

'a handful of absolutely supreme begetters in Western thought and art' for his ability to 'focus on his perceptions and productions a bisexuality more less natural to all of us but ... more concentrated, more united in division' (114). Perhaps this phrase is the most apposite epigraph not just for that battle fought between the sexes but that struggle within each of the two major combatants and within the writer who created them.

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LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER: TENDERNESS AND THE HOLY GHOST

Chong-wha Chung

The hero is obsolete, and the leader of men is a back number. After all, at the back of the hero is the militant ideal: and the militant ideal, or the ideal militant, seems to me also a cold egg. We're sort of sick of all forms of militarism ... [T]he leader-cum-follower relationship is a bore. And the new relationship will be some sort of tenderness, sensitive, between men and men and men and women, not the one up one down, lead on I follow, ich dien sort of business. (*Letters* 6, 321)

Most Lawrence critics and scholars have accepted without question Lawrence's observations in this famous letter to Witter Bynner, written on 13 March 1928. Critics seem to believe that in the last phase of his career Lawrence turned unambiguously to the theme of tenderness between men and women. It is true that in the leadership novels Lawrence exhausted the drama of male superiority and the aristocratic political system. It is also true that in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) Mellors vehemently declares that the right relation between man and woman is 'the core of life'. In this context Mark Spilka says that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a complete return to 'the central theme of his work, the love ethic' (178), and John Worthen finds in *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) 'few seeds which could germinate in another novel' (168). Graham Hough even more forcefully separates the leadership novels from the works which followed when he says that 'Lawrence now gives up the worry about leadership, mastery over men' (149).

My essay raises some questions about this assumption. Has Lawrence returned completely to his earlier emphasis on the relationship between man and woman? Has he entirely discarded his leadership ideas, grounded in the man-to-man relationship? Does he really break altogether new ground in the works that follow *The Plumed Serpent*?

My answer to these questions is that critics and scholars have overlooked Lawrence's true intentions in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. He does not abandon his social concerns or the man-to-man relationship. Instead he denounces all forms of militarism and militantism, and 'the one up one down' relationship between men and men, and between men and women. The spirit of military discipline,

or 'order and obey', and the violent mood that pervaded *Kangaroo* (1923) and *The Plumed Serpent* disappear in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; instead tenderness dominates the book. However, the tenderness is not confined solely to the man and woman relationship. Lawrence clearly implies that it will also be the basis of 'the new relationship' between men. Contrary to Graham Hough's assertion that 'We need not, perhaps, take "the new relationship" too seriously' (149), I think that Lawrence was serious. The new relationship, which was to be 'some sort of tenderness, sensitive, between men and men, and men and women', takes place not only between Connie and Mellors, but also between Mellors and the imaginary men he yearns for immediately after his first sexual encounter with Connie and directly after he confesses that his life had started again through his sexual union with her:

Driven by desire, and by dread of the malevolent Thing outside, he made his round in the wood, slowly, softly. He loved the darkness and folded himself into it. It fitted the turgidity of his desire which, in spite of all, was like a riches; the stirring restlessness of his penis, the stirring fire in his loins! Oh, if only there were other men to be with, to fight that sparkling-electric Thing outside there, to preserve the tenderness of life, the tenderness of women, and the natural riches of desire. If only there were men to fight side by side with! (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 120)

Had Lawrence turned only to female tenderness, Mellors would be content with the gratification of his desire with Connie in the woods of Wragby. But he also seeks to form a new relationship with men, 'to fight side by side' against 'the rush of mechanized greed or of greedy mechanism' (120). How Lawrence proposed to carry out this programme and whether Mellors takes actual steps to do so are different matters. The realisation of Mellors's yearnings for other men and the vision that could make the fight happen do not materialise.

What is important, however, is that in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence takes up some of the same political and social issues that he had raised in the leadership novels, issues which stayed with him to the very last phase of his life, expressing themselves in his letters, essays, poems, stories and novels. Lawrence, in fact, became even more vehement in his expressions of his views. His later poems are strong satires on social, political and religious subjects, and his last essays attack the wrongs of society and politics. His letters are also very bitter about the deterioration of life as he constantly searched for solutions.

Lawrence explores his passionate concerns about these matters more subtly in the novels and stories of the post-leadership period. He was much more alert in his convictions, views, and ideals, and he tried to avoid the mistakes of the leadership novels. He is less preachy, less direct. This more cautious attitude makes his works much more artistic. This is why many critics overlook Lawrence's hidden messages, one of which emerges in the case of Clifford.

By endowing Clifford with a knighthood, money, power, and social privilege, Lawrence seems to challenge the system of hereditary aristocracy, which made Clifford, by the accident of birth, the master of Mellors, who in Lawrence's opinion is the true aristocrat. Mellors certainly has the qualities of a true Lawrentian leader, and if he had been born in the upper class, he would have made an excellent master. He is the creator of vitality – the foremost quality of the Lawrentian leader, whose job is to help the individuals achieve their fullest potential – and he brings life-fulfilment to Connie, when her vitality has reached its lowest ebb. If one can apply the pattern of the sleeping beauty story, the gamekeeper, who symbolically guards the sacred wood of Wragby against the menaces of machine civilization, is the Prince Charming; and Connie is the princess, bewitched and imprisoned in Wragby Castle, sent into a long "demi-vierge" sleep under Clifford's spell of intellectual intimacy. Clifford in this sense is the villain (or even, along with Bertha, the witch), who in Lawrentian terms poisons his prisoner's life with the venom of his excessive mental love.

Lawrence's detailed descriptions present Clifford as a false master. Clifford is a novelist, but his mental writing, like Rico's in *St. Mawr* (1925), is rooted in a vacuum; for Connie, to live with him is 'to accept the great nothingness of life' (55). The emptiness and nothingness in the end damage her health, both physical and mental. 'The novel', Lawrence asserts, 'is one bright book of life' and therefore '[t]he novel can help us to live' (('Why the Novel Matters'; 'Morality and the Novel', *Phoenix* 535, 532). What Connie cannot find in Clifford's novels is the kind of life she finds in Mellors. Clifford is capable only of material power. He provides Connie with material comfort, and the coal-miners with money and food; but in return, he, in Connie's eyes, "has taken away from the people their natural life and manhood" (182).

Lawrence explains Clifford in *A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover"*:

So, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* we have a man, Sir Clifford, who is purely a personality, having lost entirely all connexion with his fellow-men and women, except those of usage. All warmth is gone entirely, the hearth is cold, the heart does not

humanly exist. He is a pure product of our civilization, but he is the death of the great humanity of the world. He is kind by rule, but he does not know what warm sympathy means. (333)

Clifford's lameness is 'symbolic of the paralysis, the deeper emotional or passionate paralysis, of most men of his sort and class today (333)'. No doubt Lawrence's view of Clifford and 'his sort and class' is prejudiced, but his diagnosis of the ruling class and the socio-political system is nevertheless acute. Obviously Clifford is a product of machine civilization, and in Lawrence's opinion he is a destructive element for the fulfilment of the individual life. Clifford thinks that "'the industry comes before the individual'" (180) and sees the miners as objects rather than human beings like himself. Clifford also believes that the function of man in society determines the individual; it is not individual qualities that make the leader of society. As Clifford argues:

"The individual hardly matters. It is a question of which function you are brought up to and adapted to. It is not the individuals that make an aristocracy: it is the functioning of the aristocratic whole. And it is the functioning of the whole mass that makes the common man what he is." (183)

The obvious irony is that the aristocracy of function puts Mellors in the role of Clifford's gamekeeper. Once the gaps have been opened between the ruling and serving classes and once the function of a man determines the individual, he has inevitably become part of the whole wicked system. This, in Lawrence's view, is one of the grossest wrongs of the social structure.

In *The First Lady Chatterley* Lawrence makes the gamekeeper, who in this version of the novel is called Parkin, a more political character, willing to fight against the wrongs of the social machinery. Parkin is the secretary of a local branch of the Communist League, and is fluent in political argument. Even Duncan Forbes, the detached, teasing artist argues that "'if the communists did smash the famous 'system' there might emerge a new relationship between men, *really* not caring about money, *really* caring for life, and the life-flow with one another!'" (242). The idea that communism can achieve Lawrence's vision is perhaps evidence of Lawrence's political naiveté, and, together with inconsistencies in his social visions, a serious weakness of the leadership novels. But Lawrence had the good sense to make the gamekeeper much less political in the final version of the novel.

At the end of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Mellors leaves the wood and goes to a farm. The novel ends with his long, sad letter from the farm, in which he talks about his pessimistic view of the world and its people and articulates his serious concern with society and politics, in his account of a town which is perhaps the epitome of modern industrial society:

The pits are working badly – this is a colliery district like Tevershall, only prettier. I sometimes sit in the Wellington and talk to the men. They grumble a lot, but they're not going to alter anything. As everybody says, the Notts-Derby miners have got their hearts in the right place. But the rest of their anatomy must be in the wrong place, in a world that has not use for them. I like them, but they don't cheer me much: not enough of the old fighting-cock in them. They talk a lot about nationalisation, nationalisation of royalties, nationalisation of the whole industry. But you can't nationalise coal and leave all the other industries as they are. They talk about putting coal to new uses, like Sir Clifford is trying to do. It may work here and there, but not as a general thing, I doubt. Whatever you make you've got to sell it. The men are very apathetic. They feel the whole damned thing is doomed, and I believe it is. And they are doomed along with it. Some of the young ones spout about a Soviet, but there's not much conviction in them. There's no sort of conviction about anything – except that it's all a muddle and a hole. (219)

Mellors' sharp, accurate analysis of the industrial village obviously shows his deep concern about the outside world. Why then does he choose to become a farmer? What does Lawrence expect from Mellors' farm? Sending Mellors, a non-farming type, to a farm he finds 'not inspiring' (298) is odd. What is Lawrence's meaning? The book does not supply a clear answer.

I think the answer can be found elsewhere. Just before and during the composition of the novel, Lawrence wrote letters in which he expressed his interest in settling down on a farm. When he had just begun the novel at the Villa Mirinda, he wrote to Rolf Gardiner of his desire to live on a farm:

I think, one day, I shall take a place in the country, somewhere where perhaps one or two other men might like to settle in the neighbourhood, and we might possibly slowly evolve a new rhythm of life: learn to make the creative pauses, and learn to dance and to sing together, without stunting, and perhaps also publish some little fighting periodical, keeping fully alert and alive to the world, living a different life in the midst of it, not merely apart. (11 October 1926; *Letters* 5, 552-3)

Lawrence, though he later dissociated himself from Gardiner and his movement, remained enthusiastic about going on a song-tour and reviving country-dances (which echoes the German Wandervogel movement). He was even interested in organizing a youth centre in the country and, for this purpose, establishing a headquarters on a farm. In another letter to Gardiner, Lawrence writes:

I will try to come to England and make a place – some quiet house in the country – where one can begin – and from which the hikes, maybe, can branch out. Some place with a big barn and a bit of land – if one has enough money. Don't you think that is what it needs? And then one must set out and learn a deep discipline – and learn dances from all the world, and take whatsoever we can make into our own. And learn music the same; mass music, and canons, and wordless music like the Indians have. And try – keep on trying. It's a thing one has to feel one's way into. And perhaps work a small farm at the same time, to make the living cheap. It's what I want to do. (3 December 1926; *Letters* 5, 591)

Is there no connection between Mellor's Grange Farm and Lawrence's 'small farm'? While Lawrence argues that man yearns for other men (and male activity) after his sexual fulfilment with woman, would Mellors be content as a mere farmer in spite of Lawrence's visions of the 'new rhythm of life'? While Lawrence wanted to 'abandon' his 'meaningless isolation, and join in with some few other men,' would Mellors remain indifferent to his creator's headquarters and live an isolated life?

Mellor's letter closely parallels Lawrence's own letters, as it also urges men 'to sing in a mass and dance the old group dances':

If you could only tell them that living and spending aren't the same thing! But it's no good. If only they were educated to live instead of earn and spend, they could manage very happily on twenty-five shillings ... They ought to learn to be naked and handsome ... and to sing in a mass and dance the old group dances, and carve the stools they sit on, and embroider their own emblems. Then they wouldn't need money. And that's the only way to solve the industrial problem: train the people to be able to live and live in handsomeness, without needing to spend. (299-300)

Mellors, like Lawrence (and Ramon), intends to teach life to the people and help them escape the automatism of industry. In other words, Mellors doesn't retire from life to the farm. Mellors wants to have his farming headquarters as the centre of 'a new rhythm of life'.

The question is, how could Mellors carry out his leadership responsibilities and help colliers regain their manhood and full life by singing and dancing in the country and forgetting their earthly bread? To live on a farm and return to prehistoric autarchy is by no means a wholly satisfactory solution to the industrial problem. In *The Plumed Serpent* Lawrence had already experimented with this method, and he saw that 'to sing in a mass and dance old group dances, and carve the stools they sit on, and embroider their own emblems' solved nothing much with regard to helping Mexican peons 'to live in handsomeness'.

The same unsatisfactory solution is repeated in *The Escaped Cock* (1929). Having achieved his personal fulfilment, the resurrected man does not merely remain fulfilled; he plans to leave the priestess and go to the 'open' (60) world. Once again, exactly what he will do next is not specified, but a clue is supplied elsewhere:

If Jesus rose as a full man, in the flesh, He rose to have friends, to have a man-friend whom He would hold sometimes to his breast, in strong affection, and who would be dearer to Him than a brother, just out of the sheer mystery of sympathy. And how much more wonderful, this, than having disciples! If Jesus rose a full man in the flesh, He rose to do His share in the world's work, something He really liked doing. And if He remembered His first life, it would neither be teaching nor preaching, but probably

carpentering again, with joy, among the shavings. If Jesus rose a full man in the flesh, He rose to continue His fight with the hard-boiled conventionalists like Roman judges and Jewish priests and money-makers of every sort. But this time, it would no longer be the fight of self-sacrifice that would end in crucifixion. This time it would be a freed man fighting to shelter the rose of life from being trampled on by the pigs. ('The Risen Lord', *Phoenix II* 575)

It is significant that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Escaped Cock* omit the programmes of the next stage that will follow individual fulfilment. If the heroes were just ordinary men who would be content as fulfilled lovers, these two works would need no further development; they are beautiful, complete works of art as they are. But Mellors and the resurrected man are Lawrentian leaders who, as Lawrence writes, are bound to achieve their leader's job after sexual fulfilment. In this sense, the last two works lack something they need to have.

This is clearly Lawrence's limitation when one examines him as a critic of social and political issues. When one reads the two works in the context of other novels (especially the leadership novels), one expects to learn from Lawrence what Mellors would do on the farm and what the resurrected man intends to do to 'shelter the rose of life from being trampled on by the pigs'. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Escaped Cock*, Lawrence clearly hopes to build a new relationship between men and women and men and men based on tenderness. Instead of blood and violence Lawrence wants to introduce tenderness and then expand the brotherhood between man and man 'into a full relationship', as he wrote to Gardiner in the letter of 11 October 1926:

One needs to establish a fuller relationship between oneself and the universe, and between oneself and ones fellow man and fellow woman. It doesn't mean cutting out the 'brothers in Christ' business simply: it means expanding it into a full relationship, where there can be also physical and passionate meeting, as there used to be in the old dances and rituals. We have to know how to go out and meet one another, upon the third ground, the holy ground. (Letters 5, 553)

If Lawrence meant to present the third, holy ground in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Escaped Cock*, his intentions remain only intentions.

Lawrence himself frankly admits his own limitations in an essay, "The State of Funk." Though he foresees inevitable changes in the system, he is unable to tell what new system may evolve:

Now England is on the brink of great changes, radical changes. Within the next fifty years the whole framework of our social life will be altered, will be greatly modified. The old world of our grandfathers is disappearing like thawing snow, and is as likely to cause a flood. What the world of our grandchildren will be, fifty years hence, we don't know. (*Phoenix II*, 566)

Though Lawrence is sure that there is 'a great change coming, bound to come' (566), he cannot predict the future. As a novelist he feels that

it is the change inside the individual which is my real concern. The great social change interests me and troubles me, but it is not my field. I know a change is coming – and I know we must have a more generous, more human system based on the life values and not on the money values. That I know. But what steps to take I don't know. (567)

This statement sums up Lawrence's standing as a social critic. He candidly admits that he is not a specialist in socio-political matters, contrary to George Ford's description of him as 'a major social critic occupying a role in the twentieth century comparable to Carlyle's in the Victorian age' (12). Had he been a great social critic he would have been more specific about the changes that would take place. If one applies T. S. Eliot's definition of a great critic to Lawrence, one must conclude that Lawrence neither reviewed the existing social order nor offered a new direction for future social reforms. Lawrence was unable to suggest steps for 'a more generous, more human system based on the life values and not on the money values'. This is why his leadership novels falter and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* fails to say what Mellors could do for 'a new rhythm of life'. For Lawrence social and political visions were an alien world. What he did in the leadership novels is let out his innate social passion and express his strong criticism of the socio-political structure of his time, industrialism, and machine civilization. In this regard William Troy concluded that:

Lawrence was not primarily a social critic, as some people have insistently maintained, but his *epos* is a

damning criticism not only of our socio-economic organization but of our whole culture to its roots. (10)

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It is extremely important to recognise that in *The Escaped Cock*, one of his last works, Lawrence denounced his lord-and-master vision. The resurrected man rejects Madeleine's appeal to come back to the people as their political leader: "my mission is over, my teaching is finished" (24). Lawrence, in declaring this, is merciless with himself and courageous in admitting his mistakes in the leadership novels. His chief mistake was the violation of the dualism of power and love urges; he let the power urge dominate the whole show from Aaron's Rod onward. Therefore, when he announced that the future relationship between men and men (as well as between men and women) should be based on tenderness, he in fact professed that a balance should be recovered. And he manages to bring the two principles together in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Escaped Cock*.

Mellor's characterization illustrates this point. In *The First Lady Chatterley*, the extreme of wilful, domineering intelligence is ascribed to Clifford, and that of sensuality to Parkin, who, as Clifford himself describes him, is "a half-tame animal with a certain animal niceness", devoid of Mellor's education and refinement – so hopelessly base that Connie gives up the effort to change him:

For a time she felt she would leave Clifford and go away with the keeper: buy some little farm in Scotland, and there live with him. She had enough money of her own. And Hilda would help. They might even all live together.

But then something inside her said: No! – No, she must not take him away from his own surroundings. She must not try to make of him, even in the mildest form, a gentleman. It would only start a confusion. No! She must not even try to make him develop along those lines, the lines of educated consciousness. She must leave him to his own way. His instinct was against education. (71)

Connie in the end realizes that it is 'impossible to have a whole man in any man. Her two men were two halves' (71). In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, however, Lawrence successfully brings the love and power urges together in Mellors and makes him a whole man with education, intelligence, refinement, and sensuality. This makes him a born Lawrentian aristocrat, who, unlike his predecessors in the

leadership novels, is also capable of giving life and tenderness. Lawrence achieves a personal triumph in his creation of Mellors. The character is the fruit of the marriage between the Law and Love in Lawrence. In 'Study of Thomas Hardy', Lawrence writes that supreme art is the consummate marriage of the two principles of the Law and Love – the love and power urges:

He must with reverence submit to the law of himself: and he must with suffering and joy know and submit to the law of the woman: and he must know that they two together are one within the Great Law, reconciled within the Great Peace. Out of this final knowledge shall come his supreme art. There shall be the art which recognises and utters his own law; there shall be the art which recognises his own and also the law of the woman, his neighbour, utters the glad embrace and the struggle between them, and the submission of one; there shall be the art which knows the struggle between the two conflicting laws, and knows the final reconciliation, where both are equal, two-in-one, complete. This is the supreme art, which yet remains to be done. (128)

The 'two-in-one, complete' is the state of the Holy Ghost: in other words, when the two principles are harmoniously joined in the state of the crown, the revelation of the dark god and the morning star takes place. So Lawrence writes in 'The Crown':

The true God is *created* every time a pure relationship, or a consummation out of twoness into oneness takes place. So that the poppy flower is God come red out of the poppy-plant. And a man, if he win to a sheer fusion in himself of all the manifold creation, a pure relation, a sheer gleam of oneness out of manyness, then this man is God created where before God was uncreated. (*Reflections* 303-4)

Lawrence pursued the revelation of this God across several continents. In Australia Somers and Jack search for the Dark God and in Mexico Ramon invokes the morning star – all without tangible success. Finally back in England, Mellors, in the union of the two urges, finds the god in 'the little flame' of himself and Connie. So he writes a little more cheerfully at the end of his sad letter: 'We'll really trust in the little flame, and in the unnamed god that shields it from being blown' (301). The big flame of his god didn't light up on the holy ground of Mellor's

farm for 'a fuller relationship between oneself and the universe, and between oneself and one's fellow man and fellow woman' (*Letters* 5, 553); but there is at least the little flame of himself and Connie in the heart of Mellors. This flame could have saved Aaron from his long illness in London and Somers from his abortive commitment to Kangaroo's cause; this flame does save Kate from the inertia, emptiness, and indifference of mechanical civilization. Had there been the warmth of the little flame in the leadership novels, violence, misanthropy, and unrealistic (often self-contradicting) social visions could have been modified, if not saved, and Lawrence might have been able to achieve a fuller relationship between the leaders and followers and between man and woman. The articulation of this vision makes *Lady Chatterley's Lover* the triumph of Lawrence's art.

NOTE

1. Keith Sagar believes that in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 'Lawrence is emerging from his misanthropy' (178), but a quotation like the following qualifies Sagar's assertion: "'They [the people] are animals you don't understand, and never could. Don't thrust your illusions on other people. The masses were always the same, and will always be the same. Nero's slaves were extremely little different from our colliers or the Ford motor-car workmen. I mean Nero's mine slaves and his field slaves. It is the masses: they are the unchangeable.'" (182)

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Book Reviews

John Worthen, D.H. Lawrence: *The Early Years 1885-1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; pp. xxx + 626; cloth £25.00).

Lawrence's reputation has been in recession for two decades. The decline started with Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1971) and Raymond Williams subsequently led a group of left-wing critics who, in his words, had 'got much harder about Lawrence over the years'. The double barrels of feminism and socialism have been gunning for Lawrence ever since, blowing large holes in the notion that Lawrence consumption is an unquestionably wholesome activity. For many readers, consequently, Leavis's number one isn't even in the charts any more.

The mainstream Lawrence industry, however, has reacted throughout these hard times as if there were no threat to its product whatever. For the last decade and a half it has ignored critical controversies entirely and embarked instead upon a programme of reverential monument-building: The Cambridge Edition of the Letters and Works of D.H. Lawrence. Indeed, the effect of this monument building has been to subvert critical debate on Lawrence's importance. The monuments are being erected. They wouldn't be being erected if Lawrence weren't of absolute importance. Therefore there is no need to argue his importance. That alarming confidence seems to buttress the CUP's substantial Lawrence investment.

In what is increasingly coming to look like the strategy of a corporate monopoly, the CUP is now supplying the demand for a bumper biography which its own editions of the Letters has stimulated, and John Worthen, who has devoted virtually the whole of his academic endeavour to this one author, has written the first of its three volumes. Dubious as one may be about the Cambridge project in which Worthen is a central editorial figure, the excellence of this particular volume in itself is not in doubt.

It is not simply a scholarly synthesis of already existing sources, as Worthen has cast his net much wider than previous biographers. His investigation of Lawrence's antecedents has been painstaking and precise and does truly render all other accounts obsolete. It also disposes of a key myth about Lydia Lawrence in proving that *both* parents were working class. As just one further example of demystification, Worthen shows that Lawrence's meeting with Frieda Weekley was not a whirlwind romance leading to a passionate elopement. In fact, there was no elopement at all: Frieda intended to return to Ernest Weekley after a sojourn with Lawrence in Germany in 1912, and may well have done so had Lawrence himself not revealed their affair to her husband. Worthen's biography clarifies and deepens all that we already know from previous biographies as well as presenting much that has