

how poisonous and how silly they are. It is easier to see what you are doing when you hit somebody than it is when you only slander him. It is also true that a power of dissent is a cornerstone against all forms of spiritual capitulation. On the other hand, surely, one can let some of the fresh air of passion and energy into the wilted paradises of the suburban palefaces without leading them into the ebullient war-chant of story-book redskins.

That this largely repugnant image of community exerts an influence on Lawrence's creative vision would have to be demonstrated in detail (one might begin by analysing *St Mawr*). To do so would not be to practise the discipline of literary criticism. Literary values are sized up and vindicated independently of the implied morale of a book. But it would be a valid investigation. We can certainly take stock of the moral orientations, of the human intuitions, endorsed by and embedded in a writer's inventions. We can, in fact, appraise the *civic* use that he makes of his imagination. It is at this point, I suggest, that one must ask how far Lawrence's imagination, however liberating and heartening in certain directions, does not, ultimately, nourish conceptions of community and virtue which are not viable, or even permissible, in an enlightened sense of civilization. The presence of reactionary minds may be salutary, but one must recognize them for what they are.

Three poems

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

HOSPITAL

Observe the hours which seem to stand
 Between these beds and pause until
 A shriek breaks through the time to show
 That humankind is suffering still.

THREE POEMS

Observe the tall and shrivelled flowers,
So brave a moment to the glance.
The fevered eyes stare through the hours
And petals fall with soft foot-prints.

A world where silence has no hold
Except a tentative small grip.
Limp hands upon the blankets fold,
Minds from their bodies slowly slip.

Though death is never talked of here,
It is more palpable and felt—
Touching the cheek or in a tear—
By being present by default.

The muffled cries, the curtains drawn,
The flowers pale before they fall—
The world itself is here brought down
To what is suffering and small.

The huge philosophies depart,
Large words slink off, like faith, like love.
The thumping of the human heart
Is reassurance here enough.

Only one dreamer going back
To how he felt when he was well,
Weeps under pillows at his lack
But cannot tell, but cannot tell.

PATIENTS

Violence does not terrify.
Storms here would be a relief,
Lightning be a companion to grief.
It is the helplessness, the way they lie

BLACKFRIARS

Beyond hope, fear, love,
That makes me afraid. I would like to shout,
Crash my voice into the silence, flout
The passive suffering here. They move

Only in pain, their bodies no longer seem
Dependent on blood, muscle, bone.
It is as if air alone
Kept them alive, or else a mere whim

On the part of instrument, surgeon, nurse.
I too am one of them, but well enough
To long for some simple sign of life,
Or to imagine myself getting worse.

FOR A WOMAN WITH A FATAL ILLNESS

The verdict has been given and you lie quietly
Beyond hope, hate, revenge, even self-pity.

You accept gratefully the gifts—flowers, fruit—
Clumsily offered now that your visitors too

Know you must certainly die in a matter of months.
They are dumb now, reduced only to gestures,

Helpless before your news, perhaps hating
You because you are the cause of their unease.

I too, watching from my temporary corner,
Feel impotent and wish for something violent—

Whether as sympathy only, I am not sure—
But something at least to break the terrible tension.

Death has no right to come so quietly.