

D.H. LAWRENCE'S LADYBIRD NOVELLAS

THE LADYBIRD NOVELLAS: D.H. LAWRENCE'S USE
OF
MYTHIC AND REALISTIC COMPONENTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines three novellas by D.H. Lawrence: The Ladybird, The Fox, and The Captain's Doll, collectively referred to as the Ladybird tales. It approaches these works with the intention of demonstrating the fundamental role played therein by mythic and realistic narrative components, and also with the intention of pointing out the excessively manipulative way that Lawrence uses these components to give voice to his didactic philosophy.

In the study's Introduction, the terms 'mythic component' and 'realistic component' are defined, and their applicability to Lawrence's fiction is explained. Lawrence's own definition of authorial immorality is then explored, and the study's primary argument, that Lawrence's use of mythic and realistic components in the Ladybird tales is immoral by his own standards, is stated. Each of the three chapters is devoted to supporting this argument as it pertains to one of the Ladybird novellas.

It is hoped that this thesis will create an awareness that the world-view presented in the Ladybird novellas is not so much an integral part of the art as it is an imposition on the art by the author.

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Introduction

The short fiction which D.H. Lawrence wrote after the Great War presents a significant contrast to that which he wrote before and during the war. Lydia Blanchard observes that the post-war tales display many qualities of myth and poetry in place of the more straightforwardly realistic style exhibited by Lawrence's pre-war short fiction. For example, instead of striving to make such things as characters' motivations clear and intelligible to the reader, the later tales allow a great deal to go unexplained. Narrative disruption and refrain-like repetition supplant a preference for little authorial intrusion and prose designed to create realistic characters.

Blanchard demonstrates, I think successfully, that this stylistic change reflects an effort on Lawrence's part to develop a new literary form which would be capable of expressing concerns which were beyond the scope of conventional realism. Traditional forms could clarify Lawrence's often obscure messages, argues Blanchard, but by doing precisely that they would also undermine them, "saying what [Lawrence] wants to be unsaid, bringing to light what

should be kept dark, giving a logical progression to what should be repetitive rather than sequential" (244).

Blanchard's point, that we as readers and critics should recognize Lawrence's attempts at innovation instead of rejecting them out of hand as unrealistic or confused, is a valid one; however, her article takes no notice of the effects, often confusing, that are caused by Lawrence's retention of many aspects of realism alongside his new mythic techniques. Gregory L. Lucente writes that

there exists a consensus among the multitude of Lawrence's partisans and antagonists that his work is difficult, but the crux of the difficulty, the peculiar interaction of realism and myth designed to explain and validate his developing philosophical system, has probably perplexed more readers than it has convinced. (107)

Several critics have examined the way realistic and mythic techniques interact in certain of Lawrence's post-war short fictions. Barnett Guttenberg focuses on the tension between stylistic and thematic devices characteristic of romance and those more often associated with the novel of manners, a tension that he sees as fundamental to the short novel The Virgin and The Gipsy. E. San Juan, Jr. and John F. Turner both view the tension between myth and realism as an important aspect of the functioning of "The Rocking-Horse Winner".

However, there does not appear to be anything written on the subject of this interaction or tension as it surfaces in Lawrence's Ladybird novellas -- The Ladybird,

The Fox, and The Captain's Doll, published in 1923 as a collection ¹ -- three works in which the interplay of mythic and realistic style and content is both particularly prominent and particularly disturbing. H.M. Daleski and Leo Gurko have each written an article on this group of works, Daleski emphasizing the theme of male sexual dominance as the factor which unites the three, and Gurko claiming that the common bonds are the themes of violence and of resurrection. Monroe Engel looks at the Ladybird tales in his article on five of Lawrence's short novels; he points out the importance of form as a vehicle for Lawrence's extreme ideas, and supports his claim by demonstrating how certain very specific literary forms, such as analogy, function to this end. Some critics have noted and traced specific strains of myth in these works; for instance, Joost Daalder painstakingly traces the development of mythical references in The Ladybird, and Suzanne Wolkenfeld focuses on echoes of the 'Sleeping Beauty' myth in The Fox. I think, though, that these critics stop short of realizing the importance of what they have identified. The presence in these three short novels of material that originates from or is reminiscent of myth is, in itself, of only limited

¹ According to Harry T. Moore, these novellas were originally published under the title The Ladybird: The Fox, The Captain's Doll, by Martin Secker in 1923 (313). For the purpose of this thesis, I have used Penguin's 1984 printing of Lawrence's Complete Short Novels, edited by Keith Sagar and Melissa Partridge.

critical interest; in order to understand the role of the mythic techniques and ideas in the works we must endeavour to view them in terms of their dynamic relationship with the techniques and ideas of realism.

As a terminological basis for my study, I will be using Gregory L. Lucente's definitions of 'mythic' and 'realistic'. According to Lucente,

mythic components are those repeating elements of narrative which approach an existence apart from the specificity of space and time, which at their core involve unified and idealized figures, and which establish and depend upon a relationship of unquestioning belief. By contrast, realistic components are made up of those elements that claim a clear and definite position in space and time (and so in culture), that involve figures whose relation to experience is not idealized, and that invite an attitude of analysis or even skepticism rather than immediate faith. (42)

By 'unified figures' Lucente means characters which are "idealized types representing fundamental but grandiose and impossibly unified ... qualities", such as life, death, male, female, rational, irrational (51).

Lucente's definitions are particularly useful because of their acknowledgment of the significant roles of belief and skepticism. A fundamental part of my argument is the assertion that Lawrence uses mythic components to win the reader's trust in a character, idea, or occurrence. In myth, it is perfectly acceptable to have things happen that the reader would reject as impossible in the context of realism; and Lawrence, by invoking mythic patterns and techniques, seeks to arouse a response of unquestioning

belief in the reader toward the text. When Lawrence turns to realistic components in these short novels, he creates a different set of expectations in the reader, expectations which are associated with pragmatism, disillusionment, and skepticism. Rather than inspiring trust, realistic components prompt the reader to respond somewhat cautiously to the character, idea, or occurrence being presented. The present study seeks to demonstrate that Lawrence employs realistic and mythic components in an attempt to manipulate the reader into a position of increased receptivity to Lawrence's own social views and philosophy.

I agree with Lucente that the peculiar combination of myth and realism in Lawrence's work is the result of that author's attempt to support and communicate, as well as formulate, his philosophical ideas. However, it is also clear to me that the terms 'mythic' and 'realistic' can be accurately applied to Lawrence's work not only to describe patterns of technique and content within the narrative, but also to express Lawrence's world-view. Consequently, this study will use these terms in an expanded sense. Lawrence uses mythic components of narrative to characterize his vision of an approach to life which sees beyond the immediate surface of things to find something deeply meaningful; this vision incorporates some aspects of mysticism, and is permeated by a distinct, other-worldly feeling. Conversely, Lawrence often uses realistic

components of narrative to characterize what he sees as an empty, meaningless, and negative approach to life, an approach primarily concerned with social propriety and the exercising of one's own will. Thus, I will use the phrase 'mythic element' to refer to that entity, energy, or spirit which Lawrence feels man needs in order to re-invest his life with meaning, and 'mythic component', as defined by Lucente, to refer to the literary devices which give voice to this element. Similarly, I will employ the term 'realistic element' to refer to that approach to life which focuses firstly and intensely on matters of social convention -- an approach which Lawrence felt to be ultimately negative and meaningless -- and use Lucente's phrase 'realistic component' to describe the literary devices which give formal representation to that approach.

In the works under scrutiny, it is the mythic element which is presented as constituting that which is truly real. The realistic element, by contrast, is shown to be unreal, in that it is without significant or lasting value. The relationship between the mythic and the realistic is one of opposition. There are instances in which a type of 'fantasy' element is presented as part of the shallow, realistic element, but this should not be confused with what is genuinely mythic. Rather, this kind of fantasy is antagonistic to the mythic element, because its primary goal is the fulfillment of the personal will. Examples of this

'sham-mythic element' can be found in the romantic self-image of Lady Beveridge in The Ladybird and in the character of Mrs. Hepburn in The Captain's Doll.

In these three novellas, Lawrence leads the reader through passages of mythic and realistic components, sometimes in alternation, and concludes each story with an almost didactic insistence that man's primitive nature is the key to the achievement of a mythic approach to life. Perhaps Lawrence draws the connection between the primitive and the mythic convincingly. However, Lawrence fails to demonstrate that the mythic element will be able to provide solutions, via the primitive or anything else, to the real problems that he presents in the tales.

It is crucial that we realize that Lawrence was trying to develop a new literary form, but it is equally crucial that we be ready to recognize points at which this new form fails. My position, therefore, is that the relationship between mythic and realistic components in these works shows signs of excessive authorial manipulation, of the kind that Lawrence himself would have labelled 'immoral'.

In his article "Morality and the Novel", Lawrence writes that

Morality is that delicate, for ever trembling and changing balance between me and my circumambient universe, which precedes and accompanies a true relatedness. ...

The novel is the highest example of subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered.

Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance, and untrue outside of its own place, time, circumstance. If you try to nail anything down, in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail....

When the novelist puts his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection, that is immorality. (528)

This thesis argues the following points. First, that in the Ladybird novellas, Lawrence repeatedly 'puts his thumb in the scale' on the side of the mythic element. Second, that this interference surfaces in the novellas in the form of significant confusions and inconsistencies. Third, that the reader's responses are consequently directed in too many and too varied directions to permit the establishment of a functional relationship between reader and text. The tales mislead the reader's expectations, and do so not, finally, for any acceptable reason, but rather because their author is commandeering his art for a didactic purpose.

The study at hand will also hold that Lawrence's 'immoral' interference is most obtrusive when the tale is consistently serious, as is the case with The Ladybird and The Fox, and least discernible when the work is written in a fairly comic tone, as is The Captain's Doll. The study will suggest that the reason for this difference is that in The Ladybird and The Fox, Lawrence's demand that the reader take the tale absolutely seriously in effect also requires the reader to take Lawrence's philosophy absolutely seriously, almost as a disciple would; and Lawrence places

such great demands on the reader's ability to believe without allowing him to leave the confines of realism that it is finally all but impossible to believe in the philosophy, or the tales, at all. The philosophy presented in The Captain's Doll is just as unsettling as that contained in the other two tales (indeed, it is the same philosophy), but the less serious tone and the implicit suggestion that Lawrence may be parodying some of his own techniques (see Doherty) shift the emphasis away from the philosophy to focus it on the characters. The reader is thus able to participate in the main thrust of the text without fully accepting the ideas contained in it. Even so, when one looks beneath the comic exterior of the tale, one again finds problematic confusion and inconsistencies that betray Lawrence's manipulative handling of mythic and realistic components.

At this point I should explain that, while this study does consider The Ladybird to be less effective than The Fox, and The Captain's Doll to be more effective than either of the other two, this view should not be construed as an argument that there is a development or progression of technique from one Ladybird novella to another. The final versions of these three works were written so closely together that such an argument would be extremely difficult to formulate, and, in any case, The Captain's Doll was written first (Sagar 99-101).

It should also be noted that the inquiry conducted here is based upon a critical reader response approach, and postulates someone of my own time and culture as the reader.

Chapter One

The Ladybird has been the subject of quite a bit of critical controversy, though not to the same extent as The Fox. As I see it, the trouble with The Ladybird arises out of the fact that the tale only makes sense if one interprets it as a fable, or myth, and it therefore needs to be accepted as existing in a context where the 'truth' of the myth is not held accountable to the dictates of realism in any way. However, the tale itself does not create such a context; it does rather the opposite, and carves out a scope for itself which includes a deep interest in the concerns of the "actual world." (See Daalder and Leavis for examples of opposing viewpoints on this aspect of The Ladybird.) The work makes claims to addressing the problem of meaninglessness left by the war, but instead of grappling with that problem, chooses to shut it out by offering the reader an escapist ending. This observation is not new-- F.R. Leavis makes it in D.H. Lawrence: Novelist, 1955 (65-67); but Leavis does not seem to recognize the significance of what he has observed. Lawrence presents the realistic element in The Ladybird, though not unsympathetically, quite clearly as an approach to life which must be abandoned. The

first character to appear in the tale is Lady Beveridge. She is firmly fixed in terms of time, place, and culture, and therefore in the camp of realistic narrative components. We are told that "her boys were killed" "in the years 1916 and 1917" (Complete Short Novels 206), and so we know that she is a bereaved mother living in England during the Great War. The narrator goes on to describe her social position:

Somebody had called her the soul of England. It was not ill said, though she was half Irish. But of an old, aristocratic, loyal family famous for its brilliant men. And she, Lady Beveridge, had for years as much influence on the tone of English politics as any individual alive. The close friend of the real leaders in the House of Lords and in the Cabinet, she was content that the men should act, so long as they breathed from her as from the rose of life. (206)

Lady Beveridge's powerful devotion to the alleviation of human suffering might seem to raise her above the shallowness of the purely realistic level; but Lawrence is in fact creating in her an expression of a 'sham-mythic element'.

The style which Lawrence employs in the opening section of the tale indicates an emotional distance between the narrative voice and Lady Beveridge; "How many swords had Lady Beveridge in her pierced heart!" (206) is just one instance of a melodramatic style being used to express and encourage a skeptical attitude toward this Lady's "pure fragrance of truth and genuine love" (206). This almost smirking, mock-sympathetic tone is employed through most of the tale, whenever the narrator focuses on one of the

'realistic' characters -- that is, on anyone except the Count, or Daphne after her metamorphosis. The anonymous narrator here punctuates his description of Lady Beveridge's war-time efforts with exclamations such as "But we anticipate", "Ah, she was used to such deep respect!" and "Alas, the beds were all full" (207), all of which suggest that his view of Lady Beveridge is not entirely different from that held by the society which "was beginning to jeer at this little, worn bird of an out-of-date righteousness and aesthetic" (207).

What the narrator says about Lady Beveridge affirms this interpretation of how he says it. The comment that "She had no misgivings regarding her own spirit" (206) evokes a suspicion in the reader that perhaps Lady Beveridge is too convinced of her own goodness to be quite trustworthy; and this suspicion will be doubly strong in a reader who is familiar with Lawrence's article "Nobody Loves Me" (published posthumously in 1930), in which the desire to 'love all humanity' is scrutinized, and argued to be much less selfless, and much more impossible, than it appears on the surface (204).

One problem with Lady Beveridge's desire to love all humanity is that it makes her extremely vulnerable. In order to maintain her ability to love so broadly, she needs to be loved, or at least greatly appreciated, in return. Since she -- like anyone else -- is unable to control the opinions and

behaviour of others, her happiness is perpetually at risk. She compels herself to cast her pearls, but, given the piggish nature of human beings, has no one to cast them before except virtual swine. As time and the war change people's attitudes, Lady Beveridge finds her once-respected spirit of generosity the target of ridicule. Her response to this change reveals the danger of her approach to life: "It was strange that she felt it so bitterly, when the respect became shallower. But she did. It was the beginning of the end to her." (207) Lady Beveridge's principle of loving humanity is only meaningful as long as society values it. Thus, it is contingent upon the realistic element, and contains nothing inherently, independently worthy which could align it with the mythic element.

We should note, however, that in "Nobody Loves Me", after Lawrence voices his skepticism about 'love for humanity', he goes on to say that, ridiculous as that approach to life is, we are worse off without it if we do not replace it with a more meaningful approach (205). This idea is expressed in The Ladybird, when the narrator immediately follows his observation that society was jeering at Lady Beveridge with the qualifying comment "But they dared not think ill of her" (207).

The focus of The Ladybird is thus established even before a second character is introduced. The tale addresses the specific problem of how to deal with the unseen damage

wrought by the war; the old structure for meaning is no longer viable, but we must find another before we can safely abandon it.

Having laid the groundwork for the tale, Lawrence introduces Count Dionys Psanek. The Count is small, dark, bearded, and Bohemian -- "A queer, dark, aboriginal face he had, with a fine little nose: not an Aryan, surely" (209) -- the quintessential Lawrentian mythic 'hero', "fired with a keen male energy" (208). He is on the verge of death in a prisoners-of-war hospital in England. Lady Beveridge happens upon him while performing her 'noble' duty of visiting enemy wounded. She remembers him as an acquaintance from several years ago, and tries to get him to recognize her: "'You know me, Count Dionys? You know me, don't you?' said Lady Beveridge, bending forward over the bed." (208)

Her physical position, relative to his, symbolizes the way the realistic element dominates the mythic element. Although Lady Beveridge speaks to the Count in German, and thus creates the illusion that she is conceding something to him, interaction between them takes place on the realistic level, which is her territory. By being generous, noble, and servant-like, Lady Beveridge compels the Count to play the part of the receiver, the served. That the Count resents being made to play this part is apparent from the look in his eyes, "a look of weariness, of refusal, and a wish to be left alone" (208). The most he can contribute is "the ghost

of a polite smile" (208); the word 'ghost' is notable in that it foreshadows the Count's mythic role.

Lady Beveridge is only the immediate symbol and agent of the Count's oppression. Physically, the war has wounded and nearly killed him. Before the outbreak of war, he was oppressed by the pressures of society, and sought to conform to the realistic element. Lady Beveridge's daughter, Lady Daphne, remembers him as being "a little comical. Such a dapper little man" (213); and later he remembers himself at that time as a "grimacing little society man" (231). But now, as he lies so near death, the glow of the mythic element appears in his face, and Lady Beveridge notes with surprise that "there is something remote and in a sad way heroic in his dark face. Something primitive" (213).

Lady Daphne is, until the final section of the tale, as oppressed by the shallow values of the realistic element as the Count once was. When she is first introduced into the story her character is clearly a realistic component. Her fashionable beauty is emphasized, along with her marriage to a fashionable but impoverished son of a famous politician. But Daphne's connection to the realistic element is not a rigid one, and the focus of the tale is worked out in her as she comes to accept her mythic identity through a relationship with the Count.

When we first see Lady Daphne we are told that she, too, has been damaged by the war, and by the pressures of

society: "...sorrow, pain, thwarted passion had done her great damage. Her husband was missing in the East. Her baby had been born dead. Her two darling brothers were dead. And she was ill, always ill." (209)

The still-birth of her child is indicative of the inability of the old principles, rooted in the realistic element, to produce vital, meaningful life. It is the fruit of her marriage to Basil, who is "an adorable husband: truly an adorable husband. Whereas she needed a dare-devil" (210). The principles that Daphne forces herself to adhere to, and which are personified in the man she has joined herself to, are contrived and at bottom have nothing to do with meaningful life. They are therefore artificial, and this unnatural quality is reflected in the beauty for which she is widely admired: "Her hair, her complexion were so perfectly cared for as to be almost artificial, like a hot-house flower." (209)

Her poor health is the result of her forced effort to maintain this artificial perfection, not only externally, but internally as well; this effort involves suppressing her true wild nature which she has inherited "from her father's desperate race" (210). Stubbornly,

... her will was fixed in the determination that life should be gentle and good and benevolent. Whereas her blood was reckless, the blood of dare-devils. Her will was the stronger of the two. But her blood had its revenge on her. (210-11)

The sentence which comes next draws the reader's attention beyond the immediate character of Daphne, back to the didactic focus of the tale: "So it is with strong natures today: shattered from the inside" (211). The reader is led by this to expect the tale to search for a way of overcoming the unhealthy compulsion that paralyzes Daphne, and according to Lawrence's inference, many actual people as well.

To a degree, The Ladybird conducts such a search. But Lawrence directs the search toward a prescribed solution which, if it convinces the reader at all, does so largely by default. The text has used realistic components to evoke a skeptical view of the value system upheld by Lady Beveridge; it has then contrasted these components with the beginnings of mythic components in the character of the Count. Next, we are shown Lady Daphne, who is slowly destroying herself through her adherence to her mother's value system and her marriage to a man who represents the realistic element. Lawrence has so structured the tale that the reader must accept the Count as holding the only solution to Daphne's (and therefore, to post-war society's) problem; there is no other alternative made possible. Even Daphne's father is eventually shown to belong to the realistic element (262), despite being initially presented as the antithesis of his wife.

But even this, the fact that the Count holds a monopoly on hope for a solution, is not the novella's primary weakness. More serious is the fact that, having created a circumstance in which the reader is required to respond to the Count with the belief and trust that mythic components are designed to evoke, the text undermines its own effectiveness by offering a characterization of the Count which is more likely to provoke skepticism, mistrust, and even ridicule.

An important aspect of the Count's character is his embodiment of the Lawrentian principle of positive destructiveness. Kingsley Widmer argues that the Count is a demon-figure (50), a mythic hero who is supposed to be admirable precisely because he does not comply with conventional ideas about what is admirable and positive. The reader is told that the Count's surname, Psanek, means "an outlaw" (223), and that he is abandoning the 'society man' in himself to become fully Psanek (223). Not only does he refuse to exalt the ridiculously naive principle of 'love for humanity', but he scorns love altogether, declaring that "the day of Judas ... ends with the day of love" (255). Instead of love, the Count esteems his own deep anger:

"I am a man, I am a man, even if I am little. I am not a spirit that coils itself inside a shell. In my soul is anger, anger, anger. Give me room for my anger. Give me room for that. ... If it were love, you would not ask me, why do you love? But it is anger, anger, anger. What else can I call it? And there is no why." (227)

Lawrence expands upon this idea by having the Count identify himself with the fox and the adder. These animals are traditionally viewed as destructive and dangerous, and therefore as malevolent and undesirable; yet the Count emphasizes the fact that they are capable of sexual union (223), and thus function on a meaningful level. The Count is not suggesting that these animals (and himself) are not destructive, or that their destructiveness is an illusion; instead, he implies that our attitude to destructiveness needs to change. Rather than categorizing it as negative or even evil, as Lady Beveridge does, the Count accepts it as a positive good, and urges Daphne to do the same by "[making] friends with [her] anger" (229).

The Count's insistence that his destructiveness (or anger) has neither explanation, need for explanation, nor need for remedy emphasizes the mythic nature of the particular quality which he represents. His anger is, according to him, a fundamental and necessary element of his being, not a response to anything in time and space; as he himself comments, the things he is interested in have no "relation to actual life" (231).

It therefore seems odd that the Count would talk passionately and at length about the way government should be carried out. As well as seeming out of character, this interest in politics is frightening. The mythic destructiveness which can be liberating when incorporated

into a fabular, symbolic context becomes completely monstrous when applied to a realistic context. The Count says, quite seriously, that "peace can be even more dangerous still" than a man such as Kaiser Wilhelm II (254), and claims, equally seriously, that,

"Not as a hereditary aristocrat, but as a man who is by nature an aristocrat, ... it is my sacred duty to hold the destiny of other men in my hands, and to shape the issue. But I can never fulfil that duty til men willingly put their lives in my hands." (254)

He desires that men "at last yield themselves before men who are greater than they: become vassals by choice" (254). The outright absurdity of his suggestion is astounding. Such a political system would inevitably create oppression and injustice of horrendous proportions. Yet Lawrence presents the Count and his political ideas completely without narrative irony. Clearly, he intends them to inspire the reader's support.

Another important but problematic aspect of the Count's characterization is the identification between the Count and the ladybird. The ladybird symbol incorporates mythic positive destructiveness (Lord Beveridge points out that it is related to the dung-beetle (262)), and also the elements of mystery, ancient origin, and primitiveness.

The ladybird is the emblem of the Count's family, and his attitude towards it is so reverential that Daphne responds to his speeches about it with uneasy laughter (as well might the reader). With reference to the Psanek

tradition of embroidering a ladybird inside shirt collars (225), Daphne jokes that, "I suppose ... it is as bad to have a bee in your shirt as in your bonnet" (225). The Count is not acquainted with this English idiomatic expression, and so she explains that it means "To have a bee buzzing among your hair! to be out of your wits" (225). The Count remains unperturbed, answering, "It may be. ... But with my wife I was quite, quite sane for ten years. Now give me the madness of the ladybird. The world I was sane with has gone raving. The ladybird I was mad with is wise still." (226) The ladybird thus symbolizes for him a way of living which might appear to be madness from a realistic point of view, but which he feels to be preferable to the supposedly sane civilizations which spawned the Great War.

Later the Count explains why he links himself with his familial crest so passionately:

"It has such a long genealogy - our spotted beetle. Much longer than the Psaneks. I think, you know, it is a descendant of the Egyptian scarabeus, which is a very mysterious emblem. So I connect myself with the Pharaohs, just through my ladybird." (262)

The realistic identity of the ladybird - a small, insignificant insect - thus belies the mythic significance it holds for the Count, just as his own superficial appearance belies the mythic significance which he considers himself to possess. Moreover, its true significance is shown to lie in its connection to an ancient and primitive culture, just as the Count's full glory will be shown

finally to be rooted in his mythic association with ancient Egypt (269). Lawrence is using the ladybird symbol to express his idea that that which is darkly mysterious, ancient and primitive is the saving alternative to the shallow values of intellectual knowledge and whitewashed spirituality which permeate modern society.¹

The trouble with Lawrence's use of the ladybird is that it takes what should be a purely fabular mythic symbol and forces it to function in the realm of the realistic. This is clear from the way Lawrence combines the ladybird emblem with the thimble; somehow, the fact that the thimble bears the emblem is supposed to enhance the physical quality of the shirts it is used to sew (224-25), yet there is no indication that there is anything magical about the thimble.²

The conflict at the root of this discrepancy is also evident in the way Lawrence bases the significance of the

¹ Eugene Goodheart interprets the entity represented by the ladybird and similar Lawrentian symbols as being "the bodily or physical life that [Lawrence] believed man had once possessed in his pre-civilized past and must now fully recover if future civilized life is to be possible" (Goodheart 1).

² Lawrence's compulsion to tie mythic vitality into the actual world becomes even more clearly discernible when we note that in "The Thimble" (the short story upon which The Ladybird is based) the thimble symbolizes superficial, worthless glitter (57-58). In revising the short story into The Ladybird, Lawrence specifically altered the thimble to symbolize the mythic element rather than the realistic, and in so doing strained the effectiveness of the symbol past the breaking point.

symbol on an idealized and generalized vision of an actual historical civilization. The civilization must be idealized if it is to be rendered remote and distinct enough from the actual world to be uncontaminated by the realistic element. However, Lawrence wants it to contain a viable solution to the problems of the actual world, and so has the Count treat the ladybird as if it represents a way of living which actually existed and which can be regained for the purpose of healing the damage wrought by the 'mad' modern world. Yet, in the vicious circle of Lawrence's desire to have it both ways, the Pharaohs which the Count esteems so highly are not the real Pharaohs of history, but figures idealized by his own imagination.

Lawrence's heavily didactic purpose wreaks a certain amount of havoc with the Count's own character, as well. At different times, the Count argues both that he is a natural aristocrat (254) and an aristocrat by virtue of his connection with the Pharaohs (262). Lawrence wants his mythic hero to be both entirely unique, new, and independent, existing on a plane that transcends the realistic element and the actual world, and somehow also an heir of an age-old power, able to address and cure real problems. The 'solution' represented by the ladybird could be convincing on a fabular level, but Lawrence tries to make it function almost on a literal level. The result is that the connection between the mythic element and the actual

world is shown to be both necessary and inadmissible. This places unreasonable demands on the reader's ability and willingness to accept Lawrentian doctrine, and seriously weakens the effectiveness of the Count's character.

In order to make the Count seem worthy of the reader's support, Lawrence uses the device of contrast; most importantly, he contrasts the Count and the mythic element which he represents with the character of Basil and the realistic element represented by him. That the Count emerges from this comparison in the more favourable light is due not to any inherent value that Lawrence has invested him with, but to the fact that Lawrence structures the narrative in such a way as to permit nothing else. When Basil speaks in exalted terms about the "higher state of consciousness" (250) brought about by the war, we think of him as naive and hopelessly deluded primarily because we are signalled to do so by the Count's "polite" attention and excruciatingly correct social behaviour. When the Count holds forth in an equally exalted tone on a hugely more preposterous idea, (that the world which we perceive is "only the white lining" of "the true living world of fire [which] is dark, throbbing, darker than blood" (231)), we are seduced into accepting him as credible by the absence of narrative intrusion and skeptical comment, and by the consequent illusion that the Count's words are reaching our ears

without authorial mediation, across space and time.³ By creating this illusion Lawrence is capitalizing on the human tendency to give more credit to something heard directly than to something filtered through another person's perception. He is using mythic components to induce the reader's favour for the Count, just as he uses realistic components to drive a wedge between the reader and Basil.

Lawrence's use of Basil as a tool with which to secure the Count's dominance extends further. In general, he maximizes Basil's personification of the realistic element in order to make the Count, by default, the only worthy mate for Daphne. More specifically, he causes Basil to adopt a brother-like posture towards his wife. In this implausible but convenient manner, Lawrence avoids having to deal with Basil jealously interfering in the relationship between his wife and the Count.

The characters of Basil and the Count have their origin in a short story by Lawrence, entitled "The Thimble", upon which he based The Ladybird. In the short story, Lawrence had only one mate for his heroine, rather than two. The husband in "The Thimble" starts out resembling Basil, in that he displays the superficiality of the realistic element

³ Laurence Steven makes some interesting comments on what he also sees as the stilted rhetorical style that Lawrence has built into the Count's speeches. In sum, Steven holds that this is an instance of Lawrence 'putting his thumb in the pan' that even the author is not comfortable with.

("he was an impression, only a vivid impression" (54)); the war experience transforms him so that upon returning to his wife he has clearly become a mythic character, in some ways similar to the Count ("He was like one dead. He was within the realm of death. ...Though the eyes seemed to laugh, just as of old, yet underneath them was a black challenging darkness" ("The Thimble", 60)). Lawrence's decision to separate the two sides of this one character into two simpler, mutually opposed characters indicates that he was re-working the tale to express his didactic philosophy.

In The Ladybird, Lawrence can no longer tolerate the idea that mythic and realistic elements might surface in the same person at different times. The mythic element must now be shown to stand alone; thus, the realistic element is contained within Basil, and, for added emphasis, within Lord and Lady Beveridge. The characters which contain the mythic element are shown to have possessed it from the beginning; they have not acquired it. In the early part of the tale, Daphne appears to be a realistic component only because she superimposes realistic behaviour upon her "blood of dare-devils" (210); and though the Count used to behave like a "little society man" (231), his mythic nature is older even than his pre-war self, stemming from his association with the Pharoahs. Lawrence has taken an opposition which was, in "The Thimble", an internal one,

residing within the individual, and made it external, existing between people.

This change in itself might not be so objectionable were it not for the fact that Lawrence also modifies the scope of the tale from being restricted to the one room which contains the husband and wife in "The Thimble", to addressing the wider world. As Laurence Steven notes, "by widening the scope [Lawrence] could hope to indicate that the personal core had far-reaching social and even political implications" (245). Unfortunately, Lawrence's decision to substitute two overly-simplified characters for the one, more complex, more life-like husband seriously jeopardizes the credibility of The Ladybird as a tale which addresses real problems. Lawrence has changed both scope and characters in order to articulate his philosophy, but in so doing he has created characters who are ill-equipped to bear the burden he has thrust upon them.⁴

Joost Daalder would probably disagree vehemently with my commentary on this novella, grouping it together with other criticism that has "failed to see that 'The Ladybird' simply is not to be understood as an example of

⁴ Comparing "The Thimble" to The Ladybird can yield up much more evidence of Lawrence's immoral interference in the later version than I have room to include here. Anyone interested in looking into the subject further should read Laurence Steven's article "From Thimble to Ladybird: D.H. Lawrence's Widening Vision?".

mimesis or realism but creates its own symbolic, mythical world." (107) Daalder insists that,

Lawrence's tale is not realistic because he is mythmaking -- because he would like to transform reality as we know it or think we know it. I deliberately say "or think we know it," since I believe that Lawrence is not so much concerned to show that we can change reality itself as that we need to see reality differently --to become aware of a reality to which we are normally blind. (108)

In effect Daalder is arguing that Lawrence is using mythic components to express his view of the mythic element ("that reality to which we are normally blind"). He supports his case convincingly by showing the significant way in which Lawrence works the Persephone, Dionysus and related Underworld myths into the tale by means of stylistically mythic techniques.

I feel, however, that in his attempt to argue that The Ladybird is effective and successful, Daalder neglects to observe that, even when we approach the tale as a myth or fable, Lawrence's 'immoral' handling of mythic and realistic components seriously mars the work. If we object to Lady Beveridge and Basil, and their approach to life, we do so on the grounds that they fail to deal effectively with reality; they take into account only the good, and refuse to recognize the darker side of life. Why, then, should we not also object to the Count, on the grounds that he also fails to deal effectively with reality?

The solution that the Count brings to Daphne's problem consists of establishing between them a marriage of sorts, a union forged from the primitive, dark sides of their natures. It is a marriage of dubious substantiality, however, since he must soon return to his family in Hungary. He says to Daphne that,

"In the dark you are mine. And when you die you are mine. But in the day you are not mine, because I have no power in the day. In the night, in the dark, and in death, you are mine. And that is for ever. No matter if I must leave you. I shall come again from time to time. In the dark you are mine. But in the day I cannot claim you. I have no power in the day, and no place. So remember. When the darkness comes, I shall always be in the darkness of you." (270)

The repetitive, dream-like style is intensely mythic, and almost mesmerizing. Daphne herself is spell-bound by the Count's singing of a magical folk-song and by his resemblance to "an Egyptian King-god"(269) who wants to take her "into the dark Hades with him" (270). She is powerfully attracted to the primitive spirit in him, and the tale asks the reader to believe that by uniting with this spirit she will become free from the meaninglessness of the realistic element.

Lawrence is employing all these mythic components to make the Count's 'solution' seem more valid than it actually is. Daphne is not Persephone, not even in the context of the tale, and it is almost impossible to believe that she will be able to maintain meaningfulness in her life on the strength of a primitive union with a man who will always be

remote from her. It is especially impossible to believe since the 'meaningfulness' she is shown to maintain consists of becoming numb to the lack of meaning in her marriage with Basil: "She had a strange feeling as if she had slipped off all her cares. She did not care, she did not grieve, she did not fret any more. All that had left her. She felt she could sleep, sleep, sleep -- for ever." (270)

The tale has shown that Daphne's trouble is deeply connected to the post-war malaise in England; carrying her spirit off to ancient Egypt and leaving her physical self anesthetized to the real problem is therefore an escapist, unconvincing remedy. To accept the Count's solution as valid, we would have to exempt it from the test with which we formed our responses to Lady Beveridge and Basil. I think that this would be a mistake on our part, and I think that Lawrence is wrong for expecting his readers to make such a concession.

Lawrence wants to have it both ways. He wants the reader to believe that the mythic element is the truly real, in a basic, physical sense, that the Count wants Daphne to sew his shirts because having them sewn by his proper mate will affect their quality in a practical sense -- "Sew me a shirt that I can wear" (224) he tells her. But then Lawrence also wants the reader to believe that the mythic element transcends the physical world, that it need not conform to that world's dictates or probabilities, and that the Count

would later say to Daphne that he "would not have [her finished shirt] one stitch different" because "it fitted the spirit, if not the flesh" (229). As one anonymous reviewer of the Ladybird novellas noted, the tale thus leaves the impression of a "romance which is straining at its moorings in the real" (qtd.in Draper 192). The tension is detrimental rather than conducive to the final effectiveness of the art.

Chapter Two

The Fox is a disturbing, and deeply perplexing, tale. Janice Hubbard Harris has charted the trends in critical interpretation of the novella, and finds that the bulk of this criticism can be separated into two camps. Simply put, one camp sees The Fox as an artistic success, and the other argues that it is an artistic failure. Harris declares her sympathy with the second camp, and what I have to say about the tale will build on observations made by her and like-minded critics.

Harris writes that,

In general, those who find the tale successful emphasize its mythic or fairy tale elements. ... Those critics who find flaws in the work tend to see the mythic elements clashing with the tale's realistic, psychological complexities.
(163)

I would agree with both of these statements, and would also support the argument that the tale is marred by the conflict between what Harris calls mythic and realistic aspects.¹ This conflict reveals a confusion about just what sort of tale The Fox is, a confusion which exists not only in the

¹ Harris is using the terms 'mythic' and 'realistic' in the standard sense, and not according to Lucente's definitions.

mind of the reader but in the tale itself. Sometimes it seems that the world of the story is an enchanted one; at other times it is clearly our own ordinary, material world. The point of view within the story is poorly handled, and the result is confusion in the reader's mind about whose point of view he should trust.

This confusion is exacerbated by the fact that Lawrence relies almost exclusively on the mechanics of realistic and mythic components to bring about the desired response in the reader. The reader is told what he should think and feel about the characters and their behaviour by means of technical signals, but is prohibited from developing those thoughts and feelings by the content of the tale, which encourages him to respond very differently. The Ladybird is weak because Lawrence stacks the deck in favour of the mythic element, which emerges the winner without ever having had competition. The Fox is weak because the tale itself suggests a different conclusion from the one it postulates superficially. Lawrence gives the mythic element a powerful opponent in Banford, and in so far as the mythic element is represented by Henry, it does not triumph honestly. Instead, Lawrence makes the realistic element so horrendously unattractive that the mythic element wins by default.

The two female characters are placed as realistic components -- that is, in terms of time, place and culture-

- as soon as the tale begins. The reader is told how the two are referred to, socially -- "by their surnames, Banford and March" (The Complete Short Novels, 135) -- and that they are approximately thirty years of age. They live together on a farm, and try to raise poultry. The time of the story is the end of the Great War. Banford is the daughter of a tradesman who is helping her to finance the farm "for her health's sake, and because he loved her, and because it did not look as if she would marry" (135). She is the more feminine of the two women, and is intensely concerned with matters of culture and decorum, as the description of her sitting-room and the pride she takes in it shows:

... on her sitting-room floor she had a red Turkey rug and a dark stain round, the fire-place had fashionable green tiles, the piano stood open with the latest dance music: she played quite well: and on the walls were March's hand-painted swans and water-lilies. ... it was refined and nice. (158-59)

March is more receptive to the mythic element than Banford is. It seems that her robust health and masculine talents of carpentry and joinery, though she harnesses them to accomplish 'realistic' goals by maintaining the farm while she is living with Banford, also hint at a character that is able to adapt to the mythic sphere. Lawrence tells the reader that March often seems to lose touch with the conscious world, becoming "odd and absent" (137) and entering into "an odd, rapt state" (138). Nonetheless, at the beginning of the story, March is entrenched in the

realistic world of the farm, though she is oddly dissatisfied.

Lawrence clearly means for the reader to view this world in a negative, or largely unsympathetic way. E.F. Shields observes that, when introducing the girls, Lawrence employs the technique of "ironic distance" in the narrative voice: "various details, ... are used to weight the story against March and Banford's essay in female self-sufficiency, [yet] the narrator never associates himself with the ignorance or the blindness of the characters" (Shields 356). Already Lawrence is bending the story to his conviction that the realistic element is fruitless and undesirable.

The narrator uses the word 'unfortunately' three times in the first three paragraphs, always to express the idea that the women's attempts to make a successful life for themselves are doomed to failure. They are doomed partly because of opposing forces, and partly because of the girls' own attitudes. The chickens they are trying to raise do poorly to some extent because the war conditions have made good feed impossible to get, but also because the girls are unable to think beyond their own 'civilized' approach to life. March works hard to build the fowls "a beautiful home", and thinks that they therefore "should have been perfectly content." Although they look "well enough", they disgust the girls "with their tendency to strange

illnesses, at their exacting way of life, and [with] their refusal, obstinate refusal, to lay eggs" (136). Moreover, the girls actually seem to be offended by the hens' failure to alter their sleeping habits to conform to the new Daylight Savings Bill (136).²

Lawrence uses the chickens to further illuminate the unfruitfulness of the girls' lives, by implicit comparison. Just as the birds cloak infertility beneath a functional-seeming appearance, March is "a creature of odd whims and unsatisfied tendencies" (137) while seeming to be competently in control of her life. She appears to be a practical-minded person, and yet fancies spending her time "paint[ing] curvilinear swans on porcelain, with green background, or else [making] a marvellous fire-screen by processes of elaborate cabinet work" (137). She appears to keep profitably busy, but her activities are actually trivial and meaningless -- in effect, sterile.

Her life is therefore set up, as Daphne's is, in readiness for the entrance of the Lawrentian mythic hero. Before he appears, however, March is introduced to the mythic element through her encounter with the fox.

To the girls, the fox is the "one evil ... greater than any other", "a demon" (137), because he kills their

² Lawrence intensifies the aura of infertility surrounding March and Banford by having them panic at the approaching birth of a calf. The girls' anxiety renders them incapable of dealing with the impending event, and they sell the pregnant cow (135).

hens right under their noses, eluding their every effort to shoot him. The fox is assigned a pseudo-human identity, in that the girls view him as having a human-like will and awareness. They interpret his elusiveness as a deliberate, pre-meditated strategy to avoid them, and his continual raids in the face of their gunfire as a surprising demonstration that he "made no account of" the shooting (138) -- as if a fox has it within its nature to make account of anything! By viewing the fox not only in human terms, but in humanly social terms, March and Banford reveal the narrowness of their own perceptive abilities.

It is during one effort to kill the fox that March is surprised by that animal's sudden appearance at her feet. They look at one another, and March's awareness of the fox moves from the realistic to the mythic plane. She no longer sees him simply in terms of his effect on the farm, but in terms of his almost magical effect on her:

His chin was pressed down, and his eyes were looking up. They met her eyes. And he knew her. She was spell-bound -- she knew he knew her. So he looked into her eyes, and her soul failed her. He knew her, he was not daunted. (138)

The fox is still given credit for a human-like sensibility, but instead of perceiving this sensibility through a 'realistic' framework March is now viewing it through a mythic framework. The result is that the unusual character of the fox becomes more credible to the reader than it had been a short time before. Perceived in a context of

realistic components, the 'human' characteristics of the fox seem to exist primarily in the girls' minds; but when they are placed in the context of a mythic understanding, it becomes possible to believe that they have some kind of objective existence in the fox itself.

As the fox bounds away, March is caught in a kind of semi-enchantment, a "strange mindlessness" (139); the only thought that forms in her mind is the conviction that she must find the fox. She wanders "hither and thither", and, as if from the depths of sleep, finally becomes aware that Banford is calling her. Tension is thus established between the pull of the realistic element, represented by the feminine, cultured Banford, and the power of the mythic element, the primitive nature of which is denoted by the fox and by the fact that March, still under the fox's influence, is able to answer Banford only with "some sort of screaming call" (139).

As long as the fox is the central mythic figure, the story is effective. The animal is a potent symbol of primitive instinctiveness, bringing meaning to the shallow life of Ellen March. It also gives expression to the theme of positive destruction in a manner that is abstract enough to render it credible to the reader; the fox is physically destructive only to the extent that is naturally fitting, and mystically destructive in a way which it seems will benefit March.

When Lawrence moves to replace the fox with Henry Grenfel, however, problems arise. It is unclear just how closely the two figures are related. The narrator describes Henry in such a way that he actually seems to be the fox in human form:

He had a ruddy, roundish face, with fairish hair, rather long, flattened to his forehead with sweat. His eyes were blue, and very bright and sharp. On his cheeks, on the fresh skin were fine, fair hairs, like a down, but sharper. It gave him a slightly glistening look. Having his heavy sack on his shoulders, he stooped, thrusting his head forward. ... He stared brightly, very keenly from girl to girl, particularly at March, who stood pale... (142-43)

The point is underscored by the fact that this information is conveyed through the presumably neutral narrator, rather than through March's mind. However, this overwhelmingly mythic effect is undermined when the narrator remarks that,

to March he was the fox. Whether it was the thrusting forward of his head, or the glisten of fine whitish hairs on the ruddy cheek-bones, or the bright keen eyes, that can never be said: but the boy was to her the fox, and she could not see him otherwise. (143)

With this comment, the tone of the tale is suddenly altered. The correspondance between Henry and the fox, initially fashioned to be like something out of a fairy tale, is now explained as existing only in March's perception. The mythic perspective, which looked as if it was going to control the tale, is now abruptly restricted to March.

March's first dream intensifies this confusion. The evening that Henry arrives, March dreams that she hears a

strange singing outside the house which draws her closer until she realizes that the singer is the fox. The dream itself is a mythic component, in which the relationship among time, space, and reality is loosened, and which at some level encourages the reader to believe in a mystical, portentous relationship between the dream and the dreamer's waking life. The fox's singing is a mythic component, as it is in The Ladybird when the Count's singing acts as a spell over Daphne. The dream contains other mythic characteristics as well, as several critics have pointed out. The fox is "very yellow and bright, like corn" (149), a detail which creates an echo of a particular primitive fertility rite (Vickery 311); also, as March approaches the fox, he runs away and stops singing, much like mythical beasts (for instance, the unicorn) who shy away from human beings and exclude them from participation in the mythic world. These details seem to imply that there is an actual mythic significance to the fox that March is aware of, to her credit. However, the next few sentences draw the reader's attention back to the connection that March makes between the fox and Henry, and suggest that March is affected so deeply by both because she is sexually repressed:

...she wanted to touch him. She stretched out her hand, but suddenly he bit her wrist, and at the same instant, as she drew back, the fox, turning round to bound away, whisked his brush against her face, and it seemed his brush was on fire, for it seared and burned her mouth with a great pain. She awoke with the pain of it, and lay trembling as if she were really seared. (149)

This passage draws the reader's attention back to March's odd puckering of her mouth when Henry first arrived, and reinforces the image of March's sexually frustrated state. In doing so, it leads the reader to view the dream not only through the glass of mythic prophecy, but also through the realistic framework of psychology. A psychological interpretation would suggest that March's dream is simply the natural result of her own personal feelings and perceptions. The temptation to be skeptical that Henry is allied to the fox in any supernatural way grows stronger when the narrator remarks that, though March is struck afresh the next day by the resemblance of Henry to the fox, the similarity is in fact attributable to the very ordinary factor of Henry's posture, which "must have been only a manner of bearing himself, for he was young and vigorous" (149).

This new perspective implies that the association of Henry with the fox is a delusion. Serious consequences result from this implication, because, if the identification of the man with the animal is a delusion, then Henry is not the mythic hero and the essential nature of the tale is radically altered. This type of confusion, stemming from Lawrence's inability to decide whether the connection between Henry and the fox is realistically- or mythically-

based, persists throughout the tale until Henry finally kills the fox.³

Besides this difficulty, there are problems even within Lawrence's presentation of the mythic perception of the relationship between the man and the fox. Even when Lawrence is making a concentrated effort to cause the reader to view Henry as a human counterpart to, or even extension of, the fox, certain aspects of Henry's characterization prompt a skeptical response. Replacing the fox with Henry as the central mythic component requires the reader to accept Henry's destructiveness as corresponding to the fox's destructiveness. Certainly, like the fox, Henry exerts a terrifying and deeply destructive power over March, which completely obliterates the realistic element from her awareness:

she felt the deep, heavy, powerful stroke of his heart, terrible, like something from beyond. It was like something from beyond, something awful from outside, signalling to her. And the signal paralysed her. It beat upon her very soul, and made her helpless. She forgot Jill. She could not think of Jill any more. She could not think of her. The terrible signalling from outside! (184-85)

³ Henry's slaying of the fox is a particularly problematic incident which has been interpreted in a wide variety of ways. The difficulties which it presents to the reader support my general argument about the tale, but I do not have room in the present study to demonstrate this adequately, and I feel that my argument stands sufficiently on the basis of the evidence I have included. Those interested in investigating the topic might begin by reading O. Bryan Fulmer's article, "The Significance of the Death of The Fox in D.L. [sic] Lawrence's The Fox" Studies in Short Fiction 5(1968) 275-82.

In this section, the character of Henry operates very effectively as a mythic component. However, as Ian Gregor observes, the tale's demand that the reader equate Henry's destructiveness with the fox's natural predatory behaviour makes no exception for Henry's murder of Banford or for the brutality of his attitude towards March (Gregor 15). When Henry first decides to marry March, he does so while holding in his hand a dead rabbit (153). Later March is described as "flushed red, her eyes ... very wide -- open and queer, her upper lip lifted away from her two white front teeth with a curious, almost rabbit-look." (194) Henry's way of pursuing March is likened to a hunt, not in the romantic sense, but in a mythic sense that is alarmingly literal-sounding:

He would have to catch her as you catch a deer or a woodcock when you go out shooting. It's no good walking out into the forest and saying to the deer: 'Please fall to my gun.' No, it is a slow, subtle battle. It is not so much what you do, when you go out hunting, as how you feel. You have to be subtle and cunning and absolutely fatally ready. It becomes like a fate. ... It is a subtle, profound battle of wills, which takes place in the invisible. And it is a battle never finished till your bullet goes home. When you are really worked up to the true pitch, and you come at last into range, you don't then aim as you do when you are firing at a bottle. It is your own will which carries the bullet into the heart of your quarry. ... It happens like a supreme wish, a supreme act of volition, not as a dodge of cleverness. (153-54)

Henry's love of and talent for hunting is noted several times. The narrator tells us that "He was a huntsman in spirit, not a farmer, and not a soldier stuck in a

regiment" (154); Banford notes that he is "off with the gun on every occasion, ... Nothing but the gun!" (168); and we see that both observations are accurate when Henry's first impulse after hearing Banford speaking against him to March is to head immediately for the gun (169). The fact that his way of life is marked by success while the girls' agricultural lifestyle is marked by defeat shows that Lawrence is working to win the reader's belief in Henry as the bearer of mythic life, and the reader's approval of Henry's approach to winning March.

Yet, the characterization of the youth spills over the boundaries of the fox-identity, and shows him to be willful, mean-spirited, and much like a spoiled child. After getting March to say that she will marry him, he virtually gloats over her: "'You know you've promised,' he said insidiously" (164). The next morning he continues his gloating in Banford's presence, "smiling like one who has a secret", "pleased with himself" (165). The depth of his immaturity begins to show when Banford opposes the marriage; he becomes "sulky" and "stiff with temper" (166). He even goes on to adopt an exaggerated politeness, with "the devil still in his face" (166).

To seek to justify Henry's destructiveness as positive by equating it with the natural habits of the fox is, as Gregor notes, "to juggle with the word 'natural'" (Gregor 15). His destructiveness is not part of acceptable

human behaviour, and therefore, it is not natural as the fox's behaviour is natural. Moreover, although it is primitive, Henry's destructiveness is certainly not mythic, because it is fuelled solely by his willfulness. His behaviour shows him to be more truly a representative of the realistic element, even though Lawrence is employing him as a technically mythic component.

Lawrence situates Banford as Henry's opponent in an effort to make the youth's realistic destructive nature seem to be fulfilling the role of mythic positive destructiveness. The reader is asked to believe that Banford is so hateful, even evil, that Henry does well in murdering her. After Henry kisses March for the first time, they return to the house to find that,

in the sitting-room, there, crouched by the fire like a queer little witch, was Banford. She looked round with reddened eyes as they entered, but did not rise. He thought she looked frightening, unnatural, crouching there and looking round at them. Evil he thought her look was, and he crossed his fingers. (188)

It is important to note that Lawrence is expecting the reader to trust Henry's point of view. There is no authorial intrusion here that would signal the reader to think that Henry might not be credible, as there often is when March's point of view is being presented.

With this description, Lawrence is trying to add an allegorical level to the characterizations: Banford is the wicked witch, March the damsel in distress, and Henry the

rescuing hero. At one point, the narrator even remarks that March "wanted the boy to save her" from Banford (189). This allegorical pattern amounts to 'immoral' authorial interference, however, since there is nothing in Banford's established character which supports the idea that she is fundamentally evil.⁴ Gregor observes that, "from seeing Banford as a tiresome old maid, we are told that she is 'frightening ... unnatural ... evil'. It is a big jump, and it involves a process of denigration." (17) Gregor admits that Banford is indeed shown to be "unattractive and selfish" (Gregor 16-17). He also acknowledges that the detail of her need for spectacles is an effective symbol of her impaired ability to relate to other people because it fits in with the pattern of 'sight' imagery which characterizes the relationship between March and Henry. His objection is that although

we have Banford presented as 'thin', 'frail',
'plaintive', 'frightened', [and] sarcastic ...
the position ...[does not] add up to anything

⁴ Lawrence's allegorizing is not only interference, it is deliberate interference, as can be seen if one compares The Fox with its earlier, shorter version (Lawrence, "The Fox" 28-48). In the original tale, Banford never amounts to much more than a well-meaning, generous character who is simply too limited to understand the value of the unfamiliar mythic element. Although she does not approve of March's marriage to Henry, she offers very little resistance. Henry, therefore, does not feel the need to kill her, and after the wedding all three continue to live on the farm. As with The Ladybird, the earlier version of the tale portrays the realistic and mythic elements as being opposed, but not violently opposed. And, again, as with The Ladybird, in revising the tale Lawrence exaggerated and polarized his characters in order to give voice to his didactic message.

more than 'an unattractive, tiresome and premature old maid' ...[and] these descriptions of Banford [do not] coalesce, inevitably, into 'deathly'. (16)

Gregor goes on to point out that

Far from being a Mater Dolorosa figure, ... we have Banford presented as 'though nervous and delicate, ... a warm, generous soul', and earlier when Henry arrived, 'she' was as pleased and thoughtful as if she had her own brother home from France ... her natural warmth and kindness now had an outlet ...' (16)

He then observes that, when Banford voices extreme distrust of Henry (168-9), "we feel moved to agree, rather than note the incomprehension such remarks are meant to reveal." (Gregor 16)

To pursue this argument further, I would suggest that Lawrence is expecting the reader to believe that Banford is deathly and evil simply because she represents the realistic element. Simply because she is near-sighted, frail, and cultured, we are asked to believe that she is wicked. Simply because she takes a rather silly and excessive pride in her sitting-room, and resents Henry's presence making the place take on "the look of a lumber-camp" (159), we are expected to see that she can only be the villainess of the tale. Lawrence is trying to force the reader to accept his premise that the realistic element is purely evil and the mythic element is purely (though not conventionally) good, without first persuading him that within the tale this is so.

The counterproductive tension which is created between reader and text is compounded by similar inconsistencies in the presentation of Henry and his motives for killing Banford. Lawrence would like us to believe that Henry operates on a singularly impersonal level. After Henry eavesdrops on the girls' conversation about him, the narrator comments that he was not at all surprised by what he heard and that "The things people said about him always missed him personally" (179). Henry's attraction to March seems to be very impersonal; he expresses no particular feeling for her, saying instead that "when I think of my life, and of you, then the two things go together" (186). Even when he is alone he thinks about March in impersonal, fatalistic terms: "He felt that was his doom, his destiny, and his reward, to have this woman. She was his heaven and hell on earth, and he would have none elsewhere" (192). This freedom from intense personal awareness is a core, Lawrentian mythic characteristic. However, Henry's feelings of anger and hatred for Banford become increasingly personal. When Banford objects to the possibility of his marrying March, he responds with a "devil of a temper, feeling he had been insulted" (167). Later, while watching March helping Banford carry packages across a field, Henry becomes enraged:

He stood invisible under the pear -tree, watching [Banford's] every step. And if looks could have affected her, she would have felt a log of iron on each of her ankles as she made her way

forward. 'You're a nasty little thing, you are,' he was saying softly, across the distance. 'You're a nasty little thing. I hope you'll be paid back for all the harm you've done me for nothing. I hope you will -- you nasty little thing. I hope you'll have to pay for it. You will, if wishes are anything. You nasty little creature that you are.' (177)

The way he repeats the same words over and over indicates that he has become obsessed with what he sees as the wrong done to him by Banford. His hunger for revenge betrays the fact that he is not above personal awareness, after all.

His rage approaches its climax when he receives March's letter, telling him that she wants to back out of her promise to marry him. As Henry sees it, March's decision is attributable solely to the influence of Banford. So,

with his teeth bitten together and his nose curiously slightly lifted, like some creature that is vicious, and his eyes fixed and staring, he went through the morning's affairs drunk with anger and suppression. In his mind was one thing -- Banford. (192)

Henry is clearly on the edge of madness. Moreover, he could be seen to have gone over the edge into paranoia; the narrator says that "He knew society was on top of him, and he must scheme" (192), but there is no reason offered to explain why Henry feels this way. It could be construed as appropriate if the reader believes that Henry 'is' the fox, and that, as the fox, he feels fatally trapped by a farming civilization; however, as already demonstrated, Lawrence has confused the issue of Henry's fox-identity so badly that this explanation is decidedly tenuous.

Henry's hatred culminates in wish-fulfillment when he returns hastily to Bailey Farm. As he stands ready to fell a tree, with Banford standing nearby, the narrator informs the reader that "In his heart he had decided her death" (198). The boy's feelings appear to cause the tree to fall on Banford. The resulting aura of magic or miraculousness, along with the detail that Henry watches the dying Banford "as he would watch a wild goose he had shot" (199) makes the killing seem to be a mythic component. The powerful will which has apparently caused Banford's death is the same will which Henry planned to use to snare March as his wife (153-154). If Lawrence stretched the bounds of credulity in the earlier passage, he surely breaks them here by asking the reader to believe that such self-serving willfulness as this is desirable, even good.

As E.F. Shields notes, this is precisely what Lawrence does ask of the reader. Shields observes that the narrative voice, which throughout most of the tale maintains an ironic distance from the action, is "'taken in' by Banford's murder" (Shields 356). He goes on to argue that,

While it is understandable that Henry should view Banford's death as a desirable means to an end, it is inconceivable that the perceptive narrator of the first part should view the action in the same light. Henry sees Banford as the source of his problems; thus, for him the solution is simple. But it is obvious to the reader that Henry has oversimplified the problem. ... Yet, in describing the killing, the narrator accepts the distorted and obviously inadequate view of Henry ... There is no indication on the part of the narrator that Henry's triumphant exultation is

unjustified. Instead, the narrator tends to associate his own view with that of Henry and to see the act as both necessary and good. (Shields 356-57)

The result of all of this is that the reader finds himself under great pressure from narrative signals to agree that the murder of Banford is necessary and good, while the substance of the situation urges him to be at least skeptical about its value. Lawrence is interfering with the tale in an attempt to persuade the reader to accept the idea that Henry's actions are motivated by a communion with the mythic element, and that he is therefore beyond reproach.

March is as unconvincing a heroine as Henry is a hero and Banford a villainess. In her letter to Henry, March makes a brave attempt to sound as if she is in control of her own choices, but Lawrence has carefully designed the letter so that it presents her as the manipulated pawn in the war between the realistic and mythic elements. March writes,

"When you [Henry] are there you seem to blind me to things as they really are. You make me see things all unreal and I don't know what. Then when I am alone again with Jill I seem to come to my own senses and realize what a fool I am making of myself and how I am treating you unfairly. ...When I think of what I've been and what I've done with you I'm afraid I'm a few screws loose. ... Thank goodness Jill is here ... she makes me feel safe and sane, with her loving anger against me for being such a fool." (190-91)

Although March is trying to take responsibility for her fickleness, we hear her words through Henry's ears, and perceive her as being putty-like, malleable in the hands of

whoever is present to influence her. It is because he perceives March in this way that Henry feels justified in removing Banford's influence permanently.

When the bitter atmosphere of the triangle is diffused by Banford's death, the reader is given another jolt. The fairy tale view of March's situation has clearly been a delusion. She is not now 'rescued' to live happily ever after. Rather, she is increasingly miserable: "She did not want to leave him: and yet she did not feel free with him. ...she was not glad. And he was still foiled " (201).

Again, Lawrence seems to be confused by his own tale. March is supposedly to blame for the "something ... missing" (201) in the relationship because "she still felt she ought to do something, to strain herself in some direction" (201). Lawrence uses a repetitive, mesmerizing, mythic style to describe what he thinks March ought to do:

she had to be passive, to acquiesce, and to be submerged under the surface of love. She had to be like the seaweeds ... swaying forever delicately under the water, with all their delicate fibrils put tenderly out upon the flood, sensitive, utterly sensitive and receptive within the shadowy sea, and never, never rising and looking forth above the water while they lived.
(201)

We are told that March's shortcoming is her refusal to "put her independent spirit to sleep" in Henry (204), and her insistence on striving toward what Lawrence calls "the illusion of attainable happiness" (203), which he claims is a tendency of all women.

As E.F. Shields notes, this theme of happiness is a new line of thought which has little to do with the rest of the tale (Shields 359), and as Ian Gregor observes, the image of March as a striving, straining woman is hardly consistent with her established character (Gregor 18-19). These details aside, in light of what we have seen of Henry's character, it should not be surprising that March would resist giving her life passively over to him. There is nothing in Henry that could persuade the reader that he holds the key to achieving a more meaningful type of life; mythic qualities are discernible only in the most superficial regions of his characterization.

It seems that Lawrence realizes that his tale is not arguing the case as he wants it to be argued, because the story ends with Henry's lame hope that moving to Canada will solve the problems between him and March (205). Just before Henry killed the fox, the narrator commented that

it seemed to him England was little and tight, he felt the landscape was constricted even in the dark, and that there were too many dogs in the night, making a noise like a fence of sound, like the network of English hedges netting the view. He felt the fox didn't have a chance. (170)

At this point, Lawrence seems to be trying to tie the tension between mythic and realistic elements in with the tension between the hunting and the agricultural ways of life. However, he largely abandons this effort in order to focus on Banford as the source of Henry's misery and March's entrapment. Now, having failed to demonstrate Banford's

culpability, Lawrence attempts to fault the over-developed civilization in England by diverting the reader's search for a solution to the vision of the less developed, more primitive Canada. Whether or not Canada will provide Henry and March with a solution cannot be said, because the tale ends with the couple still looking ahead to the move. However, as a resolution it constitutes an immoral authorial interference in the work. The tale itself has not built up an impression that a more primitive civilization might hold the sought-after remedy; it is Lawrence who is imposing this suggestion in order to bolster the strength of his doctrinal philosophy that the mythic element can be reached by returning to a less cultured way of life.

The overall impression left by The Fox is that of a nightmare. Characters, atmosphere, and perceptual focus all change rapidly and often, without sufficient internal justification. Lawrence's manipulation of mythic and realistic components creates a text with a stringent didactic message proclaiming the superiority of the mythic element over the realistic element; however, the message is contradicted by the substance of the tale itself, and the reader is left with so many confusing signals to sort out that he may well find it impossible to establish any sort of functional relationship with the text at all.

Chapter Three

As with the other Ladybird novellas, critical opinion of The Captain's Doll is divided. F.R. Leavis commends the tale for displaying "a sure rightness of touch in conveying the shifts of poise and tone that define an extremely delicate complexity of attitude" (206). Janice Hubbard Harris feels that it treats its subject "with surprising wit and sympathy" (154). On the other hand, Eugene Goodheart holds that "The Captain's Doll presents the power urge in the context of a love story, and the effect is bizarre and disconcerting" (134). Kingsley Widmer's assessment of the novella appears to be negative, judging by his tone. Though he does not completely dismiss the tale's value, he does call it a "profoundly equivocal courtship stor[y] ...[which] uses a rather snobbish adaptation of Lawrence's own character and marital arguments" (157-8).

It is clear to me that The Captain's Doll is, in some ways, a more effective tale than either The Ladybird or The Fox. Two factors account for this difference. First, The Captain's Doll is permeated by a comic tone which alleviates (though it does not remove) the oppressiveness of Lawrence's

didactic message.¹ This tale and the characters it contains are more amusing than are the other two tales and their characters, and, so, this time the reader has the opportunity to enjoy the story without necessarily accepting the underlying philosophy.

Second, unlike the fox and the ladybird thimble, the central symbolic figure in this novella (that is, Hannele's doll) represents the realistic rather than the mythic element. It is made by human hands, and we witness it being made ; thus it has a more definite place in time, space, and culture than do the ladybird and fox, whose origins are beyond our experience as readers. Moreover, in contrast to these other symbols, the doll invites the reader to analyze its role in the story rather than register its significance by adopting an attitude of accepting belief. The Captain's Doll is, therefore, free from one of the major weaknesses of the other tales --- that of burdening its pivotal symbol with the task of linking the magical, mythic world to the everyday world of real problems. The doll is required only to be a passive representative of the various types of limitation which characterize the realistic element. It does not have to be an active agent in the bringing about of the mythic solution, a responsibility which Lawrence lays upon

¹ Gerald Doherty's article "A 'Very Funny' Story: Figural Play in D.H. Lawrence's The Captain's Doll" D.H. Lawrence Review 18 Spring (1985-86) 5-17 is important reading for anyone interested in the comic dimension of this tale.

the fox and the thimble to the detriment of their respective tales. Yet, in spite of the comic tone and the more reasonable use of the central symbol, The Captain's Doll does contain instances of 'immoral' interference similar to those which mar The Fox and The Ladybird. Lawrence has again weighted the scale unfairly in favour of the mythic element, both by sabotaging the credibility of the realistic characters, and by carrying on as if the validity of the mythic element were adequately demonstrated when in fact it remains quite unproven.

In order to defend Lawrence, and argue that The Captain's Doll is successful and free of 'immoral' authorial interference, we would have to argue several points which I do not believe can be supported. It would be necessary to argue that the transformation of Alexander Hepburn from prisoner of the realistic element to mythic hero is a convincing one. Next we would have to affirm as fair the way Lawrence has structured his classic triangle, placing the Herr Regierungsrat opposite Hepburn in the contest over Hannele. Finally, we would have to insist that Lawrence deals adequately with both of the tale's major concerns: the problems of the man-woman relationship and the problem of restoring meaning to post-war Europe. In short, we would have to argue that the evolution of the tale progresses naturally to the mythic resolution wherein Hannele accepts Hepburn's conclusions and demands.

The momentum of the story is such that it is tempting, even easy, to feel that this is an accurate assessment. Yet if we do so we will be turning a blind eye to several serious flaws which ought to be recognized.

My first contention, that Hepburn's transformation is not convincing, requires that we first take a close look at the novella's opening section. It is here that Lawrence sets the stage for the tale, and the plausibility of his use of mythic and realistic components in the rest of the story will depend on whether or not it falls within the parameters laid down at the outset.

While the other two Ladybird novellas open with a fairly direct criticism of the realistic element, in The Captain's Doll the criticism is less overt, and at first, much more gentle. The setting is Captain Hepburn's attic room. We see that Hannele, the tale's heroine, is at work on a doll, and has been

doing something to the knee of the mannikin, so that the poor little gentleman flourished head downwards with arms tossed wildly out. And it was not at all seemly, because the doll was a Scotch soldier in tight-fitting tartan trews. (Complete Short Novels 47)

The effect is two-fold. Immediately, it is comical, juxtaposing the dignity intrinsic to what the doll represents with the indignity of its position; beneath the humorousness is an echo of fetishism. Both effects are picked up on by a comment made by Mitchka, a visitor: "Another puppet? He is a good one, though! Ha-ha ha! Him! It

is him! No-no- that is too beautiful, Hannele. It is him-- exactly him. Only the trousers." (47-48)

Clearly, the doll has been made to resemble the man Mitchka seems to fear, and it so accurately mimics the appearance of this man that it strikes her as outrageously funny. The fact that the doll is a mimicking symbol rather than a metaphoric symbol (as the ladybird and the fox are) indicates that Lawrence is employing it as a realistic component. Mimicry is reductive rather than expansive, limiting meaning and making it fixed rather than opening meanings up and allowing them to be dynamic; and these characteristics are more compatible with the realistic element than with the mythic. The criticism that Lawrence is leveling at the realistic element here concerns the effect of mimicry, which is ridicule. There is an indignity inherent in being mimicked because it involves being robbed of one's uniqueness, and implies that one is simple enough to be perfectly copied.

A sense of comic mystery is created by Mitchka's character, who "peep[s] in through the door, with roguish coyness" (47) and marvels that her friend is "Quite, quite alone!" (47). She arouses the reader's curiosity with her allusion to the character not yet introduced: "Where is he then?"; and causes the reader to prepare to meet an intimidating and fearful personage by exclaiming to Hannele, "you sit here alone and wait for him? But no! That I call

courage! Aren't you afraid?' (47). When Hepburn does arrive, the comic effect is enhanced by the disparity between what the reader has been expecting and the not-at-all-frightening demeanor of the actual man. "Hello, you there!" are his first words, spoken quietly (51); his tone and the decided informality of the greeting create a small but effective comic release of tension.

The broad comedy instigated by the endearingly child-like Mitchka fades rapidly as Hepburn begins to tell Hannele of the impending arrival of his wife, and the 'official notice' which his superiors are being forced to take of his extra-marital affair. The serious mood is accompanied by a slice-of-life conversational style which stands in stark contrast to the playful and quaint fairy tale-like repartee previously engaged in by Mitchka and Hannele.

Because the Captain's part in the discussion consists mostly of infuriatingly shallow comments that indicate he is taking the situation more lightly than he ought, Hannele's relationship with him seems to be rooted solely in the realistic element. Immediately after delivering his upsetting news, Hepburn

put on his slippers, carried his shoes aside, and resumed his chair, stretching luxuriously.

"There," he said. "I feel better now." And he looked at her. "Well," he said, "and how are you?" (54)

Hannele is "rather bitter" (54) at this, and understandably so. Hepburn's detachment, which he appears to esteem, is not mythic detachment, but sham-mythic stupidity. When Hepburn says to Hannele, "Give me your hands, and let me feel that we are together. ... Let me feel that we are together, and I don't care about the rest" (56), he clearly thinks that he is viewing his circumstances from a perspective that is superior to and wiser than one which focuses on facts and details. Yet the reader is likely to sympathize with Hannele's understanding of the matter, when she tells Hepburn "you'll have to care about it. You'll have to make up your mind. You'll just have to" (56). Hepburn's attitude constitutes evasive sentimentality which cannot elevate him to a plane above his dilemma; it only permits him to remain numb to its seriousness. Thus, it is essentially a realistic component.

However, Lawrence is not simply setting up Hepburn as the representative of the realistic element and Hannele as the source of mythic wisdom. A large part of Hannele's frustration at this point in the story is due to the presence of both elements in Hepburn's character. When Hepburn goes away with his wife, Hannele observes that "He seemed to have quite disappeared out of her. She could hardly even remember him. He had become so insignificant to her she was dazed" (63). She thinks to herself that their relationship "was all so unreal" and that "particularly he

was unreal, as unreal as a person in a dream, whom one has never heard of in actual life. In actual life, her own German friends were real. ... But this other, he was simply not there." (63) Yet when she hears "the slow, straying purr of his voice" (64), she "instantly ... felt the reality of his presence, she felt the unreality of her own German men-friends." (64)

Thus, along with the imbecilic, passive sham-mythic element, there is also something in Hepburn that is genuinely mythic, which can assert itself strongly when he is present and which disappears entirely when he is not. The description of Hannele's experience is similar to the content of March's letter to Henry, but is more convincing because the reader has not been given any reason to doubt Hannele's mental stability, and, therefore, is able to sympathize with her confusion. She is exasperated that "this is what she had to reckon with, this recoil from one to the other" (64) -- not only from the reality of Hepburn to the reality of her German friends, but also between the infuriating emptiness of Hepburn's realistic nature and the potency of his embryonic mythic nature. As she realizes after meeting with his wife, Hepburn "was horrible and vulgar, then. But also, the queer figure that sat alone on the roof watching the stars!" (83).

These recoilings are presented in such a way that their drily comical effect becomes increasingly funny, and

the reader is as much absorbed in this effect as he is in the didactic implications of the action. In the scene where Hepburn, seated on the roof with his telescope, tells Hannele that he will be joining his wife at her hotel, Hannele is struck dumb by the discrepancy between the mythic nature implied by his cat-like posture (66) and the emptiness that his words betray. Completely astonished,

she felt he was some sort of psychic phenomenon like a grasshopper or a tadpole or an ammonite. Not to be regarded from a human point of view. No, he just wasn't normal. And she had been fascinated by him! ...And he called himself a man! (68)

The scene is presented in a manner which focuses on the humorousness of the characters' failure to communicate. The following excerpt demonstrates my point:

"Do you want to go to her at the hotel?" asked Hannele.

"Well, I don't particularly. But I don't mind, really. We're very good friends. Why, we've been friends for eighteen years -- we've been married seventeen. Oh, she's a nice little woman. I don't want to hurt her feelings. -- I wish her no harm, you know. -- On the contrary, I wish her all the good in the world."

He had no idea of the blank amazement in which Hannele listened to these stray remarks.

"But --" she stammered. "But doesn't she expect you to make love to her?"

"Oh, yes, she expects that. You bet she does; woman-like."

"And you --?" -- the question had a dangerous ring.

"Why, I don't mind, really, you know, if it's only for a short time. I'm used to her. I've always been fond of her, you know -- and so if it gives her any pleasure -- why, I like her to get what pleasure out of life she can."

"But you -- you yourself? Don't you feel anything?" Hannele's amazement was reaching the point of incredulity. She began to feel that he

was making it up. It was all so different from her own point of view. To sit there so quiet and to make such statements in all good faith: no, it was impossible.

"I don't consider I count," he said, naïvely. Hannele looked aside. If that wasn't lying, it was imbecility, or worse. (67-68)

Hannele is trying furiously to get Hepburn to take notice of her feelings and of the import of what he is saying; yet Hepburn seems not even to be conscious, as he utters the most outrageous comments and remains completely unaware of how outrageous they are.² Lawrence is using the scene to make a statement about the folly of the realistic element, but his use of humour provides a focal point with which the reader can engage even if he disagrees with the didactic message.

There are moments in the tale, however, when Lawrence takes advantage of the comic tone to camouflage a significant flaw. One such moment is the passage in which Mrs. Hepburn dies and Captain Hepburn is suddenly transformed into an insightful character. The account of the death is terse, and gives only those details which paint the incident in the most comical colours:

... apparently she had in the morning washed a certain little camisole , and put it on the window-sill to dry. She must have stood on a chair, reaching for it, when she fell out of the

² Lawrence's article, "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover", published in Phoenix II, provides further illumination of the criticism being levelled at Hepburn for his lack of sexual fidelity (500) and at both him and his wife for basing their marriage on a communion of 'personalities' (506).

window. Her husband, who was in the dressing-room, heard a queer little noise, a sort of choking cry, and came into her room to see what it was. And she wasn't there. The window was open and the chair by the window. He looked round, and thought she had left the room for a moment, so returned to his shaving. He was half shaved when one of the maids rushed in. -- When he looked out of the window down into the street he fainted, and would have fallen, too, if the maid had not pulled him in in time. (85)

The scene is farcical, and on one level it parodies the kind of convenient wish-fulfilment that surfaces as the death of Banford in The Fox and Basil's retreat in The Ladybird.³ However, at the same time, the reader must believe that Mrs. Hepburn's death constitutes an event of serious importance, and it is here that Lawrence begins to muddy the waters of the tale.⁴

The problem surrounds the fact that Hepburn is suddenly loquacious and committed to interpreting the meaning behind appearances, where previously he spoke little

³ Gerald Doherty's article looks in some depth at the possibility that Lawrence may be parodying his own style in The Captain's Doll.

⁴ Leo Gurko makes a point similar to the one I wish to argue here. He writes that "In The Captain's Doll it is the death of Mrs. Hepburn that releases the others to a fresh beginning. Though her fall from a hotel window is accidental, there is something deeply purposive about it. ... Lawrence wishes to free the event from the burden of contrivance, from being, too baldly, a device manufactured to make the main sequence of his story possible. He does so by endowing Mrs. Hepburn with a complex nature not wholly borne out by the facts." (Gurko 180)

and was incapable of seeing beyond the surface of things.⁵ The change in Hepburn is so dramatic that not even the shock of the accident seems enough to account for it; in order for it to be credible we must believe that some kind of magical transformation was involved. Indeed, the narrative encourages us to infer that magic has played a crucial role. We are told that,

The chief thing that the Captain knew, at this juncture, was that a hatchet had gone through the ligatures and veins that connected him with the people of his affection, and that he was left with the bleeding ends of all his vital human relationships. (90)

Because this severance is also called "a long slow weaning away" (90), we deduce that it is intertwined with his being separated from his wife, who was eight years his senior and who behaved very maternally towards him.⁶ The element of magic is supplied by Hepburn himself, who after his wife's death describes her as having been,

"like a fairy who is condemned to live in houses and sit on furniture and all that, don't you know. It was never her nature. ...[She was] like some sort of delicate creature you take out of a tropical forest the moment it is born and from the first moment teach it to perform tricks. All her life she performed the tricks of life, clever

⁵ Gerald Doherty views the transformation as constituting a change from being completely without insight to being "a prolific metaphor-maker", "from being a passive receptor of projected meanings ... [to being] an active generator of them." (Doherty 9)

⁶ Elgin W. Mellown sees Mrs. Hepburn as a sort of "puppet master" and writes that in The Captain's Doll, "as in some fairy tale, the death of the puppet master releases the doll from its servitude." (Mellown 229)

little monkey she was at it, too. Beat me into fits. But her own poor little soul, a sort of fairy soul, those queer Irish creatures, was cooped up inside her all her life, tombed in." (86-7)

The problem Lawrence has left us with is this. In order to believe in Hepburn's transformation, and thus in the way the tale develops from this point on, we must believe that Mrs. Hepburn did exert some kind of spell over her husband which was broken with her death; however, the only testimony we have that she was in some way magical is that of Hepburn himself, and the only way that his testimony can be taken as being reliable is if he actually has been transformed from being shallow and limited to being insightful and skilled at interpretation. The whole matter is saturated with a kind of chicken-and-egg unresolvability.⁷

Moreover, there is much evidence that indicates that Mrs. Hepburn is not at all magical. She is, rather, a sham-mythic component -- a representative of that part of the realistic element which, through artifice, appears to possess something foreign to, and thus more meaningful than, a merely materialistic relationship to life. She is

⁷ It is perhaps worth noting that this problem arises at the point where, as Mellown observes, "Lawrence has used up all of the material from 'The Mortal Coil'" (229). "The Mortal Coil" is a short story by Lawrence which he used as the germ for The Captain's Doll. As with The Ladybird and The Fox, noting the ways in which Lawrence has altered the original version of the story clearly demonstrates that the instances of authorial interference which I am labelling 'immoral' are the result of deliberate revision.

described as a monkey (Daphne remembers the Count in his society-man phase as being "a bit like a monkey" (213)), and the perfect model for a doll (the narrator remarks that she looked "extraordinarily like one of Hannele's dolls, in a funny little cape of odd striped skins, and a little dark-green skirt, and a rather fuzzy sort of hat" (69)). Unusual as she may appear, her "rather lardy-dardy middle-class English" (59) reveals that, at bottom, she is very ordinary.

In addition, contrary to her own belief, she is not insightful. As Gerald Doherty notes, while Hannele is artistically creative but unable to interpret any meaning from her creations, the non-creative Mrs. Hepburn interprets freely, but incorrectly (Doherty 8,16). After visiting the shop run by Hannele and Mitchka, Mrs. Hepburn assumes that Mitchka is her husband's lover. She then invites Hannele over to her room for tea, and chatters on seemingly endlessly, completely oblivious to the fact that she is talking to Hepburn's mistress. This is hardly a portrait of someone with formidable supernatural powers of divination or control.

It would seem, then, that Lawrence has done with Mrs. Hepburn in a comic vein what he does with Banford in a melodramatic vein --- he uses the fact of her realistic nature as if that in itself were proof positive that she is a dangerous enemy. In ascribing to Mrs. Hepburn a magical quality which both conflicts with the rest of her

characterization and is necessary for the plausibility of Hepburn's rise as a mythic hero, Lawrence betrays his art in favour of making the tale voice his philosophy.

Throughout the first section of the novella, Hannele remains the central focus. Like March, she has trouble seeing past temporary influences to discern what is truly real; however, whereas in The Fox this difficulty simply reflects poorly on March for not being wise enough to submit to the mythic element, in The Captain's Doll it creates an effective comic atmosphere and also an effective characterization of Hannele. Like March, and unlike Mrs. Hepburn, Hannele herself is neither purely realistic nor purely mythic, but open to the influence of both elements.

In the middle section of the tale we see Hepburn only as the narrator presents him and not through Hannele's eyes. Leavis observes that during this time Hepburn becomes a much less interesting character (Leavis 223), and Hepburn himself soon finds his life to be tedious. Hannele's point of view is indeed crucial to the functioning of the tale, and Lawrence uses her absence to show that without the active struggle to discern the mythic from the realistic, life is without any sharp interest.

This constitutes a fairly didactic point, but once again Lawrence couches his message in the comic style which makes this tale unique among the Ladybird novellas. Doherty notes that the second section of The Captain's Doll is over-

run with nude figures, first "in post-imperial Kaprun, those hedonistic exhibitions of bodies at play though with a concomitant undertow of masochistic frustration -- 'the endless ache of flesh' -- which confront Hepburn's gaze whichever way he turns" (Doherty 10), and then in Tyrol, when Hepburn visits Hannele and finds her and her friends bathing. While nudity is not rare in Lawrence's works, here it is unusual, because unlike that in The Rainbow, Women in Love, or Lady Chatterley's Lover, it is "collective and social, its contexts are urban, [and] its scenarios are loud and theatrical" (Doherty 9-10). Doherty's argument is that the nude figures are employed as parodic devices, constituting "a deliberate excess and exaggeration" (10). I would add to this that their purpose is to demonstrate, comically, Hepburn's need for the order which Hannele can give to his life. As Doherty observes, Hepburn's attention moves from a general focus to a particular one, from an impersonal attitude to a personal one. The final figure upon whom his attention rests belongs to Hannele. The chaotic atmosphere of "flesh everywhere" (100) is stilled by the sight of her form in particular. Meaningless flesh is replaced by meaningful flesh; social nudity by semi-private nudity. Thus, Hepburn's comical state of being bombarded by nude realistic components is given over to a state of being ready to move toward mythic union with a specific individual.

However, as in the instance of Mrs. Hepburn's death, in the middle section Lawrence's comic tone once again makes it too easy for the reader to overlook a serious weakness in the development of the tale. Hepburn, now fully metamorphosed into a mythic component (although the fact of this becomes clear only as the third and final section progresses), is at last ready to marry Hannele. At this juncture Lawrence places an obstacle in his path, in the character of Hannele's fiancé, the Austrian Herr Regierungsrat (hereafter referred to most often as 'the Herr R.'). The description of the Herr R. falls right between the passage wherein Hepburn purchases the surrealist painting of Hannele's doll and the above-mentioned passage which shows Hepburn being overwhelmed by the 'endless ache of flesh'. Since this new character cuts a rather absurd figure himself, he seems to fit right in with the pervading tone. A closer examination of the matter suggests that Lawrence has included him in the tale more to fulfill a didactic function than because he is an integral piece of the art.

The Herr Regierungsrat is, without a doubt, the antithesis of the mythic hero, the quintessential sham-mythic component. While Hepburn is "a tall, slender, well-bred man" (51) with well-shapen legs, the Herr R. seems to have "no legs, save to sit with" (97), is "stout, and rather loose", and has a soul that is "sweeping and careless, ...ill-bred-seeming, but in fact, not ill-bred at all, only

a little bitter and a good deal indifferent to his surroundings" (96). In the final section we see that Hepburn's mythic nature is characterized by a strong sense of self; Hannele accuses him of "megalomania" (117) when he declares that the mountains "are not bigger than me. They are less than me" (117). In contrast, the Herr R.'s character is a hodge-podge of mannerisms that lacks the unifying integrity which might give him true strength. Being a member of the fallen aristocracy, he is neither a ruler nor a common man. His nature is rather lukewarm, exhibiting a feeble imitation of coarseness; his appearance is equally insipid, a major factor being his decadent, "fat face with its fine nose and slightly bitter, pursed mouth [which] came to have a resemblance to the busts of some of the late Roman emperors" (96).

His character seems to rise above the ordinary when Lawrence describes him as seeming, "almost eternal, sitting there in his chair with his knees planted apart. It was as if he would never rise again, but remain sitting for ever... ." (97) The picture calls to mind the image of Count Psanek sitting in the dark, "erect, like an Egyptian King-god in the statues" (269). However, the next two words shatter the connection; the Herr R. seems as if he will remain sitting for ever "... and talking" (97). The Count attracts Daphne with his singing. March's first dream has her responding to the strange singing of the fox. Hannele finds herself

mesmerized by the purring sound of the Captain's voice. In contrast, the Herr R. does not sing, nor is his voice the attraction; it is his endless, detailed, witty, cynical talk which fascinates women, Hannele among them (97). Thus, the quality of eternality which he seems to possess is really only an offensive counterfeit of mythic power.

He does carry with him a certain sense of doom, being a fallen aristocrat in post-monarchic Austria. Lawrence tells us that for Hannele, "the sense of fatality was part of the attraction" (99), and it is when we view the Herr R. through Hannele's eyes that we see the full extent of his function as a sham-mythic component:

She would like him to make her feel a queen in exile. No one had ever quite kissed her hand as he kissed it: with that sudden stillness and strange, chivalric abandon of himself. How he would abandon himself to her! -- terribly--wonderfully -- perhaps a little horribly. (99)

The relationship that Hannele has with the Herr R. is thus described in terms that place it in the same category as Daphne's marriage to Basil; both are characterized by a focus on exalted romanticism, something which almost always signals worthlessness in Lawrentian fiction.

Clearly, then, the Herr Regierungsrat is to Hepburn as Basil is to the Count. The relationship of the Herr R. to Hepburn also parallels that of Banford to Henry, in that both the Herr R. and Banford represent the civilized, known, cultivated world, while Hepburn and Henry represent the

mysterious, uncharted, primitive world. This aspect of The Captain's Doll is best illuminated by noting that the Herr R. intends to write a "very minute and thorough history of his own district: the Chiemgau and the Pinzgau" (98), while Hepburn, in contrast, plans to "go to East Africa to join a man who is breaking his neck to get his three thousand acres of land under control" (132), and then to write a book about the moon, "when I've done a few more experiments and observations, and got all the necessary facts" (132). The former is thus linked to the overly-developed civilization of Europe, the latter to a primitive continent and a mysterious celestial body.

Although it may not be readily apparent, Lawrence's employment of the Herr R. is just as 'immoral' as is his treatment of Basil and Banford. Detailed and vivid as the description of the Herr R. is, as an opponent for Hepburn this character is basically a straw man. He makes only one, cameo appearance in the tale, during which he does not speak; everything we know about him we know because we are told by the narrator. Moreover, once Hepburn returns to Hannele, the Herr R. virtually disappears from the tale, and Hannele decides to marry Hepburn with no thought for her fiance. Certainly she undergoes an internal struggle before making her decision, but it is a struggle between her desire for Hepburn and her realistic side, which desires that he should submit to her will. As far as the dramatic

development of the tale is concerned, the Lawrentian triangle of Hepburn - Hannele - Herr Regierungsrat is nothing more than unnecessary baggage. It seems a reasonable supposition that Lawrence has included it in the tale largely to make Hepburn seem as if he has emerged victorious from a battle with the realistic element.⁸

Janice Hubbard Harris views the triangle differently. Harris writes that the Herr R.,

represents to Hannele a remnant of the romantic European order she grew up with, knew, and loved before the war. Opposing his deadly invitation to move backward are Hepburn and his vague vision of something new. ... like seekers before her, Hannele is faced with a choice between difficult salvation and easy perdition. (160)

As I have already explained, the suggestion that Hannele has a legitimate choice here is not very convincing; but Harris' observation that the Herr R. represents old Europe brings up another consideration. Lawrence has built into this tale the unmistakable presence of the war malaise. The Herr R. is not simply the representative of a romantic, by-gone way of life; he reflects the damage that the war has done to that way of life, and the emptiness that all of Europe has to contend with as a result of the war. We are told that the Austrian city of Kaprun,

⁸ It also seems likely that Lawrence felt compelled to counter-balance the inverted Lawrentian triangle of the novella's opening section, wherein Hepburn is caught between two women. The implications of this apparent need to 'bring things out right' is discussed in the Conclusion of the present study.

was an elegant and fashionable watering-place before the war: a lovely little lake in the midst of the Alps, an old Tyrolese town on the water-side, green slopes sheering up opposite, and away beyond, a glacier. It was still crowded and still elegant. But alas, with a broken, bankrupt, desperate elegance and almost empty shops. (95)

The ramifications of the situation for the people who live in Austria are that they are virtually paralyzed. The Herr R. "had no money except some Austrian money that was worth nothing outside Austria. He could not even go into Germany. There he was, fixed in this hollow in the middle of the Tyrol." (98) The Austrian peasants exhibit an air of hopelessness in spite of the fact that they are on holiday:

They seemed to stray about like lost souls, and the proud chamois-brush behind their hats, this proud, cocky, perking-up tail, like a mountain-buck with his tail up, was belied by the lost-soul look of the men, as they loitered about with their hands shoved in the front pockets of their trousers. (105)

Though these passages are all taken from the latter portions of the novella, the theme of the war malaise is one which is introduced early on. Within the first few pages the reader meets Mitchka's lover, Martin, and is told that "One could see the war in his face" (49). The image of post-war Europe, bereft of its former way of life, and unable to find a purposeful new one, is therefore a recurring one which should not be ignored.

Once having presented the reader with this image, and the awareness that it constitutes a real problem, Lawrence fails to deal with the issue in any satisfactory

way. The mythic resolution of the novella does address the tale's primary focus, which is the problem of the male-female relationship.⁹ Hepburn proves his mythic nature by climbing a glacier on his own strength, without the benefit of mountaineering tools.¹⁰ He then makes the unorthodox proposal to Hannele that she marry him even though he does not love her. By way of explaining his aversion to love, Hepburn returns to the example of the doll:

"It wasn't malicious. It was flattering, if you like. But it just sticks in me like a thorn: like a thorn. -- And there it is, in Germany somewhere. -- And you can say what you like, but any woman, to-day, no matter how much she loves her man -- she could start any minute and make a doll of him. And the doll would be her hero: and her hero would be no more than the doll. ...If a woman loves you, she'll make a doll out of you. She'll never be satisfied till she's made your doll. And when she's got your doll, that's all she wants. -- And so, I won't be loved. And I won't love. ... -- I'll be honoured and I'll be obeyed: or nothing." (132)

Hepburn's attitude is undeniably chauvinistic-- indeed, the philosophy which permeates the Ladybird tales

⁹ I make this statement with the reservation that the resolution satisfactorily addresses the problem only in so far as we turn a blind eye to the problems involved in Hepburn's transformation. These problems should not, in fact, be ignored, but for the moment I wish only to demonstrate that if we set that flaw aside, the resolution is fairly consistent with the way Lawrence has set out the concern of the man-woman relationship.

¹⁰ I say little about Hepburn's assault on the glacier, not because it is an unimportant section, but because it constitutes a fairly unsurprising depiction of the Lawrentian mythic hero's supremacy over nature. An examination of the difference between how Hepburn behaves on the glacier and how the other people behave could be fruitful, but is not really necessary for this study.

promotes male dominance just as surely as it promotes mythic salvation.

However, the offensiveness of Hepburn's demands notwithstanding, his insistence on being honoured and obeyed makes sense as a response to the male-female problem as Lawrence has presented it. In the context of the tale, endless problems result when the woman is in control, because Lawrence has created a law which dictates that the woman, left to her own preferences, will choose to let the realistic element rule. The truth of this law is supported by Hannele's determination, almost to the last, to make Hepburn "go down on his knees to her" (118). It is not the realistic element in Hepburn that she abhorred while envisioning him on his knees before his wife, but simply the fact that he was on his knees before a woman other than her (79).

If the mythic element is to be the dominant force in the marriage, then, it seems clear that the man will have to be dominant also. Hepburn drives home his point with the reference to the doll, and the whole issue is tied up very neatly when Hannele acquiesces to his demands and, as proof of her rejection of the realistic element, announces her intention to burn the painting of the doll (134).

However, to return to the matter of the war malaise theme, the mythic resolution of the tale has very little to say to it. Hepburn and Hannele's salvation lies not only in

their marriage, but also in their plans to leave Austria and go to Africa. Such a solution is hardly a convincing answer to the problems being faced in Europe. The Herr R. and the Austrian peasants will continue to be virtual prisoners of their hopeless situation.

One might protest that in the context of the tale, these characters deserve to be imprisoned, since they have not found the salvation of the mythic element. However, this line of argument limits the Austrians to being the symbol of the problem, and does not recognize that they are also representative of the victims of the problem.

On the whole, The Captain's Doll is a more effective tale than either The Ladybird or The Fox. It does contain serious flaws which show Lawrence guilty of 'immoral' interference. However, in it, Lawrence does not ask us to believe that the central symbol can bring about practical solutions to real problems, nor does he impose upon the tale a resolution which is completely at odds with the essence of the content. Moreover, by employing a comic tone, Lawrence allows the reader the opportunity to enjoy the story without actually accepting the underlying philosophy.

Whether or not the reader can engage in the comic dimension of the tale while completely rejecting the underlying philosophy is still questionable. Much of the humour in The Captain's Doll is built upon the premise that any distortion of male/mythic dominance is obviously

ridiculous. The Conclusion of the study at hand is therefore directed to the discussion of this point and the larger issue of Lawrence's treatment of the role of the sexes in the Ladybird tales.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to point out the fundamental role that mythic and realistic components play in the Ladybird novellas and to demonstrate that Lawrence's use of these components in the tales is largely 'immoral' by his own standards. The first chapter demonstrated that, in The Ladybird, Lawrence undermines the effectiveness of the tale by forcing the mythic solution and the mythic components which represent that solution to be both relevant to and independent of the concerns of the material world. The second chapter showed Lawrence to be guilty of directing The Fox to a conclusion that is not consistent with the tale itself, and demonstrated that the consequent tension, coupled with Lawrence's mishandling of point of view throughout the tale, results in overwhelming confusion for the reader. The third chapter examined The Captain's Doll, and found that, while that tale is the most effective of the three in the collection (due to its comic tone and Lawrence's decision to have the central symbolic figure represent the realistic element), the success of the work as a whole again suffers because of Lawrence's tendency to

claim more on behalf of the mythic element than the tale itself warrants.

The primary purpose of this paper being fulfilled, then, it seems fitting to make note of at least one possible direction that a related inquiry might take.

Within the last ten years, many of Lawrence's critics have chosen to write about the portrayal of women in his work (e.g., Simpson; Spilka). Often these critics focus on the fact that Lawrence usually depicts women as people who ought to give up their independence and become submissive to men.

It is through this 'ought' that the findings of the present study could be linked to the larger inquiry into Lawrence's treatment of women. In several places throughout the Ladybird tales a characteristic or a type of behaviour which is shown to be mythic in a man will be depicted as realistic in a woman, and vice versa. Lawrence describes Henry as having "the devil ... in his face" (Complete Short Novels 166), and the intention is unmistakably to emphasize Henry's mythic anger; in the same tale, the similarly satanic word 'witch' classifies Banford as realistic (188). In The Ladybird, when Basil is on his knees worshipping Daphne, both characters are associated with the realistic element; move ahead to the scene where it is the woman, Daphne, who is on her knees worshipping the Count, and both characters are clearly shown to be mythic. Even in the comic

tale, The Captain's Doll, Hepburn as a controlling figure who commands obedience is mythic; Mrs. Hepburn and Hannele as controlling figures are realistic. In fact, much of the humour in the tale is derived from the inversion of the Lawrentian gender roles. The configuration of Hepburn in a triangle with two women is clearly intended to be a ridiculous distortion of the way things should be, as modelled later in the story by the triangle of Hepburn-Hannele - Herr Regierungsrat.

It is my suspicion that a careful examination of these and similar details would show that Lawrence fails to give anything but the fact of gender as his reason for making these distinctions, and that mythic power is defined, essentially, by a certain kind of male dominance. If this is the case, then Lawrence could be shown to be guilty of further 'immoral' interference than the present study has indicated. There would be evidence not only that he had put his 'thumb in the scale' to make sure that the mythic element would emerge victorious, but also that his essential premise (the superiority of the mythic element) was founded upon a set of assumptions about men and women which the art does not in itself uphold. The critical concerns of artistic immorality and political sub-text could thus be brought to bear on one another, to the benefit, I think, of Lawrence criticism as a whole.

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