the material goods that were stolen from Mexico by the colonizers (gold,

silver, oil, sugar, coffee, rubber), though the hymn blames this on the same three categories of foreigners mentioned in the previous stanzas, who would all be the "greedy ones." This makes it hard to claim that the notion is clearly against the "colonizer" (the "greedy ones" were the colonizers at the time of the Conquest, and in the twentieth century the baton is relayed to the agents of "neo-colonialism," which can be inferred from the connection with the industry):

> *What then do they want?*
>
> They want gold, they want silver from the mountains,
> And oil, much oil from the coast.
> They take sugar from the tall tubes of the cane,
> Wheat from the high lands, and maize;
> Coffee from the bushes in the hot lands, even the juicy rubber.
> They put up tall chimneys that smoke,
> And in the biggest houses they keep their machines, that talk
> And work iron elbows up and down,
> And hold myriad threads from their claws!
> Wonderful are the machines of the greedy ones!
> (229)

From this point on, there is a Manichean "Us versus Them" relationship developed in which the Mexicans are blatantly called the stupid ones who can only be mastered by the "all clever" foreigners ("What are you good for, but to be slaves, and rot away?"). This hymn is schizophrenic in that it starts by acknowledging the evils of the machines and industry in association with these "clever palefaces," but then there is a turn in the text, and it starts blaming *the Mexicans* for being conquered instead of conquering, for "squatting on their hams" with their vacant eyes, drinking alcohol and doing nothing all day: the traditional stereotype of the "lazy native." The second half of the hymn takes on a biblical style, an apocalyptic tone, with biblical expressions (i.e, "Lo! I release the dragons!"), and images and threats of punishment abound. And, at least in this hymn,

there are no solutions proposed, but only curses thrown at all Mexicans and peons (the same sort of doom as that threatened in the Book of Revelation): "Wait! Only wait! Little by little it all shall come upon you" (231). As if they deserved all the misfortune that they suffer.

It is interesting to note that Lawrence cannot see the incoherence of a pretense hymn for the revival of an Aztec religion in "biblical style." In a conversation which Ramón is having with the bishop of the Catholic church, while they are still on speaking terms, and he is trying to show him that Christianity is alien to these people, he says: "Now, Father, we must speak to the Mexicans in their own language, and give them the clue-word to their own souls. I shall say *Quetzalcoatl*. If I am wrong, let me perish" (235). A biblical style is hardly an adequate way of speaking to them in their own language.

The crowning of Ramón as Quetzalcoatl is prepared in the hymn "I am the Living Quetzalcoatl" (for the complete hymn, see appendix V):

> I am the Living Quetzalcoatl.
> Naked I come from out of the deep
> From the place which I call my Father,
> Naked have I travelled the long way round
> From heaven, past the sleeping sons of God.
>
> Out of the depths of the sky, I came like an eagle.
> Out of the bowels of the earth like a snake.
>
> … (308)

As already seen in chapter III, the personification of the god is established by the hymn, in combination with a fair amount of theatricalization in sacred rituals, in which Ramón wears his *serape*, with a scarlet fringe that goes all the way down his knees,

carefully embroidered with drawings of the eagle and the snake. By way of his soft and hypnotic voice, he really convinces the people he is embodying the feathered-serpent god.

In the novel's chapter XXI, "The Opening of the Church," not by chance, the same chapter in which Ramón's wife, and mother of his children, Carlota, dies, the hymn "Welcome to Quetzalcoatl" appears. Carlota was way too pious a Christian, to the point of thinking her husband must be guided by the devil himself, in carrying his project of destroying the Christian church. This is the moment of her death: "Carlota remained unconscious. There was a consultation of doctors; to no effect. She died at dawn …, as a *canoa* was putting off from the shore with a little breeze, and the passengers were singing the Song of Welcome to Quetzalcoatl " (316). Hence, Carlota's death works as a synecdoche for the death of Christianity in the region, and the replacement of it in people's hearts, for they now welcome their old god back (for the complete 'welcome' hymn, see appendix VI):

> We are not wasted. We are not left out.
> *Quetzalcoatl has come!*
> There is nothing more to ask for.
> *Quetzalcoatl has come!*
> …
> Ah, Quetzalcoatl !
> Put sleep as black as beauty in the secret of my belly.
> Put star-oil over me.
> Call me a man.
> (313-314)

This hymn consolidates the people's "salvation," from slaves, in one of the previous hymns, into "real men" with their native religion revived. Now they can go back to having the drums mark their time, instead of the clocks of the Christians: "the

world was somehow different; all different. No jingle of bells from the church, no striking of the clock. The clock was taken away" (320). In Lawrence's terms, they could be "true to their own souls." Dropping the imported instruments (and all the epistemology of the white men that such instruments drag along with them) works as a synecdoche for the restoration of their true identity.

The character of Don Ramón is far from being a simple one. Although Lawrence uses him to propose a naïve process of "platonic decolonization," he does not seem to be aware that a real "decolonizing process" would have to emerge genuinely from the people, not from a representative of the dominant classes. Ramón is aware that he is artificially creating a narrative, and he is manipulating people as he pleases, but, at the same time, he is convinced that it is a necessary fiction. He repeats several times that people need symbols and "manifestations," and he seems to firmly believe that this is better for them than what was imposed on them by the Spanish colonizers, or what the European socialist parties propose. He has the arrogance to believe that he is the one to tell the natives who they are. There is only one moment in the novel when he questions (in a consciousness crisis) whether he should have the right to do what he is doing. That happens after his sons (influenced by their mother) show their total scorn for their father's hymns and the whole project. That is when he questions: “Who am I, even to talk about Quetzalcoatl, when my heart is hollow with anger against the woman I have married and the children she bore me? We never met in our souls, she and I” (243). Hence, here he reveals a genuine respect for Quetzalcoatl, since he thinks that even for mentioning "His" name, he should have a purer heart. But this is a concern that does not last long. His

project of "saving Mexico" does not allow for philosophical doubts, and that justifies all his actions and makes them acceptable for himself.

Kate, on the other hand, is terrified by the idea of playing god, when the suggestion is made to her that, like Ramón, who is becoming Quetzalcoatl, and like Cipriano, who is becoming Huitzilopochtli , she should take the part of Malintzi. She asks Cipriano if it does not make him afraid. His answer is: "I *am* the living Huitzilopochtli… When Ramón dares to be the living Quetzalcoatl, I dare to be the living Huitzilopochtli. I am he. – Am I not?" (289). After getting her answer, he goes on trying to convince her: "And on the day of flowers, you, too, shall come, in a green dress they shall weave you, with blue flowers at the seam, and on your head the new moon of flowers" (289). For Cipriano, there seems to be no consciousness drama whatsoever, because his blind devotion to Ramón will allow for just about anything. If Ramón is doing it, it must be right. Army discipline does not allow any questioning. At the end of this passage he tells Kate: “We will be the gods of the lake,” to which she replies: “I’m afraid I am just a woman” (291).

There is, in a sense, in the logic of *The Plumed Serpent*, an intentional move to show how gods and goddesses are, for different purposes, artificially created by men. When Ramón first talks to Kate proposing that she takes the part of Malintzi, he does not hide the arbitrariness of the choices (of her or of the name): “And then there must come a goddess[39]; wife or virgin, there must come a goddess. Why not you, as the First Woman of *say* Itzpapalotl, just for the sound of the name?” (282; emphasis added). What first strikes one’s attention is that no reason is offered for the invitation to be done to her.

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[39] In mythological narratives, human life has a place defined once and for all, so the problem of human agency in history never arises.

There is no ‘why’, but rather, a ‘why not?’ (and the weirdness of an Irish woman becoming an Aztec goddess does not deserve serious attention). The mocking tone goes on when the justification for the choice of that entity is "the sound of the name." Kate’s initial answer expresses what she sees as the vileness of the thought: “Never! I should die of shame” (282). We know that "never" ends before the end of the novel, when her conversion is completed.

One cannot help but think that the arbitrariness Ramón is using to choose names of gods, just because he likes the sound of them, could have been present in Lawrence's own mind, in creating his novel. As I mentioned before, Lawrence read voraciously about Mexico during his first weeks in the country in 1923, and that was his first contact with Aztec mythology. The Aztec names of gods he came across could have sounded more "exotic" to the British writer, in 1923, than they should to a native, as he wants Ramón to be. As L.D.Clark mentions, in *Dark Night of the Body*, Dorothy Brett, the painter and personal friend to the Lawrences, records, in *Lawrence and Brett*, that "they read and discussed Lewis Spence's *Gods of Mexico* in Oaxaca during the time when Lawrence was rewriting *The Plumed Serpent"* (103). Clark also suggests that Lewis Spence's *Gods of Mexico* would also be a source of inspiration for the hymns in *The Plumed Serpent*:

> …it appears that he tried to write what he conceived to be hymns in the American Indian sense and that he got his ideas of what these were like from reading Lewis Spence and others. … Spence refers to the Aztec poetry he includes in his book as "hymns," and there is often a similarity between these and Lawrence's poems.

> Spence was following a practice established by Sahagún, the great friar who was the first to record Aztec religious songs and ceremonies. (90)

Sandra Gilbert follows Clark's hint and makes a comparison, in her essay "Hymns in a Man's Life: Stylistic Elements in *The Plumed Serpent* Poems," between Lewis Spence's "Song of Uitzilopochtli" and Lawrence's "First Song of Huitzilopochtli".[40] Regardless of which use Lawrence made of his sources, in the production of the hymns, the fact remains that he is not a native Mexican as he portrays Ramón to be, and that becomes a major problem in the novel. He desires to portray Ramón and Cipriano as natives, and to speak from their point-of-view, fighting against the dominating influence of foreign cultures on the life of Mexicans, and exposing the subsequent dying-out of Mexican culture, be it due to the action of the colonizers, or due to the "danger of Americanization." Yet, his cultural background makes him unsuccessful in the enterprise. He knows very little about the natives, and even Ramón listens to his own people very little. He is rather imposing his ideas on them. Hence, Lawrence creates, as Mrs. Norris had warned, at the tea-party, in the novel's chapter II, two men who are "both entirely the exception among Mexicans" (22). Curiously, what had been meant there as sarcasm, for Mrs. Norris was personifying the English civilization that Kate despised, ends up backfiring as it amounts to a fair description of what the characters turn out to be

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[40] She says: "We have only to compare, for instance, Spence's

> Uitzilopochtli, the warrior, on one is my equal;
> Not in vain have I put on the vestment of yellow feathers,
> For thorough me the sun has risen,

with Lawrence's

> I am Huitzilopochtli,
> Yellow of the sun,
> Sun in the blood . . .
> Deeper than the roots of the mango tree
> Down in the centre of the earth
> Is the yellow, serpent-yellow shining of my sun . . . " (234)

in the novel. The implicit contempt of Mexico, inherent in Mrs. Norris's words, renders itself visible in Lawrence's own text. What is Ramón's "locus of enunciation"? Is he one of the *peons*? Certainly not. He is part of the Mexican national elite, a *hacienda* owner, many times described as "almost a pure Spaniard," who has studied anthropology at Columbia University in New York. This notion is not unique to Lawrence, of course. He is supported by (and makes use of) the consolidated vision of the European culture, for whom the inferiority of non-white races, and the necessity for them to be ruled by a superior civilization is unquestionable. As Said has put it (and I quoted when discussing the notions of "civilization," "culture," and "barbarism," in "Barbaric Mexico"), from the moment Gobineau published the infamous "Essay on the Inequality of Races," in the mid-nineteenth century, "every major novelist, essayist, philosopher, and historian of note accepted as fact the division, the difference and, in Gobineau's phrase, the inequality of the races".[41] Hence, even when the British writer's impulse is to embrace the "culture of the other," his racist assumptions remain as the foundation of his Western thinking and his Western sense of self.

Ramón's "first man in arms," Cipriano, may be a pure Indian, but speaks English impressively well, after being trained in Oxford. He had had a god-father who was an Englishman, Bishop Severn, Bishop of Oaxaca. General Cipriano Viedma is described as "half-priest, half-soldier." Part of the character of Cipriano may have been based on Benito Juárez, the pure Indian who had been president of Mexico between 1857 and 1872. There is a critique, in the novel, related to Juárez's being an Indian only in blood, but full of ideas of the white men, in the voice of a guest at a dinner in Don Ramón's house:

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[41] In his introduction to the Penguin edition of *Kim*, 1989 (1901).

> But the Indian consciousness is swamped under the stagnant water of the white man's Dead Sea consciousness. Take a man like Benito Juárez, a pure Indian. He floods his old consciousness with the new white ideas, and there springs up a whole forest of verbiage, new laws, new constitutions and all the rest. But it is a sudden weed. It grows like a weed on the surface, saps the strength of the Indian soil underneath, and helps the process of ruin. No, madam! There is no hope for Mexico short of a miracle. (54)

Certainly, what Lawrence sees as a miracle is the narrative he has Ramón achieve in his revolutionary efforts, by establishing the new social order through religion. Ramón knows he is creating, with his elaborate narrative, a new community of which he is in absolute control. And that makes him more powerful than being the president, even, because this community transcends the borders of Mexico as a political body.

And as much as Lawrence abhors the "flooding of the Indian consciousness with white ideas," what he does is not that different: *The Plumed Serpent* ends up being "another paleface tale" of what Mexico should be.

VI - CONCLUSION

I have tried to lay out, along the five preceding chapters, what I believe to be the elements which reveal Lawrence's desire to "unlearn Europe" and his willingness to rescue "forgotten histories"; his genuine, if uneasy, effort to explore cultural difference. It took the same five chapters, on the other hand, to demonstrate his heavy reliance on historical assumptions of the very Western culture he was trying to challenge, and how little aware of his own limitations as a subject of his time and culture he was.

The essays in *Mornings in Mexico,* which Lawrence wrote at the same time he was writing *The Plumed Serpent,* and which benefit less from the idealized and "platonic mode" of the fiction, evince clearly again an immense effort for a sympathetic account of Indians, and, at the same time, his European cultural burden. As Jorge Ruffinelli explains:

> "Corasmín y los loros", "Paseo a Huayapa", "El Mozo" y "Día de Mercado" constituyen una visión iluminada e iluminadora del hombre mexicano, por lo menos de aquellos sectores campesinos que conoció en Oaxaca, durante su segundo viaje al país. La actitud de Lawrence - el rechazo - es vigente aquí como en *La serpiente emplumada* y *La mujer que se fue a caballo*, especialmente porque a Lawrence le duele la evidente cautela de los indígenas campesinos que cruzan a su paso, y superpone su fantasía al verdadero entendimiento del mundo hermético mexicano. (111)

> ["Corasmin and the parrots", "Walk to Huayapa", "The Mozo" and "Market Day" comprise an illuminated and illuminating vision of the Mexican man, at least of the peasant sector whom Lawrence was familiar with in Oaxaca, during his second trip to the country. His attitude - rejection - is valid here as well as in *The Plumed Serpent* and *The Woman Who Rode Away*, especially because Lawrence gets offended by the evident caution with which the Indian peasants whom he comes across look at him, and he superimposes his fantasy over the true understanding of the hermetic Mexican world .] (my translation)

In the first essay, Lawrence describes the activity in the patio of the house, with Corasmin - the little fat, curly white dog - and the parrots, as he was reading about Aztec mythology, and brooding on it. The parrots imitate somebody calling the dog: "'Perro! Oh, Perr-rro! Perr-rr-rro!' shriek the parrots, with that strange penetrating, antediluvian malevolence that seems to make even the trees prick their ears" (11). In this first essay, Rosalino, Lawrence's servant, the Indian *mozo*, is also introduced. What is interesting to notice here is that Lawrence identifies himself with Corasmin, and thinks he can understand better the dog than Rosalino, which is indicative of his total inability to cope with the alien culture:

> And Corasmin wags his tail mildly, and looks at me with real wisdom in his eyes. He and I, we understand each other in the wisdom of the other dimension.
>
> But the flat, saucer-eyed parrot won't have it. Just won't have it.
>
> 'Oh, Perro! Perr-rro! Perr-rro-o-o-o! Yap-yap-yap!'

> And Rosalino, the Indian *mozo*, looks up at me with his eyes veiled by their own blackness. We won't have it either: he is hiding and repudiating. Between us also is the gulf of the other dimension. (16)

It is in the second essay, "Walk to Huayapa," a walk through the Oaxacan countryside, that we face some heavily charged and unambiguously racist attitudes of the English writer, almost in the condition of a tourist unable to see beyond his own culture, in 1923. The arrogance starts with the irritation Lawrence feels at Rosalino's inarticulateness. The servant's repetition of *'Como no, Señor'* strikes Lawrence as stupidity and he is compared to the parrots of the patio:

> We will go out of the town. 'Rosalino, we are going for a walk to San Felipe de las Aguas. Do you want to go, and carry the basket?'
>
> *'Como no, Señor*?'
>
> It is Rosalino's inevitable answer, as inevitable as the parrot's 'Perro!' *'Como no, Señor*?' - 'How not, Señor?'
>
> The *Norte*, the north-wind, was blowing last night, rattling the worm-chewed window-frames. 'Rosalino, I am afraid you will be cold in the night'.
>
> *'Como no, Señor*?'
>
> 'Would you like a blanket?'
>
> *'Como no, Señor*?'
>
> 'With this you will be warm?'
>
> *'Como no, Señor*?'
>
> (18)

Lawrence experiences this example of "otherness" as hostility, as a lack of wish to engage in conversation; or, worse, pure stupidity. It does not occur to him that maybe Rosalino would have other things in mind, which, intuitively, he knows he cannot share with the foreigner, for lack of common cultural foundation. Even the code to be used in such exchange would demand a better command, on Lawrence's part, of the local language (a command that should certainly go even beyond any verbal language). Would it not be possible to say that Rosalino, in his silence, is wiser than Lawrence?, presuming the degree of difference between their cultural backgrounds , which Lawrence does not seem to take into consideration. When the man does not react in the way a Western person would expect him to, Lawrence prefers to think of him as a "dumb-bell": "The Americans would call him a dumb-bell" (19). As Lawrence, his wife, and servant march through the dusty countryside, the English novelist gets more and more annoyed by what he sees as Rosalino's dullness, and Rosalino's lack of interest in things that he, Lawrence, would consider of major importance. Thus when they get to the top of a hill, and have the view, through some scattered trees, of a *hacienda*, a green plantation of sugar-cane and "two spots of proud church", Lawrence asks: 'Rosalino, which is San Felipe?' (18). The answer, as he might have expected, is "*Quien sabe, Señor?"*. Still unable to understand that the man is in a different frame of mind, and that his world operates in a different logic than his (a logic that *he* would be unequipped to comprehend), Lawrence concludes: "Among the Indians it is not becoming to know anything, not even one's own name" (19).

Lawrence's frustration gets accentuated by the dryness of the road, the dust, and the temperature (the day is growing hotter, and the distance to Huayapa is probably larger

than what he had anticipated), so when they finally reach the village he is determined to quench his thirst buying some fruit. This is more a product of his own wish than having seen any for sale, but he starts his quest, regardless:

> On the bottom of the *plaza* is a shop. We want some fruit.
>
> '*Hay frutas*? Oranges or bananas?'
>
> *'No, Señor'*
>
> 'No fruits?'
>
> *'No hay.'* (25)

They go everywhere around the village, from shop to shop, from yard to yard, asking if there are fruit for sale. Lawrence gets indignant with the answer he repeatedly gets, *'No hay',* because he can see fruit growing on the trees. In one of the yards, after being given another *'No hay',* he points:

> 'But yes! There are oranges - there!'
>
> She turns and looks at the oranges on the trees at the back, and imbecilely answers:
>
> *'No hay.'*
>
> It is a choice between killing her and hurrying away.
>
> (26-7)

It is hardly possible to miss Lawrence's impatience in passages such as these. He clearly acts as a subject who believes in his own supremacy, superiority and gets indignant at not being recognized as such, and having his wishes denied. It never occurs to him that the simple *'No hay'* may be a way of saying: "we do have them, but not for sale", or "we do have them, but they are not ready to be picked yet". What he fails to see is that if the

answer is concise, so is his question. All he is able to ask is *'Hay frutas?'*. If, in the passage above, he considers that the lady is "imbecilely" answering, which he sees as reason to feel like killing her, one could argue that his question is not any more elaborate: *'Hay frutas?'*. The answer he gets fits perfectly the question he asks. One is not more articulate than the other. And even if he had been more articulate than his interlocutor, the fact that she does not give him the answer he wants could hardly be a reason strong enough to justify a desire to kill her. This obstinate insistence that the other see things his own way reveals Lawrence's difficulty to even start seeing beyond his own culture. Communication cannot get established satisfactorily and, Lawrence is sure, the fault is not his. He is totally oblivious to his own inadequacy, and cannot see that what is incomprehensible to him is a function of different cultural backgrounds. If earlier Lawrence had referred to Rosalino as a "dumb-bell," for mechanically repeating "*Como no, Señor*?," now the whole village of Huayapa is described as a crowd of dumb-bells, repeating *"No hay" :* "… it's the most regular sound made by the dumb-bells of the land" (26). The problem of cultural incommensurability is hardly perceived here, and leads to the arrogance of the European subject, who believes it his right to be served. He sees the fruit. He wants them. Nothing else matters. He is not even aware of the complexity of the culture he visits, marked by the Babel of languages surrounding him, as can be observed in an encounter Rosalino has with another native:

> The lounging man comes and mutters to Rosalino, and Rosalino mutters back, four words. Four words in the *idioma*, the Zapotec language. We retire, pushed silently away.
>
> 'What language do they speak here, Rosalino?

> 'The *idioma*.'
>
> 'You understand them? It is Zapoteca, same as your language?'
>
> 'Yes, Señor.'
>
> 'Then why do you always speak in Spanish to them?'
>
> 'Because they don't speak the *idioma* of my village.'
>
> He means, presumably, that there are dialect differences. Anyhow, he asserts his bit of Spanish, and says *Hay frutas*?. (27)

The colonizer assumes primitive simplicity that must be translated into a dominant form of discourse (eurocentric, of course), and is unable to perceive the complexity of the presence of different tribe descendants, with different native languages used in combination with Spanish.

When they finally find somebody who sells them some oranges, even though they are not ripe, they cost them three cents per piece. Rosalino's comment, when they leave, shows that they know better their environment, as is natural, and implicitly expresses a criticism to the foreigner who has to have things his own way: "In my village, oranges are five for one cent" (29), which is a very polite way of saying "You, idiot!".

The next essay focuses on Rosalino, and it is called "The Mozo." The overall mood of the essay, however, is totally different from the previous one. Here we move from mocking hostility to reverential sympathy again. It becomes evident that his previous frustration for not getting the fruit had brought to the surface his deepest animosity and deep seated prejudice against the natives. When writing "The Mozo," however, Lawrence is back to his initial project: the effort to bridge the gap that

separates colonizer and colonized (at least in his impulse). And, once again, he falls into imagining how weird the white man must look to the Indian: "to them a white man or white woman is a sort of phenomenon; just as a monkey is a sort of phenomenon; something to watch, and wonder at, and laugh at, but not to be taken on one's own plane" (33). After the image of the white race looking like freaks[42] to them, in his mind, comes the rationalization of how they came to rule, by means of commanding technology:

> Now the white man is a sort of extraordinary white monkey that, by cunning, has learnt lots of semi-magical secrets of the universe, and made himself boss of the show. Imagine a race of big white monkeys got up in fantastic clothes, and able to kill a man by hissing at him; able to leap through the air in great hops, covering a mile in each leap; able to transmit his thoughts by a moment's effort of concentration to some great white monkey or monkeyess, a thousand miles away. (33-4)

There is sympathy expressed towards a culture that does not use "cunning" and has not, therefore, become "the boss of the show". Later sympathy arises again in the description of their concept of time, as compared with the white man's:

> The white monkey has curious tricks. He knows, for example, the time. Now to a Mexican, and an Indian, time is a vague, foggy reality. There are only three times: *en la mañana, en la tarde, en la noche:* in the morning, in the afternoon, in the night. There is even no midday, and no evening. But to the white monkey, horrible to relate, there are exact spots of time, such as five o'clock, half past nine. The day is a horrible puzzle of exact spots of time. (34)

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[42] The idea of the Indian looking at the white race as "freaks" is also explored by Lawrence in *The Plumed Serpent* , as shown in my chapter IV, in the relationship between Juana and Kate: " 'Look now!' breathed Juana, almost awestruck to think that there could be whole worlds of these freak, mockable people"(190).

Lawrence is calling attention to lived, natural time, as opposed to clock time. Lived time, of course, does not favor industry, progress, capitalism and the Western culture. This passage throws light upon a recurrent move, namely, when he is inclined to sympathize, Lawrence projects onto the Indians his own beliefs: here, his appreciation of a concept of time that trusts nature rather than a machine, his disgust with his own civilization, which has to measure every second in order to keep appointments, deadlines, and agendas. It is the traditional attempt to romanticize the "noble savage". What is crucial to observe, however, is that he does not learn from the Indians their methods, for, to be sure, they are aware of time in their own way, for their own needs, and for running their plantations and their daily life, such as seasons of the year and weather manifestations which they do need to be aware of. Lawrence does not engage in any explanation of their methods of measuring time, tuned with nature or not, because he has not crossed the bridge to learn them. He prefers to say that, for them, "There are only three times: *en la mañana, en la tarde, en la noche".* What can be observed, then, is that even when he is apparently praising them, in his disgust with his own civilization, he is actually describing them as "simple-minded", unwittingly reaffirming European superiority.

As much as Lawrence wants to sympathize with them, his own "structure of attitudes and references," to use Said's terms, is always the gauge. He cannot escape European binarism and eurocentrism, as I discussed in chapter I. The other is judged as to how he identifies or not with the eurocentric ways, even when Lawrence's own impulse is to break away from this eurocentric view. His structure of references encompasses all traditional concepts of European science, European measurements, European classifications and cataloguing, European taxonomy, geometry, and

abstraction; hence, to put it succinctly: European epistemology. As seen in chapter I, Lawrence's predicament is not different from the one the anthropologist is faced with: in spite of his desire to denounce ethnocentrism, he has to employ the resources of the heritage he is questioning, and every particular borrowing drags along with it the whole of metaphysics, the metaphysical tradition of the opposition nature/culture included.

The binary-based comparison goes on, for instance, with the measuring of distances. To the Indians, Lawrence says "there is near and far, and very near and very far", whereas the "white man has a horrible, truly horrible, monkey-like passion for invisible exactitudes" (34). And his sympathy is extended also, when it comes to their exchange system and possessions:

> The same with money. These *centavos* and these *pesos*, what do they mean, after all? …The natives insist on reckoning in invisible coins, coins that don't exist here, like *reales* or *pesetas*. If you buy two eggs for a *real*, you have to pay twelve and a half *centavos*. Since also half a *centavo* doesn't exist, you or the vendor forfeit the non-existent. … The white man has a horrible way of remembering, even to a *centavo*, even to a thimbleful of *mescal*. Horrible! The Indian, it seems to me, is not naturally avaricious, has not even any innate cupidity. In this he is unlike the old people of the Mediterranean, to whom possessions have a mystic meaning, and a silver coin a mystic white halo, a *lueur* of magic. (35)

So, in the present elaborations on their concepts of time, of distance, and of currency, suddenly Lawrence's sympathy surfaces once again (even if romanticized and loaded with notions that a race could be "naturally avaricious" or have any "innate cupidity") and

in each one of the descriptions, the white man is described as the "horrible" one. The sympathy for the subjugated ones can be seen here:

> But the great white monkey has got hold of the keys of the world, and the black-eyed Mexican has to serve the great white monkey, in order to live. He has to learn the tricks of the white monkey-show: time of the day, coin of money, machines that start at a second, work that is meaningless and yet is paid for with exactitude, in exact coin. A whole existence of monkey-tricks and monkey-virtues.
>
> If an Indian is poor, he says to another: I have no food; give me to eat. Then the other hands the hungry one a couple of *tortillas*. That is natural. (35)

This passage encompasses what Lawrence thinks really valuable (which he sees as "natural"), and that would be found among the Indians, not among the white men. He emphasizes the importance of solidarity and compassion which he can see among the Indians, expressed in the last two lines; whereas the civilization of the white man, the one which subjugates, the one which "has got hold of the keys of the world", in spite of, and maybe because of, all its "exactitudes" and scientific methods, has no real meaning: "work that is meaningless". The elements of the binary pair here are an economy of sharing versus an economy of profit, the latter obviously leading to the development of capitalism.

It is important to note, however, that in spite of the essay's intention to elaborate on Rosalino, for "The Mozo" is the title of the essay, whenever Lawrence is inclined to sympathize, he ends up not concentrating on the people he met, on real people. Here, he ends up elaborating more on what *he sees* as the Mexican Indian systems of measuring

time, distance, and political economy. Thus he fails to deal with personal histories or to see Rosalino as a member of his culture. This might be taken as evidence of his inability to cope with individuals of different cultures, which is the reason why he prefers to revel in abstractions. As a matter of fact, a point which he does explore about Rosalino's life, in the essay, is, not surprisingly, a matter he identifies himself with. He learns from a man who had known Rosalino when he first came down from the hills, and could speak no Spanish, that Rosalino had refused to join the revolutionary soldiers who tried to recruit Indians from the hills. Rosalino's refusal establishes, in Lawrence's mind, a kinship between him and Lawrence, and the narrator says:

> He is one of those, like myself, who have a horror of serving in a mass of men, or even of being mixed up with a mass of men. He obstinately refused. Whereupon the recruiting soldiers beat him with the butts of their rifles till he lay unconscious, apparently dead. (42)

Rosalino's life story can be relevant only when there is common ground between him and the narrator. Lawrence takes this common ground for granted, as he assumes that Rosalino's reasons not to join the army are similar to his own. Would it not make more sense to see Rosalino's defiance as a matter of loyalty to his own tribe? Why should he see a reason to join an army that he did not recognize as his own, whose language he could not even understand? The reader is given the information that when he came down from the hills, Rosalino could not speak Spanish. Had it been a battle he saw as one of his own people's, his own tribe's, chances are that he would not have had the same attitude. As seen in chapter V, the Mexican Revolution had a number of complications, which, certainly, Lawrence did not understand, and he is only able to perceive Rosalino's

attitudes from his own perspective. Again, shaped by his cultural background, he sees things in terms of the bourgeois ideology of the self made man, not the social group. The formation of the self and the individual is a tradition of European culture, by-product of the invention of the print. As Walter Ong explains, in *Orality and Literacy*, oral communication unites people in groups whereas writing and silent reading are solitary activities. The creation of the "self," as we know it, is the result not only of writing but also of print: without these technologies the modern privatization of the self would be impossible.

In the essay called "Market Day" there is another attempt to apprehend the Mexican way of thinking. The reflection starts with another traditional binary opposition (similar to the reason/instinct dichotomy): linearity and circularity:

> Strange that we should think in straight lines, when there are none, and talk of straight courses, when every course, sooner or later, is seen to be making the sweep round, swooping upon the centre. When space is curved, and the cosmos is sphere within sphere, and the way from any point to any other point is round the bend of the inevitable, that turns as the tips of the broad wings of the hawk turn upwards, leaning upon the air like the invisible half of the ellipse. If I have a way to go, it will be round the swoop of a bend impinging centripetal towards the centre. The straight course is hacked out in wounds, against the will of the world.
>
> (45)

The *we*, in the first line, obviously refers to the representatives of the Western civilization, which means Lawrence identifies the notion of "straight courses," linearity, and objectivity with the European, white, dominant way of thinking, and the belief in

rationality. In his effort to "shake off" his European skin, he dreams of apprehending what he sees as the Mexican circularity. He describes, then, the last Saturday before Christmas, when the Indians come from miles and miles to the meeting point, Oaxaca, for their open market. Because their way of thinking is circular, rather than linear, as Lawrence has it, they do not come to the market to buy and sell. Their main purpose, rather than buying and selling, is to commingle:

> To buy and to sell, but above all, to commingle. In the old world, men make themselves two great excuses for coming together to a centre, and commingling freely in a mixed, unsuspicious host. Market and religion. These alone bring men, unarmed, together since time began. A little load of firewood, a woven blanket, a few eggs and tomatoes are excuse enough for men, women and children to cross the foot-weary miles of valley and mountain. To buy, to sell, to barter, to exchange. To exchange, above all things, human contact. (48)

The Indians, as Lawrence sees them, thrive to engage in bargaining, as "an intermingling of voices, a threading together of different wills" (49), and he describes a barter:

> ' How much this bunch of cherry-pie heliotrope?'
>
> 'Fifteen centavos.'
>
> 'Ten.'
>
> 'Fifteen.'
>
> You put back the cherry-pie, and depart. But the woman is quite content. The contact, so short even, brisked her up. (48)

After a substantial amount of give-and-take and of bargaining, here is the conclusion of a negotiation:

> 'Look!' She gathers up three or four more flowers, and claps them to the bunch. 'Two *reales*, Señorita.'
>
> It is a bargain. Off you go with multicoloured pinks, and the woman has had one more moment of contact, with a stranger, a perfect stranger. An intermingling of voices, a threading together of different wills. It is life. The *centavos* are an excuse. (49)

In his attempt to romanticize what he sees as the Mexican circularity, as opposed to the linearity and rationality of Western culture, Lawrence ends up saying that the sale itself and its monetary reward are simply "an excuse," and that the Indians are there, basically, to exchange "human contact." He puts emphasis on the atmosphere of the market: "nothing but the touch, the spark of contact" (51). This impression certainly resonates more of his own feelings and projections than what one could accept as a description of the Indian soul. Here as elsewhere, the natives are put to the service of some of Lawrence's strongest obsessions, especially the obsession with a natural, spontaneous community. Here we have the self-serving paradigm which Marianna Torgovnick writes about: "the primitive can be - has been, will be (?) - whatever Euro-Americans want it to be. It tells us what we want it to tell us" (9).

* * *

Having covered the Mexican essays in *Mornings in Mexico*, we can now proceed to advance a conclusion of Lawrence's experience in Mexico as a whole. If, in *The Plumed Serpent*, we had the idealized and "platonic mode" of the characters constructed by Lawrence's imagination, products of his perception of Mexico, combined with his readings of Aztec mythology, in the essays we have the real contact with the people from

the Oaxaca markets, the people from the villages, the people he interacted with. In both pieces (even allowing for the difference between the two genres), one can see numerous examples of the powerful animosity that Lawrence often felt against Mexico and its people, and, at the same time, his exorbitant effort to overcome that same feeling, and bridge the gap to reach them (or "cross the gulf" that separated them, to use his own terms), as he had dreamed it possible, in the beginning.

His effort to digest and accept cultural difference is encapsulated, in the novel, in Kate's metamorphosis, from a Mexico hater (as in the opening of the novel, at the bull-fight, discussed in chapter II), through her first contact with the drums, to her baptism, in the chapter "The Plaza," to her final conversion which led to her marrying Cipriano and becoming the goddess Malintzi. The fickleness of her conversion however is expressed throughout the novel, such as in the constant doubt "to stay or not to stay," and in the moments when she expresses how alien the other culture is to her, and the artificiality of forcing herself into this script:

> 'One can have too much of a good thing,' she said to Ramón.
>
> 'What good thing in particular?' he asked her.
>
> 'Oh - Quetzalcoatl and all that!' she said. 'One can have too much of it.'
>
> (387)

This feeling remains even when she is about to marry Cipriano:

> Cipriano arrived very pleased, his black eyes shining with the boyish look. He wanted Kate to marry him, go through the Mexican civil marriage, and install herself in the Villa Aragon. She hesitated. She knew she must go back to Europe, to England and Ireland, very soon. The necessity was imperative. The sense of

> menace that Mexico put over her, and the feeling of inner nausea, was becoming too much to bear. (377)

But this moment is succeeded by ambivalence: "She did not care whether she married or not. In one essential sense, she **had married Cipriano already**" (377; emphasis added). Two pages later, the confirmation of her change appears again, now in physical terms:

> She belonged too much to the old world of Europe, she could not, could not make herself over so quickly. But she felt that if she could go back to Ireland, and let her life and her body pause for a time, then she could come back and take her share. For it was not her spirit alone which was changing, it was her body, and the constitution of her very blood. She could feel it, the terrible katabolism and metabolism in her blood, changing her even as a creature, changing her to another creature. And if it went too fast, she would die. (379)

The conversion here is portrayed almost in the same terms as those of the Canadian myth of national origin, discussed in chapter III. As Leslie Fiedler argues, the pious Mohawk maiden, Catherine Tekawitha, who was born in 1656 and died in 1680, the victim of her own ascetic practices, remained a virgin for the sake of Christ. The French Canadian catholic myth has it, as Fiedler explains, that

> she immolated herself, she fasted, she beat herself until the blood came, she slept night after night in a blanket pricked by hundreds of thorns and, at last, on a Holy Wednesday, speech had failed her as she mumbled the names of Jesus and Mary. A little later she was dead and the French priest praying beside her cried out in astonishment because her face had turned white. White – (a miraculous bleaching) the complete conversion! (79-80)

Kate's conversion seems to be the exact opposite of the Indian girl turning white. A little before the passage quoted above, she had been brooding, in her stream of consciousness, about a strange "blood-unison" that she felt among all these people:

> Now she understood the strange unison she could always feel between Ramón and his men, and Cipriano and his men. It was the soft, quaking, deep communion of blood-oneness. Sometimes it made her feel sick. Sometimes it made her revolt. But it was the power she could not get beyond. (375)

The complete acceptance and internalization of their way of life, belief system and cultural values seemed to imply the need of a physical metamorphosis too, a conversion that she felt in her blood, changing her to "another creature," a change that could kill her, even, if "it went too fast". But she did survive the process, and was ultimately converted:

> For the first time in her life she felt absolutely at rest. And talk, and thought, had become trivial, superficial to her: as the ripples on the surface of the lake are as nothing, to the creatures that live away below in the unwavering deeps. In her soul, she was still and proud. If only the body had not suffered the unbearable nausea of change. She had sunk to a final rest, within a great, opened-out cosmos. (379)

The ending reveals that Lawrence is determined to obliterate the fickleness of the conversion, to erase Kate's novel-long indecisiveness, portraying finally total acceptance, total peacefulness, after the marriage with Cipriano: "She lived in his aura, and he, she knew, lived in hers, with nothing said … A mindless communion of the blood" (381). The last line of the novel, however, suggests the need to qualify this happy end. In a

short exchange of loving words between Cipriano and Kate, her final sentence is: "You won't let me go!" (400). One would expect from somebody totally converted an assurance of her own desire not to leave anymore, instead of an acknowledgement of his power to stop her from going away.

Lawrence's anti-eurocentric effort is obvious, as I have argued, throughout this work, and here, to crown it, even if he suggests that ultimately Kate did not embrace otherness as a matter of choice, but rather as a matter of fate and necessity, the fact remains that she stayed (something he had been unable to do in the first version, *Quetzalcoatl*, in which she left) . At the same time, as I have also argued, the more he verbalizes his anti-eurocentric positions, the more eurocentrism manifests itself in his discourse. In the last two passages quoted above, for instance, his discourse is pervaded by the tropes that became classic in the "primitivist discourse." As Torgovnick explains, this discourse reinforces and consolidates the idea that "primitives" are irrational, that "they are like children, our own untamed selves, our id forces - libidinous, irrational, and dangerous" (8). Hence, though Lawrence portrays Kate's marriage with Cipriano to give her, finally, peace, and says "she found herself absolutely at rest", this state of nirvana "within a great, opened-out cosmos" had to come at the expense of "rationality": "talk, and thought, had become trivial," they lived in each other's aura, "with nothing said… A mindless communion of the blood". What is in operation here again is the *Ur*-binary of primitivism (the reason/instinct dichotomy). For Kate's metamorphosis into a "primitive" to be complete, she had to give up reason.

The sad irony of it all is that, even if Lawrence had a clear and genuine impulse to break away from his European heritage, the question of cultural incommensurability remained as a powerful counterforce throughout his stay in Mexico. Even if he followed Herodotus, in asserting "the crucial importance of travel for an understanding of the world," and in the "willingness to escape from the cultural narrowness that attends knowing only one's own people," the colonial structures he necessarily inhabited stopped him from crossing the bridge. After all, if culture is a structure that, to a large extent, molds one's thoughts, speech, and behavior, and thus limits one's perception of the world, how can one speak of other, ultimately incommensurable, cultures? As a result of the prison-house of culture, Lawrence had his share in adding to the existing tropes, legitimating a eurocentric ideological discourse, and consolidating the vision of the Mexican as "primitive," as a "fascinating" but fundamentally "under-developed" people. This vision, of course, is not irrelevant to the concrete consequences in the geo-political position of Mexico in the globe today.

And yet, that is as far as Lawrence could go. Mexico might well have, for Lawrence, amounted to an excess of meaning out of control which he contemplated, mulled over, observed for a while, tried to experience, but, ultimately, could not comprehend. As Jorge Ruffinelli puts it:

> No hay espectáculo más fascinante que el de un escritor entablando una forma dialógica - un desafío, una lucha o un acoso de amor - con una realidad que no es la suya ni podrá nunca pertenecerle. (16)

> [There is not a more fascinating spectacle than the one of a writer building a dialogical frame - a challenge, a fight or a love affair - with a reality which is not his own and will never belong to him.] (my translation)

It is worth recalling, as a final remark, Linda Alcoff's argument, in "The Problem of Speaking for Others," discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. She comments on three examples related to the act of representing otherness. The first is the case of a very gifted white Canadian author, who writes several semi-fictional accounts of the lives of Native Canadian women. She writes them in first person and assumes a Native identity. She is aware of the problem that she is speaking *for* them, and is, therefore, "disempowering them." She does not deny that, and wonders if she should move over. The second case involves the 1989 elections in Panama, when Noriega won, and President George Bush declared in a public address that Noriega's actions constituted an "outrageous fraud" and that "the voice of the Panamanian people has spoken." "The Panamanian people," he said, "want democracy and not tyranny, and want Noriega out." He proceeded to plan the invasion of Panama. And Alcoff's third case is about a symposium at her own university, when a prestigious theorist was invited to give a lecture on the political problems of postmodernism. To the audience's disappointment, he introduced his lecture by explaining that he could not cover the assigned topic, because as a white male he did not feel that he could speak for the feminist and postcolonial perspectives that had launched the critical interrogation of postmodernism's politics. He went on to give them a lecture on architecture.

Obviously, none of the three cases seem to correspond to satisfactory choices. The effect of the third case is that, even though he made a powerful point, the theorist offered no contribution whatsoever to the important issue that the audience was expecting to hear. They had not attended the lecture for an architecture lesson. The second case deserves no comment, since it is pure and unadulterated manipulation of the alleged "voice of the people" when it is obvious that the action is "precisely the opposite of the voice of the people."

We are left with the first case, the case of a very gifted white Canadian author who is very sympathetic to the cause of the Native Canadian women, to a point that she feels comfortable to write in first person, assuming their identity. The question remains, despite her drives: she is "disempowering them." She is positioned as authoritative and empowered, as the knowledgeable subject, while the group is reduced to an object of victimization. The effect of her discourse, unwittingly, may be to reinforce the asymmetry of power. Whereas keeping away from speaking does not seem to offer much contribution to the problem, speaking *for* others will inevitably bring up the issue that no discourse is value-free and therefore free of some kind of ideological contamination. If, as we have learned from Spivak, "in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak," the question now seems to be, how different from that situation is the post-colonial world?

To go back to Lawrence, perhaps he could not go as far as, for instance, Enrique Dussel has gone, in *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*. Dussel elaborates on how Europe "invented" America and, then, in a

second stage, reverses his analysis and interprets world history from the view of the conquered, from the indigenous perspective, which inverts the usual European understanding of 1492. Lawrence's efforts in 1923, however, in spite of the inherent limitations of his location in culture and time, were precisely pointing to that avenue, and in the recurrent pattern of role reversals in which he engaged throughout the novel, explored in my chapter III, it is patent that he saw his fiction as a possibility, even if flawed, of redeeming otherness from the nightmare of a history written by the colonizers.

APPENDIX I

In the place of the west
In peace, beyond the lashing of the sun's bright tail,
In the stillness where waters are born
Slept I, Quetzalcoatl .

In the cave which is called Dark Eye,
Behind the sun, looking through him as a window
Is the place. There the waters rise,
There the winds are born.

On the waters of the after-life
I rose again, to see a star falling, and feel a breath on my face.
The breath said: Go! And lo!
I am coming.

The star that was falling was fading, was dying.
I heard the star singing like a dying bird;
My name is Jesus, I am Mary's Son.
I am coming home.
My mother the Moon is dark.
Oh brother, Quetzalcoatl
Hold back the dragon of the sun,
Bind him with shadow while I pass
Homewards. Let me come home.

I bound the bright fangs of the Sun
And held him while Jesus passed
Into the lidless shade,
Into the eye of the Father,
Into the womb of refreshment.

And the breath blew upon me again.
So I took the sandals of the Saviour
And started down the long slope
Past the mount of the sun.
Till I saw beneath me
White breast-tips of my Mexico
My bride.

Jesus the Crucified
Sleeps in the healing waters
The long sleep.
Sleep, sleep, my brother, sleep.
My bride between the seas
Is combing her dark hair,
Saying to herself: Quetzalcoatl .

(103, 104)

APPENDIX II

The Lord of the Morning Star
Stood between the day and the night:
As a bird that lifts its wings, and stands
With the bright wing on the right
And the wing of the dark on the left,
The Dawn Star stood into sight.

Lo! I am always here!
Far in the hollow of space
I brush the wing of the day
And put light on your face.
The other wing brushes the dark.
But I, I am always in place.

Yea, I am always here. I am Lord
In every way. And the lords among men
See me through the flashing of wings.
They see me and lose me again.
But lo! I am always here
Within ken.

The multitudes see me not.
They see only the waving of wings,
The coming and going of things.
The cold and the hot.

But ye that perceive me between
The tremors of night and the day
I make you the Lords of the Way
Unseen.

The path between gulfs of the dark and the steeps of the light;
The path like a snake that is gone, like the length of a fuse to ignite
The substance of shadow, that bursts and explodes into sight.

I am here undeparting. I sit tight.
Between wings of the endless flight,
At the depths of the peace and the fight.

Deep in the moistures of peace,
And far down the muzzle of the fight
You shall find me, who am neither increase
Nor destruction, different quite.

I am far beyond
The horizons of love and strife.
Like a star, like a pond
That washes the lords of life.

(158-159)

APPENDIX III

"Quetzalcoatl Looks Down on Mexico"

Jesus had gone far up the dark slope, when he looked back.
Quetzalcoatl, my brother! he called. Send me my images,
And the images of my mother, and the images of my saints.
Send me them by the swift way, the way of the sparks,
That I may hold them like memories in my arms when I go to sleep.

And Quetzalcoatl called back: I will do it.

Then he laughed, seeing the sun dart fiercely at him.
He put up his hand, and held back the sun with his shadow.
So he passed the yellow one, who lashed like a dragon in vain.
And having passed the yellow one, he saw the earth beneath.
And he saw Mexico lying like a dark woman with white breast-tips.

Wondering he stepped nearer, and looked at her,
At her trains, at her railways and her automobiles,
At her cities of stone and her huts of straw,
And he said: Surely this looks very curious!

He sat within the hollow of a cloud, and saw the men that worked in the fields,
with foreign overseers.
He saw the men that were blind, reeling with *aguardiente*.
He saw the women that were not clean.
He saw the hearts of them all, that were black, and heavy, with a stone of anger at
the bottom.

Surely, he said, this is a curious people I have found!

So leaning forward on his cloud, he said to himself:
Iwill call to them.
Holá! Holá! Mexicanos! Glance away a moment towards me.
Just turn your eyes this way, Mexicanos!

They turned not at all, they glanced not one his way.

Holalá! Mexicanos! Holalá!

They have gone stone deaf! he said.

So he blew down on them, to blow his breath in their faces.
But in the weight of their stupefaction, none of them knew.

Holalá! What a pretty people!
All gone stupefied!

A falling star was running like a white dog over a plain.
He whistled to it loudly, twice, till it fell to his hand.
In his hand it lay and went dark.
It was the Stone of Change.

This is the stone of change! he said.

So he tossed it awhile in his hand, and played with it.
Then suddenly he spied the old lake, and he threw it in.
It fell in.
And two men looked up.

Holalá! he said. *Mexicanos!*
Are there two of you awake?
So he laughed, and one heard him laughing.

Why are you laughing? asked the first man of Quetzalcoatl.
I hear the voice of my First Man ask me why I am laughing?
Holalá, *Mexicanos*! It is funny!
To see them so glum and so lumpish!

Hey! First Man of my name! Hark here!
Here is my sign.
Get a place ready for me.

Send Jesus his images back, Mary and the saints and all.
Wash yourself, and rub oil in your skin.
On the seventh day, let every man wash himself, and put oil on his skin; let every woman.
Let him have no animal walk on his body, nor through the shadow of his hair.
Say the same to the women.
Tell them they all are fools, that I'm laughing at them.
The first thing I did when I saw them, was to laugh at the sight of such fools.
Such lumps, such frogs with stones in their bellies.
Tell them they are like frogs with stones in their bellies, can't hop!
Tell them they must get the stones out of their bellies,
Get rid of their heaviness,
Their lumpishness,
Or I'll smother them all.

I'll shake the earth, and swallow them up, with their cities.
I'll send fire and ashes upon them, and smother them all.
I'll turn their blood like sour milk rotten with thunder,
They will bleed rotten blood, in pestilence.
Even their bones shall crumble.

Tell them so, First Man of my Name.

For the sun and the moon are alive, and watching with gleaming eyes.
And the earth is alive, and ready to shake off his fleas.
And the stars are ready with stones to throw in the faces of men.
And the air that blows good breath in the nostrils of people and beasts
Is ready to blow bad breath upon them, to perish them all.

The stars and the earth and the sun and the moon and the winds
Are about to dance the war dance round you, men!
When I say the word, they will start.
For sun and stars and earth and the very rains are weary
Of tossing and rolling the substance of life to your lips.
They are saying to one another: Let us make an end
Of those ill-smelling tribes of men, these frogs that can't jump,
These cocks that can't crow
These pigs that can't grunt

This flesh that smells
These words that are all flat
These money vermin.
These white men, and red men, and yellow men, and brown men, and black men
That are neither white, nor red, nor yellow, nor brown, nor black
But everyone of them dirtyish.
Let us have a spring cleaning in the world.
For men upon the body of the earth are like lice,
Devouring the earth into sores.
This is what stars and sun and earth and moon and winds and rain
Are discussing with one another; they are making ready to start.
So tell the men I am coming to,
To make themselves clean, inside and out.
To roll the grave-stone off their souls, from the cave of their bellies.
To prepare to be men.

Or else prepare for the other things.

(214-217)

APPENDIX IV

Who are these strange faces in Mexico?
Palefaces, yellowfaces, blackfaces? These are no Mexicans!
Where do they come from, and why?

Lord of the Two Ways, these are the foreigners.
They come out of nowhere.
Sometimes they come to tell us things,
Mostly they are the greedy ones.

What then do they want?

They want gold, they want silver from the mountains,
And oil, much oil from the coast.
They take sugar from the tall tubes of the cane,
Wheat from the high lands, and maize;
Coffee from the bushes in the hot lands, even the juicy rubber.
They put up tall chimneys that smoke,
And in the biggest houses they keep their machines, that talk
And work iron elbows up and down,
And hold myriad threads from their claws!
Wonderful are the machines of the greedy ones!

And you, Mexicans and peons, what do you do?

We work with their machines, we work in their fields,
They give us pesos made of Mexican silver.
They are the clever ones.

Do you love them then?

We love them not, and never.
Their faces are ugly, yet they make wonderful things.
And their wills are like their machines of iron.
What can we do?

I see dark things rushing across the country.

Yea, Lord! Even trains and *camiones* and automobiles.

Trains and *camiones,* automobiles and aeroplanes.
How nice! says the peon, to go rushing in a train!
How nice, to get in the *camion*, and for twenty *centavos*, to be gone!
How nice, in the great cities, where all things rush, and huge lights flare bright,
 to wander and do nothing!
How nice to sit in the *cine*, where the picture of all the world dances before the eyes!
How nice if we could take all these things away from the foreigners, and possess them!
Take back our lands and silver and oil, take the trains and the factories and the
 automobiles
And play with them all the time!
How nice!

Oh, fools! Mexicans and peons!
Who are you, to be masters of machines which you cannot make?
Which you can only break!
Those that can make are masters of these machines
Not you, poor boobs.

How have these palefaces, yellowfaces crossed the waters of the world?
Oh, fools! Mexicans and peons, with muddy hearts!
Did they do it by squatting on their hams?
You do nothing but squat on your hams, and stare with vacant eyes, and drink
fire-waters, and quarrel and stab.
And then run like surly dogs at the bidding of paleface masters.

Oh, dogs and fools, Mexicans and peons!
Watery-hearted, with wishy-washy knees.
Sulky in spirit, and inert.
What are you good for, but to be slaves, and rot away?

You are not worth a god!
Lo! the universe tangles its great dragons!
The dragons in the cosmos are stirring with anger again.
The dragon of the disappointed dead, that sleeps in the snow-white north
Is lashing his tail in his sleep; the winds howl, the cold rocks round.
The spirits of the cold dead whistle in the ears of the world.
Prepare for doom.

For I tell you, there are no dead dead, not even your dead.
There are dead that sleep in the waves of the Morning Star, with freshening limbs.
There are dead that weep in bitter rains.
There are dead that cluster in the frozen north, shuddering and chattering among the ice.
And howling with hate.
There are dead that creep through the burning bowels of the earth,
Stirring the fires to acid of bitterness.
There are dead that sit under the trees, watching with ash-grey eyes for their victims.
There are dead that attack the sun like swarms of black flies, to suck his life.
There are dead that stand upon you, when you go in to your women,
And they dart to her womb, they fight for the chance to be born, they struggle
at the gate you have opened,
They gnash when it closes, and hate the one that got in to be born again,
Child of the living dead, the dead that live and are not refreshed.
I tell you, sorrow upon you; you shall all die.
And being dead, you shall not be refreshed.
There are no dead dead.
Being dead, you shall rove like dogs with broken haunches
Seeking the offal and garbage of life, in the invisible lanes of the air.
The dead that have mastered fire live on, salamanders, in fire.
The dead of the water-lords rock and glimmer in the seas.
The dead of the steel machines go up in motion, *away*!
The dead of the electric masters are electricity itself.

But the dead of those who have mastered nothing, nothing at all,
Crawl like masterless dogs in the back streets of the air,
Creeping for the garbage of life, and biting with venomous mouths.

Those that have mastered the forces of the world, die into the forces, they have

homes in death.
But you! what have you mastered, among the dragon hosts of the cosmos?
There are dragons of sun and ice, dragons of the moon and the earth, dragons
of salty waters, dragons of thunder;
There is the spangled dragon of the stars at large.
And far at the centre, with one unblinking eye, the dragon of the Morning Star.

Conquer! says the Morning Star. Pass the dragons, and pass on to me.
For I am sweet, I am the last and the best, the pool of new life.
But lo! you inert ones, I will set the dragons upon you.
They shall crunch your bones.
And even then they shall spit you out, as broken-haunched dogs,
You shall have nowhere to die into.

Lo! in the back streets of the air, dead ones are crawling like curs!
Lo! I release the dragons! The great white one of the north
Him of the disappointed dead, he is lashing and turning round.
He is breathing cold corruption upon you, you shall bleed in your chests.

I am going to speak to the dragon of the inner fires,
He who housels the dead of the guns,
To withdraw his warmth from your feet, so your feet turn cold with death.

I am about to tell the dragon of the waters to turn round on you
And spew out corrosion into your streams, on your rains.

And I wait for the final day, when the dragon of thunder, waking under the
spider-web nets
Which you've thrown upon him, shall suddenly shake with rage,
And dart his electric needles into your bones, and curdle your blood like milk
with electric venom.

Wait! Only wait! Little by little it all shall come upon you.
(228-231)

APPENDIX V

'I am the Living Quetzalcoatl.
Naked I come from out of the deep
From the place which I call my Father,
Naked have I travelled the long way round
From heaven, past the sleeping sons of God.

Out of the depths of the sky, I came like an eagle.
Out of the bowels of the earth like a snake.

All things that lift in the lift of living between earth and sky, know me.

But I am the inward star invisible.
And the star is the lamp in the hand of the Unknown Mover.
Beyond me is a Lord who is terrible, and wonderful, and dark to me forever.
Yet I have lain in his loins, ere he begot me in Mother space.

Now I am alone on earth, and this is mine.
The roots are mine, down the dark, moist path of the snake.
And the branches are mine, in the paths of the sky and the bird,
But the spark of me that is me is more than mine own.
And the feet of men, and the hands of the women know me.
And the knees and thighs and loins, and the bowels of strength and seed are lit with me.
The snake of my left-hand out of the darkness is kissing your feet with his
    mouth of caressive fire,
And putting his strength in your heels and ankles, his flame in your knees and your legs
    and your loins, his circle of rest in your belly.
For I am Quetzalcoatl, the feathered snake,
And I am not with you till my serpent has coiled his circle of rest in your belly.

And I, Quetzalcoatl, the eagle of the air, am brushing your faces with vision.
I am fanning your breasts with my breath.
And building my nest of peace in your bones.
I am Quetzalcoatl, of the Two Ways.'

(308-309)

APPENDIX VI

Welcome to Quetzalcoatl

We are not wasted. We are not left out.
Quetzalcoatl has come!
There is nothing more to ask for.
Quetzalcoatl has come!

He threw the Fish in the boat.
The cock rose, and crew over the waters.
The naked one climbed in.
Quetzalcoatl has come!

Quetzalcoatl loves the shade of trees.
Give him trees! Call back the trees.
We are like trees, tall and rustling.
Quetzalcoatl is among the trees.

Do not tell me my face is shining.
Quetzalcoatl has come!
Over my head his noiseless eagle
Fans a flame.

Tie my spotted shoes for dancing,
The snake has kissed my heel.
Like a volcano my hips are moving
With a fire, and my throat is full.

Blue daylight sinks in my hair.
The star comes out between the two
Wonders, shines out of everywhere,
Saying without speech: Look you!

Ah, Quetzalcoatl !
Put sleep as black as beauty in the secret of my belly.
Put star-oil over me.
Call me a man.

(313-314)

APPENDIX VII

'We are men! We are fighters!
'But what can we do?
'Shall we march to simple death?
'No!No! We must march to life.
'The *gringos* are here. We have let them come. We must let them stay, for we cannot drive them out. With guns and swords and bayonets we can never drive them out, for they have a thousand where we have one. And if they come in peace, let them stay in peace.
'But we have not lost Mexico yet. We have not lost each other.
'We are the blood of America. We are the blood of Montezuma.
'What is my hand for? Is it to turn the handle of a machine alone?
'My hand is to salute the God of Mexicans, beyond the sky.
'My hand is to touch the hand of a brave man.
'My hand is to hold a gun.
'My hand is to make the corn grow of the ground.
'What are my knees for?
'My knees are to hold me proud and erect.
'My knees are for marching on my way.
'My knees are the knees of a man.
'Our God is Quetzalcoatl of the blue sky, and Huitzilopochtli red at the gates, watching.
'Our gods hate a kneeling man. They shout *Ho*! *Erect*!
…
'There are two strengths; the strength which is the strength of oxen and mules and iron, of machines and guns, and of men who cannot get the second strength.
'Then there is the second strength. It is the strength you want. And you can get it, whether you are small or big. It is the strength that comes from behind the sun. And you can get it; you can get it here!' - he struck his breast - 'and here!' - he struck his belly - 'and here!' - he struck his loins. 'The strength that comes from back of the sun.'
…
'We are men! We are men!' cried Cipriano
'But listen. There are two kind of men. There are men with the second strength, and men without it.
'When the first *gringos* came, we lost our second strength. And the *padres* taught us: Submit! Submit!
'The *gringos* had got the second strength!
'How?
'Like cunning ones, they stole it on the sly. They kept very still like a tarantula in his hole. Then when neither sun nor moon nor stars knew he was there, Biff! - the tarantula sprang across, and bit, and left the poison and sucked the secret.
'So they got the secrets of the air and the water, and they got the secrets out of the earth. So the metals were theirs, and they made guns and machines and ships, and they made trains and telegrams and radio.
…
'Now we are getting it back. We have found our way again to the secret sun behind the sun. There sat Quetzalcoatl , and at last Don Ramón found him. There sits the red Huitzilopochtli, and I have found him. For I have found the second strength.
…
'Are we men? Can we not get the second strength? Can we not? Have we lost it forever?
'I say no! Quetzalcoatl is among us. I have found the red Huitzilopochtli. The second strength!
(324-6)

First Song of Huitzilopochtli

'I am Huitzilopochtli,
The Red Huitzilopochtli,
The blood-red.

I am Huitzilopochtli,
Yellow of the sun,
Sun in the blood.

I am Huitzilopochtli,
White of the bone,
Bone in the blood.

I am Huitzilopochtli,
With a blade of grass between my teeth.

I am Huitzilopochtli, sitting in the dark.
With my redness staining the body of the dark.

I watch by the fire.
I wait behind men.

In the stillness of my night
The cactus sharpens his thorn.
The grass feels with his roots for the other sun.

Deeper than the roots of the mango tree.
Down in the centre of the earth
Is the yellow, serpent-yellow shining of my sun.

Oh, beware of him!
Oh, beware of me!
Who runs athwart my serpent-flame
Gets bitten and must die.

I am the sleeping and waking
Of the anger of the manhood of men.
I am the leaping and quaking
Of fire bent back again.'

(335-6)

APPENDIX VIII

'My way is not thy way, and thine is not mine.
But come, before we part
Let us separately go to the Morning Star,
And meet there.

I do not point you to my road, nor yet
Call: "Oh come!"
But the Star is the same for both of us,
Winsome.

The good ghost of me goes down the distance
To the Holy Ghost.
Oh you, in the tent of the cloven flame
Meet me, you I like most.

Each man his own way forever, but towards
The hoverer between;
Who opens his flame like a tent-flap,
As we slip in unseen.

A man cannot tread like a woman,
Nor a woman step out like a man.
The ghost of each through the leaves of shadow
Moves as it can.

But the Morning Star and the Evening Star
Pitch tents of flame
Where we foregather like gypsies, none knowing
How the other came.

I ask for nothing except to slip
In the tent of the Holy Ghost
And be there in the house of the cloven flame,
Guest of the Host.

Be with me there, my woman,
Be bodily there.
Then let the flame wrap round us
Like a snare.

Be there along with me, O men!
Reach across the hearth,
And laugh with me while the woman rests
For all we are worth.'

(397-8)

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