



THE PLUMED SERPENT: D.H. LAWRENCE'S NOVEL

*Ramu. K and **Dr. Ajit Kumar

**Research Scholar, Department of English, SunRise University, Alwar, Rajasthan (India)

*Assistant Professor, Department of English, SunRise University, Alwar, Rajasthan (India)

e-mail: ramuchavanu43@gmail.com

Abstract: The life and the philosophy of D. H. Lawrence influenced his novels. The emotional turmoil of his life, his obsession with perfecting human relationships, and his fascination with the duality of the world led him to create his most experimental and pivotal novel, *The Plumed Serpent*. In *The Plumed Serpent* Lawrence uses a superstructure of myth to convey his belief in the necessity for the rebirth of a religion based on the dark gods of antiquity; coupled with this was his fervent belief that in all matters, sexual or spiritual, physical or emotional, political or religious, men should lead and women should follow. Through a study of Lawrence's life and personal creed, an examination of the mythic structure of *The Plumed Serpent*, and a brief forward look to *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, it is possible to see *The Plumed Serpent* as significant in the Lawrencian canon. Though didactic and obscure at times, the novel is an important transitional work.

[Ramu. K and Dr. Ajit Kumar. **THE PLUMED SERPENT: D.H. LAWRENCE'S NOVEL**. *N Y Sci J* 2024;17(1):7-15]. ISSN 1554-0200 (print); ISSN 2375-723X (online). <http://www.sciencepub.net/newyork>. 02. doi:10.7537/marsnys170124.02.

Keywords: Lawrence, Novels, Plumed serpent.

Introduction:

D.H. Lawrence, in full David Herbert Lawrence, (born September 11, 1885, Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, England—died March 2, 1930, Vence, France), English author of novels, short stories, poems, plays, essays, travel books, and letters. His novels *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), and *Women in Love* (1920) made him one of the most influential English writers of the 20th century. D.H. Lawrence is one of the greatest and most controversial modern novelists. As a creative genius who defied convention, Lawrence may be easy to admire or admonish but difficult to ignore. His work compels attention on the strength of its originality, inventiveness, intelligence and insight. The bulk of critical comment invited by his fiction is astounding indeed. The impressive array of Lawrence's defenders and detractors sounds forbidding. Besides, so much has been written on Lawrence that an additional study of his fiction runs the risk of repetition, if not redundancy. One cannot claim to offer a fresh interpretation of the novels of D.H. Lawrence without inviting the charge of immodesty. And yet, new books and articles on Lawrence keep appearing with unflinching regularity. The ever growing mass of critical commentary on Lawrence

bears testimony to the promise of excitement and discovery which Lawrence's fiction carries. Besides, as F.R. Leavis rightly observed in *D.H. Lawrence: Novelist*, re-reading can be useful because his novels continue to reward repeated frequentations. In fact, the enjoyment and appreciation grow with every reading.

William York Tindall, who made the first study of Lawrence's sources for *The Plumed Serpent*, called the book "by far his best novel as well as the outstanding example of primitivism in our time" (D. H. Lawrence and Susan His Cow 113). As Harry T. Moore stated, the critical consensus is that *The Plumed Serpent* is "at once Lawrence's most ambitious attempt in the area of the novel and his most notable failure" ("Vision and Language" 69). Other critics were less generous. H. M. Daleski felt that although *The Plumed Serpent* was organically developed, "Lawrence's attempt ... to assert a 'male' metaphysic in order to 'justify himself' is disastrous" (251-2). E. W. Tedlock, Jr. found the "formal religious development ... embarrassingly pseudo-poetic, preachy, and posturing" (192).

Lawrence and Psychoanalytic Criticism

As the dominant symbol in *The Plumed Serpent*, Quetzalcoatl embodies all the Lawrencian dogma: duality, vitality, ritual submission to a higher

being, and worship of the blood. The image of Quetzalcoatl arose from Lawrence's attempt to define the presence of the dark god he felt vital for spiritual and physical love. It sprang, moreover, from his need to "eradicate values designated 'female' and based on 'love' and to institute a new system designated 'male' and based on 'power'" (Simpson 115). Although the religion of the new Quetzalcoatl is "meant to be a reforming of [the] primitive vital energies Kate [Leslie] senses in Mexico" (Apter 171), it is essentially a phallic cult. Since Alfred Booth Kuttner's review of *Sons and Lovers* in 1915,⁵⁷ Lawrence's works have been read in the light of Freudian or more generally psychoanalytic theories. Kuttner interpreted the novel as the struggle of a man to free himself from allegiance to his mother, the struggle which ends in tragedy: "Paul goes to pieces because he can never make the mature sexual decision away from his mother, he can never accomplish the physical and emotional transfer."⁵⁸ Lawrence's resistance to this mode of reading is well known: "I hated the *Psychoanalysis* [sic] *Review of Sons and Lovers*. You know I think 'complexes' are vicious half-statements of the Freudians: sort of can't see wood for trees."⁵⁹ He felt dismayed that the relationship between mother and son was interpreted as an Oedipal drama and that Paul Morel was identified with Lawrence himself.

Freudianism and the Literary Mind (1945) by Frederick J. Hoffman is an important early book that incorporates a detailed discussion about Lawrence's reception of Freud's ideas. Though Lawrence's consistent opposition to Freud is documented in his discursive writing, Hoffman finds that Lawrence at least allows the general significance of the psychoanalyst to his contemporaries.⁶⁰ One of the best known Freudian responses to Lawrence is Daniel Weiss's *Oedipus in Nottingham* (1962). The title of the book hints at the diagnostic tendency of the book. Offering a Freudian analysis, the study looks at the Oedipal crisis which underpins the novels.⁶¹ Weiss's reading of *Sons and Lovers* is guided by the conviction that the Oedipal situation, as Freud describes it, prevails in the novel: "For Paul the sexuality Clara offers is feasible incest, just as his relationship with Miriam, although consummated, is not; and both relationships are determined by the root Oedipal relationship."⁶² Weiss's study tends to become over ingenious in ferreting out signs of the author's unconscious intentions. The subtleties and the complex dynamics of literature are sacrificed and the work made systematic, even schematic than it is.

The Plumed Serpent:

Kate Leslie, the heroine of *The Plumed Serpent*, is a strong-willed, resourceful, and pragmatic woman. Although Lawrence uses magic, spells, and powerfully ritualistic scenes that give texture and complexity to the novel, the myth and fantasy are not enough to convince either Kate or the reader that such a vibrant, resolute woman would voluntarily succumb to the pseudo-religious practices of the Quetzalcoatl cult. *The Plumed Serpent* is a pivotal book in the Lawrence canon; it is the last of his power-struggle novels and the last that uses myth as a controlling symbol. As such the book merits consideration. Perhaps while exorcizing his own demons in *The Plumed Serpent*, Lawrence discovered the dark gods to be darker than he suspected and the abyss below even more unfathomable. At any rate, he "pulls up. His next, his last hero is not small and dark and chthonic. He is large and red-faced and a gamekeeper. And he is famously far from believing that a woman must renounce the seething, frictional, ecstatic Aphrodite of the foam" (Stewart 559). Though imperfect in many respects, *The Plumed Serpent* is, from a biographical point of view, an important work because it represents a crisis in Lawrence's personal life and a shift in his philosophy. He did not abandon his belief in male dominance, but he merged it with a new tenderness and concern for female sexuality. His dream of a primitive utopia, his obsession with male dominance, and his fascination with archetypal myth were purged, liberating him to create his masterpiece, *Lady Chatterly's Lover*. *The Plumed Serpent* is, therefore, an important transitional work.

If *Kangaroo* was a political novel that went beyond politics in search of the "dark gods", the search is carried out in *The Plumed Serpent* with a renewed vigour. Whether the leap from politics to religion marks a continuity or progression in Lawrence's thought and belief or not, *The Plumed Serpent* certainly accords a greater respect to the wonder and mystery of the religious aura of the gods of antiquity. The novel, which came out in 1926, has certainly been no favourite with Lawrencean critics and scholars. It has been criticized, in particular, for its insistent ideology, the killings, and what is taken to be its advocacy of male supremacy. Even the sympathetic critics like F. R. Leavis, Harry T. Moore, Mark Spilka and Mark Kinkead-Weekes have found fault with the novel. While F. R. Leavis cautiously condemns it for having "none" of the "flexibility of mode and mood for which the preceding novels are remarkable,"¹ Harry T. Moore says that "the ideology of *The Plumed Serpent* is repugnant to many who nevertheless admire the prose-poetry of the book."² Mark Kinkead-Weekes calls the book "altogether more dictatorial,"³ and Fjagesund criticizes it for

showing “a collapse in moral values.”⁴ Taking cue from the feminists, even an otherwise sympathetic critic like Mark Spilka calls it “an embarrassing literary odyssey of male wish fulfilment.”⁵ The novel has its faults and excesses. One should, however, be wary of condemning the novel wholesale. Terry Eagleton has certainly done no service to Lawrence when along with *Aaron’s Rod* and *Kangaroo*, he enlists the preoccupations of *The Plumed Serpent*: “a protofascist veneration of power, ‘blood hierarchy’, racial purity, male bonding, charismatic leadership, the revival of ‘primitive’ ritual and mythology, and the brutal subjugation of women”⁶ and dismisses it as “execrable.”⁷

The Plumed Serpent is a product of the author’s long-standing fascination for the American continent. It has its place in Lawrence’s ongoing quest for fullness in life: “I believe in America one can catch up some kind of emotional impetus from the aboriginal Indian and from the aboriginal air and land, that will carry one over this crisis of the world’s soul depression, into a new epoch.”⁸ Though, at times, he revolted against the Indian and later came to see the “hero” as “obsolete,”⁹ till some time after writing the novel, Lawrence considered *The Plumed Serpent* his “chief novel so far”¹⁰ which lay “nearer” his “heart than any other work” of his.¹¹ The shortcomings pointed out by critics and Lawrence’s own moments of repudiation for the American continent, the “acceptance-rejection ambivalence”¹² should not prevent one from seeing that the attempt, as ever, is to offer clues for better, healthy living, to take life to altogether more vivid circles of being.

It is while she is being rowed to Orilla in a boat that Kate is rewarded with a sudden revelation. So far she had been unable to understand the real Mexico, but now she comes to realize that “the central look in the native eyes” is a “look of extraordinary arresting beauty” (PS, 79), not of life gone “widdershins” (PS, 66). Compared with the American Villiers who is glad only when he is doing something mechanical, the crippled boatman and the man who swims across to Kate’s boat have a sense of peace about them. They are not in the grip of the worldly tendencies. The gleaming look in their eyes, the expression of being far-away, of being “suspended between the realities” (PS, 79) reminds Kate of the “morning star.” These are men who want to be able to breathe the greater breath. Many people are sincere in their desire to improve the situation in Mexico. However, most feel helpless, thwarted. Judge Burlap who is full of suppressed but

excessive anger – “an irritation amounting almost to rabies” (PS, 27) – whenever he tries to talk seriously about Mexico, serves as an example. There are, then, those like Montes, the President of the Republic who see the American Indians “as the symbols in the weary script of socialism and anarchy” (PS, 42). Slogans proclaim Montes as the man who will regenerate the degenerate Mexico. The President, who wants to make his country progress, to save it from poverty and ignorance with the help of European ideas, is unconcerned about the craving of the Mexican soul. There is a real danger that Mexico will lose its distinct identity by a rapid process of Americanization. Already the village Sayula is in the grip of materialism: “One hope, one faith, one destiny; to ride in a *camion*, to own a car” (PS, 98). Yet, by and large, the Mexicans have retained a “strange, submerged desire” for “things beyond the world” (PS, 233). Juana and her family are indifferent to money, materialism and comfort. Can liberty and progress and socialism help the Indians who sit ever so patiently, selling a few *centavos* worth of tropical, fruits and wares? Have they been able to bring solace to the white races?

Don Ramon, the eminent scholar and historian, understands Mexico as no one else does. The Mexicans neither assert their righteousness nor are they in a mad rush to “get on”. Their souls still long for that which is beyond the ordinary day-to-day world. Though they may adopt a derisive tone towards anyone who dares to rise above “the grey, lava rock level” (PS, 189), their voices have not the modern, cynical, jeering note of disbelief. In all its uncouthness, the group that huddles around the floating wick-lamp outside Juana’s kitchen-hole, reading the hymns of Quetzalcoatl in the raging-storm, wants the wonder of myth and mystery in their lives. An alien religion has failed to touch them inwardly. Instead of helping a man collect his soul “into its own strength and integrity” (PS, 248), the Sunday church, with its cheap glitter, offers no more than a little “orgy of incense” (PS, 249), leaving the soul all the more slack.

Only Ramon can speak in a language that the Mexicans understand, “the tongue of their own blood” (PS, 221). As Jascha Kessler says, Ramon and Cipriano are men who believe that “Mexico can meet the future only by means of some kind of projection of its psyche.”¹⁴ Having got a clue to his “own whole manhood” (PS, 187), Ramon now considers it his responsibility to show the Mexicans the way. And it is not socialism that holds a key to the Mexican soul, but a “living word” – Quetzalcoatl (PS, 187). Quetzalcoatl, the

feathered snake, the revered deity of ancient Mexico is the centre of all Lawrence's hope in this novel. His significance is not for Mexico alone, but the white races can also take a cue from him. He is the symbol of the best a man may be and a restorer of pride in life. When Jesus arrived in Mexico, Quetzalcoatl left. Now, having slept the great healing sleep of regeneration, he is prepared to come back to his "bride between the seas" Mexico (PS, 104). He is not a god of "one fixed purport (PS, 48). Rather many meanings coalesce in him, defying one definition. He is the gleaming morning star and the mysterious, ever-evasive holy ghost. Indeed, Quetzalcoatl is asked to hold so much weight that often it becomes "tiresome, overdeveloped."¹⁵ However, as Kermodé says, the Quetzalcoatl religion "clearly has its place, being, in relation to the main purpose of the novel, much what Lawrence's mythological and psychological systems are to his fiction."¹⁶

The elements in Mexico are tremendous. Here one can feel their influence even more powerfully – an illustration of Lawrence's belief that "the pristine spirit of the universe still beat closer to the surface in America than anywhere else."¹⁷ Ramon believes that people will perish if they make the forces of nature angry, if they fail to renew their lost connection with the elements. Many have forgotten that the earth is alive like a huge serpent sleeping. In one hymn, Quetzalcoatl sees, as he looks down on Mexico, that sun and earth and stars are getting "weary of tossing and rolling the substance of life" to the lips of the people. (PS, 216) People have displeased the cosmic dragons who are shaking with rage and are ready to strike back. The ancient religion of Mexico is the religion of living in peace with the sun and the winds, the waters and the earth.

While the white races need to make a conscious effort to pick up the "lost trail,"¹⁸ regaining the lost link with the elements is not as difficult for the Mexicans. The natives of this dark land still are part of the "Tree of Life" (PS, 68). Their roots, going down to the "centre of the earth" are alive (PS, 68). The religion of Quetzalcoatl shows them the way of getting in touch again through a revival of ancient dances and morning and evening rituals. Opposed to the jazzing of "the organdie butterflies and the flannel-trouser *fifis*" in the market plaza (PS, 101), the Indian dance is seriously meaningful. The slow round dance, with "the ancient rhythm of the feet on the earth," (PS, 232) "the dance of downward sinking absorption" (PS, 312) re-roots the people deep into the earth. The earth responds by restoring their youth, their manhood and

womanhood. Fascinated, Kate also joins the dancers in the market plaza. The excess of "uplift", the contempt of the body has been the doom of her race. Soon Kate begins to learn "to loosen the uplift of all her life, and let it pour slowly... in soft, rhythmic gushes from her feet into the dark body of the earth" (PS, 115). Replenished, she rushes home with her secret. Later, as the religion of Quetzalcoatl is declared the national religion of the Republic, there is a revival of morning and evening rituals. A "twilit newness" slowly spreads (PS, 322) as people pause for brief prayers at dawn and sunset and are put in connection again, winning their "own creation" from "the nest of the cosmic dragons" (PS, 243).

In the eyes of so many white men, however, Kate detects "the look of nullity, and life moving in the reversed direction" (PS, 66). The eyes of the German manager at Orilla have gone hard, opaque, acknowledging his defeat before the cruel surroundings. The spirit of the place is definitely down-dragging towards the white people. The dark continent seems to spell only doom and destruction for them. Is Mexico, then, a "high plateau of death" (PS, 40), the "great melting-pot, where men from the creative continents were smelted back again, not to a new creation, but down into the homogeneity of death"? (PS, 65). The folly of the white invaders is that they did not stop to consider whether their religion advocating humility and gentleness suited this land of fierce sun and forceful storms. They failed to realize that not only the elements but also the blood of the natives revolted against the white man's way of life. In attempting to save others, the white man lost his own soul. Now, thwarted, instead of moving forward, his life is going all backwards.

Nevertheless, achievement of balance and harmony is possible. Lawrence, worked under a belief that "the pristine life could still be recovered from the vestiges in today's indigenous races and from the spirit of place."¹⁹ Living the powerful life of the earth, that can but be lived by the body, will correct the over-emphasis put on the intellect by the white races. The effort is to "re-unite body and soul," to correct the "fatal division"²⁰ of being. The natives, who seem to go on "existing and persisting without hope or élan" (PS, 374) also need to revive the hope, the aspiration of the spirit. The morning star, that is Quetzalcoatl, is a symbol of that state of achieved balance, balance between the spirit and the blood, love and power. The dawn star is also the holy ghost. Just as the holy ghost "holds the light and

the dark, the day and the night, the wet and the sunny, united in one little clue,”²¹ the morning star “hanging perfect” (PS, 79) between the day and the night is “the gleaming clue to the two opposites” (PS 81).

Ramon has the power of bringing together the two great human impulses, “the breath of dawn and the deeps of the dark” (PS, 376), to a point of fusion. All others can strive to achieve this poise, this balance, which alone is “divinity” (PS, 377). In his letter to Mabel Dodge Sterne, Lawrence stresses: “one must somehow bring together the two ends of humanity, our own thin end, and the last dark strand, from the previous, pre-white era.”²² The new conception of human life that the novel envisions, rising out of “a new fusion of the white invader and the dark native”²³ emphasizes the need of balance between mind and blood for healthy, harmonious living. Quetzalcoatl, the iridescent god, gleams with many shades of meanings. He can teach the people to live beyond money and the things of the world. Just as Quetzalcoatl shines in the sky like the morning star, a tiny inward star can rise within a person. The desire is not to achieve worldly success but to pass “with transfiguration to the Morning Star” (PS, 225). It is the prompting of the holy ghost, man’s innermost soul, “the only stable centre”²⁴ inside one. In such a state, the dreams and urges trouble one not. The daytime selves and the externalities of the world are forgotten. Tomorrow, yesterday or today pass into oblivion and a man wants just to “Be”. It is a state where he is undivided, where at last he has his “wholeness, holiness” (PS, 226): “And the perfect sleep of the snake *I Am* is the plasm of a man, who is whole” (PS, 156).

An individual alone, however, is incomplete, a fragment and needs a mate for joy and fulfilment: “And where thou fallest into my hand, fall I into thine, and jasmine flowers on the burning bush between us” (PS, 160). The morning star which rises between two or many is the “only whole thing” (PS, 350). Just as there is a strong urge to move into a vivid relation with the others, there is a need of maintaining one’s integrity. The gulf between the two persons remains unsurpassable forever. The point is the same as Birkin in *Women in Love* took great pains to elaborate as “star-equilibrium.” Cipriano and Ramon, the blood-brothers, embrace each other ever in joy, still honouring “each other’s eternal and abiding loneliness” (PS, 225).

The novel asserts that when a man and woman truly come together in marriage, respecting each other’s “abiding loneliness”,

neither being possessed nor trying to possess, a star shines out of their union. However, at the same time, does the book ask Kate insidiously to give up her stakes, submerge her individuality in favour of the novel’s quest for the whole mankind? Within his limited range, Don Cipriano possesses a curious power. A “supremely vitalistic figure,”²⁵ he can cast a spell over Kate, making her think of the ancient Pan world where men strode along in immense power. Kate finds herself succumbing: “She could conceive now her marriage with Cipriano; the supreme passivity, like the earth below the twilight, consummate in living lifelessness, the sheer solid mystery of passivity. Ah, what an abandon...” (PS, 278). Kate Millet reads in such lines the political agenda of the author: “Kate Leslie is an exemplum, an object lesson placed so as to lead other women ‘back to the twilight of the ancient Pan World, where the soul of woman was dumb, to be forever unspoken.’ Her vertiginous passivity is not only an admonition to her sex, but something the author appears to enjoy playing at himself.”²⁶ Millet pays no attention to the comfort, natural ease and relaxation of the will which Kate experiences for the first time in her relation with Cipriano. Such reductive reading involves a neglect of Lawrence’s strong urge to find a more complete way of existence by attempting to unite the white consciousness with the positives of the dark continent.

Later, when she marries Cipriano, she finds absolute rest for the first time in her life in what she now takes to be her mood of “*positive passivity*” (PS, 379) as the hardness of her will is dissolved. The novel neither depicts Cipriano-Kate relationship as ideal nor as a static, unchanging one, without potential to evolve into something new. The advocacy of the mood of passivity does not so much mean submission on the part of the white woman, as the need of giving up of shrill, insistent will. In any case, knowing Kate as one does, keeping in mind her independence, her scepticism, her moments of repudiation and revulsion, one can hardly take her mood of “positive passivity” as permanent. Underneath all its barbarity, Mexico has many saving graces that serve as pointers towards a saner life for the rest of the world. Unlike the modern world, the dark country has kept alive the flow of sex instinct as “a real flow of sympathy, generous and warm, and not a trick thing, or a moment’s excitation, or a mere bit of bullying.”²⁷ In their proud manhood, men are alive to the womanliness of a woman. Walking on the beach, as a “peon” laughs at her “with a soft, grateful

flame,” Kate feels, “How wonderful sex can be, when men keep it powerful and sacred, and it fills the world! Like sunshine through and through one!” (PS, 392).

Jamiltepec, Ramon’s *hacienda*, is a picture of an ideal workers’ commune. There are men weaving *serapes*, making *huaraches*, artisans, sculptors and blacksmiths – working with their hands, deriving pleasure and satisfaction from their work. There is, then, Juana’s younger son Ezequiel, a sensitive upright youth who likes best to work on land, even though he can never hope to own any. Whereas the elder Jesus, who works a machine, is ugly in his jeering tone, Ezequiel has proud grace. These men seek neither land nor gold but life first of all. The morning star that shines in their eyes, the star that in Mexico was Quetzalcoatl, holds the promise of taking the world towards a better future.

Though Lawrence’s attempt to found a religion and invent the liturgy and rituals for it may be a part of his whimsical excesses, Kate’s spiritual odyssey falls into the quest pattern in Lawrence’s fiction. In a bid to restore the manhood and womanhood of the jaded European culture, Lawrence selects the Mexican setting to test whether it is possible to re-root the rootless lives of the white races. In order to water the “tree of life”, Lawrence seems to acknowledge the importance of music, dance and ritual. Man must rediscover the lost connection with the elements and respect the spirit of the place. The novel poses the question: What is life? Lawrence seems to answer that life is not bull-fights or social gatherings and bickerings. Although revival and regeneration of civilization is needed for realizing the fullness of being, one must stop worrying over the externalities of the world in order to discover the wholeness and holiness of the life within.

Some Religious Symbols in D. H. Lawrence’s Novel “The Plumed Serpent”

D. H. Lawrence is one of the important modern English writers, whose works are characterized by a traditional style and variety of daring erotic scenes. Thanks to these characteristics, his works are popular and easily perceptible. Though a variety of religious symbols and themes and their individual interpretations by the author are inherent in the text, whose elucidation and analysis clarify the depth of the author’s philosophy. This article analyzes some religious symbols given in D. H. Lawrence’s novel “The Plumed Serpent”, which alludes to the essence of the main character’s journey in Mexico. The journey itself is the process of self-determination and quest.

The novel mainly narrates about Kate’s journey at the time, when two Mexicans - Cipriano and Ramon – are trying to revive Aztec God cult so that the old primitive religion could return its natural position and banish imperialist Christian religion. Therefore, three Aztec gods appear in the novel - ‘Quetzalcoatl’ personified by Ramon, Cipriano as Huitzilopochtli and Kate as Goddess Malinzi.

Aztec God ‘Quetzalcoatl’ - which means ‘a plumed serpent’ in translation - was chosen as the title of the finished novel by Lawrence. This God plays an important role in Aztec religion. His name appeared in the 7th century AD and a bit later, it was connected to one of the Aztec kings. ‘Quetzal’ is the widespread name of the bird (*Pharomachus mocinno*) in Central America and ‘Coatl’ means snake, which represent the metaphors of the earth and the sky. Rising Serpent to the sky represents the symbolism of the revival from death, resurrection and rebirth [Kaplan, 1999]. We should not forget the fact that a snake changes its skin several times, which also hints to an eternal revival. Even in Georgian literature, we have got Grigol Robakidze’s novel “The Snake’s Skin”. In Greek Mythology a snake biting its tail and thus forming the circle symbolically represents the eternity. Consequently, symbolic and metaphorical meanings of the name of God ‘Quetzalcoatl’ include the eternal circle of human’s fall and rebirth. Kate’s journey from Europe to Mexico or from modern civilization to the primitive one is also exactly one of the presented examples of this eternal circle. In Lawrence’s works, modern European civilization with its over-powerful rationalism is the source of collapsed values and a lost individuality. Mexico with its forgotten ancient religion keeps the knowledge about forgotten irrational unconscious powers. Therefore, going into the depth of the unconscious and finding your real ‘self’ or being reborn is the main idea of the novel. The article aims to analyze the symbols, which represent the main idea of the novel.

The main character’s journey in Mexico and the Mexicans’ attempt to change into the rails of Aztec religion somehow indicate to the fall and collapsed values of the western civilization and the feeling of the necessity of escaping appears in an individual. Accordingly, in the beginning of the novel, Lawrence parodies the sacrifice of Christ and the bullfight. It is also worth noting that Lawrence was not the only one who noticed the similarities between the symbolism of Christianity and other ancient religions. Jung in his collected works “Psychology and Religion & Answer to Job” states that each archetypal symbol is the phenomenon itself, but existing similarities could be explained by the common roots in human psyche: “Although the Mass itself is a unique phenomenon in the history of comparative religion, its symbolic content would be profoundly alien to man were it not rooted in

human psyche. But if it is so rooted, then we may expect to find similar patterns of symbolism both in the earlier history of mankind and in the world of pagan thought contemporary with it" [Jung, 1958:222].

Shirley Bricout in her article "Ritualization of emotions in 'Quetzalcoatl' and 'The Plumed Serpent'" analyzes in detail the meaning of the symbolism of the bullfight and its similarity to Christian sacrifice. She states that the beginning of the novel with the bullfight has its meaning. She explains that the bullfight had a mysterious meaning, which was presented by the mystic communion between a torero and a bull. This mystic union aroused certain spiritual emotions in spectators and made them share this experience. Though Lawrence, in the first chapter of the novel, apparently parodies the bullfight and there are numerous examples: „She had always been afraid of bulls, fear tempered with reverence of the great Mithraic beast. And now she saw how stupid he was in spite of his long horns and his massive maleness Blindly and stupidly he ran at the rag, each time, and the toreadors skipped like fat-hipped girls showing off“ [Lawrence, 1987:10]. Therefore, the author of the article states that it is no longer possible to get a mystic communion between the bull and the torero and a common passion aroused by it: „As a consequence, the Lawrentian arena is no longer a place where passion is fulfilled, and where communion can take place, but rather a vortex of unleashed emotions that the parody of a ritual can no longer channel“ [Bricout, 2011: 10, 1:3]. Accordingly, it is not surprising that Kate is shocked by seeing such a scene and is eager to escape: „Kate knew if she saw any more she would go into hysterics“ [Lawrence, 1987 :15]. From Shirley Bricout's point of view, this scene makes the main character dissociated and puts her into hysterics. According to the author of the article, the inner tunnel with which Kate has to leave the building symbolizes the path to rebirth, but this process is delayed by the rain. For Shirley Bricout, rain in the novel represents the symbol of purification, but in the opening scene the main character's delay in the inner tunnel, because of the rain, indicates to the spiritual non-readiness to rebirth: „the rain symbolizes purification, but in the opening scene Kate isn't ready for rebirth just yet as she will be when she marries Don Cipriano“ [Bricout, 2011:239-254]. Primarily, it is important for the main character to have the desire for rebirth.

The author of the article interestingly continues the discussion and says that the irresponsible wave of the spiritual passion from the mystic bullfight gives way to a void in the belief that the characters seek to fill. However, an individual feels the same emptiness not only in Mexico, but in Europe as well. According to Bricout's viewpoint, Lawrence parodies not only the bullfight, but the sacrifice of Christ. Lawrence in his work "Apocalypse" associates the bull with the lamb: "A

Lamb it has to be: or with Mithras, a bull" [Lawrence, 1980: 99]. The author of the article also pays attention to the beginning of the novel: "It was the Sunday after Easter, and the last bull-fight of the season in Mexico" [Lawrence, 1987: 1], where the allusion to the Easter hints to the fact that the sacrifice itself is not an end. Therefore, it is described how God 'Quetzalcoatl' comes into life and the new belief takes place after the parody of the bullfight or the sacrifice. We should not forget the meaning of 'Quetzalcoatl', which, as I mentioned above, represents the symbol of the revival-rebirth. Therefore, main character Kate and the Mexicans should revive spiritually.

Due to the fact that the whole novel represents the main character's journey to renewal, we constantly come across the symbols connected to this process. One of the examples is 'the lake'. The title of one of the chapters is 'Lake'. Kate moves to live near it. A lake has various meanings. In Indian religion, a surface and the depth of a lake symbolically depict consciousness and unconsciousness of a human being. It is also perceived as a mirror, where the sky is reflected. It is also the dwelling-place of Gods. Therefore, while Kate is crossing Lake Quetzalcoatl, the men are coming out of the water and reveal the revival of God to her. Kate feels the harmony of the lake, which represents the reflection of an unconscious desirable harmony: „she sensed a certain delicate, tender mystery in the river, in the naked man in the water, in the boatman" [Lawrence, 1987:67]. We should not forget Christian symbolism of water, which is connected to baptism or communion with the truth. The lake once more reminds us what Kate is looking for in her journey. In the novel, the symbolism of a boatman draws the parallel to the Greek mythology and makes an interesting allusion to river Styx and ferryman Charon, who carries the soul of the dead to the underworld. In Greek mythology, it is known that a coin was placed in a mouth of a dead person to pay Charon for the passage. In the novel, Kate pays the boatman to cross the river. All these symbols mirror the journey of the main character in the river of unconscious. This is a hellish process that Kate needs to go through to be reborn again. The part of this process is the dark energy of the unconscious "living" in the Mexicans. It makes a physical threat to Kate.

Ezekiel, who has brother Jesus, protects her from the night rampage of the bandits and murderers. It is not accidental that the choice was made on Ezekiel. The fear that Kate feels is not the spiritual one, but "the heart-wrench of blood fear". In Lawrence's works, a man of an ancient civilization had blood consciousness. Ezekiel was exactly the prophet, who had lived before Christ. His name comes from the Old Testament of the Bible and means "God strengthens". It is symbolic that Ezekiel protects Kate not only from the bandits, but also from the darkness of the night, which is associated with

unconscious. It is interesting that Kate herself names the fear, felt at night, the blood fear, which differs from the fear she felt during the war in Europe: "In England, in Ireland, during the war and the revolution she had known spiritual fear"... "Now she knew the real heart-wrench of blood fear" [Lawrence, 1987: 127]. Understanding the existence of unconscious dark forces of the self and overcoming the fear coming from it represent the process of an inner renewal.

It is not surprising that Lawrence has chosen God for the title of his novel, whose symbolism is given in the myths of all cultures and represents a symbol of renewal, resurrection and eternity. The writer knew about the symbol of serpent not only on a religious-mythological level, but on an esoteric level as well. In his work "Fantasia of the Unconscious", he reveals a good knowledge of energy centers - the so-called chakras. As it is known, with the opening of the final chakra, an individual consciousness merges the eternity. So-called Kundalini awakening symbolism is presented by the Greek snake symbol (mentioned at the beginning of the article), which is coiled and bites its tail. Its awakening and the process of raising to the final chakra is demonstrated in the symbol of a serpent.

It is also an interesting fact that the Serpent in the Bible is the first cause of the fall of Adam and Eve. In Nietzsche's work "Thus spoke Zarathustra", a snake and an eagle symbolically represent pride and wisdom. In Nietzsche's works, a human being's dualism is considered in this symbolism - a snake means earthly, destructive, while an eagle means the heaven, resurrection similarly to Chinese Yin and Yang. The co-existence of these two opposing forces is characteristic to all living beings. Nietzsche's influence on Lawrence is noticeable not only in symbolism, but also in the writer's creative worldview, which is primarily demonstrated in doubting the values of the Western Civilization.

Finally, it is noteworthy that all the religious symbols, which Lawrence uses in his novel "The Plumed Serpent" (like the symbol of a serpent as well as the symbolism of water, the rain or the lake), belong to the archetypal symbolism of human's eternal fall and rebirth. Due to the tragic perspective of the 20s and 30s of the 20th century, it is natural that Lawrence's works are full of the reflections of the scars caused by the devaluation of Western Civilization, which in its way is presented in the fall of an individual. An eternal idea of rebirth is the purpose, hope and anchor for a fallen individual in the modern world.

References

- [1]. F. R. Leavis, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (Chatto & Windus, 1955; reprinted Peregrine Books, 1968) 69.
- [2]. Harry T. Moore, "The Plumed Serpent:

Vision and Language," *D. H. Lawrence: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mark Spilka (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, 1963) 67.

- [3]. Mark Kinkead-Weeks, "Decolonising Imagination: Lawrence in the 1920s," *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 82.
- [4]. Peter Fjagesund, "The Mystery of Lordship: The Leadership Utopia," *The Apocalyptic World of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Norwegian UP; 1991) 139.
- [5]. Mark Spilka, "Hemingway and Lawrence as Abusive Husbands," *Renewing The Normative D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Progress* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1992) 229.
- [6]. Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 278.
- [7]. Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel* 272
- [8]. *The Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 231.
- [9]. *The Selected Letters*, ed. James T. Boulton 385.
- [10]. *The Selected Letters*, ed. James T. Boulton 298.
- [11]. *The Selected Letters*, ed. James T. Boulton 297.
- [12]. L. D. Clark, "D. H. Lawrence and the American Indian," *D. H. Lawrence Review* 9.3 (1976): 322.
- [13]. Peter Fjagesund, *The Apocalyptic World of D. H. Lawrence* 130.
- [14]. Jascha Kessler, "Descent in Darkness: The Myth of The Plumed Serpent," *A D. H. Lawrence Miscellany*, ed. Harry T. Moore (1959; London: Heinemann, 1963) 243.
- [15]. Frank Kermode, *Lawrence* (Fontana: Collins, 1973) 109.
- [16]. Kermode 110.
- [17]. L. D. Clark, "D. H. Lawrence and the American Indian," 312.
- [18]. Keith Sagar, *The Art of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Cambridge UP, 1966) 147.
- [19]. L. D. Clark, "D.H. Lawrence and the American Indian," 305.
- [20]. L. D. Clark 305
- [21]. D. H. Lawrence, "Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine," *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished and Other Prose Works by D. H. Lawrence*, eds. Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore (London: Heinemann, 1968) 470.

- [22]. *The Selected Letters*, ed. James T. Boulton 225.
- [23]. L. D. Clark, "D. H. Lawrence and the American Indian," 362.
- [24]. Keith Sagar, *The Art of D. H. Lawrence* 111.
- [25]. Harry T. Moore, "The Plumed Serpent: Vision and Language," 64.
- [26]. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (1969; reprinted London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1971) 284.
- [27]. D. H. Lawrence, "The State of Funk," *Phoenix II* 569.

1/22/2024