

## BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS: TOWARDS A DIA- LECTICS OF METAMORPHOSIS<sup>1</sup>

**Izabel F. O. Brandão**

Universidade Federal de Alagoas

It is the excess of a will-to-live that distorts beings and causes metamorphoses.<sup>2</sup>

Most critics would agree that *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* is Lawrence's best book of poems.<sup>3</sup> BBF is also the most foreign of his books, as R. Aldington points out in *Portrait of a Genius* but....: it "had been wholly written out of England on non-English themes and was to date his most original contribution to poetry."<sup>4</sup> K. Sagar agrees with this when he says that BBF means Lawrence's gaining a "distinctive non-European consciousness"<sup>5</sup>. The implications of this might lead to misunderstandings. Having a 'non-European consciousness' means exactly what? That Lawrence has become able to talk more intimately about 'non-human life'? That, as G. Hough points out, Lawrence breaks with the tradition of passivity and mere contemplation, common to nature poetry in English since Wordsworth, and, instead of passivity, the poet becomes able to go into "the being of natural objects to show what they are in themselves"<sup>6</sup>? Marjorie Perloff, in an article about Sylvia Plath's poetry, argues that Lawrence is the "outstanding modern practitioner of [oracular poetry] ..., especially the Lawrence of *Birds, Beasts and*

*Flowers*”<sup>7</sup>. Her point is that Rimbaud, Plath and Lawrence belong to a group of poets whose poetry is known as “oracular”, i.e., the poet’s voice is the voice of the oracle. Catharsis becomes ecstasis and the poet utters rather than addresses. Hence, the poet identifies him/herself with the object instead of seeing it out there, “objectively and aesthetically” separated from the subject. This poetry of ecstasy sees subject and object interchanging places naturally. One becomes the other and vice-versa. I would agree with Perloff in the sense that in BBF Lawrence indeed goes into the beings of all sorts of creatures. So, BBF is Lawrence’s coming to terms with what is more than human in his soul. This might also explain the ‘foreignness’ of the poems. It is his English soul going through a metamorphosis: it is his becoming ‘cosmopolitan’ as well as integrated with nature.

My main argument in this paper will be built upon the dialectics of metamorphosis which is present in BBF. My intention is to analyse six sample poems from BBF: “Bat”, “Man and Bat”, “The Mosquito”, “Mountain Lion”, “Sicilian Cyclamens” and “Autumn at Taos” so as to show how this dialectics works. The poems’ chronological order is not considered for the sake of the argument. Its theoretical framework is based on Gaston Bachelard’s phenomenology of imagination, more specifically related to two of his books: *Lautréamont* (1939) and *L’Air et les songes* (1943). The reason for this choice has to do with the development, in the poems, of three different but interrelated phenomenologies: lightness vs heaviness, aggression and metamorphosis.

Although the title might sound rather Kafkian, it is indeed Lawrentian due to BBF’s movement towards metamorphosis. The poet departs from the sense of nausea caused by his contact with a creature like a bat (or a mosquito, for example) towards the sense of atonement with nature, when nature itself becomes animalised. However, this “animalisation” is not threatening. On the contrary, those who go into a forest (like in “Autumn at Taos”), for example,

become surprised to see how the characteristics one only finds in wild animals are transferred to nature itself. The final movement towards the completion of the phenomenology of metamorphosis is only possible after the poet's witnessing of violence committed against an animal ("Mountain Lion"). The violence supposed to come from the wildest of all animals is here transferred to foreign hunters who meet the poet, himself a foreigner as well, crossing a forest located in America. Only then is he capable of realising how comprehensive nature is in her dealings.

## **1. The phenomenology of lightness vs heaviness**

The three poems analysed here - "Bat", "Man and Bat" and "The Mosquito" - reveal the poet's battle to cope with a world he cannot fully understand. The poet's reverie takes him to the point of going into that world. In his attempt to work towards this understanding, he creates strange images which lead to a phenomenology of lightness vs heaviness as well as a discussion about power.

This phenomenology is more clearly stressed in "Bat" and "The Mosquito". Its development shows that the act of flying can reveal either the lightness or the heaviness associated with certain creatures. Different dynamics reveals that flying is not always to be taken as pleasurable.<sup>8</sup> An associated phenomenology is also discussed, i.e., the question of power. This is seen as something which does not belong exclusively to the human world. Creatures like those of the poems also fight for dominance. The focus is survival.

The first poem, "Bat", strikes us at first with a sense of negative and obscure feelings. A sequence of reticences in the first three stanzas marks this out:

When the sun from the west...

...

Departs, and the world is taken by surprise...

When the tired flower of Florence is in gloom...

Brown hills surrounding...

A green light enters against stream, ...

Against the current of obscure Arno...<sup>9</sup>

Up to this moment, there is no mentioning of the coming bats. Their presence is felt in the confusion caused between the end of the day and the beginning of the night. The poet is unable to distinguish what is day - the swallows - from what is night - the bats -, for what he sees are "things flying" (my italics). Here the phenomenology of metamorphosis begins to take place. The poet consciously does not want to see bats and transforms them into

Swallows with spools of dark thread sewing the shadows together

Is this a placid recognition of someone who is not really attentive to what is happening? Is the poet simply taking the "flying things" for birds? If that is so, do birds "sew shadows"? It is as if the poet's reasoning is working with a simple mathematical equation,  $1+1=2$ , but is caught by the absurdity of its result:

And you think:

"The swallows are flying so late!"

Swallows?

...

Never swallows!

*Bats!* (original italics)

The result sounds like a gulping down of an unappetizing

truth. The long stanza that comes after the poet's questioning is heavy with words to describe what was undescrivable before. Still, the bat is only mentioned after it. But the easy-going tone previously felt in the short verses suddenly stops and a crowded one appears. The words sound heavy, not really following the usual freedom we find in air images. The first word associated with air is freedom. It is a fine matter. But before being matter it is movement, as Bachelard points out in *Air and Dreams*. In the poem the image of heaviness comes with the bat's flying for it misses "the pure loop...". Instead of a vanishing in the lightness of the air, there is "an elastic shudder in flight"; instead of freedom,

a glove, a black glove thrown up at the light  
And falling back.

Here the poet realises that no birds can be compared to a black glove covering the light. The next image reveals the creature, and its naming comes in *italic*. It is as if this realisation gives the creeps in the poet. That is reinforced by the idea that bats (unlike their Chinese meaning) are said to represent bad omens. Their flight is not upwards. It is "an ill-fated flight", as Bachelard asserts: it

lacks sound, color, or upward movement... Forced to beat its wings, the bat does not experience the dynamic restfulness of gliding. "In it", says Jules Michelet, "we see that nature is searching for a wing, but till now has found only a hideous membrane that nonetheless functions as a wing".<sup>10</sup>

In the poem, after the bat is discovered, the tone obviously changes and with the change an uneasy feeling comes with the poet's ironical verse:

... the swallows give way to bats  
By the Ponte Vecchio...  
Changing guard.

The negative feelings grow and the poet feels “an uneasy creeping in [his] scalp”. We can even hear the demonical hissing of the bats. They go through metamorphosis again and become in the poet’s eyes

Little lumps that fly in the air and have voices indefinite,  
wildly vindictive;

Why vindictive? Maybe because bats are night creatures, condemned to be put away by people, scared of their association with vampires. They are life-takers, not -givers. That seems to be the reason why the bat is not a “symbol of happiness” for the poet. This confirms what Bachelard says about bats and bad omens.

The same kind of image also appears in “Man and Bat” where there is a battle between the poet and a bat because of the latter’s invasion to his room. The poet wants to expel it from his room. Again negative markers surround the bat. It is

A bird  
Flying round the room in insane circles

The flight is “twitchy, nervous, intolerable”. The difference between the two poems is that here Lawrence clarifies his air images and we can see that the air that brings the bat in upsets the poet for the creature it blows into the room flies with “an impure frenzy”, “an impure haste”. The images disclose a dynamics of the abyss, the verticality of flight is entirely negative.<sup>11</sup> There’s no ascent, only a descent, and an openness for more metamorphic images.

The problem here is also related to the phenomenology of lightness vs heaviness, for the bat's movements have nothing to do with the element which blows life into everything. The creature is heavy and its dynamics has nothing to do with lightness. It "clutches, cleaves and staggers". The poet's eye transforms it into different creatures. It becomes a spider: the bat is stuck

Near the ceiling as if in a web  
Staggering;  
Plunging, falling out of the web,  
Broken in heaviness...

Which air creature would be heavy if not a nasty one? This sounds paradoxical for how can a creature that flies be heavy? Perhaps the answer is in "Bat" for the poet says that it has "serrated wings", and wings like these cannot be light. They have nothing to do with the element of air.

As the battle ends the poet expresses his relief in words that mainly show how powerless he felt in facing a creature which seemed to be more powerful than he, a man, a human being, supposed to be strong and powerful. The final metamorphosis occurs when the poet allows the bat to voice its feelings:

*There he sits, the long loud one  
But I am greater than he...  
I escaped him...*

This clearly shows the poet's projecting his own sense of impotence. The "humanization" of the bat equals "him" with the poet. That alone reveals how powerful the poet's reverie is.

In *Women in Love*, D. H. Lawrence describes the art of Gudrun Brangwen by means of a very odd image: the artist works in her tiny animal sculptures as if she were using the wrong end of an

opera glass.<sup>12</sup> If we are allowed to wear Gudrun's glass in "The Mosquito", we will be able to disclose a very interesting image too: the poet's size is minimised and he fights with the mosquito in almost equal terms. Bachelard's theory of miniature might be useful to explain the power urge in the poem.

For Bachelard, miniatures have to do with a need to dominate. Seeing things small and tiny transforms the dreamer into the owner of a special world. The imagination of the dreamed things does not have a stable dimension.<sup>13</sup> Now the poet and Gudrun's glass: by seeing the mosquito in a distorted way might explain the absurd dialogue between the poet and the insect. This happens by means of metamorphosis. The first metamorphic situation occurs when the poet transforms the insect into a "human"<sup>14</sup>: The mosquito becomes "Monsieur", "Winged Victory", among other things. Is there a tinge of respect here? Or is it sheer irony provoked by the surrealist situation?

The second situation happens as the poet describes the mosquito's flying. Its power is increased by its lightness. This fact alone makes it superior to the poet. The mosquito

... lift[s its] centre of gravity upwards  
And weigh[s] no more than air ...

Here Lawrence confirms Bachelard's dynamics of the element of air: the phenomenology of flight is indeed related to the question of power: only superior beings fly. The poet is only allowed to do so in his reveries. In this sense the poet really "flies" in his fancies when he increases the mosquito's superiority by making it "sail like a heron".<sup>15</sup> But at the same time that the poet gives more power to the insect, he decides to minimise this power by calling the mosquito "a dull clot of air/ A nothingness". His attempt to dismiss the insect's power leads him to say that the "clot of air" holds power over him due to "tricks" and "filthy magic". The mosquito's secret



is then revealed:

That is your trick, your bit of filthy magic:  
Invisibility, and the anaesthetic power  
To deaden my attention in your direction

The poem's movement is circular, and it could not be otherwise for mosquitos live by flying around one's heads and ears in such a way. The mosquito

...stalk[s] and prowls[s] the air  
In circles and evasions, enveloping me,

The poet's impotence and powerlessness is increased because the mosquito's metamorphosis now gains divine qualities. The poet seems unaware of his own responsibility for the absurd of the situation. Thus the insect becomes able to interfere with the poet's mind:

I hate the way you lurch off sideways into air  
Having read my thoughts against you

This moment divides the poem into two. The first shows the poet's decreasing in power and increasing sense of impotence in facing the mosquito, and magnifying its power, as we have already seen.

Then there is a displacement. It is here that the poet takes his opera glass off and defies the creature he helped growing in power. The battle between the two becomes "a game of bluff" and the two contestants face each other in 'equal' terms:

You don't know that I exist, and I don't know that you  
exist  
Now then!

This new turn shows the poet beginning to see the mosquito as it really is: a mere insect that has an imprint which is triggered whenever it is hungry. This is seen in the mosquito's irritating bugle which cannot be helped. The poet sounds sympathetic:

If that is so, then I believe in Providence protecting the  
innocent

At the same time, the bugle, the mosquito's "war-cry", sounds in the poet's ear like "A yell of triumph as you snatch my scalp". So, we are back to square one: the poet turns reality on and off as if he could not cope with it all the time.

Because of this turning on and off of reality the language becomes now sexually charged and the 'innocent' mosquito is transformed into a Dionysian emissary. The poet's blood becomes a "Super-magical/ Forbidden liquor" which the emissary drinks "enspasméd in oblivion,/ Obscenely ecstasied". Hence, the mosquito sexually abuses the poet. Of course this is too much.

The climax of this absurd battle is reached when the poet, fed up by his impotence, smashes the mosquito. Not before questioning his own power, though:

Am I not mosquito enough to out-mosquito you?

In order to defeat his enemy, the poet has to go through a metamorphosis himself. He has to become like the mosquito so as to be able to suck his blood back. The final stanza reveals the poet back to his old 'human' self after defeating the 'divine' mosquito, the 'Winged Victory' which becomes a mere "dimmark" after the poet smashes it without condescendence. "The Mosquito" thus shows the question of power re-dimensioned by the poet's surrealist journey into the world of an insect.

## 2. Human vs animal: the phenomenology of aggression

Aggression and violence in the animal world only occur because of survival.<sup>16</sup> The same does not happen in the human world. Humans do indeed commit violence even if the context is not survival. When the question refers to power, for instance. In BBF Lawrence deals with this question in several poems. "Mountain Lion" is one of them, apart from those already analysed. This is, for me, one of the finest poems of this collection. The main question in it is power as well, but now the metaphor is not related to an opera glass. Actually, the image which best represents this poem has to do with a minimisation of power as far as the animal is concerned.

The beginning of the poem, a prose-like prologue, prepares the reader for a scene in which silence is the key-word. It helps taking the curtain off for a scene of implicit violence against the mountain lion and its world. The poet is a foreigner walking into the Lobo Valley in America. On his way he meets a group of different foreigners coming out of the valley. At first, these foreigners are just 'strangers': two men about whom the poet voices an ironical statement, especially considering what the poem discloses immediately after:

Men! The only animal in the world to fear!

The irony here has a lot to do with the fact that humans have the ability of thinking, as opposed to animals which are "irrational" and cannot think. Hence, humans fear each other as well as they fear animals. The poet himself is in a position of fear because, unlike the hunters, he has no gun.

The poem presents a whole set of questions which is gradually answered. But these questions are not really voiced openly. They are inward questions put by the poet to himself. When there is an open question, the language used is as foreign as the place

and the people involved in the situation. It seems that the language spoken by the civilized British poet could not penetrate the world brought by the hunters from the Lobo Valley. So his language ought to be foreign too:

*Qué tiene, amigo?*

Léon-

...

It is a mountain lion

A long, long slim cat, yellow like a lioness

Dead. (original italics)

The image here is again related to metamorphosis: the mountain lion, a wild animal, has become a *slim* cat. Its wildness is handed over to us in a short sentence which is like a mortal bullet: the lion, yellow like a lioness and slim like a cat, is dead.

The descriptive tone of the poem reveals that the ferociousness of the mountain lion, its beauty, slender body, its 'fine-fashioned head' or its beautiful eyes has no importance. Men have invaded its shrine and killed it, probably to skin it and sell the fur. The violence is thus duplicated: humans not only commit violence against animals but also violate their environment to do so.<sup>17</sup> To the poet is left a feeling of sorrow and mourning.

The forest becomes unreal. The poet's own metamorphosis is via identification: he transforms himself into the mountain lion and observes the landscape like the dead animal would probably do. He looks out

... to the dim of the desert, like a dream, never real  
To the snow of the Sangre the Cristo mountains, the ice  
of the  
mountains of Picoris,  
And near across at the opposite steep of snow, green

trees motionless  
standing in snow, like a Christmas toy.

The last verse shows the extension of the metamorphosis: the trees also become identified with the dead mountain lion: motionless, a 'slim' dead forest, a 'mere toy'. It is here that the whole world loses importance for the poet. His sorrow leads him to magnify the killing of the animal and see its loss as if it were much more important than if millions of humans died. Sagar considers this part of the poem as an exaggeration: "We can understand Lawrence's outrage at the mindless slaughter of a godly creature; but are we to assume that some humans, many humans, have no gods in them?"<sup>18</sup> I think that, for Lawrence, the sacredness of the mountain lion's place is more important (as it is for ecologists nowadays) and it has been violated. This is what counts. In that place, there indeed opened

... a gap in the world, the missing white frost face  
Of that slim yellow mountain lion!

The problem is the equation of humans-commit-violence-for-nothing as opposed to animals-only-kill-for-survival. It is not a question of exaggeration.<sup>19</sup> Or perhaps poets are really like ecologists: they tend to overemphasise what they consider important. Lawrence 'tonalises'<sup>20</sup> the violence committed by the foreigners he meets on his way into the Lobo Valley. This leads him to overstress his feelings and his mourning.

### **3. Humans, lovers, flowers, and animals: the phenomenology of metamorphosis**

In this part of the paper I will be looking at the two final poems of this analysis. The basic point here is to show how the dynamics

of metamorphosis happens between humans, plants and animals. Lawrence finally makes his peace with the vegetable and animal world. He understands nature and is understood by it.

"*Sicilian Cyclamens*" is, as I see it, the most Lawrentian of the poems I've been analysing. Especially because of its theme and development. Lawrence's strength as a writer has been built upon his works which deal with relationships between man and woman. In this poem he is back to this reference. What first attracts us in the poem is the tiny flowers seen by the lovers, just because they are led to look downwards, towards the earth, towards, symbolically, their inner worlds.

In the beginning we are misled into thinking that the poem deals with guilt due to the torrent of words whose connotation implies it. See, for example, the light of heaven as opposed to the lovers' eyes, after love-making:

... they felt the *light of heaven brandished* like a knife  
at their  
*defenceless eyes* ( my italics)

The misleading turn is reinforced by the strong sexual imagery which transforms the lovers' eyes into defenceless ones and reveals their faces. But, we ask, what are they guilty of? Why are their eyes 'defenceless' and their faces 'revealed'? It is then that we realise the misleading turn we were first caught into. No. Poet and lover, man and woman are not guilty. The poem reveals the lovers' connection with each other after they have sex. So they are revealed; so, they are defenceless. They have shed their personas ('masks', in their Jungian sense) along with their clothes. Now they can begin right from scratch. Now they can be transformed. Their own phenomenology of metamorphosis begins to take place.<sup>21</sup>

The poem is very rich in sexual imagery, another very Lawrentian characteristic. Everything that refers to the earth and its

connection with instincts and with what is basic in human beings is present in the poem. The second stanza, for instance, 'tonalises' all the odours and feelings of touch which can be associated with the sexual act and that imply the link between male and female (human and animal alike). The poet's choice of words could have been either vulgar or literal (like in "Figs", for example), but, instead, his choice is to the point. He refers to earth creatures in their environment

Slow toads, and cyclamen leaves  
Stickily glistening with eternal shadow  
Keeping to earth.  
Cyclamen leaves  
Toad-filmy, earth-iridescent  
Beautiful  
Frost-filigreed  
Spumed with mud  
Snail-nacreous  
Low down.

It could be said that the poet is talking in terms of 'twos'. It is him and his lover. And yet he is talking about toads, cyclamens and snails, and indirectly about sex. The pairs of noun-phrases support the idea of 'twos'. If we look carefully at "Snail-nacreous/ Low down", for example, we find in this reference that snails are 'at home' in themselves and are also very close to the soil, to the earth.<sup>22</sup>

This implies the lovers connection to each other: they are so intertwined that they are also 'at home' with the earth. After they had sex, they had to look down and, because they are two-in-one (very Lawrentian indeed) they are able to see

For the first time,  
... tiny rose cyclamens between their toes...

These delicate flowers mean the lovers' connection with a world defined by the poet as

Dreamy, not yet present  
 Drawn out of earth  
 At his toes.

This world is in the cyclamens which now begin their metamorphic journey (like poet and lover), when they are transformed several times into something different from flowers. The poet's imagination works towards an understanding of the lovers' dynamics from the inside by means of his transforming of the flowers into different things. The forms taken reinforce the lovers' transformation.<sup>23</sup> The cyclamens acquire animal qualities: they put their "ears back"; they are "Long, pensive, slim-muzzled greyhound buds"; they become "very young greyhound bitches", and because poet and lover are beginning to come together, they, like the tiny cyclamens, are still 'inexperienced', awaking to 'the new day',

Ah Mediterranean morning, when *our world began*  
 (my italics).

The metamorphosis never stops: from greyhound bitches, the flowers become less domestic than before: they are now a "hare" whose "long ears" are laid back. They are maximised into a "bunch of wild hares". Then they become human doing human things, like whispering

... witchcraft  
 Like women at a well, the dawn fountain.

Having the flowers humanised is not enough. The transformation still travels further back in time: the lovers' beginning be-



comes classical like

Greece, and the *world's morning*  
When all the Parthenon marbles still fostered *the roots*  
of the cyclamen  
(my italics)

Towards the outcome, the lovers become more and more withdrawn into themselves, into the earth, into the ancient past, into the origins. The poet refers again to flowers. This time violets (because they are as tiny as the cyclamens?)

... sprinkling *the unborn*  
Erechtheion marbles (my italics)

The lovers' origins have become classical, pagan, before the sin, before the Christian era. Perhaps this is the only way for the puritanical Lawrence not to feel guilty for enjoying sex. The metamorphic journey leads the lovers towards an era where nothing is regarded as sinful and beauty / love / passion can only be realised and understood as one faces downwards, inwards, towards the centre of the self, towards one's own earth. The poet has become unified with the flowers.

"Autumn at Taos" is the poem that best represents the dynamics of metamorphosis in BBF. It reinforces Bachelard's point about Lautréamont which applies to Lawrence's poem as well: "animalized life is the sign of the bounty and fluidity of subjective impulses. It is the excess of a will-to-live that distorts beings and causes metamorphoses".<sup>24</sup> The poet's imagination leads him to camouflage the forest using nature's best guardians: its wild animals. This is disclosed through the idea that nature is just a wild animal at rest, as the two last stanzas of the poem attest:

Make big eyes, little pony,  
At all these skins of wild beasts;  
They won't hurt you

Fangs and claws and talons and beaks and hawk-eyes  
Are nerveless just now.  
So be easy.

The poet's soul is in touch with the unknown world of nature in an American forest. It is put to a test in order for him to find his peace with that world, his atonement with nature, and with himself.

Lawrence's imagery here is the best example of how one can exorcise one's own beasts in terms of transformation, transference of qualities, or, in one word, metamorphosis. He creates a bestiary which, instead of attacking anyone, is there in nature, intimately associated with it so as to show that the animal and the vegetable (and the human for extension) worlds are unified. In ten stanzas, the poet names about ten different animals (or animal reactions) which symbolize nature itself. The animals begin to appear as in camouflage:

Over the rounded sides of the Rockies, the aspens of  
autumn,

...

Like yellow hair of a tigress brindled with pines.

So, here we have a tigress. Then a wolf's pelt (the poet's bush-soul?). Suddenly a strange creature appears, completely out of its environment:

Did you ever see an otter?  
Silvery sided, fish-fanged, fierce-faced, whiskered,  
mottled.

An otter certainly does not belong to an earth reverie but to a water one. And yet Lawrence does not really seem to care about the logic of his fantasy. To him what matters is the reality of the camouflage he can detect in his wanderings in the American forest.

Another creature which leads the poet towards the verticality of the air is a hawk, transformed into the mythical hawk of Horus. It is like a way of escaping the danger of being in a wild area, or as he says,

... under the pines  
I go slowly  
As under the hairy belly of a great black bear.

The language sounds childish at times, but the main idea is to escape from a natural fear for being in such a wild area. Colours become animalised and their metamorphic changes acquire wildness: the aspens are "jaguar-splashed", "puma-yellow", "leopard-vivid". The noun-phrases here imply the joining of forest with animal. One needs the other to survive. That is why the camouflage is good. One supports the other.

Through his bestiary, Lawrence shows us that we can cope with our own inner fears provided that we learn to command the voice of our dreams redirecting it towards reality, through metamorphosis. The principle of reality is better understood when we are able to transform it into our own language. We have to adapt ourselves to live in this planet, sometimes by means of camouflage. That is how we survive, through our persona, as Jung would put it.

BBF is thus Lawrence learning his limits and working towards the expansion of his inner world which has to comprise not only its human side but also everything that is not human but more than human.

## Notes

- 1 A shorter version of this paper was read during the *110th Anniversary: D. H. Lawrence International Research Symposium*, held at the University of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, July 9-15 1995.
- 2 G. Bachelard. *Lautréamont* (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 1986), p. 4..
- 3 Lawrence himself considers *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (hereafter 'BBF') his best book of poems. Cf. his letter to Curtis Brown (10 February 1923) in The Cambridge Edition of *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. IV (1921-24), published in 1987. Cf also Leo Hamalian's *D. H. Lawrence* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), G. Hough's *The Dark Sun*. (Surrey: Duckworth, 1983), Sagar's *The Art of D. H. Lawrence* (Cambridge: CUP, 1966), pp.118-126, and *D. H. Lawrence's Life into Art* (England: Penguin Books, 1987), and his "Introduction" to Lawrence's *Poems* (England: Penguin Books, 1987), among others.
- 4 R. Aldington. *Portrait of a Genius But ...* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1950), p.280.
- 5 Cf. Sagar's *D. H. Lawrence's Life into Art*, p.209.
- 6 Cf. Chapter IV of G. Hough's *The Dark Sun*, p.201.
- 7 Marjorie Perloff in "Angst and Animism in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath" in Linda W. Wagner's *Critical Essays on Sylvia Plath's Poetry* (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall & Company, 1984), pp.110-111. I am indebted to my colleague Ana Cecilia Acioli Lima who called my attention to Perloff's discussion of 'oracular poetry'.
- 8 For more details on this phenomenology, cf. Bachelard's *Air and Dreams* (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 1988). Although I have named in my text the French editions of Bachelard's books, I have preferred to use their editions in English for the quotations.
- 9 All quotations from BBF will be taken from the Penguin Edition of *D. H. Lawrence: The Complete Poems*, published in 1988.

- 10 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p.74.
- 11 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 95.
- 12 Gudrun's art is discussed in terms of her 'Liliputian hallucination' in Chapter III of my Ph.D. thesis. Cf. bibliography for complete reference. We could just add here that the same kind of 'hallucination' happens in *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll as well as in *A Chave do Tamanho* by the Brazilian writer for children, Monteiro Lobato.
- 13 Cf *La Terre et les rêveries du repos* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1965).
- 14 Sagar says about this poem: "In the mature BBF manner, confident, colloquial, witty, and in the form of a dialogue, the man, garrulous, the spaces between the lines representing the silence of the mosquito, its invisibility, its 'evil little aura', or later, its 'hateful' 'little trumps'". (Cf. his *Life into Art*), p. 216. Although I would share Sagar's view, I prefer to see the poem as a surrealistic reverie. This journey into the Mosquito's world reveals Lawrence's reverie as a treasure of intimacy with that world, as Bachelard would put it (cf. *La Terre et les rêveries du repos*).
- 15 Following Bachelard's idea about the phenomenology of lightness, he sees continuity between swimming and flying. Thus Lawrence's image of the mosquito sailing like a heron is perfectly plausible. The heron is a water-bird. It swims and flies. For more details cf. *Air and Dreams*.
- 16 Cf Bachelard's *Lautréamont* for more details about this.
- 17 "Cruelty can have all sorts of explanations - except for need or hunger", so says Bachelard in *Lautréamont* (p.21). His is a statement addressed to Maldoror's bestiary but it suits the idea of violence against the mountain lion pretty well.
- 18 Sagar, *Life into Art*, p.244.
- 19 Perloff's concept of "oracular poetry", briefly discussed in the beginning of this paper, is useful here. Lawrence's supposed exaggeration has to do with the concept of poetry of process itself. His "becoming" the mountain lion reveals the poet's profound identity with 'wild things', as Jessie Chambers wrote in her memoir (cf. *A Personal Record* by E.T. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1935, p. 213).

- 20 To 'tonalise' is a bachelardian term which indicates a crescendo of an image up to the point of, like in Lawrence's case, an overdose of the poet's feelings as expressed in a poem, for example. For more information cf. *Lautréamont*.
- 21 Ted Hughes's poem "Bride and Groom Lie Hidden for Three Days" can be seen in a parallel with Lawrence's poem. In Hughes's poem the lovers also begin right from scratch. In their new life, they start by 'building' each other 'like two gods of mud'. Lawrence's lovers are less 'Christian' because to escape from guilt (if they are ever guilty) they go backwards in time, towards the pre-Christian era.
- 22 Cf Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), especially Chapter 5, "Shells", pp.105-135.
- 23 Cf. Bachelard's *Lautréamont*.
- 24 *ibid.*, p.4.

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