

A STUDY OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S

TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN

THE SHORT STORY

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WOMEN IN THE SHORT STORY

BY

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree  
Master of Arts

McMaster University

October 1984

MASTER OF ARTS (1984)  
(English)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: A Study of D. H. Lawrence's Treatment of  
Women in the Short Story

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SUPERVISOR: Professor N. Shrive

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 95

## Abstract

This thesis examines, through a study of theme, characterization and plot, D. H. Lawrence's portrayal of women in his short stories. The study concentrates on a selection of stories that reflect particular patterns and trends of the female character.

In general, there are three patterns that are easily identifiable. The first pattern depicts the trapped woman, who always remains trapped in an unhappy situation. The second pattern involves the woman who tries to escape an unhappy situation but is destroyed because of her attempt to abandon a dissatisfying life. The third pattern presents the seemingly "successful" couple, and yet, the only reason for their successful relationship is that the woman is subordinate to the power of the man.

We find in these patterns evidence that indicates that Lawrence repeatedly uses the female to secure the authority of the male. The fact that the subordination of the female characters in Lawrence's short stories is neither explored nor explained within the fiction, ultimately detracts from the success of the works.

to my mother, Mattie  
and  
my sister, Audrey

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Norman Shrive, for his helpful comments and criticisms during the preparation of this thesis.

I also wish to express my gratitude to my fellow graduate student, Barbara Brown, for her encouragement and her generosity in agreeing to read my work. Her comments have been invaluable.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Evan, for his infinite patience, and without whose confidence I never would have achieved my goal.

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## INTRODUCTION

Any examination of D. H. Lawrence's works, whether it be made through a reading of one short story or through an extensive study of his entire legacy, will reveal a concern with what he sees as the diminishing strength of healthy human relationships. This preoccupation is no doubt part of his negative response to the encroachment of the industrial revolution and its consequent effect on the modern world and those who must inhabit it. If one examines Lawrence's treatment of his women characters this specific concern is put into sharp focus, particularly if the women are examined in terms of how they develop in relation to the men in their lives.

Within his works, we find, over and over, characters involved in situations that reflect an ambiguity that has, more recently, hallmarked twentieth-century relationships between man and woman. It would seem that Lawrence was prophetic in suggesting that as a woman moves away from her traditional domestic domain and begins to invest both her mental and physical energies into man's established territory outside of the home, the security of a clearly defined place or purpose in life, for both sexes, is undermined. It is how Lawrence deals with this crisis inherent in modern relationships and specifically how he perceives its resolution



that I will proceed to examine by a study of the short stories.

Lawrence's vision of what he sees as our salvation demands that we abandon our existing views of the world and our concept of what constitutes "proper" relationships with other people. Lawrence suggests we are to adopt a new understanding of life. Essential to his vision is the necessity of conceiving a new way of establishing the female and the male role.

At the heart of his metaphysic is the idea that the universe consists of opposing elements in continuous and active struggle. The cosmos continues to exist because of an ultimate unity or "Oneness" which, while maintaining all existence by eternally balancing the opposites, is an awareness that escapes the conscious human mind. However, since humanity, too, is caught up in this struggle, it is essential that we experience our connection with this ultimate unity in order to give meaning to human existence. Our only hope, in this respect, is to transcend the struggle; this alone will provide us with the unconscious and primal knowledge that we are a part of the cosmos. The means for such transcendence are through active struggle with our opposites, by which Lawrence means the opposite sex. His call for a new way of establishing female-male relationships is a result of a concern with what he finds as a diminishing

balance of control necessary for active struggle between men and women.

It would seem that there must be a balance of the male and female principles that compose the Lawrencian world. Graham Hough, in his book, The Dark Sun, provides a helpful account of Lawrence's "doctrine" that sheds light on this question. Quoting from an early essay by Lawrence entitled "The Crown", Hough elucidates Lawrence's duality with his comments on the metaphor of the unicorn and the lion fighting for the crown:

And the fight is life itself.

*Blakeian - "without opposition  
there is no  
progress".*

"And there is no rest, no cessation from the conflict. For we are two opposites which exist by virtue of our inter-opposition. Remove the opposition and there is a collapse, a sudden crumbling into universal darkness."

The lion, the mind, the active, the male principle must always be at strife with the unicorn, the senses, the passive, the female principle. A<sup>1</sup> victory for either side brings life to an end.

We arrive, then, at what will be proven to be the root cause of the source of the seemingly strained relationships that exist between the female and the male characters in Lawrence's fiction. In each story that will be examined, always there exists a conflict between one female and one male character. The strained relationship between a man and a woman is a recurring theme that is encountered in virtually every one of Lawrence's short stories.

Despite the importance a balanced opposition between man and woman has in Lawrence's concept of a proper structured relationship, his focus in dealing with this theme is, most often, on the woman. He seems to present her predicament with greater detail and more intensity than the man's. In fact, although the overall theme of a story may be about the tense relationship between a man and a woman, it is the woman alone who claims the role of the main character. In "Odour of Chrysanthemums", for example, we do not actually meet Mr. Bates until the end of the story, although his existence is very much a part of it from the beginning.

Lawrence's concentration on the woman in the short story does not seem to derive from a sympathetic motive. In other words, even though the woman receives more attention than the man in these tales, she continues to lack the necessary substance to maintain her balance in the struggle for survival. We find that the re-establishment of the female-male roles at the conclusion of the tales strengthens the man's authoritative position, or returns him to it as in "The White Stocking". This same re-structuring of gender roles for the woman means either that she maintains her already powerless position or that she moves to an even lesser one, as in "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman". It is not a balance of equals that results from the inter-opposition of a woman and a man, but an imbalance.

According to Lawrence's theory, an imbalance between the male and the female principles will result in the destruction of both, and yet this dual destruction is not what we tend to find in many of the short stories. In "None of That", for instance, the woman's position goes beyond that of a lesser weight on the balance scales, and she is absolutely destroyed. Now if both characters who were involved in such an imbalanced relationship were destroyed by it, then we would find no inconsistency with the logic of Lawrence's theory of active opposition. As Hough stated, "A victory for either side brings life to an end". We find a problem, however, when we repeatedly encounter the defeat or destruction of the woman but not the man. Despite the imbalance, the man often continues to survive while the woman is virtually annihilated.

These issues will be found to be obstacles which stand in the way of the success of many of Lawrence's tales. Graham Hough argues that it is a misconception to perceive the female-male opposition as anything more than an example of Lawrencian duality.<sup>2</sup> However, Lawrence's continued concentration on that opposition, and particularly on the role woman plays in it, causes us to suspect that something more than an instance is being presented in his fiction. Because Lawrence appears to impose his own view of woman's inferiority onto the short stories, we find rather discordant plot structures, the

repetition of flat and unconvincing female character types, and a vagueness in theme.

Although there are many fine critics of Lawrencian literature and an ample supply of thorough and illuminating studies of the man and his work, little has been done to explore woman's roles specifically. This lack of discussion is certainly true of the novels but even more so of the short stories, which in themselves have not been given sufficient attention. In fact, many otherwise fine studies of Lawrence either ignore the whole problem of Lawrence's unfair attitude toward his woman characters or merely disregard it as not really relevant to any significant analysis of his work. While acknowledging that "Lawrence repeatedly uses the female to dramatize the sicker forms of destruction", and despite his statement that this should not be "explained away", Kingsley Widmer in The Art of Perversity, goes on to do almost that.<sup>3</sup> What Widmer terms the Edenic parable, he finds in Lawrence's Fantasia of the Unconscious and is exemplified by this quotation:

Teach a woman to act from an idea, and you destroy her womanhood forever. Make a woman self-conscious, and her soul is barren as a sandbag. Why were we driven out of Paradise? Why did we fall into this gnawing disease of unappeasable dissatisfaction? Not because we sinned. But because we got sex into our head.

When Eve ate that particular apple, she became aware of her own womanhood, mentally. And mentally

she began to experiment with it. She has been experimenting with it ever since. So has man. To the rage and horror of both of them.<sup>4</sup>

This parable, Widmer states, is also "of the race, of the fate of a civilization".<sup>5</sup> For Widmer, Lawrence's criticism is directed towards the modern world and its practice of intellectualizing and rationalizing even the most intimate life forces. While Widmer's comment may have some validity, it sidesteps any real attempt to directly address that which cannot be "explained away"; namely, Lawrence's oppressing treatment of the female in his fiction. F. R. Leavis, in D. H. Lawrence: Novelist, also provides a rather insufficient account of how women characters are handled by Lawrence. In one example he discusses the positive aspects of Lawrencian realism, the lack of sentimentalizing or idealizing in the context of the short story "Samson and Delilah". To briefly recount the story, we have an independent woman at the beginning, the landlady of a pub, whose long lost husband returns to claim her after years of abandonment. This he does without any explanation. She forcefully rejects him and puts him out of her pub with the help of some customers. He later returns to the pub and as Leavis states, "is tacitly accepted as the husband".<sup>6</sup> It is fair, it seems, to view her acceptance as confusing. Her acceptance, however, may be resignation. It is not clear why she reunites herself with her husband, given

both her prior behavior and the unexplained claim of her husband. Yet Leavis states that

- no elaboration can suggest what the tale actually is, and what interest it has for us. For its effects depend upon the working of vibrations, depths, and potencies - of psychic fields of force - that it takes a Lawrence to register.

The tale, however, does need elaboration. Leavis' praise for Lawrence's style does not justify a dismissal where there exists a flaw in the story's theme. We are still unsure, in other words, about what the story means, or about what Lawrence is trying to tell us with respect to the two characters. How and why did the landlady's personality change so severely upon the mere arrival of her husband? Furthermore, why should we accept the loss of her independent spirit as something positive, the way that the story seems to imply we should?

It seems that Lawrence felt that women found themselves in frustrating and dissatisfying circumstances because they were moving away from their "proper" roles as women. Lawrence, however, seems only able to define that role as a subordinate one. As a result, the reader is often confused. For example, why must women surrender themselves or become annihilated? Furthermore, why do some women surrender to subordination or victimization when their earlier characterization seems to contradict such action? These questions, among others, initiated the preparation of this thesis and while certainly not conclusive,

the study aims to explore and find at least a partial answer.

Although I began with a study of the short stories, I discovered that it was impossible to remain with the mere text of the stories. Therefore, the arguments put forth here will involve some discussion of what will loosely be termed Lawrence's philosophy. Each chapter deals with how differing aspects of the short stories are affected by Lawrence's attitude toward his women characters, but will show that the arguments pursued are the same. In general terms, the study hopes to show that Lawrence's fiction is marred by his presentation of women.

Chapter One describes the patterns found in a significant number of the short stories by examining the similarities of plot structure. In such stories as "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman", "You Touched Me", "Fanny and Annie", "Second Best", and "Odour of Chrysanthemums", Lawrence depicts the recurrent image of the woman who is trying to escape her position in life, one which is oppressive. Such females tend to search for escape by seeking a male who will remove them from their dissatisfying circumstances. However, the woman inevitably finds herself in the same position as before or in an equally unhappy one. For example, we have some women who try to compensate for their oppressive positions by marrying into a lower class, presumably to gain some power or control.



However, as the tales themselves often reveal, such as "Second Best", power and control do not seem to be what these women are seeking. It may be argued that the shift from a higher to a lower class is used by Lawrence to criticise middle class values. If this is true, it is only true in part, for such is not the case in "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman". In this story, the woman tries to escape through upward mobility within the class structure but ends up merely as the possession of a new man. The incidents and episodes in these stories often reveal a structure that indicates Lawrence's manipulation of events and circumstances in favour of a superior male power structure.

Chapter Two focuses on Lawrence's characterization of the women in his work. The discussion will concentrate on "The Woman Who Rode Away", "The Princess", and "None of That". In all of these stories we find dissatisfied women as the main characters. They search for a fulfilment that is to be found ostensibly in the male world, as is the case with Ethel's bullfighter or Dollie's primitive Indian. The women, however, never find their fulfilment. They become either sacrificial victims of male revenge, which is most often caused by their seeking independence and power, or they simply remain dissatisfied. Furthermore, Lawrence's female characters fail to convince us of their reality because their

motives are often obscured by spiritual longings, vague desires, and undefined wants. We are never exactly sure what it is that many of these characters want, need, or even deserve. The women are also somewhat incomplete; they lack a consistency and a depth that would contribute to their credibility, even though Lawrence often describes female oppression quite acutely and with a great deal of insight. As Anne Smith tells us, he was after all, very much aware of the suffragette movement and had close relationships with women who were actively involved in it.<sup>8</sup> This familiarity with the women of his time, however, does not seem to provide him with the ability to create well-rounded, plausible female characters.

The confusion that results from Lawrence's method of characterization in the short stories also surfaces when we examine Lawrence's handling of theme. Both "The Horsedealer's Daughter" and "The White Stocking", for example, seem to suggest that the structure of a female-male relationship must be based on the authoritative position of the male. Again we are confused by the imbalance between the characters, particularly because in both stories, we seem to find "successful" relationships. In any case, they are suggested as such at the conclusion of each story. Chapter Three then, attempts to answer the question that asks what and where Lawrence wants women to be in the world and why. "The Horsedealer's Daughter"

and "The White Stocking" are used as mediums through which we try to answer this question.

It is because Lawrence, himself, concentrates on the female in his fiction that his treatment of women in the short stories merits study. An analysis of how Lawrence portrays women will result in more than an evaluation of his appeal in terms of taste. For the woman is crucial to Lawrence's art and a critical study of her role in the fiction is intricately connected to a critical study of Lawrence's art as a whole.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Graham Hough, The Dark Sun. (New York: Octagon Books, 1979), p.225.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Kingsley Widmer, The Art of Perversity (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), p.76.

<sup>4</sup>David Herbert Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious Introduced by Philip Rieff (New York: Viking Press, 1960), p.121.

<sup>5</sup>Widmer, p.78.

<sup>6</sup>F. R. Leavis, D. H. Lawrence: Novelist (Great Britain: Peregrine Books, 1964), p.259.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Anne Smith, "A New Adam and a New Eve - Lawrence and Women: A Biographical Overview", in Anne Smith ed., Lawrence and Women (London: Vision Press, 1978), pp.9-48.

## CHAPTER ONE

When reading Lawrence's short stories, with his portrayal of women in mind, it is not the impact of individual stories which always arrests this reader. Rather, it is his repetitive presentation of the defeated woman, her hopeless situation, and the lack of any positive or liberating future for her that captures the attention. After noting these patterns, on returning to the individual stories a more focused and critical reading reveals the features that distinguish their similarities.

It is the intention of this chapter to explore the plot structure of some selected short stories. I will attempt to show that in these short stories there are problems with the way in which the plots function. Within "Odour of Chrysanthemums" and "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman", for example, the reader is often surprised to encounter a character's unmotivated action or an illogical turn of events. A case in point is "Odour of Chrysanthemums", in which Lawrence uses elements of suspense to create a significant level of sympathy for Mrs. Bates. He then crushes this suspense by having Mrs. Bates defeated by her environment and her supposed failure as a wife. The story's conclusion seems more pessimistic than it would seem to merit, and as readers we are somehow left dissatisfied.

In other stories to be discussed here, namely, "You Touched Me", "Second Best", and "Fanny and Annie", we find apparent examples of awkward plot manipulation. At crucial points in these stories, characters appear to make decisions that affect their futures in ways that are based on little or no self-interest. At times, external circumstances of characters slightly blanket this fact, but in this way Lawrence seems to transform his own interests into the motives of his women characters, interests which oppose those to which the characters would seem better suited.

In "Fanny and Annie", "Second Best", and "You Touched Me", the function of plot will be examined by comparing similar shortcomings. In all three of these stories we find that for the women characters external circumstances rather than their own decisions dictate their fate. Women are not only victims of male desires, which eventually develop into actual power, but are also given no real alternative circumstances which might allow them, if not an escape, at least an option from which to determine their own fate. In an example of this sort of pattern, we find that all of the main characters end up marrying men from a lower class. We know, however, that in all three cases, it is the man who gains from the marriage and not the woman. Her decision seems to be based on resignation or desperation rather than on desire or love, whereas his decision seems to be based on a combination of power, pride,

and ego.

Kate Millett, in her book Sexual Politics, comments on the repetition of this kind of structure and illuminates its meaning:

The lovers have not so much bridged class as transcended it into an aristocracy based on sexual dynamism rather than on wealth or position.<sup>1</sup>

At the top of this autocratic order is the male. What is disturbing, however, is not that Lawrence is presenting a very real picture of what the woman's social position is, but it seems that he is suggesting that such positions of female inferiority should exist. For instance, each of the stories creates the illusion that the main character exercises her will throughout the story in choosing her own fate. Although this illusion is probably the strongest reason for believing that the woman's situation at the end of the story is a just one, the attempt to hold the woman completely responsible for her fate is actually unsuccessful. It is only as a result of blackmail that Matilda marries Hadrian in "You Touched Me", and the choices of the women in "Second Best" and "Fanny and Annie" are for men of a second preference. At times the choices of these two women seem nonsensical. In particular, we are given no real source which persuades us that the seemingly self-destructive actions of both Fanny and Frances are credible.

We turn now, however, to the stories themselves in order to examine these ideas and arguments in more detail.

As mentioned above, in all three stories the circumstances of the plot dictate the fate of the women to a higher degree than they do the fate of the man. In "You Touched Me", we could consider the case of Matilda and Hadrian. Here, Hadrian is clearly in a position of power, while Matilda stands vulnerable and victimized.

From the beginning of the story Matilda is placed at a disadvantage. When Hadrian, her adopted brother, arrives the reader finds her cleaning the house with her hair wrapped "coquettishly in a duster", preparing for his arrival.<sup>2</sup> At this early stage in the story Lawrence seems to place the burden of responsibility for their later relationship on the shoulders of Matilda. The adverb "coquettishly" suggests that Matilda hides a secret romantic interest for Hadrian, thus helping to make more plausible her agreeing to the marriage, which transpires at the end of the story. Lawrence's description of Matilda and her sister Emmie, as they prepare for Hadrian's visit, also suggests an excitement which goes beyond normal anticipation:

They were in a flutter. Emmie persuaded her father to have his bed made finally in the morning-room downstairs, whilst his room upstairs was prepared for Hadrian.

Here, Hadrian takes priority over the father and in the end he actually replaces him.

The special treatment given to Hadrian by the sisters in the early stages of the story, however, seems rather extreme.



Hadrian, by merely re-introducing himself into their lives, receives much more than visitors' privileges. We are told that he has no real claim to anything and yet, the sisters fuss over him as though he had and despite the fact that they resent being placed at a disadvantage as a result of their first meeting. However, we must remember what Lawrence himself suggests motivates the women to act as they do. Excitement, in this sense is not a positive emotion, but rather a fearful one:

The girls were terribly fluttered. To tell the truth,<sup>4</sup> they were a little afraid of Hadrian.

If we assume that the girls fear Hadrian because they are threatened by him, our assumptions are later verified. More than this, they fear not only Hadrian, but their father, since he has ultimate control over their lives.

The fact that the father eventually transfers his power over his daughters to Hadrian, confirms the suspicion that Hadrian was meant to be an authority figure. The women, particularly Matilda, were correct in feeling threatened by him. Ironically, the power transfer from Matilda's father to Hadrian is done by means of a kiss. Commanded by him to do so, Matilda must first kiss her father, then her new husband Hadrian, and as the story ends, the dying father repeats "That's right! That's right!"<sup>5</sup> For Matilda, the circumstances of which she is not in control, dictate her only option.

She is forced to marry Hadrian because she is powerless on her own. Yet the dying man's words, the repetition of "That's right!", suggests to the reader that the story's outcome is a proper one.

The incident from which the title of the story comes also supports this justifiable conclusion. Matilda is the "you" in "You Touched Me", implying that somehow she is to be held responsible for her new situation. As the critical episode of the story demonstrates, the conflict between the characters is an unbalanced one. Unwittingly, Matilda goes to her father's room, sentimentally reaches down to touch his face, and finds Hadrian instead. This action, although unintentional, is used by Hadrian to justify his possession of her. Lawrence allows Hadrian to interpret Matilda's fatalistic accident for his own purposes. After the incident Matilda tells Hadrian that she does not want to talk to him and he tells her:

"You put your hand on me though,..."  
"You shouldn't have done that, and then  
I should never have thought of it. You  
shouldn't have touched me."<sup>6</sup>

But even though it is Matilda who touches Hadrian, the idea that she chooses her marriage to him is an illusion. Her action is involuntary, and her marriage to Hadrian a result of blackmail. Unless she obeys the command of her father to marry Hadrian, she shall be excluded from her father's will, and having no means of financial support

herself, she has no other option than to marry him. As a result, Matilda is defeated and she loses control over her own life. Hadrian, on the other hand, began with no rightful claim to anything, and ends up with everything that he wants.

In The Dark Sun, Graham Hough tries to explain that the relationships between men and women in Lawrence are ones of unconscious bonds:

Relations between men and women are always relations of conflict, and lovers rarely seem ever to have any ordinary human understanding of each other; all the stress is on bonds other than the conscious ones.

Even this, however, is not altogether true, as we see in the case of Hadrian and Matilda. For if there is a bond, it is one of fear, rather a rod of domination which controls the woman's freedom.

Lawrence's use of such an accidental, even trivial, incident which brings about the destruction of Matilda's life and happiness seems unfair since it suggests Lawrence's bias towards Hadrian. Matilda ends in an unhappy situation which she did not choose, and we are not even sure why she deserves it.

We find similar problems in other of Lawrence's stories including "Second Best" and "Fanny and Annie". In these two stories, just as in "You Touched Me", the woman is exposed to humiliating circumstances. She is portrayed as vulnerable and put at a disadvantage at the beginning of the story, and defeated in the end. At the beginning of "Fanny

and Annie", we discover that Fanny has been rejected by her lover and is returning home to accept another man as her second choice. Frances of "Second Best" also returns home to do the same thing after her lover has replaced her with another woman. However, while the situations in each story seem one and the same for both the man and the woman, it is the man who gains. What is confusing, however, is that it seems to be by her own choice that the woman loses, when in actual fact she is powerless and her future depends on the man's acceptance of her. The man in these cases is not at a disadvantage in the same way at all: if the woman approaches him he will gain; if she does not, it will make no significant difference to his established social or personal life.

As with Matilda in "You Touched Me", both Fanny and Frances appear to use their freedom to choose their own fate. Both seem to be responsible for their own dissatisfying positions in life. However, if we examine the relationships between the incidents within each plot, we find a rather tenuous structure and a disturbing series of episodes, which leads to the self-destruction of the main character. This destruction, however, is often found to be unmotivated and here is where we take issue with Lawrence's responsibility as a writer.

In "Fanny and Annie", we find a rather puzzling picture of a woman who returns to her original home after having been rejected by her lover. She intends to settle

down with her first love, a foundry worker in the village. From the beginning of the story, we are aware of her despair, one which borders on apathy. Significantly, Fanny steps down from the train onto the platform where Harry, her first love, is waiting:

Her soul groaned within her, as he clambered into the carriage after her bags. Up shot the fire in the twilight sky, from the great furnace behind the station. She felt the red flame go across her face. She had come back, she had come back for good. And her spirit groaned <sup>g</sup>dismally. She doubted if she could bear it.

The reader's first thought, of course, is why does she return to such a dismal place? Lawrence, anticipating this question, provides an answer for us. He informs the reader that her life, after her cousin had jilted her, had been punctuated with several affairs which had come to nothing. As a last resort then, she returns to marry Harry, whom it is clearly stated, she does not love.<sup>9</sup> This information, however, is not really enough to answer this question. We know little of the rest of her life. What we know of her history is told primarily in relation to men. Even her employment situation and her age hint that she is approaching the "old maid" stage. We are informed that she is a thirty year old lady's maid, which indicates that she is financially disadvantaged. The fact that this might, however, give her some measure of independence is not elaborated upon in the story. If we accept, however, what the author has told us

concerning why Fanny comes home, we begin to look for reasons why she should stay. We do not find any. What we find, in fact, is an episode in the church which encourages us to expect Fanny to leave.

As Harry is singing in the church, a woman stands up in the middle of the congregation, points her finger towards Harry, and accuses him of making her daughter, Annie, pregnant, leaving her to face shame and humiliation alone:

"You look well standing there, singing in God's holy house," came the loud, angry female shout. Everybody turned electrified. A stoutish, red-faced woman in a black bonnet was standing up denouncing the soloist. Almost fainting with shock, the congregation realized it. "You look well, don't you, standing there singing solos in God's holy house, you, Goodall. But I said I'd shame on you. You look well, bringing your young woman here with you, don't you? I'll let her know who she's dealing with. A scamp as won't take the consequences of what he's done." The hard-faced, frenzied woman turned in the direction of Fanny. "That's what Harry Goodall is, if you want to know."<sup>10</sup>

Afterwards, when Fanny asks Harry if there is any truth to the accusation, Harry says, "It's no more mine than it is some other chap's."<sup>11</sup> What is disturbing is not Harry's affair with Annie, but that he dismisses her plight, a plight he may well have caused, so casually. Yet Lawrence has Fanny continue to stay with Harry and then marry him. The question still remains, therefore, why does she give herself up to such an unhappy fate.

It is possible to consider one or even two motives

for Fanny's action: one could see her motivated by power or passion. If we examine first the power motive, it may be the case that, since Fanny is "such a lady" and Harry a commoner, she would opt for power in the absence of love.<sup>12</sup> This, however, does not make sense. Clearly, the episode in the church puts Fanny at a disadvantage. Not only has she been unsuccessful in finding happiness outside of her village, now she must cope with a humiliating environment created by living with a discredited husband. As she is described returning to Harry's for tea after church, her frame of mind is revealed: "Some obstinacy made her turn with him along the road to his own home."<sup>13</sup> This obstinacy is completely unexplained. Given the recent episode in the church, it could not be for power or pride, for her pride had suffered; "she felt he dragged her down".<sup>14</sup>

It is easy to believe that her decision to stay with Harry is a mistake. Lawrence himself draws a parallel between Fanny and her aunt, whose similar marital experience causes her to express concern for the future happiness of her niece: "she cried woefully over her bright niece, when she had gone to bed".<sup>15</sup>

The other motive, passion, the unconscious bond that Hough refers to, might be another motivating factor for Fanny. It is true that Harry, although rather passive, is a passionate man. Our first image of him is one of him with a "flame-lit"

face. His soloist's voice seems to fill the church with resounding emotion. However, it is not a shared passion with Fanny. On the contrary, his passion is something which seems to dominate her. As she listens to Harry singing in the choir she ponders:

Fanny felt the crisp flames go through her veins as she listened. Even the curious loud-mouthed vernacular had a certain fascination. But, oh, also, it was repugnant. He would triumph over her, obstinately he would drag her right back<sup>16</sup> into the common people: a doom, a vulgar doom.

And, of course, this is exactly what happens. Fanny agrees to stay with Harry and his mother, with whom we learned earlier, she has nothing in common. Fanny chooses to stay, but without any real explanation why. Apparently, she has no other option or direction in which to take her life. We wonder, in fact, if there is really any significant difference between Fanny and Annie. For while Fanny seems to be less trapped by her circumstances than Annie is, both women have been defeated by the same man.

In "Second Best" we have a similar situation to that in "Fanny and Annie". The episodes of the plot in "Second Best", however, present an even more sophisticated picture of the main character's self-destruction.

Frances, the main character in "Second Best", has been carried along with the hope of a happy future with Jimmy Barrass. He has left her for another woman to whom he is now engaged and Frances is alone. Lawrence arouses our sympathy



for Frances by presenting her as a sad, defeated figure at the beginning of the story. What he does then, is transfer that sympathy from Frances to the little mole that Anne, her sister, catches and plays with as the two sisters sit and talk. The mole, trapped in the hands of Anne and held at her mercy, in effect, represents Frances. At first she feels "a keen pity for the little creature".<sup>17</sup> Later, as she recognizes it too much like herself, she wants to destroy it:

In an instant Anne put her foot upon it, not too heavily. Frances could see the struggling, swimming movement of the little pink hands of the brute, the twisting and twitching of its pointed nose, as it wrestled under the sole of the boot.

Frances could now see, beyond the edge of the bootsole, the heaving of the velvet shoulders, the pitiful turning of the sightless face, the frantic rowing of the flat, pink hands.  
"Kill the thing," she said, turning away her face.<sup>18</sup>

The mole, itself, is a powerful life image in the story. It is described by Lawrence with tenderness. It is weak, natural, and something which should not be caged. In its own environment, it is quite beautiful:

A mole was moving silently over the warm, red soil, nosing, shuffling hither and thither, flat and dark as a shadow, shifting about, and as suddenly brisk, and as silent, like a very ghost of jolie de vivre.<sup>19</sup>

The mole, however, also does its share of damage. It is disruptive to the man's ordered, structured farm. This, at least, is the opinion of Frances' "second best", a fellow

named Tom Smedley.

In a tense conversation between Tom and Fanny we are sure that the underlying meaning of the exchange has to do with the feminine nature of the mole, that is, as it is opposed to the idea of the rationally ordered, male nature of the farm. The two stand discussing the killing of the mole:

"And don't you consider it is necessary?" he asked, with misgiving.

"W-ell - is it?" she said, looking at him steadily, coldly.

"I reckon it is," he replied, looking away, but standing stubborn.

She laughed quickly.

"But it isn't necessary for me," she said, with slight contempt.

"Yes, that's quite true," he answered. She laughed in shaky fashion.

"I know it is," she said; and there was an awkward pause.

"Why, would you like me to kill moles then?" she asked tentatively, after a while.

"They do us a lot of damage," he said, standing firm on his own ground, angered.

"Well, I'll see the next time I come across one." she promised defiantly.<sup>20</sup>

This is certainly a conversation with the undertones of a courtship ritual. When Frances asks him if he would like her to kill moles, she is, in fact, asking him if he wants her. What is disturbing is that after this conversation with Smedley, Frances does not merely come across a mole, she goes out and secretly hunts one down, destroys it and returns to Smedley with it. We are faced with the problem of why she destroys the mole, a creature which represents an aspect of herself. Why this act of symbolic self-destruction?

Certainly not for power because self-destruction negates power. Certainly not for passion, since we are told that she was only slightly affected by Tom, and he is after all, what she considers to be second best. We think perhaps, when we consider the last lines of the story, "But there was a thrill of pleasure in this death", that there may exist a masochistic motive in her actions.<sup>21</sup> This motive, however, is not dealt with at all in the story. We have no reason to believe that Frances is a masochist.

It is true that Frances has been hurt by the loss of Jimmy, but Lawrence goes beyond telling us that taking someone on the rebound is not a positive action. It seems that Frances must submit herself to some kind of destruction in order to find a new place for herself in the world. This submission seems necessary since Lawrence neither provides Frances, nor the reader, with a possible alternative to her self-denying deed. We are given nothing to distract us from the direction which Frances takes. Anne is no example of an alternative, for example. She is too young and cannot be compared to Frances. Lawrence establishes that at the beginning of the story.

That Lawrence intends Frances' defeat is clear. After sitting with Anne in the middle of a field, Frances stands up and begins to walk directly towards the catalyst of her self-destruction, Tom Smedley. The turn of events in the story, however, remains confusing and awkward.

There exists an unclear connection between the incidents. It is, after all, a big step for Frances from being "tired" at the story's start, to experiencing a symbolic death at the end. If the connection is supposed to imply a cycle of rebirth or renewed energy, it simply does not work. The title clearly states that Smedley is "second best", and the void in Frances' life that remains after the symbolic killing of the mole, is replaced by an option devoid of meaning.

Lawrence seems unable to succeed in portraying women who are happy. With the exception of Louisa in "Daughters of the Vicar", Lawrence generally fails to provide a positive life for women, and indeed any real hope for the future of satisfying relationships between men and women. Even Louisa, who seems to find happiness with Alfred at the end of the story, must step down from her superior class in order to do so. The imbalance between men and women introduced at the beginning of this study contributes to this recurrent presentation of dissatisfying relationships.

One form of this imbalance involves the entrapment of the women in Lawrence's stories. In "Odour of Chrysanthemums" and "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman" we find that the female characters are trapped in equally desperate situations. The women, from the beginning to the end of the story, have no place to go; they cannot escape their oppressive conditions. Even after her husband's death at the end of "Odour of Chrysanthemums", Elizabeth Bates does not gain freedom or

relief from it, although we expect her to do so. She finds only a sort of despair. In the case of "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman", Mrs. Pinnegar is in a helpless position and there develops a critical tension between the characters as the story unfolds. This tension, however, is not released. The problems with plot structure in both stories, therefore, are similar in that these women seem unnecessarily trapped and Lawrence appears unable to find anywhere for them to go.

In "Odour of Chrysanthemums" we find an image at the beginning of the story which exhibits a striking example of this problem:

A woman, walking up the railway lines to Underwood, drew back into the hedge, held her basket aside, and watched the footplate of the engine advancing. The trucks thumped heavily past, one by one, with slow inevitable movement, as she stood insignificantly trapped between the jolting black wagons and the hedge; then they curved away toward the coppice where the withered oak leaves dropped noiselessly, while the birds, pulling at the scarlet hips beside the track, made off into the dusk that had already crept into the spinney.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly, the woman is trapped between a hedge and a locomotive; one representing the natural world and the other the oncoming progress of the modern industrialized world. This, indeed, draws our attention to the crisis of modernization and woman's position in it. Notice too, that the woman is "insignificantly" trapped, indicating that her crisis is going unnoticed perhaps. Kingsley Widmer, in The Art of Perversity, argues that this image is a part of Lawrence's

effort to avoid undue sentimentality. Lawrence, he says, gives "the domestic drama a kind of cosmic impersonality".<sup>23</sup> If this is true, however, it is not all that the image does. It gives us a very violent picture of the woman's predicament of the times. The fact that she is anonymous may indicate that she may be any woman, or perhaps all women.

Elizabeth Bates, the main character in "Odour of Chrysanthemums" is very much present and not at all anonymous. Her hardships, the depressing environment which surrounds her, are evoked with overwhelming clarity:

At the edge of the ribbed level of sidings squat a low cottage, three steps down from the cinder track. A large bony vine clutched at the house, as if to claw down the tiled roof. Round the bricked yard grew a few wintry primroses. Beyond, the long garden sloped down to a bush-covered brook course. There were some twiggy apple trees, winter-cracked trees, and ragged cabbages. Beside the path hung dishevelled pink chrysanthemums, like pink cloths hung on bushes. A woman came stooping out of the felt-covered fowl-house, half-way down the garden. She closed and padlocked the door, then drew herself erect, having brushed some bits from her white apron.<sup>24</sup>

Everything in this passage indicates decay and regression. The vine seems to claw down the house, the primroses are few, the garden slopes down, the apple trees are twiggy and winter-cracked, and the cabbages are ragged. Elizabeth Bates is stooped as she is introduced to us and we recognize her effort as she draws herself erect. It is only the chrysanthemums that seem incongruous with the rest of the environment.

For Mrs. Bates, the chrysanthemums represent the

relationship between herself and her husband. At the beginning it is a good relationship with a promising future, a positive thing, but as time moves on, like the flowers, it begins to die and finally does die with Mr. Bates' death at the end of the story. Symbolizing the death of the relationship is the crashing of the vase which holds the chrysanthemums when her dead husband is brought into the home.

We know, from Mrs. Bates herself, that the flowers have become, for her, a symbol of unfulfilled dreams. As her daughter, Annie, expresses delight over the odour of the flowers in an early scene, Mrs. Bates responds by expressing her own view of the flowers:

"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>25</sup>

Yet Mrs. Bates does take some of the flowers from the bush, puts them against her cheek, and then into her pocket. For the reader, the chrysanthemums become a symbol of illusion. They are used to hide something ugly or to decorate, an illusion just like her marriage.

The image of the chrysanthemums throughout the story works with the incidents within the plot to create the tension which was referred to earlier. The claustrophobic atmosphere of the little cottage, kept dark by a waning fire, encloses Mrs. Bates and her two children as they wait for

Mr. Bates to come home from work. With each movement and each act of preparation that she makes, the tension rises and the reader's sense that Mrs. Bates is in a stifling circumstance becomes stronger. If we compare, for example, an early passage from the story with a later one, we observe the change in tone:

The kitchen was small and full of firelight; red coals piled glowing up the chimney mouth. All the life of the room seemed in the white, warm hearth and the steel fender reflecting in the red fire. The cloth was laid for tea; cups glinted in the shadows. At the back, where the lowest stairs protruded into the room, the boy sat struggling with a knife and a piece of white wood. He was almost hidden in the shadow. It was half-past four. They had but to await the father's coming to begin tea.<sup>26</sup>

In this passage, the atmosphere is warm and the glinting of the tea cups in the firelight gives the setting an almost fairy-tale tone. The mood is undercut, however, as the boy sits cutting his wood and we are bluntly made aware of the time. The warm fire gradually gets lower, the family decides to have their tea without Mr. Bates, and later we find Elizabeth Bates apprehensive, tense, and angry as she waits for the sound of her husband's footsteps:

She worked at her sewing with energy, listening to the children, and her anger wearied itself, lay down to rest, opening its eyes from time to time and steadily watching, its ears raised to listen. Sometimes even her anger quailed and shrank, and the mother suspended her sewing, tracing the footsteps that thudded along the sleepers outside; she would lift her head sharply to bid the children 'hush', but she recovered herself in time, and the footsteps went past the gate, and the children were not flung out of their playworld.<sup>27</sup>



This build-up of tension increases until she discovers, after having left the house to search for her husband, that he has been killed in a mining accident. Her mother-in-law, who informs her of the accident, collapses upon hearing the news that her son is in fact dead. Mrs. Bates must take control of everything, she must take responsibility for her mother-in-law, she must think about her future financial situation, the children, and the business of preparing her husband's dead body. Never is the pressure on her alleviated. As she washes her husband's body, she draws close to embrace him. In this instant, she experiences what might be termed a revelation. She realizes that he is gone, and that their life together had been a lie, that she never knew him nor he her. This seems to be a rather abrupt turn of events, however, for it is a severe denial of everything that went before.

Certainly the illusion that the chrysanthemums represent is a valid one and works well to enrich the story. However, the child she is now pregnant with also becomes a part of the smashed illusion: "The child was like ice in her womb."<sup>28</sup> This is most disconcerting when we recall the delicacy with which her pregnancy was revealed:

As she reached up, her figure displayed itself just rounding with maternity.

"Oh, mother - !" exclaimed the girl.

"What?" said the woman, suspended in the act of putting the lamp-glass over the flame. The copper reflector shone handsomely on her, as she

stood with uplifted arm, turning to face her daughter.

"You've got a flower in your apron!" said the child, in a little rapture at this unusual event.<sup>29</sup>

Certainly the flowers capture our attention and remind us of the fact that her marriage is a lifeless one. However, Annie's delight and excitement are not an illusion, nor is the actual child that Mrs. Bates is carrying. To have the chrysanthemums that are in her apron pocket so strongly connected to the child in the womb is surely nihilistic. Lawrence, somewhat unfairly, builds a genuine tension in the reader and then intensifies the tension without providing any release. Confusingly, Lawrence writes that Mrs. Bates chooses life with "peace sunk heavy on her heart".<sup>30</sup> Peace, however, does not sink heavy on one's heart; a weight does. The language used in the story at this point neither is positive nor provides a resolution. Lawrence tells us that she "submitted to life" and that from death, she "winced with fear and shame".<sup>31</sup>

In D. H. Lawrence at Work, Keith Cushman claims that the death of Mr. Bates brings Mrs. Bates truth.<sup>32</sup> This may be true, in that she realizes the illusion that was her marriage. He then goes on to say, that for her, the truth liberates. We do not have a view of her at the end of the story as a liberated person, however. She continues to be weighed down. Widmer states in The Art of Perversity, that Mrs. Bates' embrace of the corpse "is a double revelation - of her failure

in love, as a wife and person, and of the absolute aloneness and defeat that is the limiting condition of life".<sup>33</sup> This seems rather a harsh statement. Mrs. Bates after all is carrying the hope of the future that comes with regeneration. Furthermore, to say that she has failed as a person is too strong a statement to make merely because she realizes that her marriage was not what she thought it to be. Lawrence's handling of the story, particularly the ending, leaves the reader feeling dissatisfied and confused. Like the woman trapped between hedge and train, Lawrence cannot find anywhere for Mrs. Bates to go. This obstacle limits the success of "Odour of Chrysanthemums", and also the success of "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman" as we shall see.

Emilia Pinnegar, the central female figure of "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman", is another example of a woman pinned between hedge and train. She sees her only escape from a dreary, unhappy life as a collier's wife through suicide. When asked why she does not abandon her life in the colliery town, she states:

"I don't see what difference it would make," she said. Then glancing round at her child; "I don't see what difference anything would make, except getting out of the world altogether. But there's her to consider." And she jerked her head in the direction of the child.

This reference to the child is important because, as in "Odour of Chrysanthemums", we are reminded that life must go on and somehow we must find a way to cope with it. This

is particularly true in Emilia's case.

Emilia tries to escape from her entrapment through her poetry. She tries in effect to overcome her despair by releasing her energies and emotions into her writing. Initially, this is something of her own which gives her hope, even if it is a subconscious hope. She sends her poetry to a periodical, the Commentator, and the editor is curiously aroused by it, enough to want to meet her. Then, ironically, Emilia's only true possession and seeming comfort leads her from one oppressing situation into another.

Jimmy Firth, the editor who comes to visit Emilia, is portrayed as a man who is self-centered. We quickly become aware that he does not really connect himself with the rest of the world. After a bad marriage, he sets out on an adventure to meet Mrs. Pinnegar. Upon meeting and talking to her briefly, he decides to save her from her horrible life with her husband and spontaneously asks her to come and live with him. Mrs. Pinnegar, seeing an escape from her world, agrees. We soon learn, however, that her spark of hope needs to be extinguished. During a short discussion between Jimmy and Mr. Pinnegar, we become aware that she is nothing more than a chattel, an object whose possession is to be negotiated between the two men. As the men talk, she is described as sitting silently, "in her tall-backed rocking-chair under the light", like an object on display.<sup>35</sup> The mood is tense and although Lawrence does

avoid sentimentality, we do feel a significant level of sympathy for Emilia. The scene as she washes her husband's back in front of the fire and then goes to prepare his tea calls for a sympathetic view of her; more importantly, however, her husband's cold and open admission that he has a mistress rallies the reader to her side. Nevertheless, the transfer is made and she becomes the new possession of Jimmy Firth.

The young editor clearly has no sense of Emilia as a real person. He is completely unaware of the implications of the entire situation. Mr. Pinnegar, however, is not, and he sadistically seems to wish the worst for his wife:

"She thinks," he said again, "that she has some wonderful future awaiting her somewhere, and you're going to open the door."  
 And again the same amused grin was in his eyes. And again Jimmy was fascinated by the man. And again he hated the spell of this fascination. For Jimmy wanted to be, in his own mind, the strongest man among men, but particularly among women.<sup>36</sup>

Jimmy is interested in Mrs. Pinnegar only because he thinks she will increase his power as a man. We know from this passage that Mr. Pinnegar is correct, and that Emilia will be defeated. At the end of the story, there is, as there was in "Odour of Chrysanthemums", no release of tension, no hope for the woman. As Jimmy drives home in a taxi after picking Mrs. Pinnegar up from the station he considers his new situation:

And as he sat in the taxi, a perverse but intense

desire for her came over him, making him almost helpless. He could feel, so strongly, the presence of that other man about her, and this went to his head like neat spirits. That other man! In some subtle, inexplicable way, he was actually bodily present, the husband. The woman moved <sup>37</sup>in his aura. She was hopelessly married to him.

We must not mistake this feeling that Jimmy has as a recognition of some unconscious bond between husband and wife. His feeling is that of excitement and victory over taking Emilia from her husband rather than wanting her for what she herself has to give.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p.244.

<sup>2</sup>David Herbert Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), II, p. 397.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.396.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.410.

<sup>6</sup>Graham Hough, The Dark Sun (New York: Octagon Books, 1979), p.173.

<sup>7</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. II, p.408.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.458.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.459.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p.467.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p.469.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p.461.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p.470.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p.465.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p.463.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p.466.

<sup>17</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. I, p.214.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.219.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p.220.

<sup>22</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. II, p.283.

<sup>23</sup>Kingsley Widmer, The Art of Perversity (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), p.22.

<sup>24</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. II, pp.283-284.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p.289.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p.286.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p.289.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p.300.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p.288.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p.302.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Keith Cushman, D. H. Lawrence at Work (Hassocks: The Harvester Press Limited, 1978), p.145.

<sup>33</sup>Widner, p.23.

<sup>34</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. III, p.612.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p.619.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p.627.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p.629.



## CHAPTER TWO

By an examination of Lawrence's characterization of the women in a selection of his short stories, this chapter will explore how the quality of that characterization affects the stories as a whole. The stories to be dealt with here are "The Princess", "The Woman Who Rode Away", and "None of That", all of which contain a female protagonist. Because the focus of each story is on the woman, the stories invite an investigative interest into what the woman represents in terms of Lawrence's universal view of her role in society. Since the success of a story very much depends on how well we believe in its characters, particular attention will be paid to the credibility of the woman. I will, therefore, attempt to show how successful Lawrence is in providing us with comprehensible female characters whose development carries us along the path which leads to the story's meaning.

One of the more noticeable features observed when comparing the three stories is the similarity of the main characters. There is actually much repetition of character traits, so much so, in fact, that we find little that distinguishes one woman from another. It is as if Lawrence has cast each woman from the same mold. Different from the trapped and desperate women who were discussed

in chapter One, the women here are all upper-middle-class and significantly independently minded. Like the women of chapter one, these women are dissatisfied and appear unsuited to their environments. We have, for example, Dollie Urquhart of "The Princess", whose father has nurtured her in an aristocratic atmosphere. The main character in "The Woman Who Rode Away" is described as a "California girl from Berkeley" married to a wealthy silver mine owner.<sup>1</sup> Ethel Cane, from "None of That", is described as a rich born American woman who had "all that terrible American energy."<sup>2</sup>

Even within this mold, however, the identity of the woman is often difficult to grasp. She seems to lack the dimensions necessary for a substantially rounded central character. As Kate Millett points out, the main character of "The Woman Who Rode Away" does not even have a name.<sup>3</sup> She is given no real identity, and as we shall later see, we know her mainly as an object in a male world.

Dissatisfied with their present lives, all of these women leave their "civilized" worlds to seek fulfilment in male-oriented ones, which are characterized by a more "primitive" cultural milieu, notably Mexican Indian. They are, however, defeated even more violently than those other women who are trapped and desperate in mining villages. Furthermore, these women tend to assume a passive attitude toward male authority which seems to inspire their destruction.

The women's behavior, however, is confusing because all are presented as "wilful" women with strong, independent spirits. Why the women are destroyed is also a problem, in this respect, and so I will examine both what leads up to the woman's defeat and whether or not this defeat is justifiable in relation to the development of her character.

The use of the sun, the south, and particularly the warmer climate of Mexico, is adopted by Lawrence in order to depict the primitive, male world referred to above. The south and the sun are what we associate with passion and, of course, warmth. The men in these southern environments have that passion; we find it in Romero, Dollie's Indian tourguide, and in Cuesta, Ethel's Mexican bullfighter. What they have also, however, is power or control, and a strong connection with the natural world around them. The women, on the other hand, are less secure in the southern environment and are somewhat isolated.

In these stories we observe that the women characters are distanced from their surroundings, and lack any real connection with them. From "The Woman Who Rode Away", we see an example of this isolation in an early description of the main character:

To be sure, the great wooden doors were open. And then she could stand outside, in the vast open world. And see the great, void, tree-clad hills piling behind one another, from nowhere into nowhere. They were green in autumn-time. For the rest, pinkish, stark dry and abstract.<sup>4</sup>

This description shows the woman surrounded by a rather alien environment. We have her sole image overpowered by the "void, tree-clad hills" and the "pinkish, stark-dry" trees. In a similar way, Dollie Urquart of "The Princess" seems unable to find any real place for herself in the world. In the following quotation, we see how Lawrence depicts her character, a character which seems to lack any connection with the rest of society:

She looked as if she had stepped out of a picture. But no one, to her dying day, ever knew exactly the strange picture her father had framed her in and from which she never stepped.<sup>5</sup>

In "None of That", Ethel Crane is very popular, very wealthy, but very much alone. The strength of her character goes beyond mere independence though, and we know that something is lacking in her life. She seems to know many people, casually and socially. However, the fact that she seems to have no intimate relationships, friendships or otherwise, indicates that she is isolated. Furthermore, her passion for "things" suggests that she displaces her need to love onto inanimate objects:

She coveted such things with lust, and would go into a strange sensual<sup>6</sup> trance, looking at some old worm-eaten chair.

These "things", her collection of old furniture and velvet brocades, are things onto which Ethel can afford to release her passions, however, since, unlike human beings, things

cannot hurt her. In this way, we are able to recognize both her vulnerability and her insecurity. At a superficial level these descriptions precipitate a critical attitude towards the three women characters. However, what the descriptions actually imply is that these women lack something necessary for their happiness. It is for this reason that they all go off to search for something meaningful.

When the women do go off on their journeys, what they discover, or what the reader discovers, is the most violent depiction of female subjugation and annihilation. In "None of That", Ethel is devastated by gang rape, which leads her to kill herself. In "The Princess", Dollie suffers from an unwanted sexual experience and imprisonment. In "The Woman Who Rode Away", the woman becomes the ultimate victim in a ritualistic sacrifice. The repetition of the victimization of these women is striking, and they all appear to submit to their victimization without any fight at all. What appears to be the woman's voluntary subjugation is rather confusing to the reader because it is the independent spirit of these women which causes them to embark on their respective endeavours in the first place. Faith Pullin, although referring to Sons and Lovers, makes some remarks about Lawrence's treatment of his woman characters that are equally applicable to these short stories:

In many respects, Lawrence never emerged from the infantile state in which other people are merely instruments. This leads him to make

confusing and contradictory demands on his characters, as well as on the women with whom he interacted in his real life.

As I will show, these "contradictory demands" that Ms. Pullin refers to, can be found in the three stories under discussion here.

One feature all of the characters have in common is their self-consciousness. The same independence that these women share is brought about by self-consciousness. This is the very thing, however, that Lawrence despises: "Make a woman self-conscious, and her soul is barren as a sandbag".<sup>8</sup> As Kingsley Widmer states, their self-consciousness is what eventually causes their destruction.<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that the male characters are not self-conscious; they too have egos. In fact their egos at times actually seem to supersede the woman's. For example, Cuesta is certainly aware of his flamboyance as a bullfighter. Romero too, in assuming that Dollie's invitation to guide her into the mountains is also an invitation to be her lover, demonstrates his ego. Unlike the woman, however, these men are not destroyed by the relationships.

What is most disturbing in the midst of these issues is the authorial presence of Lawrence himself. In discussing "The Princess", Graham Hough expresses his discomfort with how Lawrence handles the story:

It is all done with power and conviction, but leaves behind a sense of disquiet. Apart from a mere social distaste for the theme, it is not

at first clear why. The contrast between the inhibited sexuality of the woman and the natural sexuality of the man is valid enough. And the not unknown situation in which a rich cosmopolitan woman half consciously exploits a poorer and more primitive man for his sensation value is a legitimate object of Laurentian satire. Yet there is something repellent about the treatment of this story, as about the treatment of similar themes elsewhere in Lawrence. I believe it is an impurity of motive, perceptible but hard to pin down.

This "impurity of motive" that Hough refers to not only undercuts the theme of the story, as we shall see in the next chapter, but also weakens the credibility of the characters. We close our books, leaving behind us a defeated woman, feeling somehow that she was supposed to be defeated, and yet not really understanding why.

The discussion might best be started by calling attention to another detail from Hough's comment. He alludes to the situation we find several times in Lawrence where a wealthy middle-class woman "half consciously exploits", he says, "a poorer and more primitive man for his sensation value". Whether or not the woman, in fact, does exploit the man is a question worth exploring. The woman in each of these stories, after all, is the one who, as a result of her interaction with the man, is destroyed in the end. More importantly, however, as obscure as her motives are for initiating the relationship with the man, in all three stories, they seem to stem from her own need to find fulfilment. There is no evidence to suggest that her motives derive from a

desire merely to exploit someone else.

At the beginning of "The Woman Who Rode Away", for example, we receive some insight into the monotonous role the woman has as the silver mine owner

Gradually her nerves began to go wrong: she must get out. She must get out. So he took her to El Paso for three months. And at least it was the United States.

But he kept his spell over her. The three months ended: back she was, just the same; in her adobe house among those eternal green or pinky-brown hills, void as only the undiscovered is void. She taught her children, she supervised the Mexican boys who were her servants. And sometimes her husband brought visitors...

Notice, however, that Lawrence's description of the woman's situation does in no way explore or elaborate upon why her nerves are beginning "to go wrong". We sense, instead, from the tone of the passage, that she is more like a spoiled child looking for mere entertainment. Indeed, her plans to go into the mountains are later described as "crazy".<sup>12</sup>

While these women characters are not sentimentalized, we find, interwoven into the text, evidence that suggests their desperation. All of these women long for escape, and yet Lawrence does not fully present the entrapment they suffer in an environment which offers little to satisfy their needs. Nor does he adequately account for why these women have the problems that they apparently do. The evidence that does exist is not emphasized and at times the author interrupts the narrative with his own comments, distracting the reader from sympathizing with the main



character. To return again to "The Woman Who Rode Away", the authenticity of the woman's need to reach out in an attempt to grasp some meaning from life is trivialized by an authorial intrusion:

...this particular vague enthusiasm for unknown Indians found a full echo in the woman's heart. She was overcome by a foolish romanticism more unreal than a girl's. She felt it was her destiny to wander into the secret haunts of these timeless, mysterious, marvellous Indians of the mountains.<sup>13</sup>

Here, it is not so much the poor and more primitive male the woman is energized by; rather, the source from which her enthusiasm comes is to be found in the adjectives Lawrence himself uses: timeless, mysterious, and marvellous. These are all of the things that we know are absent from the banal life that she is leading. The passage quoted above does not suggest the woman's desire to exploit a primitive male. Rather it merely reflects the woman's longing for an exciting and meaningful life. Furthermore, this longing seems reasonable, given what we know of the quality of her present existence.

The lack of a needed level of sympathy towards these women characters is not only to be found in the text of the stories. Critics, too, seem to often miss perceiving what is actually going on in these stories. In other words, there is an insufficient understanding of what logically motivates these women to be found either in the texts themselves or from the critics.

In discussing "None of That", Widmer claims that Ethel is a wilful woman. He argues that faith in an idea, more specifically, in the imagination, causes her to abandon any reverence for the physical.<sup>14</sup> After she is raped by six Mexican bullfighter's assistants, she kills herself.

In the following quotation, Widmer comments on her suicide:

Apparently the lady's imagination is unable to override the body and reality, and she kills herself, as she previously swore to do. The denial of actual life in the name of a spurious idealism collapses, and we see in melodramatic retrospect that a sham "belief" in "imagination" and "will" merely masked a longing for rape and destruction.<sup>15</sup>

It is true that the story presents Ethel's belief in the imagination disparagingly. However, in no way should we conclude that her belief in the imagination accounts for a "longing" to be raped and annihilated. The rape of a woman by six men does not represent "the body and reality", and it is hardly surprising to discover that Ethel's imagination or her ideals could not overcome such a brutal attack. Such an unconscious desire for annihilation should only come from the mind of a character who is presented as insane, and we have no evidence in the text to suggest that Ethel is insane, only dissatisfied.

As a result of what we see is Ethel's discomfort within an apparently normal social setting, we can infer that her life is devoid of a significant level of fulfilment:

It was only in intimacy that she was unscrupulous and dauntless as a devil incarnate. In public,

and in strange places, she was very uneasy, like one who has a bad conscience towards society, and is afraid of it. And for that reason she could never go out without a man to stand between her and all the others.<sup>16</sup>

This evidence, however, is not really sufficient enough to help us understand why she is dissatisfied or insecure. We do not understand what the root of her problem is and therefore we are unable to imagine a way for her to correct it.

In terms of her attraction to Cuesta, the Mexican bullfighter, we are not sure why Ethel is drawn so strongly towards him. What motivates her attraction to him seems almost masochistic and self-destructive. Ethel tries to avoid the spell of Cuesta, but she cannot. Like the other women in the story, she is fascinated by him:

So he held his arms out to the bull, with love. And that was what fascinated the women. They screamed and they fainted, longing to go into the arms of Cuesta, against his soft, round body, that was more yearning than a fico. But the bull, of course, rushed past him, and only got two darts sticking in his shoulder. That was the love.<sup>17</sup>

In this instance, we might be able to understand the woman's attraction to Cuesta, because, while he is very strong and powerful, he seems to have control over himself. He holds his arms out towards the bull with the gentleness of a lover. Later, of course, he delivers its death wounds. But the first part of the image we have of him could work as a plausible motive for his appeal to Ethel and the other

women. It is not this path, however, that the story follows. Instead, Ethel's attraction is developed as based on some sort of masochistic, unconscious desire. The attraction for Cuesta does not diminish after the sword is plunged into the side of the bull, as we might have imagined. Instead, Ethel's preoccupation with Cuesta seems to intensify. This turn of events, however, is rather awkward since the idea that she wants subconsciously to be victimized does not really make sense. Actually, it contradicts her will and strong spirit that we were shown earlier on in the story.

Returning to what Widmer argues, the story does suggest that Ethel's faith in the "imagination" results in an unhealthy perception of reality. We are shown how her belief in the power of imagination affects her outlook on life when she says:

If the imagination has the body under control,  
you can do anything, it doesn't matter what  
you do, physically.<sup>18</sup>

Again we do not know from where this need to believe in "imagination" comes. We may infer that it comes from her need to create meaning or purpose in her life. This idea, however, is not clearly suggested by the text. Furthermore, the fact that she is destroyed at the end of the story indicates that the author does not want the reader to follow this line of argument.

It appears then that, for Lawrence, Ethel's need

to believe in "imagination" stemming from her dissatisfying life is unacceptable. Otherwise, she would have been destroyed at the end of the story. By getting rid of Ethel, Lawrence gets rid of the problem. This handling of the complication in Ethel's character is irresponsible. Perhaps if Lawrence had provided some insight into what motivates Ethel, the development of her character could have been adequately dealt with and an acceptable solution to her problems presented.

In returning to Widmer's explanation of what motivates Ethel, we may consider that he has a point when he argues that in Lawrence's work the woman's unconscious will mask some unconscious desire.<sup>19</sup> This desire, however, may be for the physical in terms of human contact and communication, not conclusively for self-destruction. Since Ethel does come to such a devastating end without any comprehensible motivation on either her part or on the part of the men who rape her, it seems that Lawrence incorporates into his fiction his own viewpoints on the inferiority of women revealed in the following quotation:

When a woman is thoroughly herself, she is being what her type of man wants her to be.<sup>20</sup>

This statement implies that since the total identity of a woman depends on the needs or desires of her male partner, her importance or value as a contributing member to the human community also depends on the limitations that her

male partner has set out for her. Her inferiority, therefore, stems from her inability, as Lawrence determines it, to achieve self-identity. In any case, Ethel's need to believe in "imagination" and to exercise her will is not adequately dealt with in the story. Because the story lacks insight into the motives of the character, the reader is confused and the story loses a high level of credibility. Widmer himself states that Ethel is attracted to Cuesta, the Mexican bullfighter who hands her over to his assistants, for obscure motives. Ethel's suicide, however, demands motives which are not obscure, if we are to learn anything at all from the character or the story. As it exists the story seems rather purposeless and its value one of inferior sensationalism.

As was mentioned earlier, these stories provide the most violent depictions of female destruction. Widmer provides us with what he sees as the motive behind Lawrence's use of the woman in his fiction:

Lawrence repeatedly uses the female to dramatize the sicker forms of destruction. Though the dominant role of heroines and feminine sensibility in Lawrence's fictions may partly derive from his sources, . . . the obsessive quality of Lawrence's interest in the heroine runs much deeper.<sup>21</sup>

Widmer continues his discussion by relating Lawrence's Oedipus complex to his art. However, while biographical details may serve to help us understand Lawrence the man, and perhaps to a certain extent Lawrence the author, they

do not justify any problems we may find in the tales. Indeed, the destruction or self-destruction of any character without a sufficiently clear motivation provided by the author is very difficult to justify. Yet, despite this absence of clarity in relation to Ethel's fate in "None of That", somehow the tale gives us the feeling that the character deserved her end, and that the story ends on a sound note. In this respect, Graham Hough makes the comment that, "if she is raped and killed by six Mexican bullfighter's assistants, we are left to infer that this is what she deserves".<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps this feeling that the woman deserves her fate comes from the fact that we do not find a strong reason for her dissatisfaction with her life. Also, the fact that, in the final analysis, Ethel acts self-destructively by committing suicide, rather than being destroyed by something or someone outside of her own will, suggests that she is responsible for her own fate.

I take the position here that this is not the situation. Ethel, while seeming to create the circumstances of her own destruction, is actually being set up by the author as the object of male revenge. Her independence, dissatisfaction, and power are unacceptable. She is not, therefore, the subject of the story; she is the object of it.

This notion of the woman as object within a male world can be difficult to see. This problem is a result of the fact that, like the woman in "The Woman Who Rode Away"

and Dollie Urquhart, Ethel is the central character. She is the protagonist and is emphasized as such by the fact that she is virtually the only female character in the story. In other words, the power of the central character is not as great as the story leads us to believe. In this way, the story is marked by a kind of deception, thereby doing a disservice to both the character and the reader.

Similar to the type of problems found in Ethel's characterization in "None of That", are those which limit the success of "The Princess". As with Ethel, there is no progressive development of Dollie Urquhart's character. Her characterization is marked by a circular structure which brings her to her defeat. Because Dollie lives in a world of fiction and fantasy, it is difficult for the reader to relate to her. At first, therefore, we are somewhat distanced from her and thus unsympathetic towards her character. Then, Lawrence allows the reader to become closer to Dollie.

From her early interaction with Romero, we seem to see Dollie's emotional side and our sympathy for her is aroused. Although this stage in the story provides a potential situation for the development of her character, it does not happen. Instead, she is brutally snapped back into a world of unreality after Romero attacks and captures her. Furthermore, like "None of That", "The Princess" seems to implicate the female protagonist as the cause of



her own destruction.

At the beginning of "The Princess", Dollie is a character from whom we feel quite distanced. She is presented to us indirectly as her father's daughter rather than as Dollie Urquhart per se. The events of her life are narrated in a very factual tone:

The Princess learned her lesson early - the first lesson, of absolute reticence, the impossibility of intimacy with any other than her father; the second lesson, of naive, slightly benevolent politeness. As a small child, something crystallised in her character, making her clear and finished, and as impervious as crystal.<sup>23</sup>

The comparison between Dollie's character and the crystal provides us with an image of someone lovely but not quite human. Since there is no element of the emotional aspect of Dollie's character in this early description, it slightly predisposes the reader to be critical of her.

The same predisposition is also affected by Dollie's rather self-centred and fantastic view of the rest of the world. We are told, for example, that her knowledge of the world, given to her by her father, has not been acquired through first-hand experience. When she visits Paris she sees it with, rather than through, the eyes of Zola and Maupassant.<sup>24</sup> Later, when she observes a very charismatic cabman in Rome, described as "lusty" and "sensual", the narrator reveals her response:

She knew all about him, in Zola. And the peculiar condescension with which she would give him her

order, as if she, frail, beautiful thing, were the only reality, and he, coarse monster, was a sort of Caliban floundering in the mud on the margin of the pool of the perfect lotus, would suddenly enrage the fellow, the real Mediterranean who prided himself on his beauté male, and to whom the phallic mystery was still the only mystery.<sup>25</sup>

From this passage we can see that her perception of reality is a fantastic one and, it is easy to infer, a potentially dangerous one. Indeed, the response of the Roman cabman foreshadows the later actions of Romero, when he imprisons and subjugates Dollie in the New Mexico mountains. It is important to keep in mind, however, that it is her father who imposes this view of life upon her, although it is Dollie whom we see in action.

Our early introduction to Dollie presents a significantly different type of character from the one we encounter later on in the story. For when she meets Romero, her attraction to him is a very real one, based on the experiences she has with him. The excitement and anticipation that she feels for Romero are genuine, and through their interaction we see the emotional side of Dollie. As Romero helps her one day on a fishing excursion, we are aware of a gentleness of tone in the writing:

And he withdrew a little, and stood in silence, leaning against a tree, watching her. He was helping her across the distance. She knew it and thrilled. And in a moment she had a bite. In two minutes she landed a good trout. She looked round at him quickly, her eyes sparkling, the colour heightened in her cheeks. And as she

met his eyes a smile of greeting went over his dark face, very sudden, with an odd sweetness.<sup>26</sup>

While the earlier passage foreshadows Romero's brutality, this passage opposes that foreshadowing. The line, "He was helping her across the distance", could be interpreted as the distance between her life of fantasy and the superior life of the real world. Such an interpretation, however, leads us to believe that she is progressing in terms of human development. This, however, does not happen. As the story later reveals, Romero harshly turns on Dollie because she is unable to move from one extreme to the other; the world of passion is strange and frightening to her, and her rejection of Romero's demands wounds his ego, conjuring up his vengeful ambitions. In the end, Dollie returns to her world of fantasy and there has been no development of her character, only a brutal interruption of its linear movement through time. Thus the circular structure of the story fails to give the character any real chance to grow or learn.

It seems that Dollie is being punished by one man for being the creation of another man. Lawrence, himself, insists at the outset that Dollie is as she is because of her father. "It was her father's fault", he says.<sup>27</sup>

Yet we have, in the story, that deceptive quality referred to in "None of That", which gives us the impression that Dollie does have control, a control which allows her to

take the responsibility for her own fate.

There are occasions in the story that suggest that Dollie has choice, that she "wills" herself into situations. If we examine these occasions closely, however, we find that the suggestion that Dollie is responsible for her own defeat is not convincing enough to persuade us of her guilt. Indeed, as we examine her return to the world of illusion when she goes mad, we find that it is neither justifiable nor consistent with what leads up to the incident in the text.

After her father's death we are told that Dollie experiences a void in her life. Her father was her entire world and now she feels an emptiness that she must fill:

She felt that, since she could not evaporate into nothingness, like alcohol from an unstopped bottle, she must do something. <sup>28</sup>

This desire on Dollie's part to do something indicates a capacity for choice. So, she goes to New Mexico with her companion with the idea of marriage in mind.

It is in New Mexico that Dollie meets Romero and is attracted to him. Later, having been touched by the spark of passion in Romero, she longs for adventure. Like the woman in "The Woman Who Rode Away", she looks to the mountains:

And she thought of her adventure. She was going on alone with Romero. But then she was very sure of herself, and Romero was not the kind of man to do anything to her against her

will. This was her first thought. And she just had a fixed desire to go over the brim of the mountains, to look into the inner chaos of the Rockies. And she wanted to go with Romero, because he had some peculiar kinship with her; there was some peculiar link between the two of them.<sup>29</sup>

Now we see that she is eager to explore the natural world of the physical reality, of sensations. She tells Romero that she wants to see some wild animals.

Displacing a desire for the passionate life of the physical onto the adventure of a mountain trip, Dollie is not yet totally confident and comfortable with any human interaction. This, however, is not surprising given her past life as we know it from the text. Her choice to continue with Romero up the mountain slopes, after her companion turns back as a result of an accident, does not indicate her subconscious desire to be raped. Yet, we are told by the author that she later feels responsible for her situation with Romero.

In the camp with Romero, Dollie wakes up in the middle of the night cold and confused. Romero asks her if she wants to be made warm by him. Dollie, going against her instinct agrees:

And he was warm, but with a terrible animal warmth that seemed to annihilate her. He panted like an animal with desire. And she was given over to this thing. She had never, never wanted to be given over to this. But she had willed that it should happen to her. And according to her will, she lay and let it happen. But she never wanted it. She never wanted to be

thus assailed and handled, and mauled. She wanted to keep herself to herself.<sup>30</sup>

The following morning, Dollie's refusal to acknowledge and approve the previous night's encounter, angers Romero. Consequently, Romero repeatedly rapes Dollie and she is powerless to escape his watchful eye.

In this first contact with Romero we are not sure what is meant by "she had willed that it should happen to her". Certainly we find evidence to indicate that Dollie wanted a closeness with Romero and that she responds positively to him. However, it is his early kindness and his gentleness that she responds to, not his final brutality. Therefore, it seems that her desire was for a less intense relationship with Romero. As it stands, Dollie forfeits her liberty in attempting to enter a world which she does not really understand.

Robert H. MacDonald, in an article entitled, "Images of Negative Union: The Symbolic World of D. H. Lawrence's 'The Princess'", argues that the union of Dollie and Romero is an example of Lawrence's negative sexual union, the destructive combination of opposing elements. "The opposites", he says, "meet, and interact, and in this case destroy each other: Romero is killed and Dollie goes mad".<sup>31</sup> However, if this theory were to work, there would have to be some balance of power between those two opposites in order to substantiate a legitimate struggle, which there is not.

Dollie's choice to go with Romero and the motive behind that choice are turned into an advantage for Romero. There is no actual union between them. Furthermore, while it is true that both are destroyed by the experience, Dollie goes mad as a direct result of it, and Romero is killed by the outsiders. This indicates that even as they are destroyed, his power is still his own while hers is taken from her.

In "The Princess" domination and oppression disguise themselves as conflict, leaving us to question Lawrence's own motives behind the writing. In speaking of "The Princess", Mark Spilka gives the following comment:

In "The Princess" a more dubious wilful heroine, Dollie Urquhart, is repeatedly violated by her mountain guide when she calls for his warmth, mistakes it for male conquest, and - just as repeatedly - refuses to admire it. The envious, murderous Lawrence knows in his bones he can't win this way.<sup>32</sup>

Here, Spilka indicates his own suspicion that it is Lawrence, not Romero, who is intent on destroying Dollie.

"The Princess" is not the harshest treatment of women by Lawrence in his fiction. Among the short stories, "The Woman Who Rode Away" is the ultimate annihilation of the female. The woman in the story is nameless and her search for fulfillment as she rides away into the Mexican mountains ends in a ritualistic disaster. As Millett states, the real interest in the story is the crushing of the woman's will.<sup>33</sup>

After leaving a life where she seems to be nothing more than a possession of her mine owner husband, she embarks on a journey into the mountainous territory of the Indian. Where the women of the other stories are given obscure motives, this woman is given none. We only know that she is dissatisfied with a sterile life and now goes to search for something else. After coming upon three Indian men, she follows them to their village, hidden deep inside the mountain slopes. She is there held prisoner and eventually sacrificed to the sun.

The characterization of the woman is actually almost non-existent. Kingsley Widmer argues that she is a willing captive, and that while there are some problems of an overstated theme, the story successfully demonstrates that "the longing for a more primordial awareness really covers a desire for annihilation in the fullest sense".<sup>34</sup> Yet, the woman, even before she is captured by these Indians, has no stated desire, no clear longing, only an enthusiasm to leave her unhappy environment. Once on her journey she is stated as no longer even having a will:

Her horse plodded on, towards that immense and forbidding mountain-slope, following a stone little trail. And if she had had any will of her own left, she would have turned back, to the village, to be protected and sent home to her husband.

But she had no will of her own.<sup>35</sup>

This statement is rather confusing since a little further on in the story we see the woman's temper flair at the striking



of her horse by one of the Indians:

"Don't do that!" she cried, looking round angrily at the fellow. She met his black, large, bright eyes, and for the first time her spirit really quailed.<sup>35</sup>

Despite this slight inconsistency, her determination and her independent spirit, seen at the beginning of the story, are suddenly replaced by a passive mind and spirit. She becomes the non-thinking object of a male world.

There is little doubt as well, it seems, about the power and existence of this male world. As Millett points out, the world of the 'supreme male' is beyond sex; it involves power:

By 'male' Lawrence simply means oppressive force, a charisma of mastery, "something primevally male and cruel...."<sup>37</sup>

Certainly the Indians do not see the woman sexually: "They could not see her as a woman at all. As if she were not a woman."<sup>38</sup> They intend only to destroy her in their own primitive ritual.

Once in the camp, the woman's victimization and captivity are clear. She sees relatively few women, and is surrounded and controlled by the men of the village. Despite her lethargic behavior, she is given tranquilizers just in case she suddenly regains self-control. The personality of the woman loses presence in the story and it is her gender and her physical body which capture the focus:

They came quickly forward, and suddenly gripped her arms as she stood, without hurting her, but

with great power. Then two of the old men came, and with curious skill slit her boots down with keen knives, and drew them off, and slit her clothing so that it came away from her. In a few moments she stood there white and uncovered. The old man on the bed spoke, and they turned her round for him to see. He spoke again, and the young Indian deftly took the pins and comb from her fair hair, so that <sup>39</sup>it fell over her shoulders in a bunchy tangle.

Notice from this passage that, despite the initial hold on her, the captors do not even touch her. They use their knives to remove her clothing, indicating both their personal distance from her and their violent means. As her incarceration advances, she goes through a cult-like brainwashing experience.

In a vulnerable and confused drug-induced state, she listens to a young Indian tell her of the angry sun over whom they have lost their power. Her responsive words are born of manipulation:

"I hope you will get him back."  
 The smile of triumph flew over his face.  
 "Do you hope it?" he said.  
 "I do," she answered fatally.  
 "Then all right," he said. "We <sup>40</sup>shall get him."  
 And he went away in exultance.

The woman has no idea that she has just agreed to be the sacrificial white woman who, being responsible for having driven the moon back from the sky, will be killed and sent to appease the angry sun. Thus the sun, representing the natural reign of man, will again have the moon, the subordinate planet, representing woman, who has no light of its own but reflects only the rays of the sun.

As the story advances, the woman becomes less resistant to the forces around her. The final scene, in which she is being prepared for the sacrifice, presents the character as an observer only. She has lost all identity and, even though she is not the narrator, we seem to see the action through her eyes. As she is held, outstretched arms and legs grasped by four powerful priests on the stone at the mouth of a cave, we are told that:

She felt little sensation, though she knew all that was happening. Turning to the sky, she looked at the yellow sun. It was sinking. The shaft of the ice was like a shadow between her and it. And she realized that the yellow rays were filling half the cave, though they had not reached the altar where the fire<sup>41</sup> was, at the far end of the funnel-shaped cavity.

She begins to understand, like a distanced observer, that once the sun's light reaches the altar, the priests will take their knives and strike her dead in a sacrifice.

The symbolic elements of the scene do not seem difficult to identify. Kate Millett recognizes, quite reasonably, the cave for the womb and the knives for the penis and penetration.<sup>42</sup> Her argument is consistent with what we find here as the victimization of the woman and her role as an object of male power throughout the story:

Lawrence has improved upon the rape fantasy by sterilizing the story - removing all traces of overt and sexual activity and replacing them with his home-made<sup>43</sup> mythology - the woman is sacrificed to the sun.

Once again, therefore, we find that the woman is given no

real change to find fulfillment. Her character is subject to the control of the men around her, and she is given no opportunity to learn and grow.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>David Herbert Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories. (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), II, p.547.

<sup>2</sup>David Herbert Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories. (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), III, p.705.

<sup>3</sup>Kate Millett, Sexual Politics. (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p.285.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.546.

<sup>5</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. II, p.476.

<sup>6</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. III, p.706.

<sup>7</sup>Faith Pullin, "Lawrence's Treatment of Women in Sons and Lovers", in Anne Smith ed., Lawrence and Women. (London: Vision Press, 1978), p.49.

<sup>8</sup>David Herbert Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious. Introduced by Philip Rieff (New York: Viking Press, 1960), p.121.

<sup>9</sup>Kingsley Widmer, The Art of Perversity (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), p.78.

<sup>10</sup>Graham Hough, The Dark Sun (New York: Octagon Books, 1979), pp.179-180.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p.548.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p.550.

<sup>13</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. II, p.549.

<sup>14</sup>Widmer, p.80.

<sup>15</sup>Widmer, p.81.

<sup>16</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. III, p.713.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p.706.

<sup>18</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. III, p.718.

<sup>19</sup>Widmer, p.80.

<sup>20</sup>David Herbert Lawrence, Assorted Articles.  
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), p.236.

<sup>21</sup>Widmer, p.76.

<sup>22</sup>Hough, p.232.

<sup>23</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. II, p.476.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p.477.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p.484.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p.475.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p.480.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p.493.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p.504.

<sup>31</sup>Robert H. MacDonald, "Images of Negative Union:  
The Symbolic World of D. H. Lawrence's 'The Princess'",  
in Studies in Short Fiction 16(1979): p.289.

<sup>32</sup>Mark Spilka, "On Lawrence's Hostility to Wilful  
Women: The Chatterley Solution", in Anne Smith ed.,  
Lawrence and Women. (London: Vision Press, 1978), p.197.

<sup>33</sup>Millett, p.288.

<sup>34</sup>Widmer, p.33.

<sup>35</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. II, p.553.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p.555.

<sup>37</sup>Millett, p.290.

<sup>38</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. II, pp.557-558.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p.564.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p.573.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p.581.

<sup>42</sup>Millett, p.292.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p.286.

### CHAPTER THREE

In this chapter I will attempt to reveal what role the female plays within the structure of Lawrence's female-male relationships by examining the themes of "The Horsedealer's Daughter" and "The White Stocking". Both stories deal with a turbulent relationship between a man and a woman and end with an apparent resolution between them. For this reason, the stories are appropriate subjects for the study of theme discussed here.

Each story reflects Lawrence's dualism, characterized by a continuing cyclical process of conflict and resolution. Recalling Lawrence's metaphor of the unicorn and the lion fighting for the crown, we are reminded of the importance of a balanced opposition of the male and the female principles in Lawrence's metaphysic. Other aspects of importance are the necessity of conflict and the inevitability of destruction for both principles should this balance falter. There must be a resolution in the aftermath of conflict with the proper re-establishment of a balance between the opposing principles in order to complete the cycle. Finally, each new balance of the conflicting opposites advances the upward linear progress of developing relationships between the male and female principles.

Although this final stage, the upward progress of the male and the female principles, is not evidenced in "The



Horsedealer's Daughter" and "The White Stocking", we do find evidence of the cycle of opposition and resolution in both stories. Each couple experiences a crisis of interaction, which results in the intensification of their intimacy. Mabel, of "The Horsedealer's Daughter", is about to drown herself when Ferguson, the local doctor, rescues her. In "The White Stocking", Elsie is pulled back by her husband from straying too far beyond the limits that determine the boundaries of marriage.

In both stories it seems to be the woman who is causing the imbalance in the relationship: it is the woman who seems to reflect the destructive nature of the imbalance. Unlike the woman, the man appears not to be threatened by it. Using the principles of Lawrence's own theory as criticism upon which to evaluate the two stories, I will concentrate particularly on how successful Lawrence is in providing a balance of strength between the man and the woman in each relationship.

First I would like to call attention to Lawrence's own aesthetic principles in order to demonstrate how significantly his dualistic philosophy relates to his fiction. As Richard Foster tells us in an article entitled "Criticism as Rage: D. H. Lawrence", there is a strong connection between Lawrence the critic and Lawrence the artist:

Lawrence knew quite consciously - that is to say, theoretically and philosophically - what he expected of art, and he knew how to use those

expectations as principles, even as a basis and threshold for a general method of criticism peculiarly his own. Lawrence's principle was that the function of literature is moral. But, he wrote in Studies in Classic American Literature, it is a "passionate, implicit morality, not didactic"; it "changes the blood" before it changes the mind.<sup>1</sup>

Foster continues his discussion by telling us that Lawrence believed art had an obligation to destroy old and unhealthy beliefs first "so that new life could take root in cleared ground".<sup>2</sup> As we begin a discussion of Lawrence's theme in the two short stories, "The Horsedealer's Daughter" and "The White Stocking", we have in mind to discover what this "new life" that Foster refers to should consist of, in particular, what these stories imply with respect to the role of women.

Taking each story separately, the chapter will trace the actions of the characters through their world of experiences. Following this, a discussion will attempt to bring together common observations made of both stories. The chapter will conclude by presenting a view of the woman in Lawrence and her role proper as the author sees it.

"The Horsedealer's Daughter" opens with the question, "Well, Mabel, and what are you going to do with yourself?".<sup>3</sup> This question is crucial to the meaning of the story, for Lawrence builds on its suspenseful potentiality, creating both an awareness that Mabel is not in a satisfactory situation, and that she must make some sort of decision

regarding her future. Joe, the interlocutor and Mabel's brother, asks the question with "foolish flippancy", but as Lawrence tells us, he "felt safe himself", as he awaits his sister's response.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Joe is pointed out as foolish may imply that Lawrence is warning his male readers to pay attention to what women are saying and doing since it will inevitably affect their own lives.

Mabel, like many of Lawrence's female characters, is proud, wilful, and isolated in a world of men. After the death of her mother, she cared for her father until he died, and continued to look after her three brothers until bankruptcy ruined the family. As a personality, it seems that she has been ignored by her family and the result is, as we see, a demeanor of passivity and reticence:

"You'll go and stop with Lucy for a bit, shan't you?" he asked. The girl did not answer.

"I don't see what else you can do," persisted Fred Henry.

"Go as a skivvy," Joe interpolated laconically. The girl did not move a muscle.

"If I was her, I should go in for training for a nurse," said Malcolm, the youngest of them all. He was the baby of the family, a young man of twenty-two, with a fresh, jaunty mien.

But Mabel did not take any notice of him. They had talked at her and round her for so many years, that she hardly heard them at all.

Mabel's attitude here, her lack of passion for life, forbodes her eventual suicide attempt. Like many of Lawrence's characters, she has substituted the lack of an emotional life or human relationship, with a pride in material things, all representative of a superior social position. After the ruin of the family

business, a horse dealership, she is lost and feels that she has nothing left. It is only as a result of her contact with Jack Ferguson, the local doctor, that she seems saved from self-destruction.

In the midst of the stifling atmosphere of a family consultation, Jack Ferguson, a friend of Fred Henry's, is spotted from a window, as he is approaching the house. When he enters the kitchen where all are seated, Mabel ignores him, and he takes no significant notice of her. She appears mysterious and stubborn as she cuts herself off from any human interaction. As she goes to tidy her mother's grave, in fact, we find that she feels closer to death than to life:

It gave her sincere satisfaction to do this. She felt in immediate contact with the world of her mother.

However, in this intimate moment between herself and her departed mother, she is not hidden from observation.

Ferguson spots her on his way to visit his rural patients:

She seemed so intent and remote, it was like looking into another world. Some mystical element was touched in him. He slowed down as he walked, watching her as if spellbound.

In this episode and in the episode to follow, Lawrence uses the language of the supernatural, "mystical" and "spellbound", to describe the nature of that which draws the two characters together.

The language goes beyond suggesting mere sexual

dynamics and suggests that the contact between the two characters is somehow a part of the laws of the cosmos rather than those of humanity. Ferguson, for example, returning from his calls in the country sees Mabel walking slowly into a local pond. His vision is blurred, however, by the passing of the day's light:

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. Yet he could see her positively enough, whilst he kept his eye attentive. He felt, if he looked away from her in the thick, ugly falling dusk, he would lose her altogether.

More than just dramatizing the scene, Lawrence conveys here the elusiveness and tenuousness of the complexity of human relationships, particularly those between men and women.

After seeing Mabel entering the pond, Ferguson is struck by the reality of what he is seeing and runs to rescue her from the pond. Carefully, he follows her and submerges himself in the water in order to save her. By this heroic action we are reminded of Ferguson's purple scarf, one of the descriptive details Lawrence uses earlier in the story as Ferguson enters the house. A probable allusion to the significance of the colour of Christ's robe, Ferguson's scarf helps to characterize him as a savior. Their submersion into the water is reminiscent of the sacrament of baptism and the scene, therefore, suggests the elements of a rebirth ritual.

This notion of rebirth is certainly in keeping with what we believe are among Lawrence's creative motives; that is,

to destroy the old and unhealthy and make room for new life to "take root" and flourish. The issue of whether or not the story suggests that new life can flourish can be discussed by examining the concluding part of the story.

Following her rescue, Ferguson carries Mabel back to her home, wraps her in warm blankets, and revives her with whisky. Mabel, slightly disoriented, tries to construct the events leading to her present condition. This is the first time that we encounter her speaking, and she asks Ferguson whether she is insane. He tells her that she is not and she continues questioning him as to why he saved her. Suddenly, after Ferguson tells her that he undressed her and wrapped her in blankets to revive her, Mabel asks him if he loves her. This turn of events, and her rather pathetic embrace of his knees after she crawls toward him, surprises both the reader and Ferguson. The act of rebirth seems to have released a suppressed Mabel, one now filled with bursting emotion and desperation:

She looked at him again, with the same supplication of powerful love, and the same transcendent, frightening light of triumph. In view of the delicate flame which seemed to come from her face like a light, he was powerless. And yet he never intended to love her. He had never intended. And something stubborn in him could not give way.  
"You love me," she repeated, in a murmur of deep, rhapsodic assurance. "You love me."

However, with the intimacy of passion that ensues, we feel that it is Mabel, not Ferguson whose desire controls. Earlier, Ferguson was "spellbound" by Mabel and here there is a resistance.

in Ferguson that is overwhelmed by something not quite defined, something beyond mere sexual attraction.

The story's suspenseful climb to the interaction between the characters seems somehow to have been diverted. There is, instead of a balanced exchange of the sudden awareness of love, a sense that the two individuals are not working in harmony. Both characters feel the awkwardness after a sudden unexpected intimacy; both seem uncomfortable, and at times, are horrified because of the intensity of the events.

Interestingly, however, Ferguson thinks of the implications for himself in terms of his professional image:

He too sat there motionless and silent on the hearth-rug. The strange pain of his heart that was broken seemed to consume him. That he should love her? That this was love! That he should be ripped open in this way! Him, a doctor! How they would all jeer if they knew! It was agony to him to think they might know.<sup>10</sup>

Mabel, on the other hand, bases her fears on insecurity:

"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>11</sup>

Mabel feels desperate: she, unlike Ferguson, seems totally dependent upon him for not only her happiness, but for her survival. Indeed, the fact that he prevented her from self-destruction strengthens this notion. Notice, however, that although she has been saved from death, her new happiness or "new life" must depend on the security of Ferguson's commitment.

He, on the other hand, is less dependent on this new relationship, for he is the one who is able to leave her after the events, at the end of the story.

So, in this new relationship we are left unsure about the future of the couple. The story well presents the complexity of life and human relationships, but the basis of the couple's relationship, what actually draws them together and why, is left rather ambiguous. Furthermore, we, like Mabel, are not wholly convinced by Ferguson's reassurances of "I want you". What does not seem ambiguous in the story or in its specific conclusion is the suggestion that the woman must not tip the balance of control in the relationship. This story, it seems, disturbingly, places the woman in an inferior position.

For one critic of Lawrence, however, F. R. Leavis, the story is a successful one and strongly positive:

... [Lawrence] hates 'emancipation' (tough or sentimental) and reductive functionalism, is concerned always with the relations between individual human beings -<sup>12</sup> the relations in all their delicate complexity.

Leavis is correct when he claims that Lawrence is concerned with the complexity of human relationships and dislikes 'emancipation'. We find a problem in Lawrence when the woman of the relationship is given less self-esteem than the man. In this story, at any rate, Lawrence's theme seems to do more than explore the relationship between a man and a woman. It seems to imply that the proper structure of such a relationship should include the subordinate role of the woman.



In "The White Stocking" we find Elsie Whiston introduced as a light and bouncy, tinkerbelle type of character. She is the light of her husband's life. She is also selfish and vain, but appears to be happy in her marriage. This happiness, however, largely depends on the security she finds from being in her husband's power:

He was such a man. She liked to see his neck glistening with water as he swilled it. It amused her and pleased her and thrilled her. He was so sure, so permanent, he had her so utterly in his power. It gave her a delightful, mischievous sense of liberty. Within his grasp, she could dart about excitingly.

The story explores the relationship between Elsie and Ted and examines the crisis that develops because Elsie strays away from Ted's "grasp". It is circularly structured, beginning with the seed of crisis planted at breakfast, interjected by an explanatory history of the morning events, itself a circular structure, and ending with the climax and resolution in the evening.

The paradisaical atmosphere of the Whistons' marriage is disturbed by Elsie's receiving an, at first, unexplained Valentine's day gift. She receives, through the post, one white stocking and one dangling pearl ear-ring. At first, she pretends to Ted that she does not know whom they are from. Gradually, however, as though strongly suspicious rather than sure, she tells Ted that she thinks the sender is Sam Adams, her former employer. There is a tension between the couple as Elsie further relates that she received a similar Valentine's gift

the previous year. The seed of the crisis now has taken root and Ted goes off to work that morning slightly piqued.

Elsie, however, only a little troubled, goes upstairs to play with the ear-rings, one from this year and one from last, but this latter one she neglects to tell Ted about. She wears the ear-rings the entire morning:

She was stimulated all the day. She did not think about her husband. He was the permanent basis from which she took these giddy little flights into nowhere. At night, like chickens and curses, she would come home, to roost.<sup>14</sup>

From this description, the seriousness of Elsie's character is highly questionable. It is true that we do feel rather sympathetic towards Ted Whiston. However, Leavis, with his comments, seems to pronounce a harsher judgement on Elsie than the story requires:

The success of the tale depends on our being made, as we are, to take the precisely right attitude towards the petty, childish little coquette of a wife; one, that is, enabling us to sympathize with it enough to see how a man we respect can be, and is, deeply attached to her.<sup>15</sup>

We may feel a degree of sympathy for Ted, but there is, after all, no question of Elsie's love for, and loyalty to, her husband.

Before she and Ted were married, they went to a Christmas party given by Sam Adams, her then employer. At this event Adams showers his attentions and praises on Elsie and she becomes overwhelmed by the romantic atmosphere of the evening. Since Whiston does not dance, Adams receives carte blanche for the evening and, as the dance begins, Elsie loses herself in the

movement. With clear symbolic undertones of love-making,

Lawrence describes the dance:

He was an excellent dancer. He seemed to draw her in to him by some male warmth of attraction, so that she became all soft and pliant to him, flowing to his form, whilst he united her with him and they lapsed along in one movement. She was just carried away in a kind of strong, warm flood, her feet moved of themselves, and only the music threw her away from him, threw her back to him, to his clasp, in his strong form moving against her, rhythmically, deliciously.<sup>16</sup>

After this dance it is to Whiston, however, that she is drawn, not Adams. The arousal or excitement that she feels, longs to engage itself with Whiston: "I do wish you could dance," she says, and when he replies that he cannot, she returns to the arms of Sam Adams "a little bit irked".<sup>17</sup> Following each dance with Adams, it is Whiston that she looks for, indicating that her interest in Adams is purely temporary and selfish; he merely nurtures her ego and feeds her romantic nature.

Whiston's tolerance for the entire evening lasts only for so long, for when Elsie's fallen white stocking, which she mistook for a handkerchief, is retrieved and kept by Adams, his anger rises and he demands that they leave the place. On the way home, Elsie, in a mood of probable regret, begs Whiston through her tears to "be good" to her, and so the incident ends. Elsie "was restored at last", re-established under the authority of Whiston.

This same assertion of Whiston's authority re-establishes Elsie's position again, in the evening, when Whiston

returns from work. Irritated all day by the discomfort of the breakfast scene, he demands to know why Elsie kept the white stocking rather than throw it on the fire. Elsie seems to challenge him, telling him that it will save him from buying her a new pair. Unable to move him with this, she goes upstairs, slips on the white stockings and returns to model them in front of him. Whiston's anger rises and seemingly unable to contain himself, he strikes Elsie a blow on the mouth, so severely that she is left bleeding. With this, he asserts his authority and Elsie is taken aback. During the exchange of few angry words, Elsie avenges herself with the information that she has received also a pair of pearl earrings, and an amethyst brooch from the year before. With this, Whiston removes the articles from the house and sends them back to Adams. When he returns, the story ends with the couple in a strange sort of reconciliation:

"I'm sleeping down here," he said. "Go you to bed."  
 In a few moments she lifted her tear-stained swollen face and looked at him with eyes all forlorn and pathetic. A great flash of anguish went over his body. He went over, slowly, and very gently took her in his hands. She let herself be taken. Then as she lay against his shoulder, she sobbed aloud:  
 "I never meant - "  
 "My love - my little love - " he cried, in anguish of spirit, holding her in his arms.<sup>18</sup>

Once again, Elsie is restored, but at the cost of her independence.

Even the conceited Elsie, with her vain desires, and slight self-infatuation deserves no such blow on the mouth. Leavis, however, does not see this as a brutal blow of male

domination:

Whiston strikes his wife a blow on the mouth, but it is not a brutal view of life that we are given, but a positively and essentially humanizing one.<sup>19</sup>

It is not clear how Leavis values the episode as "essentially humanizing". He does find Lawrence's ability to free the "flow of his sympathetic consciousness" remarkable, since it results in a fiction, "Free from any sentimentalizing or idealizing bent with its irresistible truth it gives dignity to human life".<sup>20</sup> However, within this unsentimental truth, we clearly have a woman being "put back into her place" by means of violence. The dignity, if any at all, can be given only to Whiston as he reclaims his authority when his wife pushes him beyond his tolerance level. Even at that, his response is one of brutality rather than mere anger. The fact that he is remorseful at the end gives us no real assurance that it will not happen again. In fact, the story's circular structure suggests that such a thing likely will happen again, and even should. This cycle exists just as we have the constant contracting and retracting, deconstructing and reconstructing movements within the Lawrencian universe.

After having examined both stories, what we find in common in terms of theme is the complexity of the male-female relationship with its attendant dynamics. What we also find, however, is the structuring of the relationships based on the male authority. The woman, in Lawrence, seems repeatedly to

lose whether she knows it or not. Like Mabel, Elsie depends on her male counterpart to act, to control, and to define the laws of life's limitations.

Neither Elsie nor Mabel seems to be able to order her life or cope with freedom, the freedom to exercise an intelligent will. Mabel turns to self-destruction when she loses the boundaries of home and duty; house management for her brothers. Elsie, too, seems to challenge her husband with the dance in the white stockings: "She was rid of the responsibility of herself. Her husband must look after that".<sup>21</sup> More than by mere coincidence it seems, Lawrence repeatedly uses the woman to test the strength of the male dominion.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Richard Foster, "Criticism as Rage: D. H. Lawrence", in A D. H. Lawrence Miscellany Edited by Harry T. Moore. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959), pp. 312-326.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>3</sup>David Herbert Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), II, p. 441.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 443.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 448.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 449.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 453.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 455.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 457.

<sup>12</sup>F. R. Leavis, D. H. Lawrence: Novelist (London: Peregrine Books, 1964), p. 263.

<sup>13</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. I, p. 249.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>15</sup>Leavis, p. 258.

<sup>16</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. I, p. 252.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 265-266.

<sup>19</sup>Leavis, p. 258.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 258-259.

<sup>21</sup>Lawrence, Complete Short Stories. I, p. 260.



## CONCLUSION

There is no question that Lawrence is sincerely concerned with the future of relationships between men and women. In an essay entitled "Love", Lawrence provides us with a reason for his preoccupation with the subject of female-male interaction:

Only in the conjunction of man and woman has love kept a duality of meaning. Sacred love and profane love, they are opposed, and yet they are both love. The love between a man and a woman is the greatest and most complete passion the world will ever see, because it is dual, because it is of two opposing kinds.<sup>1</sup>

For Lawrence, the love between a man and a woman is both selfish and selfless, and the constant pulling and pushing movements of emotions as a result of this condition is, for him, the true reality of life. In this respect, it is not difficult to understand why Lawrence so often deals with the problems and complexities of the female-male relationship.

Within his short stories, we find that he continuously deals with faltering relationships, ones in which we inevitably find the woman to be the source of the problem. Specifically, the woman's increasing demands and her growing spirit of independence appear to be most important among the factors that threaten the survival of the relationship. Since this relationship is characterized by a male authority, however, the threat is actually to that authority rather than to the

relationship per se. Consequently, Lawrence's solution to strengthen the diminishing relationships that he presents in his short stories directs the female character to throw off her destructive desires for control or power and re-establish herself as the loyal follower and supporter of the male purpose. For example, this is exactly what Elsie does in "The White Stocking". If she had not done this, we presume that she, like Ethel in "None of That", would have been destroyed. This direction that Lawrence imposes on his women characters specifically leads them, not onto a separate but equal path with men, but onto a contingent and unequal one.

Lawrence's solution to the problem that the "wilful" woman creates again and again in the short stories, however, is not satisfactory in terms of how it affects the coherence of the stories themselves. Among several reasons for this incoherence is the fact that Lawrence does not examine why his women characters are dissatisfied, and presents little evidence even to justify the dissatisfaction that they so obviously feel. Moreover, it is not sufficiently clear why the women who do try to escape their situations must necessarily be destroyed as the stories suggest. The submission of some of the women to self-destruction, too, causes confusion, since it contradicts much of their earlier characterization.

As I have shown in this study, all of these problems reflect the flaw in both Lawrence's theory and, more pertinent to this undertaking, his fiction. This flaw perpetuates an

imbalance between men and women with respect to their  
importance in the world and the completeness of their humanity.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> David Herbert Lawrence, "Love", in Phoenix Edited and with an introduction by Edward D. McDonald. (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 153.

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