

THE THEME OF ALIENATION IN SOME TALES

OF D. H. LAWRENCE.

The Theme of Alienation in Some Tales  
of D. H. Lawrence.

By

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An examination of the theme of alienation in the selected tales of D. H. Lawrence. The thesis is divided into two main parts. In the first section this theme is treated with specific regard to militarism which is linked with each of the tales. In the second section the theme is examined and focused in its relation to death as it confronts the chief protagonists. The concluding chapter moves to a consideration of this theme in Lawrence's later work.

### Textual Note and Acknowledgements

The editions of Lawrence's works used in the preparation of this thesis are the Viking Press for all works except Lady Chatterley's Lover for which the Grove Press edition was used and The Man Who Died for which the Vintage Books edition was used.

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I have learnt to be unsocial entirely, a single thing to myself. I hate being squashed into humanity, like a strawberry boiled with all the other strawberries into jam. God above leave me single and separate and unthinkably distinguished from all the rest: let me be a paradisal being, but never a human being: let it be true when I say "Homo sum, humani omnis a me alienum puto". Henceforth I deal in single, sheer beings -- nothing human, only the star singleness of paradisal souls.

(Collected Letters, To S. S. Koteliansky, Sept. 23, 1917)

I am tired to death of all the indecencies of intimacies. I want to be left alone. There must be a complete new attitude. And till then silence . . .

(Collected Letters, To the Hon. Dorothy Brett, Jan. 28, 1925)

I suffer badly from being so cut off. But what is one to do? . . . at times one is forced to be essentially a hermit. I don't want to be. But anything else is either a personal tussle, or a money tussle: sickening: except, of course, just for ordinary acquaintance, which remains acquaintance. One has no real human relations -- that is so devastating.

(Collected Letters, To Dr. Trigant Burrow, Aug. 3, 1927)

For Tomas and Heidi

## INTRODUCTION

### Lawrence and the Theme of Alienation

In a discussion of the theme of alienation in the work of D. H. Lawrence it is essential to distinguish the term from its more common usage as a sociological term. What I propose to discuss in the present study centers around the concept of alienation as we find it in Lawrence's work only. The term itself, however, does not refer to any strict definition taken from Lawrence. (It is one primarily derived through Lawrence's fiction. The theme of alienation was of especial importance to Lawrence and in his fiction he approaches more nearly than in his other writings a sure grasp of the human complexities of alienation.)

He was, of course, radically opposed to any doctrine which denigrated the individual in favour of society. Lawrence railed against that tendency in modern civilization which moves towards mass society, a society in which individual life is progressively thwarted through a constant externalization of the inner life of man. Lawrence's belief in man's integrity as an individual was rooted in an intuitive awareness of man's organic being.

Fundamental to Lawrence's thought is the concept of man's physical being as providing the basis for his connexion with the cosmos at large, an organic connexion which sustains man in his relationships to the world about him. If a man is removed from this living connexion with the rest of things, through an emotional imbalance of some kind or other, he is brought to what may be termed a state of "radical" alienation. It is primarily this kind of alienation which will be discussed in the short

tales I propose to consider in this paper.

The experience of alienation in Lawrence's fiction is one that involves the whole being of a man. Though this experience may vary in its intensity, range and duration, it becomes finally the determining point of an individual's life. The all-sundering experience of alienation may provide the source and impetus for a new and radically different awareness of life. Then, in a new world of surcharged realities the individual is firmly established. However, this very experience may result in failure. It may turn out to be the cause of an individual's destruction that ultimately annihilates any possibility of an organic continuity in life. Whatever the consequences, and Lawrence's fiction is rich in the different and unique quality this experience has upon his characters, there are principally these two currents that figure largely in the process of alienation. The first involves a painful re-entry into life when the experience one has undergone serves as the basis for a more intense and vital existence. In the second, the disintegrating effects of the experience (always perilously close to death) culminate in death. In the latter case, the death experience itself is contingent upon the kind of alienation experienced. For some Lawrencean protagonists, death simply absolves them from unendurable pain and suffering in life. For others, death is the natural consequence of their alienation, and it is incumbent upon them to "know" and experience death as an all-enveloping reality.

Though Lawrence often dramatizes the experiences of alienation in his fiction (when, for instance, all normal ties are severed and broken out of the sheer intensity and stress of a particular situation), it must

be emphasized that his belief in individuality itself arises from his sense of man's ultimate "aloneness". It is this concept of "aloneness" in Lawrence which must not be confused with that of alienation. Aloneness was for him the principle of all organic life. Alienation then must be understood as an unnatural condition of being that results in some new, altered state of being or death. The two are sometimes directly related. When, for instance, an individual's "aloneness" is impaired, a process of alienation may begin to occur. It is this kind of situation which I propose to examine in the following chapters. Touching this point, Lawrence declares in any essay on Edgar Allen Poe that

The central law of all organic life is that each organism is intrinsically isolate and single in itself.

The moment its isolation breaks down, and there comes an actual mixing and confusion, death sets in.

This is true of every individual organism, from man to amoeba.

But the secondary law of all organic life is that each organism only lives through contact with other matter, assimilation, and contact with other life, which means assimilation of new vibrations, non-material. Each individual organism is vivified by intimate contact with fellow organisms: up to a certain point.<sup>1</sup>

What is very significant in the passage above is that the "actual mixing and confusion" accurately describes the experience of alienation as it appears again and again in Lawrence's fiction. Lawrence's ideas on aloneness as an essential human need are based on his beliefs concerning the human organism as an organism. Aloneness becomes the integral part of organic life, though it is essential, of course, that there be meaningful contact with other life. The full, complete life is based always on the primary

Lawrencean value of touch. The significance of touch is nowhere more apparent than in those situations of extreme alienation which shall be examined later in this discussion. It is important both to appreciate the difference between aloneness and alienation and to recognize their connection with one another.

In human relationships, aloneness is for Lawrence a necessary basis not only ~~for~~ the relationship between lovers, but to a host of other relationships as well. Even in the closest relationship with another person, an individual's full human achievement is dependent upon this essential aloneness.

For the end, the goal, is the perfecting of each single individuality, unique in itself -- which cannot take place without a perfected harmony between the beloved, a harmony which depends on the at-last-clarified singleness of each being, a singleness equilibrated, polarized in one by the counter-posing singleness of the other.<sup>2</sup>

This passage, from Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, is further consolidated in the later Fantasia of the Unconscious where Lawrence succinctly states (after stressing the need to be alone with one's soul) that "being alone in peace means being two people together".<sup>3</sup> This "normal" aloneness, as opposed to the "radical" alienation so often depicted in the stories and novels, can best be understood as Lawrence's own attempt to come to terms with an issue of central significance in his life and work.

Lawrence, in his personal life, often tended to oscillate between a real need to establish close relations amongst a group of people, as in his plans for the utopian community of Rananim, and an adamant disinclination to admit even his closest friends into an intimate relationship. There appears, mixed indelibly in the make-up of the man himself,

a "noli me tangere" attitude that recoiled from close contact with other people. This attitude is at times so drastic as to verge into misanthropy and a hard aversion to humanity. Lawrence's insistent emphasis on man's aloneness may be regarded as a belief that had been conditioned by his own life. The alienation which Paul Morel suffers after his mother's death in Sons and Lovers can readily be discerned as mirroring Lawrence's own predicament after the death of his own mother. In D. H. Lawrence and the New World, David Cavitch explores other crises in Lawrence's life that reflect conditions of alienation. In his personal life Lawrence experienced both the strengths of "manly isolation" (aloneness) and the "mixing and confusion" of the experience of alienation.<sup>4</sup>

A peculiarity that has been remarked of Thomas Hardy was that to the end of his life, he loathed being touched even in the friendliest manner. A far more deeply rooted malaise appears characteristic in Lawrence, for though he was exceptionally adept at striking up a casual acquaintance with a great many people, he was somehow barred from the intimacies of deep and abiding friendship. Even the overpowering need for purposeful activity in the world (a cardinal Lawrencean belief) was, insofar as group effort is involved, ultimately thwarted. In one of his later letters to Rolf Gardiner the perplexed ambiguity within Lawrence himself over his personal isolation is revealing of the inner tensions he felt.

I should love to be connected with something, with some few people, in something. As far as anything matters, I have always been very much alone, and regretted it. But I can't belong to clubs, or societies, or Freemasons, or any other damn thing . . . I shall be wary beyond words, of committing myself . . . Everything needs a beginning, though -- and I shall be very glad to abandon my rather meaningless isolation, and join in with some few other men, if I can.<sup>5</sup>



Though Lawrence frequently desired some greater communion with a group of people, he held back suspiciously, and fiercely fought any encroachment upon his inner world.

Lawrence's aloneness was often provoked into extreme opposition by forces external to him. For instance, the utter disillusion and profound "ennui" that the Great War had wrought upon his sensibility provoked him into an opposition to it and the values he believed it represented. In this very opposition he found himself terribly alone. Through the war years this aloneness in Lawrence was intensified. It very nearly precipitated in his own life the kind of alienation which will be discussed later in Chapter One, with regard to militarism. In Chapter Two the quality of aloneness in individuals' lives gives way before an extremity of experience that leads to their alienation. One remarkable feature of Lawrencean alienation is that its hold over an individual can be finally broken only through "touch", which is the restorative antidote to alienation. Only through contact with other life can an individual's "aloneness" be sustained. This is the cardinal rule of Lawrencean aloneness and the proof for it is simple. One has only to follow the ways in which characters in Lawrence's fiction escape their alienation and move beyond it. They are released from their alienation only through human contact. If they do not or cannot receive this contact, a process of dissolution ensues and they die. As the subject of this thesis is the theme of alienation in Lawrence's fiction, it is to this that we must now turn.

In his major novels, there is a pattern of alienation which is readily traced across the range of his achievement, from the early autobiographical Sons and Lovers to Lady Chatterley's Lover. In Sons and

Lovers, Paul Morel's experience of alienation after his mother's death moves with the kind of tensions and counter-tensions that have been suggested above. In the final chapter "Derelict" the double nature of his alienation is well in evidence: "Always alone, his [Paul Morel's] soul oscillated, first on the side of death, then on the side of life, doggedly."<sup>6</sup>

The intensity of his experience and the radical nature of his alienation is an effect of the sundering emotional crisis of his mother's death. The event shakes his organic hold on life profoundly and the normal, everyday order of things becomes disturbed and altered by a surreal apprehension of the unreality pervading all things:

Everything seemed so different, so unreal. There seemed no reason why people should go along the street, and houses pile up in the daylight. There seemed no reason why these things should occupy the space, instead of leaving it empty. His friends talked to him: he heard the sounds, and he answered. But why there should be the noise of speech he could not understand.<sup>7</sup>

There is in the intensity of Paul's experience the marks of a severely disordered psyche. The jangled perceptions, the confusion and breakdown of normal relations with the world wherein all contact is tensely gripped to a hard critical point, and then released suddenly in a flood of emotion, prove terrible in their effects and are symptomatic of how far he has gone in the extremity of his grief:

The days passed, the weeks. But everything seemed to have fused, gone into a conglomerated mass. He could not tell one day from another, one week from another, hardly one place from another. Nothing was distinct or distinguishable. Often he lost himself for an hour at a time, could not remember what he had done . . . Sometimes he ran down the streets as if he were mad: sometimes he was mad; things weren't there, things were there. It made him pant. Sometimes he stood before the bar of the public-house where he called for a drink. Everything suddenly stood back away

from him. He saw the face of the barmaid, the gabbling drinkers, his own glass on the slopped, mahogany board, in the distance. There was something between him and them. He could not get into touch.<sup>8</sup>

His world has undergone a metamorphosis where "the realest thing was the thick darkness at night."<sup>9</sup> The imagery of darkness is indicative of his longing for death, for reunion with his mother who is of a piece with that darkness. And yet he struggles inwardly between surrendering to the death-motive latent within him and a contrary desire to defeat it at all costs. His desire to live resists the death-impulse in him which is finally overborne. It is his resistance that triumphs over the aching attraction of death and distinguishes him as an emissary of a tiny, undaunted light moving towards a community of men and a re-established "touch" with them:

Everywhere the vastness and terror of the immense night which is roused and stirred for a brief while by the day, but which returns, and will remain at last eternal, holding everything in its silence and its living gloom . . . On every side the immense dark silence seemed pressing him, so tiny a spark, into extinction, and yet, almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night, in which everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror, and holding each other in embrace, there in a darkness that outpassed them all, and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness, and yet not nothing. 'Mother!' he whimpered -- 'Mother!' She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself. He wanted her to touch him, have him alongside with her. But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.<sup>10</sup> (*Italics mine*)

The alienation which has driven him so precariously near to death

has revealed to him dark realities that lay like an abyss at his feet. Acknowledging like a Pascal the terror of the infinite spaces between the stars, he is ready to admit the ultimate insignificance of his alienation, even of his life, but perseveres bravely beyond it. Significantly, it is upon this theme that the novel closes, that of a man whose alienation is the mark of a more complete manhood, establishing himself anew in a resistance against death.

In The Rainbow, the theme of alienation reappears when Ursula's rejection of her lover Skrebensky forces her back upon herself in hard reaction against the kind of life that he represents. Unwilling finally to compromise herself through marriage to Skrebensky and the tiresome round of activities which that would entail, she moves towards the woods in a sudden repulsion of feeling that signals her alienation: "A solitary thing, she took the track straight across the wilderness . . ."<sup>11</sup> The constant fluctuations she meets with everywhere in her personal life make it an imperative for her to know some deeper reality, some source of creative life which will sustain her in her deepest being. In her vision of the powerful dark horses, symbolic as they are of deep, primal forces within her, she is brought to an awareness of the vital powers which lay dormant and which utterly negated the finite, ordered, "active" world typified by Skrebensky. The intensity of her experience leaves her very nearly shattered, physically weak, and yet it connects her with an "isolated, impregnable core of reality."<sup>12</sup>

As she sat there, spent, time and the flux of change passed away from her, she lay as if unconscious upon the bed of the stream, like a stone, unconscious, unchanging, unchangeable, whilst everything rolled by in transience, leaving her there, a stone at rest on

the bed of the stream, inalterable and passive, sunk to the bottom of all change. She lay still a long time, with her back against the thorn tree trunk, in her final isolation.<sup>13</sup>

Significantly, it is after her painful experience of alienation that she realizes in a nausea of awareness the severe limitations that are everywhere about her. The dominant imagery of husks and shells serves to denote the constrictions upon her new life, with its seed of ready, potent life:

If she could but disengage herself . . . from all the vast encumbrances of the world that was in contact with her, from her father, and her mother, and her lover, and all her acquaintance.

Repeatedly, in an ache of utter weariness she repeated: 'I have no father nor mother nor lover, I have no allocated place in the world of things, I do not belong to Beldover nor to Nottingham nor to England nor to this world, they none of them exist, I am trammelled and entangled in them, but they are all unreal. I must break out of it, like a nut from its shell which is an unreality.'<sup>14</sup>

It is only this extreme non-human appreciation of vital impersonal centres in her own life, and the recognized potential of a much fuller being in the lives of other people as well, that draws her fiercely apart for a time and leaves her eventually with the hope of a radically altered state of being among men. This new hope, as tender in its strength as a seedling rising to growth, is recognized by Ursula in the rainbow with all of its wonderful promise of a brave new world.

In Women in Love, the "strange conjunction" that Birkin desires of Ursula is one that essentially rests on their mutual aloneness. It is again that "normal" sense of aloneness which is insisted upon here. For Birkin, it is not inconsistent with their love that they retain always "an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings: -- as the stars balance each other."<sup>15</sup>

(His reiteration of this point stresses the tensions that Birkin-Lawrence thought necessary to the love relationship. The dangers of excessive love were fatal in Lawrence's estimate to a man's inviolate being recalling that central law of all organic life referred to earlier.) What Birkin attempts to elucidate to Ursula without much apparent success is the necessity to acknowledge the limits between them. In The Symbolic Meaning, Lawrence speaks of this "sacred mystery of otherness"<sup>16</sup> and its significance lies in terms of the love relationship which touches upon our theme here:

The triumph of love -- which is the triumph of life and creation -- does not lie in merging, mingling, in absolute identification of the lover with the beloved. It lies in the communion of beings, who, in the very perfection of communion, recognize and allow the mutual otherness. There is no desire to transgress the bounds of being.<sup>17</sup>

The kind of aloneness that Birkin understands as a natural condition in life, and of especial importance in his love of Ursula, is, of course, quite different from the alienation encountered by Gerald. The contrast drawn here should clarify the necessary distinction which must be made between aloneness and alienation.

Gerald's radical alienation is an effect, ironically enough, of his own will. It is through his will that he directs and controls the vast energies that transformed the workings of his father's coal mines. In his position as an industrial magnate his ruling principle was an abstraction that carried in its finality an inevitable logic of its own, quite beyond Gerald's specific ends:

This was the sole idea, to turn upon the inanimate matter of the underground, and reduce it to his will . . . There were two opposites, his will and the resistant Matter of the earth. And between these he could establish the very expression of his will, the incarnation of his power, a great and perfect machine, a system, an activity of pure order, pure mechanical repetition, repetition ad infinitum, hence eternal and infinite.<sup>18</sup>

After Gerald has died, Birkin's last encounter with his friend as he lay an inert corpse, hits upon the truth of that inevitable logic, for upon Gerald's frozen face was this "last terrible look of cold, mute Matter."<sup>19</sup>

It is the fatal mark of his alienation which had been latent in him from the first, when he had forestalled any human sympathies and feelings within himself to gain the inhuman isolation of a machine principle. The cold impersonality that characterizes Gerald has its symbolic counterpoint in the snow-bound mountains where he meets his death. They symbolize the inner desolation of his soul which has been stripped completely of its human contacts. His alienation has nothing in it that is vital to him, for he is left a mere nullity, like the Matter that he had fought to subjugate. One of Lawrence's remarks taken from his essay, "The Reality of Peace" is vividly elucidative when taken in the context of Gerald's alienation: "For that which happens at the quick of a man's life will finally have its full expression in his body."<sup>20</sup>

In Lady Chatterley's Lover, the theme of alienation is evident in both of the major characters. Mellors' alienation is a kind of defensive reaction against a world which had deeply hurt him while Connie suffers badly from the lack of any vital relationship in which to root her being. Her superficial, cerebral attachments with Clifford Chatterley and his set leave her feeling null and insignificant. This emptiness registers itself upon "her body [which] was going meaningless, going full and opaque, so much insignificant substance"<sup>21</sup> in the absence of any real transforming "touch". The contact which establishes her physically comes through her sexual encounters with Mellors where the life in each of them is roused

to a mutual desire that gives form to their separateness. It is this desire that is instinct with great life forces and surges up and past any obstructing barriers it meets. Mellor's apparent insentience, a condition of his alienation, is merely a cover to protect himself for "he dreaded, with a repulsion almost of death, any further close human contact."<sup>22</sup> A shrewish, bullying wife and the countless diabolical encroachments of a mechanistic world sear the crocus-like tenderness of the man himself until he has become bitterly suspicious of the very desires that urge his union with Connie. Despite his deliberate resistance to and suppression of his sexual desire, he feels this desire intensely and is moved in a wave of tenderness for Connie, as she kneels enraptured before some new-born chicks, brave and fine in their own vulnerability:

The keeper, squatting beside her, was also watching with an amused face the bold little bird in her hands. Suddenly he saw a tear fall on to her wrist.

And he stood up, and stood away, moving to the other coop. For suddenly he was aware of the old flame shooting and leaping up in his loins, that he had hoped was quiescent for ever. He fought against it, turning his back to her. But it leapt, and leapt downwards, circling in his knees.<sup>23</sup>

It is the wave and flow of tender passion that breaks his tight isolation and liberates the feelings that lie constricted within him, though at a great personal cost of which he is aware immediately after their first sexual consummation:

He stood back and watched her going into the dark, against the pallor of the horizon. Almost with bitterness he watched her go. She had connected him up again, when he had wanted to be alone. She had cost him that bitter privacy of a man who at last wants only to be alone.<sup>24</sup>

It is the desire within him that breaks the integument of his willed



alienation and connects him up again through an organic relationship.

For Lawrence, desire was a great godly force within man that gave shape to his life and worked his destiny while a man's will hampered things and too often became misdirected and perverse. In the unpublished prologue to Women in Love he makes this distinction clear: "Desire, in any shape or form is primal, whereas the will is secondary, derived. The will can destroy, but it cannot create."<sup>25</sup>

Though this has been but the briefest sketch of the theme of alienation as it appears in Lawrence's greatest novels, it reveals his fascination for the ambiguities and complexities of a subject which he continuously worked and reworked throughout his career. He perceived that man's increasingly alienated position in the universe led to a disastrous alienation from the organic movement of life. He believed this development to be pernicious in its effects and struggled to depict the problem through his art. It is not in the novels however, but in several of his finest short tales that this theme is handled with Lawrence's greatest skill. In the concentrated form and limits of the short story, he dealt more incisively with this question than in the larger fictions.

As the primary purpose of this thesis is to explore the theme of alienation in selected tales, the approach is not a strictly chronological one but turns more upon thematic relationships as they appear in a certain grouping of the tales in the different sections. The stories to be considered in the first section are "The Prussian Officer" (1913), "The Thorn in the Flesh" (1913) and "England, My England" (1915). In the second section the tales discussed are "Odour of Chrysanthemums" (1911), "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" (1916) and "The Man Who Loved Islands"

(1926). The concluding section focuses on "The Man Who Died" (1927-28).

## FOOTNOTES (INTRODUCTION)

- <sup>1</sup>Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature p.66.
- <sup>2</sup>Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious p.22.
- <sup>3</sup>Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious p.168.
- <sup>4</sup>Lawrence, Kangaroo p.216.
- <sup>5</sup>Lawrence, Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence p.928.
- <sup>6</sup>Lawrence, Sons and Lovers p.412.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid. p.410.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 410-12.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid. p.410.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid. p.420.
- <sup>11</sup>Lawrence, The Rainbow p.486.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid. p.491.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid. p.489.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 491-92.
- <sup>15</sup>Lawrence, Women in Love p.139.
- <sup>16</sup>Lawrence, The Symbolic Meaning p.128.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid. p.130.
- <sup>18</sup>Lawrence, Women in Love p.220.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.472.

<sup>20</sup>Lawrence, Phoenix, p.672.

<sup>21</sup>Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.80.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.103.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p.135.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p.139.

<sup>25</sup>Lawrence, "Unpublished Prologue to Women in Love," Texas Quarterly, VI (1963), p.107.

## CHAPTER ONE

In "The Thorn in the Flesh" Lawrence's description of the natural world contrasts sharply with his depiction of military life. The opening paragraph of the tale gives at once a brilliant picture of a summer afternoon in a rural setting. In the next paragraph however, a discordant note is struck between the full, sun-dappled landscape and a military barracks with its iron huts and "big, hard-drilling-yard surrounded by a wire fence."<sup>1</sup> The contrast is a significant one for it anticipates a conflict between an impersonal military authority and the sensitiveness of organic life.

In the story, a young soldier's acute fear of heights provides the basis of this conflict, for it prevents him from carrying out a simple military exercise, that of scaling some fortifications. The youth's apprehension is evident from the start. Before the manoeuvres have begun, he is tense and anxious with the knowledge of his fear. The fear of disgracing himself publicly before the other men through his physical weakness becomes a constant trouble to him. His self-consciousness separates him from the other soldiers and accentuates the emotional turmoil that he is suffering. The natural delights of a beautiful summer's day turn sour for him; there is the nausea of lime trees that "smelled sickly with blossom"<sup>2</sup> and a growing sense of being trapped despite "the distant spaces of sky and fields all free with air and sunshine."<sup>3</sup> It is this dramatic contrast between the youth's inner brooding and the gorgeous afternoon surrounding him that Lawrence carefully works into his story.

It emphasizes the disorientation between the youth, Bachmann, and the world about him. On the march towards the fortifications he is in one of the inner files where he is "half suffocated with heat and dust and enclosure."<sup>4</sup> The bright sunlit fields and spaces are little to him in his present state of being, for "he was bound in a very dark enclosure of anxiety within himself".<sup>5</sup>

The crucial dramatic episode occurs when Bachmann, unable to complete the climbing exercise, wets himself, and is then ignominiously hauled on to safe ground by his sergeant. The sergeant is a military type and not at all a well-developed character in his own right, as is, say, the Captain in "The Prussian Officer." We are given only the briefest glimpse of the sergeant whose "hanging face" and "smouldering" eyes<sup>6</sup> appear to suggest a discontent similar to that of the Captain in the other story. The humiliation Bachmann suffers as the sergeant harasses him before the men, drives him in recoil from the bullying officer whose presence is a violation to him, as "the breath of the barking words was on his nose and mouth."<sup>7</sup> It is this "hard" military presence that denies his frailty and will not admit it. Instead, Bachmann is bullied and cajoled by the wild insensitivity of military authority. The close, enraged face of the sergeant involuntarily triggers a revulsion in the youth who accidentally strikes him. This action forces him to flee in an "immediate instinctive decision".<sup>8</sup> Significantly, it is not from a personal enmity with his sergeant that he flees but "from it all, the military world, the shame."<sup>9</sup> The two are synonymous in his mind. After his escape, he feels momentarily a great elation, but even in this he is checked by a feeling of the deep shame that he had experienced. It is then that he is forced into a

"radical" alienation out of simple recoil from the harsh contact with the military world. It is a question of sensitiveness. The brusque insentience of the sergeant who had dragged him like a sack with his "large hands"<sup>10</sup> is a paradigm of something larger. The imagery of hands in contrast to Bachmann's vulnerability seems to denote militarism in general; its impersonality is a violation to him for it derides his manhood. "He could not bear his shamed flesh to be put again between the hands of authority. Already the hands had been laid upon him, brutally upon his nakedness, ripping open his shame and making him maimed, crippled in his own control."<sup>11</sup>

The tale, written in 1913, anticipates Lawrence's vigorous rejection of militarism during the Great War and the modern decadence with which he associated it. In several letters written during the war he constantly reiterates the idea that military life is anathema to the individual, "it is the annulling of all one stands for, this militarism, the nipping of the very germ of one's being. . . ."<sup>12</sup> And indeed, in the tale this point is the burden that is sometimes too obtrusive in the story itself. Nevertheless, the impersonal motive-force behind militarism is directly linked to alienation. Bachmann's wincing sensitivity before the sergeant is a case in point. If he is to remain a man, and not merely a unit to be manipulated he must, at great hazard to himself, escape from what the sergeant represents. Significantly, it is not the sergeant himself in human relationship to Bachmann that is important, but the sergeant's "hands", for it is as an instrument that the sergeant functions in the tale. The sergeant is a cipher, merely one of those "hands of authority" that is completely oblivious to the youth's real, human need for self-

respect. Bachmann is shamed to the quick of his being. The sergeant is preoccupied only with the obvious failure of the youth as a soldier. Lawrence himself clearly states the problem as he sees it when he makes a distinction that is essential to an adequate understanding of the story. Very simply, he believed that an individual lost his integrity amidst the "sticky male mass" of military life, and ultimately in war: "The spirit of war is, that I am a unit, a single entity that has no intrinsic reference [italics mine] to the rest: The reference is extrinsic, a question of living, not of being".<sup>13</sup> Lawrence's sympathy, then, was with the inner man, with Bachmann's being, rather than with his performance as a soldier. This is apparent even in the light touches that characterize Bachmann. At the start of the tale, his uniform is depicted as a kind of shroud. "His blue uniform, sagging on him as he sat bent over the card, disfigured his youthful shape."<sup>14</sup> Lawrence carefully develops the tensions that culminate finally in Bachmann's escape: "He only knew the need to get away from everything he had been in contact with."<sup>15</sup> He is left feeling "detached and impersonal",<sup>16</sup> his initial "aloneness" arising from the fear of his weakness having been intensified into a condition of alienation. The sense of his alienation is conveyed by the dramatic contrast again of the splendid summer day set against his own inner feeling of displacement. The familiar world becomes foreign to him, apart.

In a field a little way off, men and women were taking up the hay. The bullock-wagon stood by on the path, the men in their blue shirts, the women with white cloths over their heads carried hay in their arms to the cart, all brilliant and distinct upon the shorn, glowing green acres. He felt himself looking out of darkness on to the glamorous, brilliant beauty of the world around him, outside him.<sup>17</sup>

This psychological aberration is one of the principal elements of



Lawrencean alienation. Through it, we sense the power of an emotional crisis that breaks with ordinary experience. Bachmann arrives at a state of being where "he could not recover the normal world".<sup>18</sup> An overwhelming sense of shame incapacitates him from taking "responsibility" for himself. He is left with a simple choice. He might return either to the barracks, or to his sweetheart. He turns to Emilie, "his heart, obstinate in hope"<sup>19</sup> suggesting once again the inner motivation that lies opposed in him to any compulsion from without, from any of those "hands of authority".

Significantly, the greater part of the tale rests on the development of the relationship between Emilie and Bachmann. It is only through a full, sexual relationship with Emilie that he regains himself and dissipates the shame within him that had "seemed to displace his strength and his manhood".<sup>20</sup> Her room is a "sanctuary"<sup>21</sup> for him, strong and severe in its catholicity. A carved crucifix on the wall is a new revelation to him, for its figure of a hanging Christ so human in "helpless torture"<sup>22</sup> becomes an analogy for what he himself has known. But in his passion for Emilie he moves beyond an overpowering sense of his alienation and unites with her. Emilie herself, described as "naturally secluded in herself"<sup>23</sup> is ready to meet with him in his need. In doing this she becomes implicated with him. In sketching Emilie's background Lawrence counterpoints Bachmann's subjection to military authority with her own servitude in the Baron's home. It is a religious trust to Emilie that she serve the baron and his family loyally and without question. Bachmann's presence in her room is a violation of that trust, for he is at odds with the society that sponsors the ideals of duty and service that have encompassed her life.

Emilie, implicated and captive, stood looking on. She was no longer free, working with all this regulated system which she could not understand and which was almost god-like to her. She was put out of her place. Bachmann was in her room, she was no longer the faithful in service serving with religious surety.<sup>24</sup>

Their sexual consummation brings them both beyond any societal controls. Bachmann's innate dignity of being survives his alienation and the humiliation which had carried him there. In making love to Emilie he is restored to his vital self, "Shame and memory were gone in a whole, furious flame of passion".<sup>25</sup> And Emilie, who lacks the sophistication of her well-bred lover and needs "to be in subjection" finds in Bachmann "the unknown quality which terrified her beyond her service".<sup>26</sup>

When, finally, he is arrested by the military police, he is impervious to them on any but the most superficial level. Their perfunctory commands he obeys simply, but he is not implicated in his deepest being -- the being that is strong and distinctly apart from its mere role as a soldier. His love has vindicated his manhood. This distinction, between a soldier and a man, between an extrinsic reference and an inner one, is recognized by him and, like his own acceptance of his fear of heights, he is free to move beyond it:

[The lieutenant] recognized him as his object. He gave the brief command to dress.

Bachmann turned round for his clothes. He was very still, silent in himself. He was in an abstract, motionless world. That the two gentlemen and the two soldiers stood watching him, he scarcely realised. They could not see him.

Soon he was ready. He stood at attention. A curious silence, a blankness, like something eternal, possessed him. He remained true to himself.<sup>27</sup>

He leaves the "sanctuary" of Emilie's room easily, for his passion has not only broken his alienation but carried him past it to levels of

experience that have strengthened the fibre of his individual being. He has learnt his lesson well. To the lieutenant who recognizes him "as his object" he responds with "the shell of his body"<sup>28</sup> and it is enough. The story ends on a hopeful note, for the baron who has witnessed the vulnerability of the lovers is kindly disposed to them and prepares to help Bachmann in his difficulty. He perceives in Bachmann's eyes, as he has in Emilie's, something terrible and profoundly moving:

The girl looked back at him steadily, dumb, but her whole soul naked before him. For two seconds he looked at her in silence. Then in silence, ashamed and furious, he turned away . . . [Bachmann's] eyes met the furious blazing look of the Baron. The latter shook his wounded hand, and then went still. He looked into the eyes of the soldier, steadily. He saw the same naked soul exposed, as if he looked really into the man. And the man was helpless, the more helpless for his singular nakedness.<sup>29</sup>

The reader is left finally with the impression that Bachmann has surpassed his alienation. There is a curious strength in his "singular nakedness" that is greater than any brute force. The military compulsion which had driven him away in helpless reaction into an alienating experience becomes at last subordinate to the greater truth of his passionate love with Emilie. It integrates Bachmann as an individual and in doing this it vindicates his flight from military authority.

"The Prussian Officer" contains marked similarities to "The Thorn in the Flesh". "The Prussian Officer", however, is a far more powerful tale and its principal strength lies in what had been almost completely ignored in "The Thorn in the Flesh".

The personal relationship between the military officer and his peasant orderly, Schoner, is of central significance in this second story. The characters of both are finely drawn. Schoner is so much of a piece

with the natural, physical world that he "seemed never to have thought, only to have received life direct through his senses, and acted straight from instinct."<sup>30</sup> It is the officer who disturbs this vital, organic relationship with the world and compels him to act unnaturally and finally self-destructively. Lawrence emphasizes throughout the underlying tensions that polarize the orderly, with his "blind, instinctive sureness of movement",<sup>31</sup> against the Captain, with his "tense, rigid body, that had become almost unliving, fixed."<sup>32</sup> The sergeant in "The Thorn in the Flesh" had functioned only as a symbol of an impersonal authority; the Captain, despite his hard ideals of service and duty, is impelled to precipitate a "personal" relationship with his servant, for "he was a man of passionate temper, who had always kept himself suppressed."<sup>33</sup> The Captain feels himself thwarted by the emotional side of his nature, which he has fought so hard to repress and stultify. "He knew himself to be always on the point of breaking out".<sup>34</sup> The consciousness which leads him to despise this weakness in himself paradoxically attracts him to, and repels him from, the orderly, the embodiment of that aspect of himself which he has so severely ordered in the interest of the "higher man", the gentleman:

But the influence of the young soldier's being had penetrated through the officer's stiffened discipline, and perturbed the man in him. He, however, was a gentleman, with long fine hands and cultivated movements, and was not going to allow such a thing as the stirring of his innate self . . . he kept himself hard to the idea of the Service. Whereas the young soldier seemed to live out his warm, full nature, which had a certain zest, such as wild animals have in free movement. And this irritated the officer more and more.<sup>35</sup>

This fatal imbalance within the officer himself serves as the basis for his attraction to the orderly. What marks their relationship from its inception is the sense of its inevitability. The officer finds that

"in spite of himself"<sup>36</sup> he is drawn into fuller relationship with the orderly.

The sexual motivation which directs the Captain's treatment of the soldier is perverse and homosexual. The captain refuses to acknowledge his passion and this in effect increases his hostility towards the orderly who is inadvertently the cause of it. The first recognition that something more than a typical officer-servant relationship is involved occurs when a seemingly trivial incident touches off a powerful wave of feeling in the officer. The captain, startled out of his normal reserve, shocks Schoner into a radically different experience from any he has had before:

Once, when a bottle of wine had gone over, and the red gushed out on to the tablecloth, the officer had started up with an oath, and his eyes, bluey like fire, had held those of the confused youth for a moment. It was a shock for the young soldier. He felt something sink deeper, deeper into his soul, where nothing had ever gone before. It left him rather blank and wondering. Some of his natural completeness in himself was gone, a little uneasiness took its place. And from that time an undiscovered feeling had held between the two men.<sup>37</sup>

The "undiscovered feeling" is something terrible in its implications to both men -- the spilt wine, symbolic as it is of blood, of deep, primal forces that have been somehow released, links the men despite their conscious wills and desires to act otherwise, for [we are told] "the soldier even more than the officer wanted to be left alone."<sup>38</sup> The officer fights desperately against the impulses that afflict him but simply cannot overrule the perversity of his lust for the orderly. His servant's scarred thumb, for instance, is a source of dire aggravation for him: there is the suggestion of something fearfully obscene in his curious preoccupation with it, for, "he wanted to get hold of it and -- A hot flame ran in his blood".<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, the unnaturalness of this relationship prefigures in part that which Lawrence was later to develop in Women in Love between Gerald Crich and Gudrun Brangwen. The only outlet for the pent-up sexual frustration of the officer lies in the violence he inflicts upon his servant. His heterosexual affairs leave him tense with his "eyes" even more hostile and irritable than ever. It is interesting to note the great significance, throughout the tale, of the emphasis placed on eyes and the subtle communications and interplay of feelings that are transmitted through them. Several months before Lawrence began "The Prussian Officer", he wrote to a correspondent:

Cruelty is a form of perverted sex . . . And soldiers, being herded together, men without women, never being satisfied by a woman, as a man never is from a street affair, get their surplus sex and their frustration and dissatisfaction into the blood, and love cruelty. It is sex lust fermented makes atrocity.<sup>40</sup>

It is precisely this conviction that is so powerfully evoked in "The Prussian Officer". The Captain is stimulated and satisfied in hurting Schoner, as when he throws a heavy glove into the orderly's face and has the gratification of "seeing the black eyes flare up into his own, like a blaze when straw is thrown on a fire."<sup>41</sup>

Though the servant's instinct is to avoid any personal contact with the officer, he is inevitably drawn into relationship with him because of the hate which is generated as a result of the officer's abuse of him. Although the officer's feelings are perverted and destructive, they are nevertheless powerful feelings and consequently he is emotionally impelled to make some response; for "in spite of himself the hate grew, responsive to the officer's passion."<sup>42</sup> This new development forces him to insulate

himself against any personal contact whatsoever. In this way he is alienated from the other soldiers in an attempt to live through the emotional strain imposed upon him by the Captain. "Without knowing it, he was alone. Now this solitariness was intensified. It would carry him through his term."<sup>43</sup> The officer refuses to acknowledge his feelings, pretending rather to some normal anger that a superior might feel for an obstinate subordinate. The effect of this self-deception wears on his nerves until its culmination in another burst of violence. He strikes the servant with the end of his belt, and the blood on the servant's mouth gives him "a thrill of deep pleasure and of shame."<sup>44</sup> The effect of the officer's repression is the sadism that counterbalances it. The violence is no more than a brutal assertion of his unacknowledged sexual desires, symbolized by the dark bruises on the orderly's thighs. The final shock of the officer's kicking Schoner, of the wilful, perverse intimacy that the officer inflicts upon him, is such that the servant is severed from his connection with the rest of humanity and roused fitfully into a consciousness that he did not want. The bruises are symbolic too of the secret, clandestine nature of their relationship, something which Schoner must conceal at all costs, for he has gone the limits of his experience and is beyond any connection with the world he has left:

And looking at his thighs he saw the darker bruises on his swarthy flesh, and he knew that if he pressed one of his fingers on one of the bruises, he should faint. But he did not want to faint -- he did not want anybody to know. No one should ever know. It was between him and the Captain. There were only the two people in the world now -- himself and the Captain.<sup>45</sup>

The bruises are the mark of his initiation into a radically different experiential awareness of the world. His movements, which had

been like those of an "unhampered young animal",<sup>46</sup> are stultified after the shock of his beating and he is left "a mass of inertia [wherein] . . . he had to force every one of his movements from behind, with his will."<sup>47</sup>

The consciousness of the orderly then begins to react against all that may be conceived of its former relations with the natural phenomenal world. The imagery is significant here. Schoner is nauseated by the sickly "smell of greenness"<sup>48</sup> the "suffocating, hideous smell" of sheep; the beautiful sunny day is a "world [seen] through a smoked glass, frail shadows and unreal." His very sensations become the terms of his alienation. The orderly who once "never seemed to have thought" is now, "only a consciousness, a gap that could think and perceive."<sup>49</sup>

One is struck by the similarities between Schoner and Bachmann of "The Thorn in the Flesh". For Bachmann too, natural things had become soured through his anxiety and had "smelled sickly with blossom". His consciousness too, had become "gripped and separate [leaving] his body worked by a kind of mechanical intelligence, a mere presence of mind."<sup>50</sup> Though Schoner's progressive disorientation is far better developed than Bachmann's, the similarities would appear to indicate some features that are common to the kind of alienation Lawrence presents. The principal elements which such a comparison suggests are the gradual atrophy of normal sense perceptions and, secondly, the separation between mental awareness and the movements of one's body.

Now, Schoner's experience becomes so intense and so attenuates his organic being, that his vital connection with the phenomenal world is utterly broken, leaving him only with a chaos of sensations and reactions. The only reality outside of himself is the Captain, who, like



himself, is isolated from the others. When he murders the Captain he is destroying his final bond with the world, a bond which ironically has been the cause of his very severance from it. The bond itself is a very complex one. For, apart from their "personal" relationship, there is the bare fact of their military service together. The Captain, it must be remembered, represents military authority as surely as the sergeant in "The Thorn in the Flesh". This authority is an inevitable force to Schoner, something larger than himself or the Captain:

He had served the Captain for more than a year, and knew his duty. This he performed easily, as if it were natural to him. The officer and his commands he took for granted, as he took the sun and the rain, and he served as a matter of course. It did not implicate him personally.<sup>51</sup>

Later, as Schoner stands by the Captain's body, this point is emphasized once again: "it was a pity it was broken. It represented more than the thing which had kicked and bullied him."<sup>52</sup> Schoner's respect for the Captain's authority ironically compounds his alienation. In killing the Captain he also puts an end to his greater relation with the world, as a subordinate with a responsible duty to his officer. In Schoner's mind, then, alienation from the military order involves an alienation from the natural order as well.

The personal relation underlying it all is of the greatest significance in understanding Schoner's radical alienation.

The description of the actual murder is rendered in terms that would appear to suggest a sexual consummation in the death throes and convulsions of the Captain under the body of the orderly:

It pleased him to keep his hands pressing back the chin, to feel the chest of the other man yield in expiration to the weight of his strong, young knees, to feel the hard twitchings

of the prostrate body jerking his own whole frame, which was pressed down on it.<sup>53</sup>

Afterwards, the orderly feels "a heavy relief", and it is here that the final stage of his alienation, his very disintegration, sets in. The solicitude and care with which he covers the body and sits by it, is the poignant mark of his new posthumous existence. He is out of life, "here his own life also ended";<sup>54</sup> his emotional extremity having changed the world for him. The Captain who would not be touched into life by his servant has chosen rather to force his orderly into a living death. This new consciousness has left him with an overpowering sense of his own separateness, apart from others, and this is, in fact, his last regret. "He would not have minded anything, but he could not get away from the sense of being divided from the others."<sup>55</sup> This new idea of himself has destroyed his innate self-sufficiency, his innocence, what Lawrence was to refer to in an essay as the basic state of consciousness, that unawareness of man's isolation, when he is of a piece with "a living continuum, as if all were connected by a living membrane",<sup>56</sup> and again, "the true self is not aware that it is a self. A bird, as it sings, sings itself."<sup>57</sup> The peasant orderly had been compelled to subject himself to the terms of a new relationship wherein he was "obliged" to forsake his "true self" and proceed on to a wholly different orientation to the world about him. The effects of such a sudden, radical shift in consciousness without any understanding of what it is about leaves the peasant at first "bewildered", and finally interferes with his actual sense perceptions. In the final part of the tale, his vision and consciousness is jangled, and he has a nervous fear of "little creeping birds".<sup>58</sup> Everything is strange and

unreal to him, distorted and uneven. The last human being he actually sees, has no connection with him; he perceives a woman but he is "on the real dark bottom" while she is only the "bright, solid unreality".<sup>59</sup> The contrast signals the rift between all that he has formerly known and marks his new dislocation in time and space. "He did not know where he was or what he was".<sup>60</sup> He cannot even think to speak to the woman for he has left all that behind him in his former life. "He had no language with which to speak to her. . . . She would make a noise of words that would confuse him, and her eyes would look at him without seeing him."<sup>61</sup> He would be an alien to her in his new, altered state, for she is completely out of his ken, as he is out of hers. There is something altogether inhuman about his final moments, where his former unity has utterly dissolved and he "was divided among all kinds of separate things."<sup>62</sup> His alienation is relieved only by his physical death, which releases him from his tormented consciousness, and gives him the peace of insentience, of non-being symbolized in the mountains. "He stared till his eyes went black, and the mountains, as they stood in their beauty, so clean and cool, seemed to have it, that which was lost in him."<sup>63</sup>

In some major respects "The Thorn in the Flesh" and "The Prussian Officer", written before the Great War, anticipate the general tenor of much of Lawrence's writing during this period of war. One such tale, "England, My England" published in October of 1913 in the English Review not only presents Lawrence's despair over the dissolution attendant on war but also moves into a consideration of the effects of such a crisis on the individual's values as they come into conflict with those of his society. It is this very conflict that touches so closely upon our theme

of alienation.

The tale "England, My England" opens with the image of a man working on a common, vexed with the problem of making a path which he is digging line up straight in his sights, but which despite his efforts cannot be set aright. This is the practical failure which Lawrence underscores again and again in his depiction of Egbert, the protagonist of the story. Egbert is a tireless worker and yet accomplishes so little, and the little that is accomplished is tentative only, nothing permanent and well-made. He is deeply impressed with the historic past of England. Lawrence dramatically heightens and emphasizes this connection with a rich, full-blooded past, and yet the solid, substantive past symbolized in Crockham cottage, where lingers a spirit of place as "secret, primitive, savage as when the Saxons first came",<sup>64</sup> is set in juxtaposition with the very limitations of Egbert himself, who refuses to come to grips with life and is therefore inadequate to the real demands of the present. Lawrence himself was obsessed during the war years with a terrible sense of the imminent destruction of our civilization. His poignant description of an old peaceful England contrasts sharply with his imagery of autumnal disintegration which figures so largely in the tale.

In a letter to Lady Asquith dated November, 1915, only one month after the publication of "England, My England" he wrote:

When I drive across this country, with autumn falling and rustling to pieces, I am so sad, for my country, for this great wave of civilisation, 2000 years, which is now collapsing, that it is hard to live. So much beauty and pathos of old things passing away and no new things coming: this house of the Ottoline's -- it is England -- my God, it breaks my soul -- their England, these shafted windows, the elm-trees, the blue distance -- the past, the great past, crumbling down, breaking down, not under the force

of the coming birds, but under the weight of many exhausted lovely yellow leaves, that drift over the lawn, and over the pond, like the soldiers, passing away, into winter and the darkness of winter -- no I can't bear it. For the winter stretches ahead, where all vision is lost and all memory dies out.<sup>65</sup>

Lady Ottoline's house and grounds, the Breadalby of Women in Love, have drawn about them "a magic circle . . . shutting out the present, enclosing the delightful, precious past, trees and deer and silence, like a dream."<sup>66</sup> This novel itself, as Lawrence tells us in his foreword "took its final shape in the midst of the period of war, . . . the time to remain unfixed, so that the bitterness of the war may be taken for granted in the characters".<sup>67</sup> There is no small irony in the scene where, amidst this "magic circle" of England's enchanted past, Hermione attempts to smash Birkin's head, who, fortunately, manages to cushion the blow with the help of a thick volume of Thucydides -- the author whom Lawrence read [as he tells a correspondent] when he had the "courage to face the fact of these wars of a collapsing era, . . . He is very good, and very present to one's soul."<sup>68</sup> Lawrence makes his meaning clear -- one is implicated in the collapse of a civilization despite a "predilection" for the past.

The analogy with Breadalby is close to Crockham cottage, where "Egbert and she [Winifred, his wife] were caught there, caught out of the world."<sup>69</sup> The dynamic oppositions of the past, with its deep pathos, set against the present, with its grim realities of war and dissolution "and no new things coming" are implicit in the structure of the tale itself. It is one of the most conspicuous features in Egbert himself, who has no sense of deep personal commitment but merely indulges himself in his fascination for the past, collecting old folk-music and studying the old

customs. His practical failure, mentioned earlier, is closely bound with his idealization of the past, "curious that the sense of permanency in the past had such a hold over him, whilst in the present he was all amateurish and sketchy."<sup>70</sup>

Lawrence is very careful in presenting Egbert as a "higher being", intrinsically superior to his wife's family (the analogies which Lawrence uses in describing them are significant and evaluative though sarcastic: his wife's family are "true English, as holly trees and hawthorn are English" while "Egbert was a born rose").<sup>71</sup> However, immediately after this description of Egbert as a higher being, one of those natural aristocrats of the Lawrencean canon, he abruptly qualifies his praise: "a higher being, mind you. Not a deeper."<sup>72</sup> His cultural superiority and "age long breeding" are not informed by any deeper emotional being within -- the vital source that directs the destinies of other Lawrencean heroes. Egbert's failure to choose some line of work in the world eventually estranges his wife; he is shut out of her life because of his refusal to commit himself in some way. "It was that he stood for nothing"<sup>73</sup>

Though Egbert's being is superior to and finer than hers, as finely wrought gold to pewter, it is devoid of the "robustness" and "depth" of her own English strains. This depth is one of motive -- the motive to move on purposefully in life and to accept its responsibilities. In absolving himself from the world and its work, he abnegates his responsibility to the very life that is in him; for in his interests, the garden, and collecting folk songs and folk dances he is ineffectual, "all amateurish and sketchy". There is no vitality even in the sequestered life he has chosen.

Egbert certainly refuses to do anything in the world, but significantly his "public" indifference has its ramifications in his private life, for even here there is no core of purpose behind his negation of the world's purpose. He is described as "the living negative of power",<sup>74</sup> refusing the responsibility he has towards his children and negating his wife's attempts to influence them. It is this denial of responsibility on his part that symbolically inflicts the crippling wound upon his daughter. His daughter's stumbling upon a sickle he had left lying in the grass serves as the crucial dramatic episode of the tale and underscores his ineptitude in coming to grips with life, with the responsibilities incumbent upon him as a father. The support and guidance he might have given his daughter is ironically substituted by an iron brace, and there is an even further irony in the fact that even this brace is supplied through the father-in-law.

The guilt he feels after his daughter's accident contributes at last to force him to some issue. He goes against his deepest instincts and acquiesces over the matter of war and the "mob-spirit". His individuality is compromised and in effect he betrays himself: "Should he give himself over? Should he make over his own life and body to the control of something which he knew was inferior, in spirit, to his own self?"<sup>75</sup> Even in this, he defers to Winifred and his father-in-law as to whether he should join up or not. In the end he is simply "bullied" into it. For Lawrence, such a betrayal of oneself was pernicious. During the war years he had been appalled by the effects of a "mob-spirit" as it came into conflict with the individual's own sense of truth and justice. "The terrible, terrible war, made so fearful because in every country practically every man lost his head, and lost his own centrality, his own manly isolation

in his own integrity, which alone keeps life real".<sup>76</sup> After a brief stay at a military barracks, Bodmin, where Lawrence had been medically examined for military service and subsequently exempted, he wrote to a correspondent of his dismay over it all:

It is annulling of all one stands for, this militarism, the nipping of the very germ of one's being . . . The sense of spiritual disaster everywhere was quite terrifying. . . . Their manliness all lies in accepting calmly this death, this loss of their integrity.<sup>77</sup>

"England, My England" shows us just such a predicament of a man swamped by something external and removed from his own true desires. Egbert's loss of integrity is an effect of his wrong choice, of his acquiescence; and this is made clear to the reader in the description Lawrence gives us of Egbert after his enlistment:

It did not suit him to be a modern soldier. In the thick, gritty, hideous khaki his subtle physique was extinguished as if he had been killed. In the ugly intimacy of the camp his thoroughbred sensibilities were just degraded. But he had chosen, so he accepted. An ugly little look came on to his face, of a man who has accepted his own degradation.<sup>78</sup>

His lack of any real self-commitment not only estranges his wife from him but it also draws him further and further away from himself. The clue to Egbert's alienation lies in his break with his "manly isolation". This breakdown of his individuality before the mob-spirit leaves him "contaminated"; Lawrence stresses the corrupt effect Egbert's decision to become a soldier has upon him bodily, leaving his face with "a slightly impure look [and] a little sore on his lip, as if he had eaten too much or drunk too much or let his blood become a little unclean."<sup>79</sup>

The imagery in the final section of the tale, when Egbert is at the front and about to die, is indicative of the universal significance of



his death. His alienation, like Schoner's, is in itself a kind of death, for in Flanders, "he seemed already to have gone out of life, beyond the pale of life",<sup>80</sup> and the image of a bird on a dark sea becomes a symbol of the dissolution going on within him. Unlike the servant in "The Prussian Officer", whose alienation **forces** him to seek death as a relief from consciousness, Egbert's fulfillment lies in his "knowing" as fully as possible the death impulse which he had "chosen" over life:

Better the agony of dissolution ahead than the nausea of the effort backwards. Better the terrible work should go forward, the dissolving into the black sea of death, in the extremity of dissolution, than that there should be any reaching back towards life.<sup>81</sup>

His death too, occurs in the autumn, another symbol for Lawrence of the breaking down and disintegration of things: in the letter quoted earlier autumn is placed in the context of the collapse of an epoch, marked by the great war. "War is a great and necessary disintegrating autumnal process." Lawrence's belief that the war was to be the fiery apocalypse of our civilization is woven into the texture of the tale. The autumnal fields with their sad prospect of a crucifix knocked slanting (not unlike the similar imagery, used in "The Thorn in the Flesh" where Bachmann's alienation is symbolized in the carved crucifix of a Christ hanging in "helpless torture") gives way to the heavy symbolism of three horsemen -- and the final revelation of a "horse colossal -- colossal above him."<sup>82</sup>

In all three of the tales Lawrence presents both German and English militarism as a force that somehow comes into conflict with an individual's deepest feelings. This conflict precipitates his alienation. The conflict itself is also within the individual, for in-so-far as he is a soldier serving under a military authority he is a "social" being -- something

apart from the "absolute individual self" that is distinct from it.

Lawrence, of course, emphasized the need for a balance between the two:

I have found that one has such a living social self. I am sure every man feels first, that he is a servant -- be it martyr or what -- of society. And if he feels that he has trespassed against society, and it is adverse to him, he suffers. Then the individual self comes up and says, "You fool".<sup>83</sup>

In "England, My England" Egbert's social self usurps his inner desire to stay clear of the war and consequently "he suffers", but ironically his wife defers to the soldier "in a little passion of duty and sacrifice . . . so ready to serve the soldier, when she repudiated the man".<sup>84</sup> This degradation of the living, individual self manifests itself on his physical person and finally alienates Egbert from all of his former life. After the "realness" and "vulgarity" of the military camp his family becomes "unreal" to him. He is irritated by the children and even Joyce's lameness is strangely repugnant to him. He is left completely on edge by it all and positively glad to return to the camp in Flanders. The memory of the past life with his family is so nauseous for him that he leaves off thinking about them. His death is the final mark of his alienation.

What has been said of the characters of Bachmann and Schoner earlier, would corroborate this point of view. Bachmann, however, is delivered from his alienation only through his sweetheart, who restores in him, through their relationship, that priority of his individual self over and above "the soldier in him". Schoner leads a posthumous existence after he murders the Captain. His alienation is the consequence of a terrible invasion of his individual being by the Captain, his military superior.

For Lawrence, the greatest imperative was to abide by the deepest truth of one's individual being -- one's "aloneness", past any ulterior reference. If an individual surrendered that inviolate "aloneness" to some external compulsion such as the militarism discussed here, a disintegrating process set in, destroying the integral self. This process, of course, is what has been understood through this discussion of the three tales, as alienation.

## FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER ONE)

<sup>1</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories I, p117.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p118.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p121.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p122.

<sup>12</sup>Lawrence, The Collected Letters, p459.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p374.

<sup>14</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories I, p117.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p122.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p123.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p122.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p126.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p125.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p126.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p127.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p128.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p130.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p129.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p134.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p97.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p98.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p97.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p98.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p99.

- <sup>40</sup>Lawrence, The Collected Letters, p136.
- <sup>41</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories I, p99.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p100.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p104.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., p97.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p104.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid., p106.
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., p118.
- <sup>51</sup>Ibid., p98.
- <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p110.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid., p111.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup>Lawrence, Phoenix, p761.
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid., p382.
- <sup>58</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, I, p113.
- <sup>59</sup>Ibid., p114.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., p113.

- <sup>61</sup>Ibid. p.114.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., p115.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., p116.
- <sup>64</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, II, p307.
- <sup>65</sup>Lawrence, The Collected Letters p.378.
- <sup>66</sup>Lawrence, Women in Love, p76.
- <sup>67</sup>Ibid. p.vii.
- <sup>68</sup>Lawrence, The Collected Letters, p54.
- <sup>69</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, II, p307.
- <sup>70</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid., p306.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p311.
- <sup>74</sup>Ibid., p315.
- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., p327.
- <sup>76</sup>Lawrence, Kangaroo, p216.
- <sup>77</sup>Lawrence, The Collected Letters, p459.
- <sup>78</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, II, p328.
- <sup>79</sup>Ibid., pp. 328-29.
- <sup>80</sup>Ibid., p329.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 322-33.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p333.

<sup>83</sup>Lawrence, The Collected Letters, p234.

<sup>84</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, II, p329.



## CHAPTER TWO

In the first part of "Odour of Chrysanthemums", the atmosphere is charged with petty domestic annoyances that signal a far deeper problem in the protagonist's life. A collier's wife, angrily thinking her husband has missed his supper for a bout of drinking in a local pub, prepares herself for a confrontation with him. Her children, looking forlorn and distraught, augment her grievances against him:

The mother looked down at them, at the brown silken bush of intertwining curls in the nape of the girl's neck, at the little black head of the lad, and her heart burst with anger at their father, who caused all three such distress. The children hid their faces in her skirts for comfort.<sup>1</sup>

As the evening wears on, and he has still not appeared, her anger becomes "tinged with fear". The wife, Elizabeth Bates, is a fastidious woman of "imperious mien" who refuses to enter the pubs in search of her husband despite her growing fears of some accident that might have happened to him. Her fears are answered when a collier, who had been working with her husband that evening, becomes alarmed and hastens to seek him out. The growing suspense, heightened by realistic touches that are interfused so closely with the woman's emotional state as it changes from anger to fear, is remarkably well evoked: "As they stumbled up the entry, Elizabeth Bates heard Rigley's wife run across the yard and open her neighbour's door. At this, suddenly all the blood in her body seemed to switch away from her heart".<sup>2</sup> Other details as well contribute to the mounting tension. Before the dead husband is brought home there are no less than seven direct references to the time, each serving to underscore the

anxiety within the cottage. The actual obscurity within the kitchen itself, with its shadows, suggests the lack of any clear understanding between members of the family. "Their faces were hidden from each other".<sup>3</sup> Lawrence's choice of the word "hidden" in this context is significant. It suggests something of the nature of the relationships within the family. Elizabeth's relationships to the children have been conditioned by her strained relations with her husband; she sees them in terms that belie their own distinct individuality. As her son John sits "almost hidden in the shadow" struggling with some wood he is carving "she saw herself in his silence and pertinacity; she saw the father in her child's indifference to all but himself."<sup>4</sup> Throughout the tale, the reader has a direct sense of her parental responsibility for them, for "they were her business",<sup>5</sup> but any real and sustaining affection for them is simply "hidden" from our view. Later, the emotional impact of her husband's death brings this truth to the surface: "The children had come, for some mysterious reason, out of both of them. But the children did not unite them."<sup>6</sup> Even the fact of her pregnancy is not a consolation to her, after his death, for "the child within her was a weight apart from her".<sup>7</sup> When her son complains of the darkness, her remonstrance is to chide him for being like his father. However, when she does light the lamp and her daughter becomes delighted over some chrysanthemums in her mother's apron, an "unusual event" we are told, there is a heightened sense of some imminent catastrophe about to occur. The pale chrysanthemums provide the major thematic metaphor of the tale:

'Go along, silly!' said the mother, turning up the lamp. The light revealed their suspense so that the woman felt it almost unbearable. Annie was still bending at her waist.

Irritably, the mother took the flowers out from her apron-band.

'Oh, mother -- don't take them out!' Annie cried, catching her hand and trying to replace the sprig.

'Such nonsense!' said the mother, turning away.

The child put the pale chrysanthemums to her lips murmuring:

'Don't they smell beautiful!' Her mother gave a short laugh.

'No,' she said, 'not to me. It was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when you were born, and the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he'd got brown chrysanthemums in his button-hole.'<sup>8</sup>

The chrysanthemums foreshadow her husband's death. They are associated in her mind with unhappy events, even curiously enough with her daughter's birth. When the body is carried into the parlour with its pervading "cold, deathly smell of chrysanthemums"<sup>9</sup> and a vase of chrysanthemums is knocked over by one of the men, this connection between the sense-symbol of chrysanthemums and death is further reinforced. Elizabeth Bates' consciousness of death as the final severance of the relationship between her and her husband is crucial to our discussion. It is only through her awareness of death and its implications to her, that she apprehends the nature of her alienation. The ritual washing of her husband's body impresses her with a sense of her own alienation from him:

Life with its smoky burning gone from him, had left him apart and utterly alien to her. And she knew what a stranger he was to her. In her womb was ice of fear, because of this separate stranger with whom she had been living as one flesh. Was this what it all meant -- utter, intact separateness, obscured by heat of living? In dread she turned her face away. The fact was too deadly. There had been nothing between them, and yet

they had come together, exchanging their nakedness repeatedly. Each time he had taken her, they had been two isolated beings, far apart as now.<sup>10</sup>

The last sentence is extremely significant. Lawrence emphasizes their mutual alienation by stressing the fact that even in love-making, they had been "far apart as now" -- the immeasurable distance between life and death. They had, in fact, been "dead" to one another in life for, despite their marriage, "they had denied each other in life."<sup>11</sup> His death is a revelation to her of their deeper failure to meet as an individual man and an individual woman beyond the screens of their marriage and their grievances about it. Their mis-marriage itself stems from an absolute refusal to acknowledge a deeper, impersonal reality between them that has nothing whatever to do with their lives together as husband and wife. Ironically, it is after the emotional crisis of her husband's death that Elizabeth Bates has the sufficient detachment to clearly survey their wasted lives together, without being interfered by any of those pressing circumstances that constitute the "heat of living":

For as she looked at the dead man, her mind, cold and detached, said clearly: 'Who am I? What have I been doing? -- I have been fighting a husband who did not exist. He existed all the time. What wrong have I done? What was that I have been living with? There lies the reality, this man? And her soul died in her for fear: she knew she had never seen him, he had never seen her, they had met in the dark and had fought in the dark, not knowing whom they met nor whom they fought. And now she saw, and turned silent in seeing. For she had been wrong. She had said he was something he was not; she had felt familiar with him. Whereas he was apart all the while, living as she never lived, feeling as she never felt.

In fear and shame she looked at his naked body, that she had known falsely. And he was the father of her children. Her soul was torn from her body and stood apart. She looked at his naked body and was ashamed, as if she had denied it. After all, it was itself. It seemed awful to her. She looked at his face, and she turned her own face to the wall. For his look was other than hers,

his way was not her way. She had denied him what he was -- she saw it now. She had refused him as himself. And this had been her life, and his life. She was grateful to death, which restored the truth. And she knew she was not dead.<sup>12</sup>

There is a simple and yet important distinction to be made here. Throughout this passage, Lawrence emphasizes Elizabeth's consciousness of her "alienation" before her husband both in death, and through her retrospection, in life. This is obviously different from the "aloneness" that figures so largely elsewhere in Lawrence's fiction. For example, in Women in Love, Birkin's proposal of marriage to Ursula provides the clue to understanding this necessary distinction. What Birkin desires of Ursula is a relationship that will acknowledge limits to their marriage and ultimately to their love, for there is something "beyond love, a naked kind of isolation, an isolated me, that does not meet and mingle, and never can."<sup>13</sup> This "aloneness" constitutes for Birkin-Lawrence something absolutely essential to a relationship. The "strange conjunction"<sup>14</sup> he would have with Ursula is dependent on their mutual "aloneness". But how different this is from Elizabeth's realization of her husband as a "separate stranger", someone "utterly alien" to her! For Elizabeth and her husband had never gotten beyond their marriage to any of those impersonal levels of being that the Birkin-Lawrence figure felt so essential to a relationship. Their relationship had remained fixed; the continual quarreling amidst the squalid brutal conditions of a mining town where their familiarity had led only to contempt, had deadened their sensitivity to the kind of "impersonal" awareness that Elizabeth discovers only belatedly as she sits by her husband's dead body. Their life together had been a lie, for there had not been any acknowledgement of the separate man and separate woman that they were despite the fact of their

marriage. This condition had been the cause of their alienation. "It had become hopeless between them long before he died. Yet he had been her husband. But how little!"<sup>15</sup> In this way Lawrence undercuts the significance of their marriage relationship itself, insofar as it had impeded any recognition between them of their individual selves.

When Lawrence partially revised the tale in 1914, he had already begun work on his major novel, Women in Love, a novel in which he proposed to do away with the old stable notion of character, and write about a radically different awareness of character as something far deeper, far more impersonal than had hitherto been the case. In a letter to Gordon Campbell written in September, 1914, he reveals his new attitude on this subject:

We want to realize the tremendous non-human quality of life -- it is wonderful. It is not the emotions, nor the personal feelings and attachments, that matter. These are all only expressive, and expression has become mechanical. Behind it all are the tremendous unknown forces of life, coming unseen and unperceived . . . and driving us, forcing us, destroying us if we do not submit to be swept away.<sup>16</sup>

Interestingly, Lawrence's new conceptions of what constitutes human life at its deepest levels are clearly those expressed through his portrayal of Elizabeth Bates in "Odour of Chrysanthemums". For in Elizabeth's new consciousness of "tremendous unknown forces" that she had denied in her relationship with her husband, there lies also the reality of her alienation. This reality is dramatically evoked when she attempts to come into close, physical "touch" with her dead husband: "Elizabeth embraced the body of her husband, with cheek and lips. She seemed to be listening, inquiring, trying to get some connection. But she could not. She was driven away. He was impregnable."<sup>17</sup> She is out

of "touch" with him in his death as she had been in life. The pathos of such an event, combined as it is with the traditional ritual washing of the dead, impresses the reader with a sense of how close Elizabeth's experience of alienation is related to death. Indeed, it is only the inalterable physical fact of her husband's death that has prompted her to consider their wasted lives together. If it leads her to an anguished sense of alienation, a consciousness of that "horror of the distance between them",<sup>18</sup> it also signals her break with the past (with a life which had in a very real way been "dead"), and augurs some kind of new issue from it: "She was grateful to death which restored the truth. And she knew she was not dead." In the end, it is not to death but to life that she submits.

Another story which uses a domestic setting amidst a rather brutal Midland background to explore the theme is "The Horse Dealer's Daughter". Some of the causes of Mabel Pervin's alienation are made evident from the start. The family's "desultory consultation"<sup>19</sup> after the collapse of the family business amounts to little more than the three brothers haranguing their sister Mabel into finding a place for herself. The badgering tone in which they address her on this point suggests the curious kind of "familial" obligation they feel towards her as a sister; they are not at all concerned with her own feelings in the matter. Her impassiveness towards them is the consequence of the years of bad treatment she had suffered from them. It is not an unfounded whim of her own that sets her at odds with them, "They had talked at her and round her for so many years, that she hardly heard them at all."<sup>20</sup>

The circumstances of Mabel's past life had fixed her in an

opposition to the kind of life that her brothers lived. Only her sense of the family's financial solvency had inured her to the vulgarity of her situation and had left her "brutally" independent in tension with the world about her. With the money gone, this very independence was severely impaired.

For months, Mabel had been servantless in the big house, keeping the home together in penury for her ineffectual brothers. She had kept house for ten years. But previously it was with unstinted means. Then, however brutal and coarse everything was, the sense of money had kept her proud, confident. The men might be foul-mouthed, the women in the kitchen might have bad reputations, her brothers might have illegitimate children. But so long as there was money, the girl felt herself established, and brutally proud, reserved.

No company came to the house, save dealers and coarse men. Mabel had no associates of her own sex, after her sister went away. But she did not mind. She went regularly to church, she attended to her father. And she lived in the memory of her mother, who had died when she was fourteen, and whom she had loved. She had loved her father, too, in a different way, depending upon him, and feeling secure in him, until at the age of fifty-four he married again. And then she had set hard against him. Now he had died and left them all hopelessly in debt.<sup>21</sup>

Her gradual loss of all significant human contacts, the estrangement from her father and finally the family's bankruptcy force her to act self-destructively. She chooses, in a moment of emotional crisis, to follow the one person who had meant most to her -- her dead mother. The touch of the macabre that Lawrence introduces with Mabel's absorption over caring for her mother's grave, is important to a consideration of Mabel's alienation. It shows the radical nature of her alienation. It is so perilously close to death. Unlike Elizabeth Bates in "Odour of Chrysanthemums", a character who is keenly aware (as she attends her husband's body) of the gap between life and death which separates her from him, Mabel's unnatural alienation over a period of years had led her to seek some



kind of consolation in an identification with her dead mother. The "gap" between her mother and herself is momentarily closed when she works about the cemetery plot:

It gave her sincere satisfaction to do this. She felt in immediate contact with the world of her mother. She took minute pains, went through the park in a state bordering on pure happiness, as if in performing this task she came into a subtle, intimate connection with her mother. For the life she followed here in the world was far less real than the world of death she inherited from her mother.<sup>22</sup>

This strange "connection" renders her impervious to the bullying, hostile world she has known, which is significantly less real than the one she inhabits in association with her mother. The anticipation of her own death is like a drug to her, removing as it does a pained sense of the actual world.

She thought of nobody, not even of herself. Mindless and persistent, she seemed in a sort of ecstasy to be coming nearer to her fulfillment, her own glorification, approaching her dead mother, who was glorified.<sup>23</sup>

Her desire to follow her mother in death recalls the similar motivation of Paul Morel's in Sons and Lovers, discussed in the Introduction. Paul, however, has not the same depth of motive operating within him as Mabel has (who, for years, had "lived [*italics mine*] in the memory of her mother") and in the end he checks this impulse in himself and moves away from it. Mabel, by contrast, is impelled to attempt a suicide. The utter barrenness of her life, devoid of any warm and sustaining human relations, prompts her to it. Death becomes, then, her deepest motive. She abides by this truth within her until it has been countermanded by an event that re-establishes her in life again.

When the young doctor saves her life after she has very deliberately

walked into a pond, to end it, the story takes on a different emphasis. It is only his "touch" upon her, both literally and figuratively speaking, that saves her from death. In his desperate efforts to save her life, as he gropes for her in the "foul earthy water",<sup>24</sup> he very nearly loses his own. For a moment he too goes under and is linked, on a symbolic level as well, with that world of death which Mabel has chosen. It is only through his courage to meet her in this extremity, where his own life is in jeopardy, that he can take her back with him into the world.

There is between them an uncommon bond. Early in the story the doctor's discomfort before Mabel as he waits politely for an answer as to her plans, signals this curious bond: "Mabel looked at him with her steady, dangerous eyes, that always made him uncomfortable, unsettling his superficial ease".<sup>25</sup> Later, this connection between them is made somewhat more explicit. There is the suggestion of a level of communication that moves through their eyes as they look upon each other, and which links them up beyond any conscious realization of it. Immediately before Mabel's attempted suicide, as she attends her mother's grave, such an interplay of feelings is evident:

She lifted her eyes, feeling him looking. Their eyes met. And each looked again at once, each feeling, in some way found out by the other. He lifted his cap and passed on down the road. There remained distinct in his consciousness, like a vision, the memory of her face, lifted from the tombstone in the churchyard, and looking at him with slow, large portentous eyes. It was portentous, her face. It seemed to mesmerize him. There was a heavy power in her eyes which laid hold of his whole being, as if he had drunk some powerful drug. He had been feeling weak and done before. Now the life came back into him, he felt delivered from his own fretted, daily self.<sup>26</sup>

Lawrence emphasizes repeatedly this relation between "eyes" and subtle undercurrents of feelings. The effect of Mabel's look on the doctor is to

revitalize his whole being. It is this subliminal attraction that ultimately saves her life. Without it, the doctor would have been unable to distinguish her figure moving towards the pond. In the failing afternoon light where everything was "grey, deadened, and wintry",<sup>27</sup> she would have been missed but for this "supernatural" sight. "He seemed to see her in the midst of such obscurity, that he was like a clairvoyant, seeing rather with the mind's eye than with ordinary sight".<sup>28</sup> And indeed when he arrives at the murky pond itself, "his eyes seemed to penetrate the dead water".<sup>29</sup>

All of this is central to an understanding of the complex relationship which develops between the two characters. Lawrence is concerned not so much with what the characters actually say to one another as with what motivates them to say it. For instance, Mabel's naive question to the doctor [who has stripped her of her wet clothes] after she has become conscious of her nakedness, "Do you love me, then?",<sup>30</sup> marks this point. Behind this question, she poses still another larger question. Will it be life for her or death? Her alienation in life had led her to choose death and she would not return to that same alienation once again; only the doctor's love for her could establish her in life through a vital human relationship. For even after the doctor has rescued her, she does not regret her decision to take her own life: "It was the right thing to do. I knew best, then".<sup>31</sup> Before the doctor's affirmative response to her question this inner tension in Mabel is clearly revealed:

She had gone suddenly very still. He looked down at her. Her eyes were now wide with fear, with doubt, the light was dying from her face, a shadow of terrible greyness was returning. He could not bear the touch of her eyes' question upon him, and the look of death behind the question.

With an inward groan he gave way, and let his heart yield

towards her. A sudden gentle smile came on his face. And her eyes, which never left his face, slowly, slowly filled with tears. He watched the strange water rise in her eyes, like some slow fountain coming up. And his heart seemed to burn and melt away in his breast.<sup>32</sup>

There is throughout the latter part of the tale a sense of uncertainty, of a hovering between life and death, issues upon which the future of both characters depend. The doctor himself is checked by a contrary impulse to avoid a deeply personal relationship with her because of his professional code of ethics, but even this is overborne by a deeper passional feeling within him: "He never intended to love her. But now it was over. He had crossed over the gulf to her, and all that he had left behind had shrivelled and become void".<sup>33</sup> The imagery of the gulf is significant here. It dramatizes the distance between them which has been overcome. Mabel's alienation, like the sodden vile smelling clothes, are removed from her completely by the young doctor who has reached across to her and "touched" her into life. Her nakedness before him suggests a previous vulnerability within her that has survived her alienation. She is ready, though haltingly and with some doubt, to realize herself in an intimate relation with the doctor. Indeed, one of the most remarkable features of the latter part of the tale is the counterbalancing between their feelings of joy and fear. This condition of polarity which underlies their relationship is most important. It attests to the impact of Mabel's alienation upon them both. Her experience of alienation, which had brought her so near to actual death, has left her divided between the claims of life, as they are represented in the doctor's love, and those of death, which are terrifyingly real to her in her distressed state. The powerful and wavering interplay of feelings between love and death marks the tensions of their new

relationship. It is the note upon which the tale ends. As Mabel notices the repugnant smell of her hair, she is suddenly conscious of what represents to her her undesirability, and consequently she derides herself before the doctor:

'I feel awful. I feel awful. I feel I'm horrible to you'.  
'No, I want you, I want you', was all he answered, blindly,  
with that terrible intonation which frightened her almost  
more than her horror lest he should not want her.<sup>34</sup>

In the last tale to be discussed in this chapter the kinds of tensions and counter-tensions so evident in "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" [as the above passage reveals] give way to a directness of action that is very forceful. In "The Man Who Loved Islands", the very simplicity of the action, as the protagonist moves from island to island, heightens the interest one feels in reading the tale.

It is about a man whose steadily increasing alienation from the world about him leads to his death. What is striking as one reads the tale is the sense of inevitability with which the protagonist Cathcart is carried to his death. Lawrence evidently does not sympathize with the motivation behind Cathcart's desire to make of an island "a world of his own".<sup>35</sup> Lawrence presents him as a rather mistaken idealist whose greatest mistake, it appears, is his very idealism. Any notion of the perfectibility of man irked Lawrence, and consequently in his depiction of Cathcart he is often satirical in tone:

Why should it [Cathcart's island] not be the Happy Isle at last?  
Why not the last small isle of the Hesperides, the perfect place,  
all filled with his own gracious, blossom-like spirit? A minute  
world of pure perfection, made by man himself.

He began, as we begin all our attempts to regain Paradise by  
spending money.<sup>36</sup>

Cathcart's first island fails to become any such ideal world. What undermines his aspirations from the start is, curiously enough, the island itself. Cathcart's enlightened plans to remake the island into "a little world to itself"<sup>37</sup> are countermanded by the island's engulfing spirit of place. The active "timeless world"<sup>38</sup> of the island's own dark past runs counter to his idealization of the island and negates it. Cathcart's awareness of mysterious influences that pervade his island disturbs him; subsequently, he focuses his attention elsewhere:

He was uncannily aware, as he lay in the dark, that the blackthorn grove that seemed a bit uncanny even in the realm of space and day, at night was crying with old men of an invisible race, around the altar stone. What was a ruin under the hornbeam trees by day, was a moaning of blood-stained priests with crucifixes, on the ineffable night. What was a cave and a hidden beach between coarse rocks, became in the invisible dark the purple-lipped imprecation of pirates.

To escape any more of this sort of awareness, our islander daily concentrated upon his material island.<sup>39</sup>

In this way, Lawrence introduces a thematic contrast between Cathcart's "day-time" consciousness and those dark realities of the island that are evoked at night. Cathcart's ideal world will not admit such awarenesses that disturb the purity of his own island Utopia, and so they are avoided. In fixing his attention on the material island, however, he meets with real difficulties that undermine his practical efforts to improve the island. Unaccountably, the island loses the thousands of pounds that are invested in it in an effort to make it a going concern; personal enmities arise among the island's inhabitants and strange accidents and afflictions occur on the island, such as the accidental death of a cow which had fallen over a cliff. This last event, which happens ironically enough the day after

a large party celebrating the harvest and the good fortune it betokens for the island, signals something completely irrational:

This was symbolic of the island. As sure as the spirits rose in the human breast, with a movement of joy, an invisible hand struck malevolently out of the silence. . . . Out of the very air came a stony, heavy malevolence. The island itself seemed malicious.<sup>40</sup>

The spirit of the place itself, then, opposes this idealizing influence of Cathcart. His good-will is false to it, something external to its "malevolence". Its opposition is not unlike that of the islanders themselves to Cathcart. They wonder over their idealistic "master", as over some precocious, innocent child, and yet their deference to him is tinged with mockery. His wide range of theoretical knowledge is not balanced by a sure grasp of the substantial nature of things. He does not seem to have come into a real contact with actual existence. He is not a farmer; he merely talks of farming. His bailiff, a real "man of the soil",<sup>41</sup> defers to Cathcart's ideas and plans for the island but remains aloof from them. He is more intrigued with Cathcart himself, with the master's "immaculate figure".<sup>42</sup> There is an incongruity between what Cathcart wants practically to achieve on the island and the man Cathcart himself. Cathcart is presented as a cultivated gentleman, an aesthete who catalogues the flowers mentioned in the ancient classics; certainly not a man of the soil. He is described while on a routine errand, as an "elegant tall figure in creamy-white serge coming like some bird over the fallow, to look at the weeding of the turnips."<sup>43</sup> The imagery used here draws a significant and dramatic contrast between Cathcart's ethereal nature and the inglorious task of weeding turnips. He is really at odds with the physical realities about him. He is out of touch with them as he is with the people themselves.

He sees them as fitting nicely into the scheme for his little world, an integral part of his grand design, but he misses seeing them entirely as individuals with passions of their own. The relative sterility of contact between Cathcart and his islanders is something that contributes to his alienation. His idealism refuses to admit their human feelings and their limitations within his perfect world; he refuses, for instance to fully acknowledge the fact that he had been swindled by both his housekeeper and his butler. If the reader is at all doubtful of the implications of Cathcart's idealism, Lawrence is quick to point them out:

It is doubtful whether any of them really liked him, man to man, or even woman to man. But then it is doubtful if he really liked any of them, as man to man, or man to woman. He wanted them to be happy, and the little world to be perfect. But anyone who wants the world to be perfect must be careful not to have real likes or dislikes. A general goodwill is all you can afford.

The sad fact is, alas, that general goodwill is always felt as something of an insult, by the mere object of it; and so it breeds a quite special brand of malice. Surely general good-will is a form of egoism, that it should have such a result!<sup>44</sup>

Though Lawrence's intrusions into the tale remind a reader of his own injunction to trust the tale, not the artist, they are sometimes most elucidating. In the above passage Lawrence associates Cathcart's insulated kind of idealism with egoism. Cathcart's failure to relate to the islanders and the island itself other than as resources for his egoism to act upon circumscribes the kind of influence he has over them. This influence is reduced to a simple cash nexus and when the island eventually drains Cathcart's capital he is forced to quit it.

The second island, though much smaller, is no longer a little world; it becomes for Cathcart, "a sort of refuge".<sup>45</sup> He feels less and less



implicated in the world of men; any rough, vital fibre of human feeling or interest leaves him and he begins to work indifferently:

he spent long, silent hours in his study, working not very fast, nor very importantly, letting the writing spin softly from him as if it were drowsy gossamer. He no longer fretted whether it were good or not, what he produced. He slowly, softly spun it like gossamer, and if it were to melt away as gossamer in autumn melts, he would not mind.<sup>46</sup>

The very quality of Cathcart's life becomes insubstantial and evanescent. A "gossamy look"<sup>47</sup> comes upon his face and his years upon the island blend indistinctly in his mind like mist. The imagery Lawrence develops in this middle part of the tale accentuates the growing diffuseness of Cathcart's being.

Eventually Cathcart has a rather desultory love affair with his housekeeper; it leaves him feeling shattered and even more out of sorts. He is prompted to it not by any real sexual desire but by "her will" and the mere "automatism of sex".<sup>48</sup> This connection with a woman does not bring Cathcart into any vital sense of "touch" with her. He finds that she is to have a child by him and then "his desire, whatever it was, died in him with nauseous finality".<sup>49</sup> Cathcart is repelled by this unwanted state of affairs that had transformed his island refuge into something "hateful to him, vulgar, a suburb";<sup>50</sup> consequently, he leaves the island for a third and final one.

On this last island, his alienation is clearly evident. Any sort of human contact becomes repugnant to him. Even the few sheep on the island are "hideous and gross";<sup>51</sup> the absence of any trees or bushes is a relief to him for "they stood up like people, too assertive". The egoism that had sustained his idealistic venture to create a perfect

island ] has to be, before you can presume to fill it with your own personality."<sup>56</sup> Cathcart's egoism is even more audacious when in regard to the elements themselves. He sees the snow as something he must "conquer" if he is to remain master of his fate; it is a "new, white brute force which had accumulated against him."<sup>57</sup> It prevents him from having access to his boat and this is intolerable for him: "if he was to be shut in, it must be by his own choice, not by the mechanical power of the elements".<sup>58</sup> He is, of course, doomed to failure, despite his desperate efforts. His final acknowledgment that one cannot "win" against the elements comes too late. The elements themselves appear to pass sentence on the private unapproachable little world of Cathcart's egoism:

As he looked, the sky mysteriously darkened and chilled.  
From far off came the mutter of the unsatisfied thunder,  
and he knew it was the signal of the snow rolling over  
the sea. He turned, and felt its breath on him.<sup>59</sup>

The seal that is set upon Cathcart's alienation is a fitting one for it -- his death. In divesting himself of all human contact, in fruitlessly trying to break from the human condition itself, the penalty he pays is the loss of his life. There is a deep sense of justice revealed in Lawrence's fable-like story; perhaps, this in itself accounts for the inevitability with which the action of the tale moves.

The three tales in this section invite some comparison. Though they commonly focus on the theme of alienation, the distinguishing feature in all three of the tales is the significance of death to each of the main protagonists. Their alienation is inextricably linked to death. Their awareness of death or their proximity to it gives a keen edge to their alienation and defines it more clearly. It is the confrontation with

death that is central in the tales and upon which the theme of alienation turns. This is nowhere more apparent than in the following epilogue where "death" is of a piece with the protagonist's alienation.

## FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER TWO)

- <sup>1</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, II, p. 290.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 292.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 287.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 286.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 294.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 301.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 299.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 288-89.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 296.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 300.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 301.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 300-1.
- <sup>13</sup>Lawrence, Women in Love, p. 137.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 139.
- <sup>15</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, II, p. 301.
- <sup>16</sup>Lawrence, The Collected Letters, p. 291.
- <sup>17</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, II, p. 299.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. p.441.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. p.443.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 446-47.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. p.448.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. p.447.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. p.450.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. p.445.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. p.448.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. p.449.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. p.450.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. p.452.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 453-54.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. p.455.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. p.457.

<sup>35</sup>Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, III p.722.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. p.725.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. p.726.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid. p.724

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 724-25.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p.730.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p728.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p.726.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p727.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p734.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p735.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p737.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p.739.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p740.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p742.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p743.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p722.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p745.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p746.

Epilogue: "The Man Who Died"

In Lawrence's last major work of fiction, "The Man Who Died", (originally entitled "The Escaped Cock") the theme of alienation is central to an understanding of the Christ-figure in the story. The story itself is of crucial importance in this discussion, for with it the reader may observe how Lawrence expanded the theme to cover history and civilization by using the Christ figure. For this reason the theme of alienation in the story takes on a significance that far surpasses the other tales. In this epilogue many of the features common to the experience of alienation that we have seen in the preceding chapters find their classic statement in "The Man Who Died". His alienation within the tomb is more clearly defined than the others and through its obvious symbolic overtones it is comparatively richer. Shortly after the story begins, the startling nature of his alienation is presented. It is an alienation that is closely linked to death. The man who died wakes to find himself bound up within a tomb of rock, with very little desire to move back into life. An overwhelming sense of nausea for what had been his past life momentarily checks any impulse of movement within him:

He resented already the fact of the strange, incalculable moving that had already taken place in him: the moving back into consciousness. He had not wished it. He had wanted to stay outside, in the place where even memory is stone dead.

But now, something had returned to him, like a returned letter, and in that return he lay overcome with a sense of nausea. Yet suddenly his hands moved. They lifted up, cold,

heavy and sore. Yet they lifted up, to drag away the cloth from his face, and to push at the shoulder bands. Then they fell again, cold heavy, numb, and sick with having moved even so much, unspeakably unwilling to move further.

With his face cleared, and his shoulders free, he lapsed again, and lay dead, resting on the cold nullity of being dead. It was the most desirable. And almost, he had it complete: the utter cold nullity of being outside . . .

Then suddenly he leaned up, and the great world reeled.<sup>1</sup>

The specific condition of the man's alienation is clear enough. With a nauseous awareness he perceives that he is "awake, and numb, and cold, and rigid, and full of hurt, and tied up."<sup>2</sup> His isolation within "a carved hole in the rock"<sup>3</sup> and these features of his alienation dramatize the extent to which his previous life, his life of mission, had carried him.

Whether or not his former experience as a messiah had carried him to an actual physical death is not really the issue. Lawrence's ambiguity on this point merely enhances the nature of the Christ figure's alienation. In the above passage the phrasing changes slightly and importantly from the "cold nullity of being dead" to the "cold nullity of being outside." The man who died is virtually "outside" of life and alienated from it. Graham Hough in his criticism of the story makes a simple and yet necessary judgment: "One who has suffered as the prophet has done, the extremity of physical and spiritual torment has in effect died; and if his vital powers should, miraculously or unmiraculously, return, it is a real rebirth."<sup>4</sup> And Lawrence in a letter to the painter Mark Gertler spoke of the painful depression men suffer under a spiritual change of life or "what the mystics call the little death . . . Then, in the end, you come out of it with a new sort of rhythm, a new psychic



rhythm: a sort of re-birth."<sup>5</sup>

This "new psychic rhythm" taken into the context of "The Man Who Died" is what really impels him to move into life again. For, beneath the "utter bodily disillusion" that fills the consciousness of his newly won life, he is driven by great resolution, "a desireless resoluteness, deeper even than consciousness."<sup>6</sup> This new resoluteness in his being anticipates his connection with the phenomenal world about him, for as he looks upon it this same quality is abundantly in evidence:

The man who had died looked nakedly on life, and saw a vast resoluteness everywhere flinging itself up in stormy or subtle wavecrests, foam-tips emerging out of the blue invisible, a black and orange cock or the green flame-tongues out of the extremes of the fig-tree. They came forth, these things and creatures of spring, glowing with desire and with assertion. They came like crests of foam, out of the blue flood of the invisible desire, out of the vast invisible sea of strength, and they came coloured and tangible, evanescent, yet deathless in their coming.<sup>7</sup>

Lawrence's intention in writing the story had been to dramatize the Christ figure's denial of the spiritual motivation behind his former life as a prophet. There comes a new and startling revelation to Lawrence's Christ, "From what, and to what, could this infinite whirl be saved?"<sup>8</sup> The man who had died regards his past life as a teacher and a saviour as one of "interference"<sup>9</sup> -- for that transgression he believes he had been compelled by Pilate and the high priests to die. "I wanted to be greater than the limits of my hands and feet, so I brought betrayal on myself."<sup>10</sup> There is an interesting parallel between Lawrence's presentation of Christ and his own life. E. M. Forster<sup>11</sup> and other critics of note have recognized the prophet in Lawrence's writings. So often in Lawrence's work the artist suffers before the prophet in him, whose passionate zeal to "save" western civilization interferes with the

work of art itself, as in his "leadership" novels, notably The Plumed Serpent. John Middleton Murry's<sup>12</sup> remark that leaving Jesus out of any attempt to understand Lawrence would be like playing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark is most apt. The lyrical quality of Lawrence's final period of writing attests to the need he felt, like the man who died, to leave off "his striving self, which cares and asserts itself."<sup>13</sup>

The man who died takes with him on his journey into life a young cock, a symbol of "the everlasting resoluteness of life".<sup>14</sup> The bird becomes the man's link with the phenomenal world. "And always the man who had died saw not the bird alone, but the short, sharp wave of life of which the bird was the crest."<sup>15</sup> When questioned by his former disciples whether he is a believer or not, he simply states his belief in the bird as being "full of life and virtue". The bird is a symbol of the new terms of his relation to the world about him. He has, then established a new belief not on an ultimate salvation for himself and mankind but in his "true relatedness"<sup>16</sup> with life itself. This marks a distinct break with the terrible "numbness" of his alienation within the tomb, where the subtleties of any relationship, large or small, with the world had been void. The cock is the first significant clue to his establishing a vital relation with the world. For Lawrence even such a start was tremendously important:

If we think about it, we find that our life consists in this achieving of a pure relationship between ourselves and the living universe about us. This is how I "save my soul", by accomplishing a pure relationship between me and another person, me and other people, me and a nation, me and a race of men, me and the animals, me and the trees or flowers, me and the earth, me and the skies and sun and stars, me and the moon: an infinity of pure relations, big and little, like the stars of the sky: that makes our eternity, for each one of us, me and the timber I am sawing, the lines of force I

follow; me and the dough I knead for bread, me and the very motion with which I write, me and the bit of gold I have got. This, if we knew it, is our life and our eternity: the subtle, perfected relation between me and my whole circumambient universe.<sup>17</sup>

These very convictions are powerfully evoked in "The Man Who Died". The Christ figure comes eventually to meet with a priestess of Isis. She recognizes in him the reborn man that he has become and sees in his face the "sheer stillness of the deeper life".<sup>18</sup> Her dream as a priestess of Isis is to seek out and fulfill her destiny through the sexual mystery of the god Osiris. He becomes for her the embodiment of her dream, the male Osiris. The man who died, though not oblivious to the "little life" of the world where compulsion of all sorts holds sway, is yet beyond it, having died even to his own mission in life, which had been to compel love on all men: "Re-born, he was in the other life, the greater day of the human consciousness."<sup>19</sup> It is only through a full sexual relationship with her that he is wholly restored to vital and potent being. It is through the "perfected" contact he achieves with her that he comes into dynamic "touch" with the circumambient universe:

But the man looked at the vivid stars before dawn, as they rained down to the sea, and the dog-star green towards the sea's rim. And he thought: 'How plastic it is, how full of curves and folds like an invisible rose of dark-petalled openness that shows where the dew touches its darkness! How full it is, and great beyond all gods. How it leans around me, and I am part of it, the great rose of Space. I am like a grain of its perfume, and the woman is a grain of its beauty. Now the world is one flower of many petalled darknesses, and I am in its perfume as in a touch.'

So, in the absolute stillness and fulness of touch, he slept in his cave while the dawn came. And after the dawn, the wind rose and brought a storm, with cold rain. So he stayed in his cave in the peace and the delight of being in touch, delighting to hear the sea, and the rain on the earth, and to see one white-and-gold narcissus bowing wet, and still wet. And he said: 'This is the great atonement, the being

in touch. The gray sea and the rain, the wet narcissus and the woman I wait for, the invisible Isis and the unseen sun are all in touch, and at one.<sup>20</sup>

In this way, Lawrence hoped to show through the man who died that the fulfilled nature of his relationship with the priestess involved needs for a greater relationship with the phenomenal world. His alienation within the tomb was a terrible seal against all of these life-sustaining contacts. When the man who died leaves the woman to escape capture by the Romans, he goes "alone, with his destiny. Yet not alone, for the touch would be upon him, even as he left his touch on her. And invisible suns would go with him."<sup>21</sup> This new aloneness signals his new individual being in life; yet this aloneness itself is integrally related to the relationship which he has established with the priestess. The instinctual "resoluteness" which had carried him through his alienation has now connected him up with life once again. His death-like alienation from the world has gone from him like the winding cloths and the tomb which had imprisoned him. His new manhood, the life of his physical resurrection, is established in the touch of the priestess of Isis. "'On this rock I built my life'. The deep-folded, penetrable rock of the living woman!".<sup>22</sup>

In one of Lawrence's late essays, "The Risen Lord", he writes that "the great religious images are only images of our own experiences, or of our own state of mind and soul."<sup>23</sup> With this idea in mind, "The Man Who Died" may be regarded as giving the theme of alienation a universal symbol in the life of Christ. As Lawrence identified with the Christ figure so may all men. It is the image of the Christ in his story that has a significantly modern aptness. The increasing alienation of

modern man from organic ties with the phenomenal world is at issue here. As Nathan Scott has observed: "Lawrence in his preoccupation with human isolation moved towards an analysis of the factors in modern culture which have tended to aggravate the perennial isolation of man that we have found him defining."<sup>24</sup>

For Lawrence, the only counter to such developments in the modern world was to make a clear break with them and begin anew like the man who died. In Apocalypse, one of Lawrence's last statements, this belief is expressed in his finest prose:

For man, the vast marvel is to be alive. For man, as for flower and beast and bird, the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most perfectly alive. Whatever the unborn and the dead may know, they cannot know the beauty, the marvel of being alive in the flesh. The dead may look after the afterwards. But the magnificent here and now of life in the flesh is ours, and ours alone, and ours only for a time. We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and in the flesh, and part of the living, incarnate cosmos. I am part of the sun as my eye is part of me. That I am part of the earth, my feet know perfectly, and my blood is part of the sea. My soul knows that I am part of the human race, my soul is an organic part of the great human soul, as my spirit is part of my nation. In my own very self, I am part of my family. There is nothing of me that is alone and absolute except my mind, and we shall find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter of the sun on the surface of the waters.

So that my individualism is really an illusion. I am part of the great whole, and I can never escape. But I can deny my connections, break them, and become a fragment. Then I am wretched.

What we want is to destroy our false, inorganic connections, especially those related to money, and re-establish the living organic connections, with the cosmos, the sun and earth, with mankind and nation and family. Start with the sun, and the rest will slowly, slowly happen.<sup>25</sup>

In the context of "The Man Who Died", it is only through the kind of organic relationships described here that the Christ figure's deathly

alienation is transcended. Like the biblical paradox that one must lose one's life in order to gain it, the man who died comes through to a new living connection with the universe that is based, ironically enough, on the "death" of his former life as a messiah.

From the discussion of the theme of alienation in these tales one may infer the vital significance of touch. In all of the tales, the chief protagonists escape their alienation only through the restorative powers of close human contact. When these contacts are denied nothing remains but dissolution and finally death. In the tales Lawrence emphasizes this pattern again and again.

The experience of alienation can provide the ground for a new and vitalistic awareness of life or it may mark the terms of one's destruction. One is left wondering over this simple logic and yet convinced finally of its truth.

The inevitability of action with which so many of the tales move substantiates this truth and attests to Lawrence's artistry in handling such a complex theme as that of alienation.

## FOOTNOTES (Epilogue)

<sup>1</sup>Lawrence, The Man Who Died, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Hough, "Lawrence's Quarrel with Christianity: The Man Who Died",  
D. H. Lawrence. (1963), p. 107.

<sup>5</sup>Lawrence, The Collected Letters, p. 1225.

<sup>6</sup>Lawrence, The Man Who Died, p. 169.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p. 132.

<sup>12</sup>Scott, Rehearsals of Discomposure, p. 156.

<sup>13</sup>Lawrence, The Man Who Died, p. 180.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Lawrence, Phoenix, p. 528.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Lawrence, The Man Who Died, p. 193.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 209.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 207.

<sup>23</sup>Lawrence, Phoenix II, 571.

<sup>24</sup>Scott, Rehearsals of Discomposure, 156.

<sup>25</sup>Lawrence, Apocalypse, 199-200.



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