

*D. H. Lawrence's
Language of
Sacred Experience*

*The Transfiguration
of the Reader*

Charles Burack



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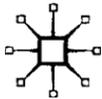
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of Sacred Experience**

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Charles Michael Burack

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D. H. LAWRENCE'S LANGUAGE OF SACRED EXPERIENCE

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To my loving parents, Ruth and Elmer Burack

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Introduction

On February 24, 1913, a month before he began composing what would become his two greatest novels—*The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920)—D. H. Lawrence wrote to the artist Ernest Collings about the numinous nature of his own creative process:

I always feel as if I stood for the fire of Almighty God to go through me—and it's a rather awful feeling. One has to be so terribly religious, to be an artist.¹

Throughout the rest of his literary career, Lawrence, like the English romantic poets, continued to identify artistic creativity and religious sensibility. In “Introduction to These Paintings” (1929), written a year before his death, he insists that the imagination is an essentially sacred faculty and is energized by bodily feeling:

In the flow of our imagination we know in full, mentally and physically at once, in a greater, enkindled awareness. At the maximum of our imagination we are religious. . . . An artist *can* only create what he really religiously *feels* is truth, religious truth really *felt*, in the blood and the bones. (*Late Essays* 193, 196)²

Critics have examined the nature of Lawrence's religious ideas and symbols but have skirted the question of how his novels function as religious art.³

This book argues that Lawrence's major novels, beginning with *The Rainbow*, can be considered “hierophantic art” in that they seek to evoke sacred experiences in the reader. Indeed, the structure and character of the novels' narrative textures suggest that Lawrence is trying to play the role of a hierophant; that is, he is acting like the conductor of a religious

initiation rite who leads novitiates through a series of transformative experiences designed to culminate in the awareness of or union with the divine. Whether or not Lawrence was in any literal sense a hierophant, prophet, or priest is not the point.⁴ That he conceived of himself as a vatic figure is crucial because it powerfully shaped the kind of novels he produced or attempted to produce. Every prophetic figure aims to bring others closer to divinity, and the most successful prophets bring about a fundamental transformation of consciousness—a conversion experience—in those they have influenced. Lawrence's visionary ambitions, fed by abiding pantheistic and animistic intuitions, impelled him to try to awaken in his readers a deeply felt experience of the life energy animating the universe. For him, the felt recognition of the aliveness of the cosmos and of one's fundamental connection to it constitutes the essence of sacred experience. Numinous feelings include wonder, awe, mystery, terror, and a sense of relatedness; these feelings are expressions of the body's energies and modes of knowing.⁵ Other important thinkers of the time—like William James, Rudolf Otto, Richard Bucke, and P. D. Ouspensky—also emphasized the primacy of feeling (over reason or doctrine) in sacred experiences.⁶

As a hierophantic novelist who believed in the unity of body and soul, Lawrence attempted to use language in ways that would touch the reader's somatic modes of experiencing and responding. He did not merely wish to represent numinous feelings but to evoke them in the reader. Some of these visionary intentions are spelled out in the essays he wrote in the mid-1920s about the nature and role of the novel and the novelist. In "The Future of the Novel," also titled "Surgery for the Novel—or a Bomb" (1923), he insists that the novel has to "present us with new, really new feeling, a whole line of new emotion, which will get us out of the emotional rut" (*Study of Thomas Hardy* 155). He elaborates on the distinction between new feeling and old emotion in "The Novel and the Feelings" (1935), asserting that the novelist needs to break down the reader's socialized emotional responses in order to elicit fresh, unknown, "aboriginal" feelings; in doing so, the novelist helps the "so civilized" reader to "un-tame himself" (*Study of Thomas Hardy* 201–4). And in "Morality and the Novel" (1925), Lawrence proclaims that visionary art "gives us the *feeling* of being beyond life or death" (*Study of Thomas Hardy* 171). This evoking of numinous feeling was the seemingly impossible task he set for himself, and critics have both championed and ridiculed him for this ambition. We examine how Lawrence sought to actualize his religious intentions through the artistic forms he fashioned.

Lawrence thought that sacred feelings are evoked in readers when they experience a deep sense of connection with the visionary work of art, which is itself the numinous product of the artist's own intense relationships with others. A sacred relationship is one in which polarized wills, beings, or forces exist in dynamic equilibrium.⁷ Art is an authentic revelation because each "perfected [fully realized] relationship" reveals, brings into being, the divine: "The true God is *created* every time a pure relationship, or a consummation out of twoness into oneness takes place" (*Reflections on the Death* 303).⁸ For Lawrence, the novel is the quintessential religious art because of its ability to represent the complexity and dynamism of human connections: it is "the highest example of subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered" and the "perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationships" (*Study of Thomas Hardy* 172, 175). The rainbow is one of his primary symbols for numinous connection: as relationships change, so do the aspects or qualities of divinity—the rainbows—that they manifest; each authentic moment of connection produces a new rainbow. In "Why the Novel Matters" (1925), Lawrence characterizes the novel as "the one bright book of life" that "can make the whole man-alive tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or any other book-tremulation can do" (*Study of Thomas Hardy* 195). He even provocatively describes the Bible as "a great confused novel" that is not so much "about God" but "really about man alive" (*Study of Thomas Hardy* 195). Whether the Bible is a novel, or the novel a Bible, the equation of the two literary forms implicitly announces Lawrence's vatic-artistic ambitions.

Lawrence believed that sacred experiences occur when a person develops an unselfconscious, impersonal, and spontaneous relationship with another person or being. This relationship must be both mutual and felt, and it is the relationship itself that activates the religious awareness. The relationship is a means to awareness as well as a form of awareness itself: deep connection produces profound reciprocal awareness; expanded awareness enables a full sense of connection. The sacred encounters represented in Lawrence's novels are experienced by the characters as an influx of passion or peace. Most of these encounters are erotic because Lawrence understood sexual union to be the most important mode of mystical union: "In the act of love . . . Man is with God and of God"; sex is "the deepest of all communions, as all the religions, *in practice*, know. And it is one of the greatest mysteries, in fact, the greatest, as almost every apocalypse shows, showing the supreme achievement of the mystic marriage" (*Study of Thomas Hardy* 78; "A Propos of LCL" in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* 325). In erotic union, sacred life energies are exchanged between the

partners, and new life is sometimes created. The numinous experience of passion is associated with the participants' rhythmic motion and energy as well as their sense of intense, active engagement in and beyond the time-space world of becoming. The experience of peace is related to stillness and silence together with a greater sense of release from the everyday world and of union with the eternal realm of being. The first type of numinous encounter is an immanent experience of divinity; the second a transcendent experience. "Immanence" implies that the divine is experienced as present (showing, manifesting) in the world; "transcendence" implies that the divine is experienced as beyond the world. Evelyn Underhill, whom Lawrence may have read in 1914 or 1915, discusses this distinction in *Mysticism* (1910).⁹ Because sacred experiences involve influxes of life energy, they are revitalizing, reenergizing, rejuvenating. Lawrence's religion was a body-centered vitalism influenced in part by Nietzsche.¹⁰

Because of his vitalistic orientation, Lawrence considered his ultimate religious-artistic task to be the revivification of the reader. This revitalization effort has two phases: one to break down the reader's conventional orientation to self and world, and a second to evoke more vivid and integrated modes of knowing and acting. Thus, he believed, like Nietzsche, that there is a "double rhythm of creating and destroying" in "true art."¹¹ This "double rhythm" of art corresponds to the two phases of spiritual rebirth: death to the old self; birth of the new self.¹²

The focus of Lawrence's demolition effort is the modern Western consciousness, whether Christian or secular. He insisted that this "mental" or "spiritual" consciousness is dominated by conceptual thought, language, and vision. Because mind and will contort and stifle the body's spontaneous responses, sexual activity is crippled. Thought, speech, hearing, and sight are all modes of consciousness and communication associated with the head or mind, and Lawrence believed that this overemphasis on head-centered consciousness—and consequent underappreciation of the powers of the rest of the body—produces the mind-body split as well as a sense of rupture between self and other. He accepted Nietzsche's assertion that the fracturing of the Western consciousness was initiated by the ancient Greeks: their highly intellectual and visual culture reified the distinctions within the self, and between self and other.¹³ In effect, the Greeks made mental distinctions into phenomenal divisions; today, theorists call this mindset a split subjectivity shaped by logocentrism and ocularcentrism.¹⁴

This book analyzes the two phases of the revitalization effort in Lawrence's major novels. I concentrate on his experimentation with various

literary devices and sacred discourses in his attempt to transform the reader's consciousness. My focus on the relationships among hierophantic intention, literary technique, and reader response has a secondary aim of reassessing the ideological positions that critics have assigned to Lawrence's novels. We see, for example, that some of the techniques have ideological values that partially subvert the patriarchal ideology voiced by narrators and characters and thus suggest that Lawrence may have had stronger sympathies with feminism than has been asserted. Feminist attacks on Lawrence's novels have often overlooked the subversive implications of their formal structures.¹⁵ Recently, Carol Siegel has demonstrated that Lawrence was not nearly as antifeminist as has been claimed: he strongly identified with the women's literary tradition, sought out the literary advice and response of women, and sometimes encouraged women to write.¹⁶ Indeed, I believe that Lawrence's attack on logocentrism and ocularcentrism is implicitly antimasculinist. Feminist theologians, such as Mary Daly and Rosemary Ruether, have cited dualistic thought and language as responsible for creating and sustaining the sexist structures in Judaism and Christianity, and Simone de Beauvoir asserts that the dualistic thinking inherent in patriarchal language is responsible for the construction of "woman" as "the Other"—an Other which is presistently associated with the inferior or rejected pole of a whole series of asymmetrical polarities.¹⁷ Recent feminist scholarship has linked ocularcentrism and male domination; the Lacanian film critic Laura Mulvey, for example, has examined the objectifying and controlling features of the scopophilic male gaze.¹⁸

To interrogate the relation between technique and reader response in Lawrence's novels, I have developed a poetics of narrative technique, and a phenomenology of the reading experience, that analyze the implied textual effects on the novels' readers. The investigation does not focus on the actual, historical impact of the novel on readers but rather on potential reader responses suggested by the novel's textual effects. In short, I concentrate on what Wolfgang Iser calls "the implied reader": the "network of response-inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text."¹⁹ While not limiting myself to Iser's particular methodology, I show how the textual effects of Lawrence's novels invite and channel potential reader responses. Actual responses are always unique and involve a dynamic exchange between text and reader: the text verbally prestructures possible responses, and the reader actualizes one or more of those potentials through an act of construction; reading strategies are shaped by the reader's interpretive community and by idiosyncratic features of the reader's life and reading experience. Iser argues that one of the

main functions of literature is to call into question the reader's habitual understanding of social conventions. In my analysis of Lawrence's novels, I am assuming, as Lawrence surely did, a reader who is at least open to being transformed by reading fiction. This "ideal reader" will be simultaneously resistant and receptive to change. Carol Siegel has shown that for many of Lawrence's novels, this ideal reader was probably female, but my study does not presuppose a female reader; rather, I assume that the literary devices are potentially effective for male and female readers. It should be stressed that I am not suggesting that these techniques generally evoke the effects that Lawrence intended; to the contrary, it is obvious that many critics and ordinary readers do not respond to the devices in the ways he hoped. But I try to elucidate the specific cognitive and emotive effects that Lawrence aimed, sometimes strained, to produce with and through language.

The dual rhythm of destroying and creating is also the structure of a religious initiation rite. Lawrence's novels can be thought of as scripts that enable readers to vicariously experience a sacred-erotic initiation. Lawrence would have learned about initiation rites as early as 1908 from his reading of Theosophy and cultural anthropology and discovered that initiations aim to engender a spiritual rebirth in the novitiate.²⁰ Theosophists Helen Blavatsky and Annie Besant have extensive discussions of initiation rites, as do anthropologists James Frazer and Jane Harrison.²¹ Initiation rites make use of mortification practices that dissolve the novice's ordinary or profane relationship to self and world; they also employ ritualized procedures for instilling a new, numinous mode of being. I claim that Lawrence, the would-be prophet and hierophant, in effect tries to induct the reader into his own private religion—a religion that stresses the interrelatedness of all beings and the ability to experience that connection through feeling, especially sexual feeling. Initiation is the explicit thematic focus of *The Plumed Serpent*, but it is also of thematic importance in *The Rainbow* and in nearly all the novels that followed it. In *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the more successful couples are transfigured by their erotic encounters; and in each case, it is the relationship itself that functions as the hierophantic force.²² The degree of initiation of the characters is a result of the degree of interrelatedness: the more fully and deeply the lovers are connected, the more complete their experience of divine passion or peace. Often, the language that Lawrence uses to portray the characters' progressively more intense numinous encounters is meant to have an escalating hierophantic effect on readers.

Lawrence's interest in enabling the reader to experience sacred energy is less idiosyncratic when it is understood that influential Theosophists

like Annie Besant were claiming that the culminating point of initiation in many Western esoteric societies and eastern religions is “when the Initiate became a God, whether by union with a divine Being outside himself, or by the realization of the divine Self within him. This was termed ecstasy.”²³ The Theosophists considered Jesus, Buddha, and other Initiates into the “Mysteries” to be “Sons of God” and “Saviours of the world” who had manifested their own divine powers.²⁴ Lawrence often uses the phrase “Son of God” to describe characters in the throes of numinous erotic passion.

Lawrence’s belief in the spiritual power of art was shared by mainstream theologians. For example, the German theologian Rudolf Otto believed that numinous feelings can be evoked by stimulating “kindred and similar feelings belonging to the ‘natural’ sphere” and to art.²⁵ It is the metaphorical relation of nature and spirit, and of art and spirit, that enables the one to induce the other.²⁶ According to Otto, “He who ‘in the spirit’ reads the written word lives in the numinous, though he may have neither notion of it nor name for it” (61).

The destructive phase of an initiation rite usually involves purification or mortification practices. In her discussion of the mystery rites of the ancient Greeks, Jane Harrison argues that the essence of a mystery is not “secrecy” but “purification in order that you might safely eat and handle certain sacra.”²⁷ Body and mind must be cleansed of impurities before there can be contact with holy things. Evelyn Underhill, in her analysis of the education of Christian mystical consciousness, also stresses the importance of purification: Christian mystics put themselves through painful, lengthy mortification practices to rid themselves of sinful thoughts and feelings and to prevent the commission of future transgressions.²⁸ The destruction phase of Lawrence’s novels aims to purify readers’ consciousness so that they can have a more sacred—energetic, integrated, healthy, wondrous, reverential—relationship to life, especially erotic life. In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, the narrator presents Lawrence’s belief in purification when he asserts that an important function of the novel is to “lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead” and thus “cleans[e]” the reader’s “sensitive awareness” (101). Because Lawrence saw the reader’s consciousness as tainted and fragmented by excessive thought, reflexivity, and vision, one of his general mortification strategies is to use literary devices that call attention to the splits in the reader’s consciousness between self and other, mind and body, ego and unconscious. Some of his devices exaggerate the verbal and visual features of modern consciousness associated with these splits: dualism, verbosity, viscosity, self-consciousness, conceptualization, objectification, accentuated

time-space sense. By using devices that amplify the ruptures in the reader's consciousness, Lawrence in effect completes the splintering process: he shatters, kills off (mortifies), the reader's split subjectivity and prepares the way for new, numinous forms of awareness. Lawrence's splintering techniques anticipate many of the devices used by postmodernist writers. However, many of the later writers revel in these splits rather than seek to overcome them.

The sacralization phase of initiation rites seeks to create the awareness of or union with divinity. Lawrence wanted the reader to become fully aware of the sacred energies at work in erotic exchange. This intention is also alluded to by the narrator of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, who says that another function of the novel is to "inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness" and thereby "freshen" or revitalize the reader's awareness in relation to sexual activity (101). Some of the devices that Lawrence uses to rejuvenate the reader resemble those used in meditative and contemplative practices: visualization and repetition devices are often used to convey how characters' bodies dynamically register erotic experiences.²⁹

To transform the reader's relationship to eroticism, Lawrence needed a new religious-erotic vocabulary. Rather than inventing new terms, as the later Joyce did, he selected words from extant discourses and transvalued them. Like Nietzsche, he believed that the transvaluation of language often requires the recovery and resuscitation of terms that once had great emotive power. I examine Lawrence's attempts to eroticize religious language and to sacralize sexual and organic discourses. Two general strategies include the sensualization of Christian terms that ordinarily have a purely spiritual (disembodied) meaning as well as the reliteralization of erotic metaphors for mystical union. Lawrence also experimented with a variety of esoteric discourses, particularly from those traditions in which the erotic body has sacred value: Jewish Kabbalah, and Tantric Yoga (a Hindu and Buddhist tradition). Much of his knowledge of these discourses came from reading the Theosophists.

I argue that the two transformative phases are associated with different narratorial consciousnesses or narrative textures. The contrasting style, tone, vocabulary, and function of these differing narrative voices suggests two different narrators: one who attacks, shatters, and mortifies; and one who reintegrates and reenergizes. In most of the novels, the narrators—or narratorial modes—alternate: passages attempting to mortify the reader are followed by ones aimed at revitalization, and these in turn are succeeded by passages seeking to further purify the reader's consciousness.³⁰ Lawrence analogized the gradual transformation of consciousness to that

of a snake sloughing off its skin: as the old skin is slowly sloughed off, it is gradually replaced by new skin. He wanted readers to slowly slough off their fragmented, nonvital modes of knowing and relating and to experience more unified and vital modes.

Many of the novels end with a passage or series of passages that seem aimed at destroying the new mode of consciousness that Lawrence has worked so hard to evoke in the reader. This final disintegrative effort destabilizes the dogmatic assertions voiced by narrators and characters. I interpret such endings as Lawrence's attempt to free readers of any overattachment to the particulars of the sacred encounters that have been depicted; ultimately, readers must learn for themselves, in a full-bodied way, what numinous erotic experience is.

I begin my analysis with *Lady Chatterley's Lover* because it represents Lawrence's most deliberate and developed attempt to structure his novels as a sacred transformative process—a religious initiation rite—for the reader. *Lady Chatterley* reveals the basic features of the hierophantic pattern and serves as a fully articulated paradigm for analyzing Lawrence's earlier attempts at creating the initiatory design. In chapter 1, I examine the destructive phase of *Lady Chatterley*, which dominates the first half of the novel; and in chapter 2, I discuss the vivification phase, which centers on the erotic encounters between Connie and Mellors in the second half. The main organizing device for the novel's mortification phase is a satiric narrator who bombards the reader with intensely visual, verbal, scientific, and reflexive analyses of the sexual attitudes and actions of Clifford Chatterley and his Cambridge colleagues, and of young Connie and her sister Hilda. The principal organizing technique of the sacralization phase is a narrative consciousness that transforms the conventional categories of the novel: instead of offering the characters' visual and conceptual perspectives, this narrator presents psychonarrations of the nonverbal experiences of their bodies, and uses tactile focalizations to convey the shifting sensations and feelings registered by hands, genitalia, and torsos.³¹ These focalizations exploit the physical dimensions of language—its phonic resonances and rhythms—as well as the power of language to cancel or overcome itself in contradiction, paradox, and negation and thus release nonlinguistic forms of awareness in the reader. The techniques and discourses used in the last four sex scenes reveal Lawrence attempting to destroy the initiatory pattern that has been so deliberately shaped.

Having examined how the fully formed transformational pattern operates in *Lady Chatterley*, I turn to Lawrence's early attempts to construct the pattern. In *The Rainbow*, the subject of chapter 3, the

destruction–sacralization rhythm is actually repeated four times: once in the eroticized portrayal of the anonymous premodern Brangwen generations, and again in the depiction of the sexual encounters of each of the three named, and progressively more modern, generations—those of Tom and Lydia, Anna and Will, and Ursula and Anton. The pattern is also reversed, with the vivification phase appearing first and gradually giving way to a disintegrative phase. This is the only novel in which the standard initiatory order of mortify–then–revitalize is reversed. As readers proceed through the novel, they experience a fourfold rhythm of rising and falling energy and of integrated and splintered forms of awareness. Moreover, I concentrate on Lawrence's transvaluation of Kabbalistic language in the erotic episodes. Lawrence found the Jewish esoteric tradition—and the Christian Kabbalistic tradition spawned from it—an attractive source of symbols because it draws on Biblical language familiar to his readers, uses this language in startlingly strange ways, is more body-centered than most conventional Christian discourses, and offers a full set of gendered symbols of divine energy as well as erotic metaphors of sacred union. Lawrence's knowledge of Kabbalah was largely derived from the Theosophists, who considered Jewish mystical teachings to be a version of the primeval “secret doctrine.”³² He may have also been familiar with the writings of: the influential Rosicrucian Kabbalist Eliphas Levi, author of *Transcendental Magic* (1896); S. L. MacGregor Mathers, translator of *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (1887) and *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage* (1900) and a founder of the Golden Dawn Society that claimed Yeats as a member; and Hermeticist A. E. Waite, author of *The Holy Kabbalah* (1912).³³ I show that the vitalizing passages in *The Rainbow* are replete with Kabbalistic mystical expressions, while the mortifying passages are dominated by magic terms. The mysticism–magic distinction is important because Lawrence associated mysticism with an unselfconscious, receptive, unitive experience and with balanced, reciprocal encounters, while he saw magic as a selfish, manipulative, and knowledge-driven activity that produces unbalanced, hierarchical relationships.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the use of scientific and quasi-scientific discourses in the sex scenes in *Women in Love*. In the novel's disintegrative phase, Lawrence conflates mechanistic and magical discourses because he considers the motivating force behind both magic and mechanistic science to be the twin will to knowledge and power. Mechanistic science, in his view, is even more pernicious than magic not only because of its destructive potential when (mis)applied in industry and on the battlefield but also because it de-animates the universe. Lawrence's understanding of

mechanism was probably influenced by the writings of Herbert Spencer and Ernst Haeckel.³⁴ In the works of William James and P. D. Ouspensky, he found a powerful critique of mechanistic and positivistic science. Throughout the mortifying scenes in *Women in Love*, mechanistic discourse is associated with egoistic willfulness, violence, death, disequilibrium, logocentrism, and ocularcentrism. In the novel's vivifying phase, Lawrence draws on the terminology of Eastern mysticism in an attempt to forge a startling, attractive, quasi-scientific alternative to the Western mechanistic model of relationships.³⁵ He makes use of the language of the Hindu system of yoga, especially Tantric yoga, which is a training method designed to lead aspirants to sacred union and integration through proper stimulation and alignment of the body's centers of energy and consciousness. Tantric yoga is, in part, the art of sacred sexuality and focuses on arousing and channeling erotic energy or "serpent power" for the purpose of simultaneous union with one's sexual partner and with divinity. Lawrence's main source for Tantric yoga is again the Theosophists: both Blavatsky and Besant discuss yoga; also, Richard Pryse, a student of Blavatsky, wrote a yogic interpretation of the Book of Revelation called *The Apocalypse Unsealed* (1910), which Lawrence read in 1915–16. Lawrence uses yoga terms like "chakra" in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, which he considers his own half-serious effort at formulating a "subjective science"—a "science which proceeds in terms of life and is established on data of living experience and of sure intuition."³⁶ Yoga posits that the body has various chakras, which are centers of energy and consciousness.

My analysis of *The Plumed Serpent* in chapter 5 shows that Lawrence's effort to initiate the reader has become overly selfconscious, insistent, and distorted. His didactic imperative has now taken on an authoritarian twist and too often drives and distorts narrative development. In trying too explicitly to control the representation of his religious ideology and its effects on the characters and the reader, Lawrence makes significant literary errors of commission and omission: he manufactures implausible or distorted characters and situations, and refrains from presenting perspectival details that would make these implausibilities and distortions more evident to the reader. These latter techniques reveal a desire, conscious or unconscious, to cover up the untenable and unpersuasive features of the novel. The novel's technical problems simultaneously disclose the difficulties that were always inherent in Lawrence's initiatory aims and undermine any forced attempt to transform the reader. I focus on the weaknesses in the novel's sacralization phase since the passages dealing with the portrayal of the Quetzalcoatl rituals—meditations, dances,

ceremonies, hymns—are the most innovative, flawed, and disturbing in the book.

I conclude by assessing the overall trajectory of Lawrence's hierophantic–artistic practices. I also argue that a poetics of literary technique gains depth and scope by yoking it to a phenomenology of reader response. This integrative approach is particularly powerful for examining the potential cognitive and affective impacts of literature on the reader.

CHAPTER ONE

The Destruction Phase of Lady Chatterley's Lover

In late October 1926, two weeks after telling Frieda he would “never write another novel,” Lawrence began writing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.¹ He finished the third and final version in January 1928. His letters from that period indicate he powerfully identified with the novel and considered it as precious and frail as his self. Fearing public outcry and government censorship, he initially had no desire to publish the manuscript. Only after considering private publication did he resolve to rewrite and publish the work. While some critics have considered the novel one of the worst of his major fictions, he thought it a consummation of his creative efforts:

It's what the world would call very improper. But you know it's not really improper—I always labour at the same thing, to make the sex relation valid and precious, instead of shameful. And this novel is the furthest I've gone. To me it is beautiful and tender and frail as the naked self is, and I shrink very much even from having it typed. Probably the typist would interfere.²

In contrast to this positive self-assessment, even so extreme an advocate as F. R. Leavis considers the novel overly “deliberate” and “calculated.”³ And Michael Squires, who has studied the novel's composition, deems it “schematic” (168). My analysis of the novel's language shows that despite the sexual explicitness, the somewhat schematic structure, and the occasional stylistic heavyhandedness, the representations of eroticism are much more complex and subtle than has been realized. While the plot is