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Work and Identity in the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*: D. H. Lawrence's Critique of the (Post) Modern

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D. H. Lawrence's career as a writer was accompanied by many vicissitudes, and his works embody those vicissitudes—both of the times and of his own experience. Raymond Williams, one of the most important British literary critics, identifies the turning point in Lawrence's career as *Sons and Lovers*, which was completed in 1913. Williams writes as an avid proponent of Lawrence's literature, and he duly points out the predicament with which Lawrence was confronted. Attending to Lawrence's experience in his hometown as the son of a miner, Williams emphasises the pressures of the significant social change caused by industrial capitalism. Because of these pressures, the young, sensitive, and insightful writer comes to cast a critical eye on the harsh reality of industrialisation in Britain. Lawrence's criticism of industrialism is intensively discussed in James Knapp's *Literary Modernism and the Transformation of Work*—Knapp analyses how the theory of management called Taylorism, a managerial method characteristic of the age of industrial capitalism or of the modern, affects human subjectivity and causes the transformation of work. Moreover, Knapp foregrounds the relationship between the “work of art” and “more mundane kinds of work” or labour in his discussion of literary modernism and

industrialism's influence upon it (3). In this paper I argue that Lawrence focuses on the relation of literary "work" to "work" as labour in the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*, the critical vision of which is based on Lawrence's response to industrialism and modernity, and on the difficulty of his grappling with industrial capitalism. In this discussion, I will eventually elucidate Lawrence's insight not only into modernity but also into postmodernity. What follows is an attempt to historicise Lawrence's literature in terms of "work," an attempt that will also problematise the distinction between modernism and postmodernism and offer a reconsideration of the relationship between the two.

I. Lawrence's Difficulty and Modernity

In *Culture and Society*, one chapter of which is allotted to an argument about Lawrence, Raymond Williams explains Lawrence's criticism of industrial capitalism.

The intellectual critiques of industrialism as a system were therefore reinforced and prepared for by all he [Lawrence] knew of primary relationships. It is no accident that the early chapters of *Sons and Lovers* are at once a marvelous recreation of this close, active, contained family life, and also in general terms an indictment of the pressures of industrialism. Almost all that he learned in this way was by contrasts, and this element of contrast was reinforced by the accident that he lived on a kind of frontier, within sight both of industrial and of agricultural England. (206–07)

Williams says here that Lawrence's "primary relationships" with his family and local communities play an important role in his "critique of

industrialism.” Significantly, Williams points out that the novel depicts the experience of the “frontier” in which industrial England and agricultural England co-exist. The experience of this kind of “frontier” is, according to Fredric Jameson, the very basis from which modernist works of literature were born. Jameson argues as follows:

[T]he protagonists of those aesthetic and philosophical revolutions were people who still lived in two distinct worlds simultaneously; born in those agricultural villages we still sometimes characterize as medieval or premodern, they developed their vocations in the new urban agglomerations with their radically distinct and “modern” spaces and temporalities. The sensitivity to deep time in the moderns then registers this comparatist perception of the two socioeconomic temporalities, which the first modernists had to negotiate in their own lived experience. (“The End of Temporality” 699)

The “comparatist perception of the two socioeconomic temporalities,” or the experience both of industrial England and of agricultural England, causes Lawrence to cast a critical eye on industrialism, making him a modernist.

What Lawrence produces as a modernist after *Sons and Lovers* seems to Williams to show Lawrence’s struggles. Since Lawrence is one of “the first modernists,” he has to “negotiate” the impact of the socioeconomic transformation of society in the early twentieth century. Negotiating the pressures of the modern proved to bring a difficulty. In *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, Williams argues:

Where then does the difficulty start? In *Sons and Lovers*, it seems to me, it starts with the relation with Clara. It isn’t difficult to notice the

change—the change in the writing—that begins just then. The characterization of Clara has, it seems to me, a certain functional quality—she is a function in the growth of another rather than a person in herself. [. . .] Still the difficulty indicates something that Lawrence had to face, of a new kind: not the flow of life, at once personal and social, but growth, change, under real pressure—adult pressures; decisive new relationships; a working self-defining world. A different way of seeing, a different way of writing. (142)

The protagonist's relationship with Clara registers the difficulty of the experience on the "frontier" under "adult pressures." These pressures require of Lawrence a "different way of seeing" and a "different way of writing" that in turn bring what Williams calls a "functional quality" into the description of the relationship between the protagonist and Clara, meaning that Clara is given the function only of facilitating Paul's growth. Her characterisation with this "functional quality" shows the transformation of the "primary relationships" Lawrence first-handedly knew from his own experience. One of such "primary relationships" is seen in the figure of Paul's father: according to Terry Eagleton, "his [Paul's father's] 'real,' working self can come alive in a family context of free, rather than compulsory, labour" (*Exiles and Émigrés* 194). The father plays his parental role "through qualities directly connected with his life as a working man" (194): he is fully himself both as a father and as a worker. Yet, because of the "function of the novel's own shifting focus," as Eagleton puts it, he "is reduced to a shrunken, almost broken man" (196) and his "functional quality" is dominant in the latter half of *Sons and Lovers*.

This change of relationships is, however, brought about by the transformation of the reality itself, which in turn affects the "way of seeing"

and the “way of writing.” As “a social system, industrialism, has destroyed given reality by forcing people into systematic roles,” as Williams points out, “the new reality, that which in its turn is irreducible and radical, has to be fought for” (*The English Novel* 144). The necessity for Lawrence to fight for a new reality leads to a marked change in his “way of writing,” as we will see later, especially in *Women in Love*. Williams uses the word “destroyed” in the quotation above to imply how the destructive influence of industrialism radically affected means of grasping and expressing reality.

II. Work as the Fundamental Structure of Experience

Lawrence’s effort to navigate the difficult, turbulent path from the old reality to the new reality bears fruit in the form of novels such as *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and the “leadership novels.” In *Culture and Society*, Williams explains the path Lawrence chose to go along as follows: “The bridge across which he [Lawrence] escaped was, in the wildest sense, intellectual. He could read his way out in spirit, and he could write his way out in fact” (207). Lawrence’s escape is made possible by reading philosophy and literature and by writing or creating a new reality; this “intellectual” effort results in the highly problematic form of his novels. Williams argues that “[i]t is not in any way surprising that [. . .] the novels of this period [. . .] are for all their energy willed and abstract; the only form of an extensive kind still available to his imagination” (*The English Novel* 147).

In both *Culture and Society* and *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, Williams problematises the “willed” and highly “abstract” form of Lawrence’s novels. While Lawrence’s stories and novels up until *Sons and Lovers* describe “primary relationships” of working-class characters the author knew directly, novels written after this period tend towards abstract

metaphysical or intellectual themes and principles in the actual everyday life of the characters. Chapter 17 of *Women in Love*, entitled “The Industrial Magnate,” exemplifies the destruction of “primary relationships” and the “willed,” highly “abstract” nature of Lawrence’s novels in that period. In the chapter, Gerald Crich inherits a coal mine from his benevolent, charitable father; however, he denies his father’s paternal benevolence and innovates a new method of management. He succeeds in the innovation, but the workers at his company are “not important to him, save as instruments, nor he to them, save as a supreme instrument of control” (*Women in Love* 231). His successful industry forces both his workers and himself “into systematic roles”; consequently he sometimes “stood up in terror, not knowing what he was” (232). Gerald knows that “[o]nly Birkin kept the fear definitely off him” (232), but the latter, who is supposed to counterbalance the former’s relentlessness, is the very embodiment of “willed” abstraction. In *Culture and Society*, Williams explains the point to which this tendency towards abstraction leads Lawrence’s works:

The attempt to separate material needs, and the ways in which they are to be met, from human purpose and the development of being and relationship, is the suburban separation of “work” and “life” which has been the most common response of all to the difficulties of industrialism. (213)

In *Women in Love*, Gerald keeps himself “away from Birkin, as from a church service, back to the outside real world of work and life” (232). Although Gerald’s “work and life” outside Birkin’s influence seems not to be separated, both his work” and his “life are radically cut off “from human purpose and the development of being and relationship,” such that his

workers and himself are mere “instruments” for the industry and for its management. Therefore, he feels “as if the very middle of him were a vacuum” and that the situation becomes “more and more difficult” (233). This is far from the description of Mr Morel in *Sons and Lovers*, whose “working self can come alive in a family context,” to use Eagleton’s phrasing cited above, “in a more subtle blending of home and work.” The difference between *Sons and Lovers* and *Women in Love* epitomises the difficulty inherent in the new ways of seeing and writing that were required of Lawrence by the pressures of social change in the course of the advancement of industrial capitalism. Yet, even though the “separation of ‘work’ and ‘life’” is apparent in Lawrence’s novels, such as *Women in Love*, his modernist works are derived from the experience of the “frontier” on which the collision between industrialisation and pastoral England enabled the author to grasp the material aspects of “work” and “life”—both of which were affected and transformed by the “difficulties of industrialism.”

The key to considering this problematic issue of the “separation of ‘work’ and ‘life’” in Lawrence can be found in the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*. The Foreword is, I think, one of Lawrence’s most difficult texts, and it seems too abstract to be the preamble to a realist novel. Nevertheless, the importance of the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers* cannot be overemphasised: the Foreword is indispensable for interpreting and historicising the novel. I would like to consider the relation between the two texts in terms of what Fredric Jameson calls metacommentary. Unravelling the relation of a text and its meaning, Jameson presents the structure of interpretation and meaning production as follows:

The work does not confer meaning on these elements [the very components of our concrete social life], but rather transforms their

initial meanings into a new and heightened construction of meaning. [. . .] [A]ll stylization, all abstraction in the form, ultimately expresses some profound inner logic in its content and is ultimately dependent for its existence on the structures of the raw materials themselves. (“Metacommentary” 16)

The work—in this case, *Sons and Lovers*—“transforms” the meanings of the “concrete social life” that is lived and experienced on the “frontier” of the social change called modernity. The lived experience in this period is most typically conditioned by industrial capitalism. The “stylization” or “abstraction” in the form of the novel is the embodiment of the transformation of such “initial meanings” of the lived experience, a transformation driven by the pressures and impact of modernity. Here, importantly, Jameson points out that there is an “inner logic” or “structures” that determine the transformation and abstraction of the novel. Jameson continues, “[I]t is certain that experience has as its most fundamental structure *work* itself, as the production of value and the transformation of the world” (18, italics original). The “most fundamental structure” of lived experience is conditioned by “work” as “the production of value and the transformation of the world.” Because the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers* argues over the very concept of “work,” this definition functions as an explanation of the “stylization” or “abstraction” of the novel.

At first glance, the Foreword deals with the relationship between the flesh and the word, based on the following two sentences in John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word” (i. 1) and “The Word was made flesh” (i, 14). This binary opposition seemingly corresponds to the opposition between physicality and intellect. Then, subverting the simple binary opposition, Lawrence foregrounds the theme of work: “[A] man may hire

my Word, which is the Utterance of my flesh, which is my work” (Foreword 469). Lawrence criticises the inversion between the flesh and the word in the Gospel, and tries to change the inverted relation into the primacy of the flesh, which is the source of any utterance, by equating the utterance of words with work. In this way, the flesh is regarded as the source of production, and therefore the relationship between the flesh and the word is the analogy of the human body and its production.

Subsequently, Lawrence uses the metaphor of the relationship between worker bees and a queen bee. At the beginning of the argument, Lawrence shows the flesh-word relationship to correspond to the Father-Son relationship, and in the latter half of the essay he comes to identify the flesh as the matrix of any creature, i.e. women. Thus, the relationship between a queen bee and her worker bees functions metaphorically as the relationship between the flesh and the word. The following is the description of that relationship:

Yea, like bees in and out of a hive, we come backwards and forwards to our woman. And the Flowers of the World are Words, are Utterance—“Uttering glad leaves,” Whitman said. And we are bees that go between, from the flowers home to the hive and the Queen; for she lies at the centre of the hive, and stands in the way of bees for God the Father, the Almighty, the Unknowable, the Creator. In her all things are born, both words and bees. She is the quick of all the change, the labour, the production. [. . .] And as he [one of the bees] comes and goes, so shall man for ever come and go: go to his work, his Uttering. [. . .] (Foreword 471)

Here, humans are compared to worker bees that fly between flowers and

their hive in order to do their “work.” As bees’ work with flowers is equated with “Utterance,” so is humans’ “work” essentially connected to uttering words. What should be noted here is that the queen bee is the matrix not only of worker bees but also of their “work,” and that she is considered to be “the quick of all the change, the labour, the production.” In this respect, the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers* can be interpreted as an argument that work, labour, or production is the very basis of “all the change.” Since human experience, as Jameson puts it, “has as its most fundamental structure *work* itself, as the production of value and the transformation of the world,” the gist of Lawrence’s Foreword lies in the presentation of the most fundamental condition of experience as “work.” This leads us to say that Lawrence, contrary to Williams’s judgment, neither separates “material needs” from “human purpose and the development of being and relationship” nor settles for the “suburban separation of ‘work’ and ‘life’”—instead, his writings try to grasp “life” in terms of “work” and *vice versa*.

III. The Foreword as Lawrence’s Metacommentary

Nevertheless, as Williams insightfully argues, Lawrence’s novels after *Sons and Lovers* appear to separate “life” and “work,” or to prioritise abstract, metaphysical themes over the “material” aspects of human life. Jameson’s argument about “metacommentary” is useful in considering how and why material aspects seem to be suppressed, even though Lawrence accurately comprehends that “work” underlies lived experience, as is expressed in the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*. As we have seen, Jameson states that the work of art transforms the basic meaning of raw materials, whose structure is nothing less than work or labour. As for the transformation, Jameson argues that “its [the art’s] mechanisms function as a censorship, which secures the subject against awareness of the resulting impoverishment, while

preventing him/her from identifying connections between that impoverishment and mutilation and the social system itself” (“Metacommentary” 18). He then concludes that metacommentary “aims at tracing the logic of the censorship itself and of the situation from which it springs” (18). The transformation of raw materials into art is conceived of as a “censorship” by which the harsh reality of “impoverishment” and the relationship between “impoverishment” and “the social system itself” are to be suppressed. What forces Lawrence to censor his insight into work as the fundamental structure of experience, and consequently makes his novels seem to separate “work” and “life,” is the “resulting impoverishment” caused by industrial capitalism, impoverishment that requires of him the “different way of seeing” and the “different way of writing” discussed above. Since Lawrence himself delves into the quintessence of “work,” a quintessence most affected by industrialism and by the resulting “impoverishment,” the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers* functions as metacommentary.

Lawrence’s metacommentary traces the “situation” from which his novel “springs” to the most fundamental problem of “impoverishment”: the problem of alienation, in the broadest sense of the word. The following passage reaches the core of the problem of alienation in relation to “work”:

For every petalled flower, which alone is a Flower, is a waste of productiveness. It is a moment of joy, of saying “I am I.” And every table or chair a man makes is a selfsame waste of his life, a fixing into stiffness and deadness of a moment of himself, for the sake of the glad cry “This is I—I am I!” (Foreword 472)

Just as the flower is the fruit of worker bees’ labour or the objectification of

their activity in the form of alienation, so is “every table or chair a man makes” the objectified, alienated form of his work or labour. By using such phrases as “a waste of productiveness” or “the waste of his life,” Lawrence emphasises the alienated state of work. Morag Shiach, who analyses Lawrence’s various texts in terms of labour and subjectivity, reads “I am I” as “a misrecognition, a comforting illusion,” and argues that “[t]he waste that is a property of work is a deadening and fixing process in which the recognition of the self has become illusory” (154). However, in spite of the negative connotation of the words “waste,” “stiffness,” and “deadness,” I do not think that Lawrence dismisses the state of alienation as such. Rather, he recognises alienation as the inevitable precondition for human utterances, work, and any act of production that might break what Shiach calls “misrecognition” or “illusion.” Furthermore, Lawrence regards alienation as the ontological basis of identity by connecting the state of alienation with the cry of “I am I.” It should be noted here that Lawrence accepts the alienated state in favour of its negativity, and that his formulation of identity is predicated on such a dialectic view on alienation. Lawrence asserts that work and alienation underlie human existence and identity. In other words, his thoughts on abstracted, ontological, philosophical issues are fundamentally rooted in his insight into work and alienation. Therefore, it can be said that Lawrence never intended to separate “work” and “life.”

Why, then, is he said to be faced with a “difficulty” that predicated the abstract, willed form of his novels after *Sons and Lovers*? This is because the immense pressures of industrialism forced Lawrence to settle for what Jameson calls “censorship” in order to grasp, to address, and to write on the new reality. Lawrence’s “difficulty,” which Williams finds in the protagonist’s relation with, and in the characterisation of, Clara in *Sons and Lovers*, can be seen in the concluding passage of the Foreword as well:

But the man who is the go-between from Woman to Production is the lover of that woman. And if that Woman be his mother, then is he her lover in part only: he carries for her, but is never received unto her for his confirmation and renewal, and so wastes himself away in the flesh. [. . .] And if a son-lover take a wife, then is she not his wife, she is only his bed. And his life will be torn in twain, and his wife in her despair shall hope for sons, that she may have her lover in her hour. (Foreword 473)

At the end of the Foreword, the “Woman” suddenly has what Williams terms a “functional quality.” Lawrence’s description of “Woman” and “Production” in the Foreword is initially an exegesis of the fundamental relationship between the flesh and the word. Yet here the description of the fundamental relation, which is also the fundamental structure of human experience, is reduced to a “functional” relationship between man and woman. The role of the woman who is a wife of the “son-lover” is identified as being “only his bed,” which typifies a “functional quality.” Although, or even because, this concluding passage functions as an explanation both of the story of *Sons and Lovers* and of the meaning of the title, the Foreword can be considered to be a “censorship” as Jameson formulates it. This kind of reduction caused by the “censorship” epitomises the “difficulty” that Lawrence cannot escape. The lively description of—or, to use Williams’s phrase, the “marvelous recreation” of—the close relationship in working-class communities in *Sons and Lovers* is transmuted into the depiction of the abstract, functional relationship of abstracted personhood by way of “censorship.” If the “censorship” is a defensive response to the “resulting impoverishment” caused by industrial capitalism, then that is an ineluctable response of a writer who squarely stares down the reality of “work” that manifests itself as

alienation under industrialism.

Being faced with that kind of harsh reality endangers the identity or the ontological basis of a human subject; that is, industrialism affects the identity established through “work” and embodied in the utterance of “I am I.” In this respect, the son-lover’s identity “torn in twain” is a consequence at once of alienation and of his struggle with the mighty socioeconomic change. However, this “torn” identity is for Lawrence not only a result of the reality of industrial capitalism, but also the very foundation or condition of life under capitalism: alienation. The subject who utters, “I am I” is built upon the ontological basis of alienation, which is to be regarded both as the conditioning of lived experience and as the consequence of the alienating influence of industrialism.

IV. Modernist Lawrence’s Prescience about Postmodernism

The alienating force of socioeconomic change argued above deeply affected Lawrence’s novels after *Sons and Lovers*. In *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, Williams discusses Lawrence’s later novels as follows:

[P]ersonal experience itself narrowed down to a single generation: the parents, the past, the known place left behind as irrelevant; the children, the future, any kind of settlement in their turn inconceivable. Between an irrelevant past and an inconceivable future [. . .] what is then known as personal life is in its different ways “not enough.” (146)

Detecting “a rhythm of successive generations” (200) in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, Terry Eagleton points out the rhythm of inwardness and transcendence between generations that is depicted in those novels. Though

meaningful interrelation between generations is dramatised in *The Rainbow*, the “movement towards transcendence” leads “to a timeless moment of interior triumph over history and culture” (Eagleton 202). In *Women in Love*, people of the older generation (such as Gerald’s father) are posited as being overcome, and the protagonists cannot see what will become of themselves in the future. Williams describes this state of timelessness as an “irrelevant past” and an “inconceivable future” brought about by Lawrence’s struggle with the relentless force of modernity. In this sense, Lawrence can justly be called modernist. At the same time, that kind of temporality—timelessness or the negation both of the past and of the future—can be interpreted, according to Fredric Jameson, as the manifestation of the “impact of the new value abstraction on everyday life and lived experience” that is characteristic of postmodernity (“The End of Temporality” 703). Jameson argues that in postmodern representations, “the historical past has diminished” and the “modification of the past” results in the “wholesale liquidation of futurity” (704).

Furthermore, Jameson points out as another characteristic of postmodernism “the centrality of language” (705). In the postmodern era, the economy largely depends on communication and information: communication is required both of managements and of workers in seeking flexibility; information is the very basis of production, consumption, and the functioning of the market. Under these circumstances, human subjectivity and intention, which condition production, consumption, and economic activities as a whole, are performatively constituted by language. Christian Marazzi regards the postmodern economy as being controlled by speech acts:

In this theory of language, there is no distinction whatsoever between

intention and instrument. [. . .] The duality between intention and language, according to which language began because, first, there was a “desire” for language, simply does not exist. There is instead *circularity* between intention and language (“in this case it is, if anything, the instrument—language—that has molded its user”). (30, italics original)

What Jameson calls “the centrality of language” takes the form of “circularity between intention and language” in the postmodern economic system. This “circularity” can be seen as a version of the inversion between “The Word was made Flesh” and “The Flesh was made Word,” which Lawrence problematises at the beginning of the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers* (467). Marazzi’s description that language “has molded its user” corresponds to the formulation that it is the “Word” that has molded the “Flesh.”

The postmodern economy is based on, and affected by, language, which gives rise to desire, intention, and subjectivity; thus its very mode of production exploits such speech acts, or the inverted connection of “Word” and “Flesh.” In the modern mode of production, human intellect, at the base of which lies command of language, is substantiated in fixed capital such as machines and instruments; by contrast, in the postmodern mode of production, “the *general intellect* is not fixed in machines, but in the *bodies* of workers. The body has become, if you will, the tool box of mental work. [. . .] [T]he *general intellect* presents itself as living labor” (Marazzi 44, italics original). In this way, the postmodern mode of production exploits the “bodies of workers” that embody the “general intellect” that in the older mode of production is fixed in machines. This means that the identity constituted through the utterance of “I am I,” or the connection between the “Word” and the “Flesh” as such, is fully incorporated in, and exploited by,

the process of production peculiar to postmodernity. In other words, since subjectivity or identity as Lawrence formulates it in the Foreword is constituted through work, and since subjectivity or identity as such is exploited under the postmodern mode of production, workers cannot resist this exploitation by any means. In this respect, especially because of the diminished temporality and the postmodern method of exploiting identity, what Raymond Williams conceives of as “difficulty” in Lawrence’s literary career is not only that difficulty Lawrence faced from the mid-1910s to the mid-1920s, but also the predicament of any worker in the age of postmodernism.

The theme of work and Lawrence’s depiction of identity constructed through work, even though the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers* was written at what is typically considered the dawn of modernism, precisely predict the issues of work considered under the postmodern mode of production. What can be construed in Lawrence’s Foreword is also problematised by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*. Referring to Karl Marx’s notion of “general intellect,” Hardt and Negri state: “At a certain point in capitalist development, which Marx only glimpsed as the future, the powers of labor are infused by the powers of science, communication, and language. [. . .] What Marx saw as the future is our era” (364). To play on Hardt and Negri’s words, one could aptly say that at a certain point in capitalist development called postmodernism, which Lawrence only glimpsed as the future, the powers of labor are infused by the powers of science, communication, and language. What is problematised by Hardt and Negri essentially concerns the relationship between labour and “science, communication, and language.” James Knapp points to this problem by quoting the following passage from Antonio Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks*: “There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded:

homo faber cannot be separated from *homo sapiens*” (Knapp 15). By rendering the “Word”—general intellect, including the “powers of science, communication, and language”—and the “Flesh” or body—that which is actually engaged in the act of labour—inseparable, Lawrence’s Foreword to *Sons and Lovers* accurately presents a critique of the problem of this separation as Gramsci describes.

In the postmodern age, the general intellect substantiated in the bodies of workers is as a whole exploited. The bodies of the workers, which embody “general intellect” constituted by language, are exploited by the sheer control of biopower, and the control or management of biopower characterises the life and politics of postmodernism. Speaking to this, Hardt and Negri add the following explanation:

The powers of production are in fact today entirely biopolitical; in other words, they run throughout and constitute directly not only production but also the entire realm of reproduction. Biopower becomes an agent of production when the entire context of reproduction is subsumed under capitalist rule, that is, when reproduction and the vital relationships that constitute it themselves become directly productive. [. . .] Production fills the surfaces of Empire; it is a machine that is full of life, an intelligent life that by expressing itself in production and reproduction as well as in circulation (of labor, affects, and languages) stamps society with a new collective meaning and recognizes virtue and civilization in cooperation. [. . .] This deployment extends across the general linguistic territories that characterize the intersections between production and life. (*Empire* 364–65)

In the age of modernism, the separation between work and life, or between

production and reproduction, is, as we have seen in Raymond Williams's criticism, "the most common response of all to the difficulties of industrialism" (*Culture and Society* 213). By describing bees' work, Lawrence problematises this separation and foregrounds the ambiguity of the separating line itself. Since worker bees go to work from the hive where the queen bee is ensconced and then return to it, their life or reproduction seems to be separated from their work (i.e. pollination). However, the queen bee is "the quick of all the change, the labour, the production"; therefore, Lawrence's description of the beehive is not simply predicated on the separation of work and life. Rather, it depicts the inseparability between work and life or between production and reproduction, which is the very basis of the establishment of identity. Although the Introduction to the Cambridge Edition of *Sons and Lovers* says that Lawrence "argues that Man goes to Woman as to a source of life, for renewal, and away from her to the various activities in which he asserts his individual identity" (lii), and Morag Shiach argues that "[w]ork is always outside" (155), those readings are not true of what Lawrence writes in the Foreword. Lawrence's attempt to subvert the binary opposition of the "Word" and the "Flesh" leads to questioning the problematic separation between work and life or between production and reproduction. As the postmodern mode of production exploits, as *Empire* shows, the unity between work and life or between production and reproduction, the description of work in Lawrence's Foreword, which establishes the connection between work and identity, can be read as a critique of the postmodern as well as of the modern.

In the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*, we can thus identify prescience on Lawrence's part about what Hardt and Negri call the "biopolitical." Lawrence's argument around "Word," "Flesh," and production is pertinent to an analysis of biopower that highlights "the general linguistic territories

that characterize the intersections between production and life.” Having thus said, the present article does not just eulogise the prescience of Lawrence’s argument on language, labour, and identity; it rather aims to historicise Lawrence’s philosophical argument, which is written in the context of his struggle with the pressures of industrialisation and modernity. Since Lawrence’s response to modernity is also relevant to issues considered in postmodernism, it follows that we should pay attention to the historical continuity between modernity and postmodernity. To put it differently, the lasting impact of modernity should be taken into consideration even when distinctly postmodern problems with language, labour, and identity are at issue. This is the very reason Lawrence’s writing is suggestive and significant in terms of both modernism in the early twentieth century and postmodernism in the twenty-first century.

Notes

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