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Disavowed: the downfall of England's men, marriages, and sense of self in the stories of D. H. Lawrence

Emily Guido

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Abstract:

This paper aims to discuss the theme of displacement, specifically of men in early twentieth-century England experiencing the decline of the traditional masculinity model, in the short fiction of D. H. Lawrence. Displacement, fundamentally, it is removing that which belongs in a specific place or home to an unknown, unadapted environment. In the context of literature, displacement can take more abstract shapes, such as cultural, spiritual, and mental displacements that—as most great literature does—arouses our sympathies to the larger groups and concepts for which they stand. In these types of stories, physical displacement becomes the metaphor for these more abstract outcastings. Any problem of displacement within a society, and particularly relating to the societal roles we take on, is essentially a problem of how well traditions adapt in evolving worlds as well as what (or who) will be left behind—and what will fight to keep its place. The nuclear house and household structure acts as a representative mimicry, containing a microcosm of the social ranks that would be assigned to the household members in larger society. That form is familiar to us, the hierarchical structure of marriage and family as a descending order with the husband/father at the helm; so familiar, in fact, that once the structure begins to fail, confusion and panic rush in like water, sinking the ship. The twin prongs which bring about the displacement of men and masculinity in England at this time were the trope of the New Woman (and subsequent modernist reactions to it) and The Great War. A handful of short stories by D. H. Lawrence exemplifies this rhetoric: “England, My England,” “New Eve and Old Adam,” “The Prussian Officer,” and “The Man Who Loved Islands.” Furthermore, these stories illustrate Lawrence’s use of marriage and relationships to sharply define not only the shape of the displacement experienced by these characters but also to delve into disturbing and graphic consequences that this phenomenon has on our relationships to others and to ourselves.

Disavowed: The Downfall of England's Men, Marriages, and Sense of Self in the Stories of D.H. Lawrence

By
Emily Guido
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College of Humanities and Social Sciences
English Department

Thesis Committee:

[REDACTED]

Dr. Monika Elbert

Thesis Sponsor

[REDACTED]

Dr. Melinda Knight

Committee Member

[REDACTED]

Dr. Adam Rzepka

Committee Member

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Montclair State University

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D. H. Lawrence and War:

The strongest assault on men's sense of self and masculinity which greatly affected Lawrence's writing is the wartime model of masculinity that pervaded England leading up to and during World War I. "D. H. Lawrence did not serve in World War I. He was deemed unfit for service due to tuberculosis; however, this did not negate the impact the war had on him" (Wright 79). One of the short stories that provides the most scope for insight into Lawrence's relationship to the military can be seen in "The Prussian Officer." In this story, we see clearly themes which express the main challenges to masculinity: tension within male camaraderie, suppression of emotion and expression, and contempt (often self-contempt) for the perceived femininity or weakness of traits not traditionally associated with masculinity.

"The Prussian Officer" is "a peerless construction, on a theme in which writers did not frequently engage: cruelty as a form of perverted sex adopted to demonstrate phallic power to achieve dominance and submission in a covert homoerotic context" (Radu 94); because love and affection are considered vulnerabilities in the version of masculinity that emerged in the era of World War I, Lawrence's male characters conflate love with weakness, affection with tension, and sexuality with perversion/revulsion. The most common reactions to emotions that make male characters feel too vulnerable mirror those that most commonly helped men in the real world cope with intense feeling in a world where vulnerabilities were not tolerated well in men: anger/violence or stoicism. Each of these reactions is typified and represented in the two main characters in "The Prussian Officer," with the captain as anger/violence and the orderly as stoicism. Radu proposes an interesting experiment to "read the tale as the homoerotic and sadistic relationship of two males dissolving into each other, forced to live in a masculine world, far from female presences" (96). As the tale unfolds, it is clear that neither methodology (anger

or stoicism) is very effective; each man is splintering apart, giving way to the catastrophic moments where they can no longer contain themselves. Radu refers to the tension caused by opposite coping mechanisms as the “result is the fusion of apparent opposites, two bodies functioning as duplicates of each other, as the two poles of a magnet, as a case of articulation, of blending of the two masculine types” (96). Radu goes as far as to say that the combination of militaristic views of masculinity and contempt for femininity, particularly as such traits as determined to be feminine emerge within the male personality, create “a specific Lawrentian perception of masculinity associated with dominance and potential leadership overtones underlying identity uncertainty,” and furthermore that “such uncertainties can be seen in their attempts to be different and adopt an aggressive behaviour” (Radu 94). Hence, when the captain notices that his orderly is preoccupied writing love poems for his sweetheart, he perceives the orderly as weak while simultaneously perceiving *himself* as weak for his own preoccupation; worse, while the captain feels himself crumbling inside, no longer able to be stoic nor suppress his interest in the orderly, he also sees the other man as more or less “self-contained,” causing both resentment and insecurity to rise in him until he expresses himself in the only other acceptable way: an act of violence. He exerts his authority over the orderly to the point of bullying, then physically beats him. Some of his struggle transfers to the orderly at this point, who is less and less able to restrain his own emotion as the story plays out, ultimately leading to his own act of violence against the captain—only this time, the act is lethal. Harrison points out the portion of accountability belonging to the military: “Lawrence makes it clear that the captain’s nature is suppressed and that military hierarchy and routine only exacerbate his conflicted identity. His capacity for emotional connection has been replaced by the need to dominate and control, and his only way to truly feel an affective bond is through violence” (82).

This insight is significant in two ways: firstly there is the explicit blame for both deaths as a direct result for encouragement of violence coupled with the discouragement of emotional expression, and therefore the orderly's murder of the captain is "an expression of violence encouraged by the system he serves and has been forced to embody" (Harrison 83). Secondly, there is the implication that this twisted sort of competition between men who are part of the same company, their mutual admiration and resentment, is what passes for camaraderie, companionship and affection between men in service.

Booth contends that "[the] arrest of development attendant on military life is a recurring theme" specifically citing "The Prussian Officer," "[though] the men are represented in terms of some ill-defined lack of their own, there is also the suggestion that they may need nothing beyond themselves and each other" (57). There is an abundance of evidence for this sentiment within the world of the story, in which the only women who are mentioned are simply referred to as "girl" or "woman" and only appear when the male characters are distinctly craving distraction from one another. The captain, in the throes of his agitation over his orderly, "went away for some days with a woman" only to deem it a "mockery of pleasure. He did not want the woman" (Lawrence 147). The orderly's sweetheart is mentioned more often, and in terms of love, yet her mentions are still restricted only to when the orderly is frustrated or upset over the captain: "He went with her, not to talk, but to have his arm round her, and for the physical contact. This eased him, made it easier for him to ignore the captain" (146). In this highly militaristic story, the role of women could not be made more obvious: to exist on the periphery, to comfort the men, to not make themselves too known. Yet on the companionship of men, Bilsing states that the "shifting societal constructs of masculinity after the war are played out in these short stories, and within Lawrence strives to achieve a brotherhood, a male community" (78); ironically, though women

were also called upon to participate in the war effort, on the home front rather than the battlefield, the exclusionary attitude from men was ubiquitous, existing in both places. Therefore, when soldiers came home, they neither appreciated or acknowledged the women who assumed more masculine societal roles while they were away. In a fashion, “The Prussian Officer” mimics such a tendency by neither appreciating nor acknowledging female characters, except just enough for the reader to know that there is a female presence to ignore. Knowing from the rest of his work how sensitive Lawrence was to the interactions between the sexes, this absence feels especially intentional and poignant.

In a way, the war called into question Lawrence’s own personal sense of self and masculinity; his brief time spent in military life before being dismissed did not reaffirm him of himself: “Even though all aspects of the military were abhorrent to him, the soldiers/veterans Lawrence fictionalizes in *England, My England* [the short-story collection] are all the more powerful for their experience, not weakened as Lawrence was” (Bilsing 79). If anything, having been deemed “unfit” due to illness seemed to drive Lawrence to think more deeply about what the concept of “unfitness” means for a man. While characters like Evelyn and the captain and his orderly of “The Prussian Officer” are depicted as becoming stronger, outwardly more stoic and enduring the longer they serve, Lawrence unravels them mentally. They rapidly disintegrate on the inside, ultimately meet violent and untimely deaths, and their mangled bodies are discovered by horrified comrades. Lawrence himself likens the conditions of their bodies to the strength of the military body, and the country in general.

Then of course, there is the traditional nuclear family model to contend with. Both men and women have wrestled against rigidly define roles; when one cannot fulfill their designated role, it often leads to an identity crisis, one that is rooted in the question of whether or not their

personhood is damaged or diminished by their inability to live up to the societal standard of man- or woman-hood. Lawrence experienced this dilemma for himself: “it is worth recalling here that according to Jeffrey Meyer’s biography of Lawrence, Lawrence was sterile” (Allan 20). In and of itself, this piece of knowledge should not affect the general analysis of either Lawrence or his work, however Allan makes the point that while he is “admitting this biographical detail into evidence...indeed, as evidence it is circumstantial rather than direct evidence,” he does so only to make the point that “[if] Lawrence’s ‘ultimate character’ is the phallus, it is because in some ways he makes its symbolic nature real and its real symbolic” (Allan 21). Put another way, for Lawrence the spirit and the body had an incredibly complex, intertwined and yet not always totally connected relationship. Damage to the psyche translates to damage to the body (such as the brutal deaths following the mental decline of both main characters in “The Prussian Officer”), but it does not go both ways: damage to the body neither decreases nor desecrates the spirit or personhood of the individual. This would suggest that Lawrence believed our identities come first and foremost from some core place deep within us; our personalities and our selves are not preordained by the bodies we are born into, but influenced over time by societal perceptions of our bodies. Furthermore, the rotting away of deepest, inner spirits can eat outwards and leave us visibly mangled—not directly, but through the breakdown of our minds, then choices, until the consequences become such that we can physically be harmed by them. War, of course, is the largest-scale example of how twisted ideologies result in mangled bodies, but Lawrence shows us how this can happen at the level of the individual in his portrayal of how military life leaves the bodies of the captain: “[the] body twitched and sprawled there inert” (Lawrence 158) and the orderly: “looking every moment it must rouse to life again” (164). But what is more telling is the commentary on their respective states. Of the captain’s body, the

orderly thinks how it was a “pity *it* was broken. It represented more than the thing that had kicked and bullied him” (158), as if the body were a tool that could still be useful if it could somehow operate without the man inside of it; of the orderly’s body, Lawrence describes it as “so young and unused” (164) as if the chief shame in the orderly’s death were the unrealized potential for all the labor and brute force it would now never provide. However, men’s bodies were not the only wreckage Lawrence worked through in these stories; he was also remapping the landscape for relations between married couples in the wake of these shifting ideals.

In the hands of Lawrence, displacement as experienced by men in war and in marriage are essentially one in the same. It is an upheaval of the homefront, the introduction of chaos to the aspects of life which are meant to be realms of safety. Within British literature there is a history of war represented through the bodies of male characters; in fact, Bourke argues that war is incredibly impactful in affirming and uniting male gender identity (*Dismembering the Male*). “Wartime experiences led to an increased yearning amongst the male sex for a domesticity that was far from oppressive”—Bourke writes; this is the same sense that Lawrence portrays through Evelyn in the beginning of “England, My England,”—“but that very domesticity failed to substitute a more effective conjugal bonding. The ability of lovers to communicate kindly to each other was as limited as male bonding in the trenches” (252). Lawrence often likened marriage to war; however, bonding in the trenches with other men is a side-by-side, horizontal line from one to another. Marriage, in Lawrence’s work, is perhaps better imagined as a face-off, with the line from husband to wife separated by a slash, or a wall against which both parties butt their heads whenever they attempt to reach each other. “The figure of the lost friend together with the beleaguered sense of male friendship in the work of Forster, Lawrence and the war poets...that had provided protective and familiar forms of male friendship” (5), according to Lusty, are

evidence of a major decline in the places and the ways in which men could experience companionship (something essential to the human spirit). Part of this decline means that the men of Lawrence's period feel they cannot receive intimacy in any other way than within a marriage. Marriage *is* their community, and yet one would imagine it to be taxing on both parties to have a wife fulfill every role in a community for her husband: lover, mother, therapist, nurse, friend, etc. It would also have been lonely to inherently view your truest comrade as both confidante and enemy, as Lawrence portrays marriages (his own included) to constantly pit husband and wife against one another.

The spiritual, mental, social displacement we see the men (and subsequently their marriages) cycle through in Lawrence's stories stand as representations of thousands of British citizens floundering in the aftermath of various wars and the continued collapse of the once-grand empire. Furthermore, these stories of endless search, of the utter lack of enoughness, show how the loss of assumed might and inherited grandiosity strains these men's relationships to home, to their loved ones, and to themselves.

As for the body-mind connection at the heart of the problem of displacement, as Susan Reid summed up, Lawrence's writing "is often divided between the frightening acknowledgement of a void at the centre [sic] of existence and the desire for an essence of being," often for purposes of self-consciousness and irony, "it is at once modernist in outlook while yet simultaneously reaching back to the Victorian preoccupation with the Cartesian mind-body split and the desire to recover a lost wholeness" (153). Building off the disconnect Lawrence explores between the soma and psyche, particularly when applied to stories of war, we can begin to examine the wanderings and wonderings of Lawrence's leading men.

“England, My England” is the story of displacement from marriage, as well as a displacement from home and self. The displacement we see here is somewhat self-imposed, but Evelyn received more of a push than Lawrence’s other men, which will be discussed elsewhere in this essay. The motivation for Evelyn was that his wife, Winifred, encouraged him to go to war and was afterwards much more accommodating and passionate towards him. Additionally, his father-in-law emphatically supports Evelyn’s notion of becoming a soldier. In their eyes, this will make him a true man, a provider, a husband and father living up to his potential and his obligations. Evelyn, too, is satisfied to have become a figure representing a respectable form of masculinity in his society. However, he alludes throughout that he would have been much more content to be in his home, tending to his garden. His quest for fulfillment meant displacement from home; in order to take his place in a wartime patriarchal society, he would have to leave his place of comfort and shelter. To be the man his family needs, he must leave his family. Furthermore, it is this expectation that he should not be home tending to domestic tasks, but out soldiering, that is straining his marriage. His wife and family found him disappointing, somewhat understandably, as they are not able in this time to fend solely for themselves. They need him to take care of them. However, upon earning his wife’s love and respect by joining the war, both characters had the sense it had more to do with his occupation than his *self*, and so the passion it ignited was chronically ephemeral before turning to sour resentment.

Evelyn and Winifred are the clearest example of how war-fashioned ideals of masculinity directly affect couples on the home front. In Evelyn, Lawrence explores what it means to be an English soldier, the wreckage of the mind and body, and the implosion of the nuclear home. Bourke writes extensively on the impact of war on men’s self-identification with masculinity and the literal and metaphorical dissecting of male bodies in wartime: “Death was not entirely in the

hands of the Creator: it had many stage managers. The aesthetics of the dead male body concerned people as much as the aesthetics of the living body. Acceptable levels of death and appropriate responses were negotiated between the state, various interest groups (such as the medical profession and funeral directors) and the bereaved” (210). “Acceptable” deaths, Bourke expands, meant to die in such a way as to indicate heroics on the battlefield. The ideal death would create a symbolic martyr, the romantic notion of a strong, able-bodied man willing to fight and die for his country. Any other death, by disease or accident, would instead indicate a certain weakness of body, or at worst, a dereliction of duty. A man who dies in such a way could be seen as having intentionally avoided battle, what Bourke names “malingering,” and what was considered incredibly shameful: “Malingering, therefore, as simply another response to public responsibilities of masculinity. The price for male citizenship was paid on the industrial site and on the field of war” (77). Lawrence alludes to this attitude as well, in describing Evelyn’s wife’s and father-in law's disappointment in him until he joined the army: “The father in law approved heartily; an admirable thing for Evelyn to do, he thought” (171). Winifred also agrees immediately and enthusiastically that joining was the right thing for Evelyn to do.

Then there is the displacement of consciousness. The story begins by telling us that Evelyn is dreaming. We are to assume, as readers, that he is looking back on his home and family life from some future time. And as it is described as a dream that is “stronger than reality,” we are to assume that this dream is no longer his reality. He is somewhere we do not know, without this home and this family that we see in the beginning.

In the end of the story, there is a moment in which Evelyn once again becomes disconnected from his awareness and we can imagine that here is the place in which the story loops around itself and the dream takes place. In his final moments, Evelyn thinks of home and

how it was that he came to leave it. By answering the call of war, of the poisonous expectations put on him and many like him to assert his manhood through violence and false loyalties, thereby leaving what ought to be true loyalties—like his family—in his wake, and to assert his superiority—as if “superior” was indeed what Englishmen were—Evelyn becomes displaced from his own mind and wants; from a marriage that, by all accounts, had started out happily; and from his right to life on his own terms, or even life itself.

The battleground of marriage comes into focus before that of the war as his home life splinters apart in the wake of their eldest child’s injury, when Evelyn’s inaction causes “[his wife’s] soul to shrink away from him in a revulsion. He seemed to introduce the element of horror, to make the whole thing cold and unnatural and frightful” (168), then scarcely two pages later, “yet the husband and wife were in love with each other” (170). The love in their marriage is the very reason Evelyn’s perpetual idleness in the first half of this story is so unnerving and disturbing to Winifred: his partnership and participation in family life is essential to their survival, but he proves in this instance that he cannot be counted on. The same love is also responsible for her rejoicing in his new profession, as it is a sign that, while the risk to his own life magnifies greatly, his family is for the first time able to relax and gain a sense of safety they had previously lacked. Winifred’s happiness is partly relief, because no longer is she the sole worrier over her family’s fate. However, the two still retain the resentments that had built up in them, and Evelyn’s solution of joining the war is only a short-term fix for both his struggle with personal versus traditional identity in this time and their marital discord.

Like Bourke, Wright comments on the atrocities committed against male bodies during the war, and by extension on their sense of masculinity and self-identity:

Men's bodies were treated as fodder during the war, and that translated to a gross abuse of traditional understandings of machismo and masculinity. Early on, the war was painted as a great adventure, directly preying upon these ideas of what it means to be a man, and it enticed young, eager, healthy male bodies to their destruction, and often, death.

Interestingly, this may have been why Lawrence was left so bruised and bitter, being rejected as unfit for war service. Though he was disgusted by the war, his ego had to feel the rejection as a direct assault on his own masculinity because his body and health did not measure up to military standards. (Wright 83)

The language of violence becomes stronger as Evelyn's affiliation with the war continues. He is now described as "a potential destructive force, ready to be destroyed. As a potential destructive force, he had his being" (172). As an agent of destruction, at the moment in which it occurs by his hands, the truth of these statements comes to fruition: "All was so intensely, intolerably peaceful that he seemed to be immortalised. The utter suspension of the moment made it eternal" (174). The description of his peace within chaos as both "intense" and "intolerable" speaks to his inability to settle into one place entirely; the moment feels eternal, but it will quickly come to a fatal end. The nature of any moment is to be transient, and so for any moment to be prolonged into infinity would become truly intolerable. Peace, too, is not something human beings are hardwired to seek or accept. Humanity is a race of survivors, of strivers, in search of more, bigger, and better. However desirable this moment of destruction for Evelyn is, he cannot and will not linger in this sense of peace. In just a few moments more, we will see him wishing for another kind of peace—the peace of family and home—and then another still: the ultimate peace of the dead.

The crippled daughter of this couple is a pivotal function of Evelyn's progression as well: Anghel proposes the annex-metaphor theory to depict her importance:

The father-daughter relationship is depicted by means of the annex-metaphor, the key element of a conflated entity where one character is rendered as the externalization of another's inner world. Such abstract notions as thoughts, opinions, projections, expectations acquire a concrete dimension thanks to a fictional addition whose role is to complete the protagonist's portrait. (Anghel 9)

The crippled daughter is "an extension of her father's obscure self," in this reading, because much of his inner world is subsequently defined by her injury as a result of his failure to protect her and an injury incurred at the family home—his domain—by his own carelessness. At first this is characterized by his self-imposed distance from the family, "henceforth he was a cipher" (170), but eventually comes to manifest as Evelyn's fulfillment of the traditionally masculine role of provider and father. However, as was previously stated, this paradoxically culminates in a physical distance. The term *annex* also lends itself to discussions of displacement, as it is a place outside the primary structure, though connected. To share a single wall is hardly to be the same place, just as the psyche is not the same as the soma. Yet, these could not be separated, or, if separated, neither could operate nor be understood. In that vein, the condition of the daughter is crucial to the understanding of the father.

Additionally, the understanding of the father will give insight into the other men of these stories. Anghel observes that Evelyn "moves within the existential parameter designed for him by uncontrollable agents, but he paradoxically tries to enjoy the flow of existence" (12). It is apparent that Evelyn is the most willing to go along with his displacements of the characters in these stories. Unlike the men of "New Eve and Old Adam," "The Man Who Loved Islands," who

are only all-too-willing to travel far and wide, do so in search of an *escape*. Evelyn is running *toward* something, albeit that something is more of a cultural regress than a forward move ahead. He is the one character with something *found*, which is not terribly surprising if we are considering the displacement experienced in these stories to be a symptom of a national decline. Evelyn is the only soldier, the only to join the war effort and actually take up that antiquated mantle of masculinity—violence—in which, for all its horror, masculinity in this place-time is still most comfortable to stand. While all of these men struggle with reform and resist the call to come forward into an era of the New Man, as empowered and impressive as the New Woman is simultaneously shaping up to be, and most of them flee from the unknown to find only dissatisfaction in the mental stagnancy that dogs their paths no matter how many miles they traverse, Evelyn finds some comfort and even glory in a full backslide into his old traditional role...briefly. Ultimately, he is also the only one to perish. This aligns with Bourke's take: "[the male] body was the subject of both imagination and experience. Men could be able-bodied: fortified, forceful, vigorous. Yet, their bodies could also be mangled, freshly torn from the war....The corporeal male would eventually become a corpse on some battlefield or mortuary slab" (11). While the male body became a symbol of strength, and strength the ultimate tenet of masculinity, that tenet ironically relies on an utter phobia of weakness (true or perceived). Rendered to a heap of mounting fears and a lengthening list of restrictions, the concept of masculinity, rather than fortifying the corporeal body, began instead to erode the mental stability of sense of self, the innate conviction of manhood within man himself, which was now open to debate and relentless questioning. Without the innate conviction, men were left to judge their masculinity by measuring it against femininity, as if they were opposite beings rather than parallel genders. One example of this is in "England, My England," where he writes that Evelyn

was “never very definite or positive in his action” while his wife, Winifred, is described as “strong with life like a flame in the sunshine...yet she was like a weapon” and “her soul was hard as iron against him” (166). From this description, it is clear that while Evelyn’s father-in-law certainly had assumptions about what sort of man his daughter’s husband was supposed to be, both Evelyn himself and Winifred had an innate understanding of the fact that he possessed traits more often associated with femininity even as she possessed traits typically attributed to masculinity. In framing the characters in this way and still continuing to play out the gender-power conflict within marriage the same way as his other stories (that is, with Evelyn in the male role and Winifred in the female role), Lawrence establishes personality traits as genderless and wholly beside the point of the main conflict: the power imbalance between and oppressive restriction of gender roles. Factors such as weakness, ambition, laziness, responsibility, etc. did not save Evelyn from having to interrogate and question his role as a man and a husband even after becoming the epitome of what those around him consider manliness: a soldier and a family man. Nor did it save Winifred from having to step up into a seemingly more masculine role to care for the family. In short, the problem did not originate in the personality of one or both spouses and did not originate in the mismatched biological attributes decided by their respective sexes. It was created by large-scale attitudes surrounding gender, and the challenges that individual couples face are simply symptomatic of a world that does not make allowances for deviation.

However, for Lawrence, the problem and puzzle of masculinity does not exist solely as the contrast held up against what is feminine. Or, that is to say, masculinity is a puzzle among and between men chiefly, with the symptoms spilling out into marriage and the interplay between male and female characters. This can be seen most clearly in “The Prussian Officer,” in

which a battle of wills plays out in near silence between an officer and his orderly until the tension becomes physical. Radu writes that “[such] attitudes of sexual dominance and submission of both heterosexual and homosexual orientations can be found in several of Lawrence’s productions of this period of masculine vision” (94). Therefore, it can be deduced that Lawrence’s struggles with the meaning of masculinity and self-identity come not from (or not entirely) a reaction to feminist waves or the New Woman, but primarily from competition and comparison with other men.

D. H. Lawrence and The New Woman:

The stories discussed here were published between 1914 and 1934, and D. H. Lawrence had experienced, alongside much of the Western world, the wave of the New Woman in literature for the last few decades. This woman had a degree of independence, of agency; she spoke her mind and was involved in the decision-making process regarding her own fate. Unusually, these characteristics were not attributed to any sort of legendary, outlandish personality on her part but framed simply as the ordinary attributes of ordinary modern women, just as they have always been of male characters. With this New Woman comes a problem for the writers of the age: where to redraw the lines? After all, if a woman is independent, if a woman is educated, if a woman is her own being and not a possession or extension of a husband, and not a wife-in-waiting, what need is there for the old role of men? Notable male modernist writers, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound in particular, reacted poorly: “The accusation from Eliot and Pound of the ‘feminization’ of poetry was mustered to deflect attention from the salutary shock of female aesthetic and professional participation in modernity...both felt that too many productive and attention-getting females undermined their cultural ambitions” (DuPlessis 25). Furthermore,

between 1912 and 1915, both poets published “coincidentally matching poems, ‘Portrait of a Lady’ (Eliot) and ‘Portrait d’une Femme’ (Pound), [which] not only expressed young male rejection, but (at least in Pound’s case) constructed the female figure as a know-nothing dilettante” (26). Lawrence, too, took to the pen; however, his explorations into the matter held more of an air of good faith inquiry and an honest extrapolation of both the male and female perspectives. His clearest attempt to engage with the New Woman comes in the form of his story “New Eve and Old Adam.” Turner describes this story as an exploration of “the conflicts between men and women, and the contradictions they feel, as a result of the spread of first-wave feminism” (35). By the time modernists are responding to the New Woman, she takes up more space, fills more of the page, and assumes a larger role. Where do we put all the extra limbs, the arms and legs of male characters, who used to sit comfortably in the room they occupied, now spilling out into empty space? And just what is out there, in that new space? What new forms may they take, now that the house has collapsed and the walls are gone? These are the questions Lawrence grapples with in the following stories to be discussed; in these stories, the questions are met with grief, with confusion, with abyss, and with more questions. Ultimately, Lawrence leaves us hopeful, as his characters are at once cautionary tales and supplicants recruited to explore the terrain for men in the real world, charged to risk it all and send back answers.

In DuPlessis’s view, the movement in reaction to the New Woman’s emergence in literature is nothing short of aggressive—and understandably so, when one considers the inherent misogyny in attempting to re-center men and masculinity, and the perceived ways they suffer when women command autonomy: “Masculinist modernism is a form of concealed moralism in response to erosions of male hegemony” (21). What is most fascinating about this standpoint is the use of the term “moralism,” because it implies that the feminisation of art would be to corrupt

it, or to make it lesser in substance, and therefore rob male artists and writers of the esteem of their profession. Whether or not this attitude contributed to Lawrence's motivation for fixating on the aftermath of the New Woman is uncertain; however, even if it is, his portrayal of the relationship between his male and female characters raises legitimate concerns and questions worth thinking over. The social status quo has been rocked: what blueprint are we to follow now? In some ways, rigid traditional thinking provides a safe harbor for those of little ambition or imagination (which is, of course, each individual's prerogative). The paradoxical sense of panic in the face of *more* options, *more* freedom, is peculiar, and yet a valid phenomenon for which there are no quick and easy solutions. While feminist movements in literature and society mainly focus on the expansion of options for women, there is an equal plethora of new roads open to men as they are no longer confined to small boxes of what men and masculinity can mean. Lawrence is right to interrogate this new terrain in himself and his art, and to encourage the world to do so as well through experiencing his stories. DuPlessis further discusses the "hygienic undertone" to the superiority of masculinity with which modernist literature is "so saturated" that "it is difficult to see [those norms] as precisely assumptions" (24). Lawrence, however, does not appear to make these assumptions in his writing. Strychacz takes note of Lawrence's middle-of-the-road position as well, commenting that "for Lawrence, female empowerment comes about through congress with the more powerful male" (213). Lawrence does not seem to inherently have an objection to women's empowerment, nor does he believe that it should cause discomfort of men. It is the sense of emasculation, of "submission" that is problematic for him. This, however, indicates a presupposition that women's empowerment does not seek equality, as advertised, but dominion, a reversal of roles with men subordinate to women. Indeed, anti-feminists imagine that conquest is the natural inclination of all

subcategories of society. Peter and Paula of “New Eve and Old Adam” portray this fundamental misunderstanding the best of all Lawrence’s short stories. Paula wants to be seen and loved for the entirety of her person; Peter wants, above all, to retain the masculine role in the relationship and to not “submit” to her, believing that her empowerment is the belittlement of himself: he recognizes the “curious little strain in her eyes, which was waiting for him to submit to her,” a look which triggers him to “[resist] her while ever it was there” (Lawrence 101). One has to wonder, though, if Paula was indeed waiting on her husband’s submission or if that was simply a projection on his part. If taken at face value, it can be ascertained that this moment in the story constitutes a pivotal role-reversal of husband and wife, man and woman, in the masculinity model; a moment that shifts from “old” ideals to “new,” from “his” to “hers.” Lawrence uses this scene to indicate that perhaps ideas of gender roles neither belong to nor preclude certain groups of their own accord, but only within the systemic models which assign them. The fact that Wussow asserts that the characters in Lawrence’s plays are “the undoings of the characters in his fictions” (184) is worth mentioning, as the inverse of masculine/feminine characters in respect to their genders proves that Lawrence takes a contemplative, experiential approach to writing gender roles. “There is a performance, even dance, of gender that is effected [sic] among and between the characters through engagement, action and gesticulation. Gender is indeterminate and malleable” (Wussow 185). It is not only in the plays that this tendency in Lawrence shows itself. The short stories also contain a healthy dose of traditional role-reversal.

War and the New Woman:

There is a clear line drawn from love to war in the short fiction of D. H. Lawrence, most graphically formatted in “England, My England,” but the language of battle permeates the

dealings between couples across the short stories. Lawrence scholar Gary Watson observes, “Lawrence’s originality derives from the way in which he negotiates the modernist break or rupture with the past: he does so while holding on to—and simultaneously redefining—marriage...this is so strong (so imaginatively and existentially strong) a manoeuvre [sic]” (50). Lawrence’s choice to portray marriages in this way may in fact be an extension of personal opinion, as he often described his marital writing as autobiographical. As it happens, whether incidentally or purposefully constructed, this style and attitude slips seamlessly into English literary tradition: exploration of conflict between subsets of society and the portrayal of the real-world societal issues of the age. When we speak of displacement of men in this time period, we are speaking of the wreckage left behind by war, or conversely, when we speak of war, we are speaking of the symptomatic wreckage in the wake of various societal and cultural shifts which spur them. War is not the cause of men’s increasingly shaky footing; however, war and displacement circle, the hot wind of the cyclone invigorating the cold other. Scholars have connected first-wave feminism and the effect of the New Woman on society to male modernists, including Lawrence; consider DuPlessis’s statement:

The anti-female fulminations voiced by the young male modernists, along with their resentment of professional women (as important editors and fellow writers), were an attempt by these men to position themselves in an already existing cultural field that included women with serious cultural power...They itched to reduce or curtail the already existing and fast-increasing cultural power of women in their milieu, particularly seeking to guide, cooperate with, control and (if these did not work) to excoriate the female editors of many of the significant periodicals of modernism, crucial for dissemination and reception of their brand of the work of the New. (25)

However, Lawrence in particular displays far more nuance than a simply reactionary response to the rise in feminist representations in literature. His approach includes considerations such as the floundering of male identity in a wartime England as well as takes seriously the message of the New Woman without wholly dismissing it. That being said, one can see some shadows of the general modernist response in Lawrence's work. Lusty also connects the aftereffects of battle to modernist writers, as the anti-feminine rhetoric of wartime is mirrored in the modernist reaction to the New Woman:

a masculine militarised [sic] body in terms of hardness, impenetrability and self-discipline, a body defined as at risk of contamination by the soft, oceanic fluidity of the female body. The intense misogyny and violence directed towards women [particularly in times of war] disclose a psychic fragmentation that tied anxieties around the penetrability of the male body to the vulnerability of the nation state....The modernist maxim, 'make it new' perhaps typifies the ambivalence and precariousness of modernist literary practice and its gendered claims to innovation...[the] creative act of making something *appear* new... conveys a defensive reaction against the perceived effeminacy of male artistic labour and the perceived feminisation of the commercial public sphere. (Lusty 6-8)

Because a man may become more flexible in love and more vulnerable in regard to the woman he loves, meanwhile the male body was becoming synonymous with the strength of the state, the rhetoric around women served the purpose of hardening male hearts and minds against them in order to reduce state vulnerability. Lawrence explores the ways in which men, women, and their interactions have suffered immensely instead. Modernist literature rushes to fill the gap in the wake of the New Woman, addressing the silent but heavy question of *what about the New*

Man? Lawrence grappling with this question as he does across the short stories discussed here, and elsewhere, is very much a defensive reaction as much as it is an earnest attempt to riddle out an answer. Nor does the effort stop there; he also seems to wish to assert a new type of harmony now that the traditional idea of harmony has fallen into such deep discord. In addition, “male privilege and power still dominated the cultural and political landscape of modernity...[therefore masculinity appears] in ways that are reactionary or innovative, rigid or adaptable—and sometimes both at the same time” (9). Part of the problematic nature of this is that much of the motivation was to take the focus away from the New Woman and recenter men in the literary realm as quickly as possible, an attempt at erasure that is little more than lashing out at a changing world. Though feminist movements are not primarily focused on men in and of themselves, they do still consist largely of women who have been trained and pressured to worry about the effect that any and all of their actions may have on the men around them any time they dare to reach for autonomy. On the other hand, a recalibration among male spheres, both public and private, is unquestionably called for. At times, Lawrence *does* seem to villainize and discredit the New Woman (most notably in “New Eve and Old Adam” in his portrayal of Paula as manipulative and even vindictive against her husband) while inciting sympathy for the displaced male. Overall, however, those moments can be better categorized more as an acknowledgement of a realistic emotion that arises in the process of a multifaceted, holistic approach to that necessary recalibration. Moments of apparent contempt for the New Woman in Lawrence’s body of work, such as we experience through Peter’s eyes, can and do coexist with contrasting moments of critique for the traditional views on masculinity.

Peter, while not a soldier, flees the battlefield of his marriage. He is not able to unalienate himself from his wife, from his love. Every time he and Paula come together again, he convinces

himself her love is false, or absent, and escapes once more to a new country. In the end, we see him rereading letters sent to him in Italy, where presumably, if we are to take a cue from the content of his wife's letters, he has fled again. She accuses him of not being able to see her for who she is, points out his inability to stay put in their marriage and love her. This speaks to the larger sense of displacement that men feel in the face of the New Woman. After all, if a woman is independent, if a woman is educated, if a woman is her own being and not a possession or extension of a husband, and not a wife-in-waiting, what need is there for the old role of men? Turner describes this story as an exploration of “the conflicts between men and women, and the contradictions they feel, as a result of the spread of first-wave feminism” (35). In the nineteenth century, under the banner of the New Woman, men are for the first time in their recollection required to be partners rather than masters; they must now learn to provide the comfort and care that wives have always done if they want to keep a wife. Peter is not able to love Paula as a human being apart from her wifeliness. She spends the story desperately trying to pull him into the modern era, to take him with her into a future marked by a marriage of equals. He simply cannot adjust, refusing to see her as his peer, as a fellow creature of his kind. He can only conceive of her as either rival or beloved possession, sometimes simultaneously, and that push and pull alternately draws him home and repels him to farther borders. However, he is also displaced from himself and his own true thinking and motivations. He projects his insecurities onto Paula, convincing himself that it is not he who *cannot* consistently love her but she who *will not* consistently love him. That it is not he who denies her emotional humanity but she who holds no sympathy for him. That it is she who *wants* him to run away, not that she is acquiescing to his persistently expressed desire to leave her, which he alludes to frequently, including upon his return. Even the final sentences of the story portrays his denial of the reality of their marriage

and his wife's experience of him. His last lines prove that he is ultimately displaced from Truth: "But you lie to yourself. You *wouldn't* love *me*, and you won't be able to love anybody else—except generally" (131). This comes on the heels of reading letter after letter from her begging to know him instead of being treated as an enemy, asking to be known *by* him and loved as a whole entity in and of herself. Turner argues that "Lawrence's Old Adam wants a wife in the traditional Christian sense, identified at root with his own life" (50), a desire intrinsically at odds with Paula's. Peter and Paula are no strangers to "that battle between them which so many married people fight, without knowing why" (96). The displacement Peter experiences is the direct result of the marriage war that Lawrence describes between Evelyn and Winifred: "He and she, as if fated, they were armed and exerting all their forces to destroy each other" (166). In the hands of Lawrence, displacement as experienced by men in war and in marriage are essentially one in the same. It is an upheaval of the homefront, the introduction of chaos to the aspects of life which are meant to be realms of safety. Not the least of those upheavals is Peter's sense of lost power: "[Paula] is the more restless, powerful person in the marriage...she is full of self-contradiction, the talkative but finally inarticulate victim of a transitional age" (Turner 39). Furthermore, Turner posits that "Peter absents himself in spirit from Paula as an act of resistance, determined not to be used as a plaything, a doll to be called into being and then rejected according to whim...his doubt about his own masculinity is that he fears he may, in the future, become enslaved by her" (44). To men groomed by patriarchy, women gaining power does not mean peace and equality. They perceive peace and equality as being tamed, conquered, and enslaved. The power-mad always perceive a peer as a threat and authority over others as their divine and unimpeachable right. Lawrence's portrayal of Peter most closely mimics this type of man, one who considers an acquiescence to his wife as a concession of his rightful power. The

easiest way to reassert power is to convince himself that Paula's unhappiness with the marriage has to do with her sexuality—which it is so easy to reduce feminist movements to, simply because men have traditionally been so unwilling to separate the concepts of women and sex objects. Feminism is not about sex solely. It is about agency, choice, freedom. Each of the men Paula ropes into the mind-games she and her husband play, each a would-be point in a potential love triangle, simply represent a *possibility*, a path that Paula *could* take, and that realm of possibility also includes no man at all. It is her awareness of this fact, and Peter's unwillingness to acknowledge it, that place the power in her hands. If Peter was not only able but enthusiastic about embracing Paula as a full person, seeing her for who she is besides his wife, and loving her as that person, there would be no power to fight over; they would both be open to the love and harmony they each crave. Stewart writes that "Lawrence rejects the traditional masculine antagonistic model of mind and body together with the (masculine) desire for control and mastery as he posits a reciprocal relation between feeling and intellect and exhorts his reader to embrace a (feminine) passivity and vulnerability" (198). Though this statement may be interpreted in myriad ways, I believe that the "passivity" mentioned in relation to Lawrence is meant not in the sense that he encourages his characters to be overly accepting of their circumstances and forgo agency; rather, that "vulnerability" or sensitivity to emotion, and the embracing of one's emotions, unlocks a kind of feminine power, wherein we are no longer controlled by the chief urge to resist any and all feeling and instead use emotions as signals toward a course of action. It is passivity that stands firm before the onslaught rather than seeking cover or turning tail the other direction; it is another facet of strength to resist fear and not what is feared (in the case of Lawrence's characters—representative of men raised in a wartime model of masculinity—what is feared is overwhelming emotion). One of the best examples of this is

Peter of “New Eve and Old Adam”; in his compulsive resistance of his wife’s will and empowerment, he loses his own physical sense of self: “Since she had begun to hate him...[his] body had gone meaningless to him again, almost as if it weren’t there”; “his body felt like a piece of waste” (Lawrence 107-8). Lawrence continually shows how this “standard of emotional denial is unsustainable” (Stewart 205), as the act of ignoring the signals to action that emotions provide inevitably leads to irrevocable damage inflicted upon the body. Peter ignores the emotional signals he feels in his body that could perhaps influence his course of action in such a way that would repair his spiritual connection with his wife, such as when they are first married, in sync, and he had felt a “physical glow and satisfaction about his movements, of a creature which rejoices in itself; a glow which comes on a man who loves and is loved passionately and successfully” (108). Peter is in this state only when he feels he understands and is understood by Paula. Lawrence continuously warns, through his writing, that it is not a biological difference between men and women that makes marriages unhappy but the failure to recognize and cherish the spirit of the other person and foster that connection.

Lawrence, Self-identity, and Masculinity:

Watson argues that “the answer emerging from Lawrence's work *as a whole* is that, without an ‘ultimate marriage’ to ground it, friendship might not on its own constitute a strong enough centre. But be that as it may, marriage—marriage based on passion—is the relationship that gets the emphasis throughout Lawrence's work” (50). For Lawrence, “passionate” love is spiritual in nature, it is constituted of the recognition and subsequent union of souls, somewhere deeply within the body. In “The Horse-Dealer’s Daughter,” it is through eye contact that the spirits of the central couple connect over and over, long before the first touch. And it is the

spiritual transformation that awakens and makes the doctor susceptible to love. “Roving across the landscape, the doctor’s quick eye detected a figure in black...it would be Mabel Pervin. His mind suddenly became alive and attentive” (Lawrence 190). All along, simply being aware of her presence had a peculiar effect on the doctor; Mabel, who had already decided she would not fight her fate but give into it, was half-inside a spiritual realm at this moment, something to which the doctor was subconsciously sensitive.

Oyama similarly notes that spiritual connection happens before physical contact occurs: “the theory that the awakening results from physical sensation is less credible than that of its having a mental or spiritual cause” (Oyama 23). Lawrence does not so much use physical touch as a catalyst to spiritual awakening in “The Horse-Dealer’s Daughter” as he uses it to emphasize sensation as an extension of spiritual awakening—in this new awareness, the body, too, feels new and therefore sensation is heightened. Physical conditions are transient; spiritual epiphanies bring the character out of a fugue state the body is under since birth, inundated by the circumstances of their social standing. The spiritual epiphany is love, is wordless communication and recognition, is the absoluteness of interdependence between human spirits. In this state, all of the doctor’s other concerns fall away. He is not yielding to her, as he believes, but to her state of epiphany/freedom.

Oyama further states that “[the] gap, or laceration, between the forces of life and death, becomes the field of communication and it opens up a community which has been hindered due to the external reality in the cross-class romantic fiction” (Oyama 23). D. H. Lawrence has a tendency to highlight all the ways in which the spirit is out of sync with society/societal notions. “The Horse-Dealer’s Daughter” seems to erase the gap in communication between men and women by removing influences that are part and parcel of bodily existence (gender, class,

personal identity—what are we when the body is no more than a house for the soul, a conduit for sensation?): here is a woman whose soul is resuscitated and newly returned to Earth; here is a man rattled by proximity to death and the upheaval of his daily reality. Though it takes him a few moments longer to overcome resistance, they nevertheless find themselves interacting purely through spirit and sensation as if brand new. “Epiphany and the communication of ecstasy are positive and wonderful techniques of expression which carve out a new horizon for the *possibility of human beings’ mutual reception in Lawrence’s fictional world*” (Oyama 27, emphasis mine); Lawrence’s idea of mutual reception depends on the spiritual awakening, the shedding of external notions that divide human beings on the basis of gender, otherwise the “ultimate marriage” of friendship cannot be.

Reid takes the idea of the spiritual awakening even further, and finds the concept of Irigaray’s angel in Lawrence’s work: “Lawrence’s angel [acts] as a placeholder, particularly, for an unrealized masculinity” (68). This role is personified by the doctor in “The Horse-Dealer’s Daughter”; in fact, even as Lawrence robs him of his angel status, he *grants* him a corporeal physicality, the sensation of physical touch evidence of his spiritual awakening, or, in Reid’s words, a realized masculinity. The sexless angelic man reaches epitome, and in so doing, becomes flesh and blood man: more fallible, certainly, but truer and solidly positioned in his world. This sense of finality is reflected in his thoughts just after he admits to loving Mabel: “He had crossed over the gulf to her, and all that he had left behind had shrivelled and become void” (Lawrence 196). The doctor slowly but surely gains confidence in his newfound identity, so that by the end his sense of self and masculinity is no longer tied to the social judgments of the town, nor is it tied to the reality of his and Mabel’s difference in class.

Das also finds Irigaray's rhetoric within the body of Lawrence's work: "The relationship of wonder will deconstruct the phallogocentric relationship of possession, consummation and this will create a relationship of subjectivity and freedom...there will always remain an interval and one sex will never be consummated or consumed by another" (68). The "relationship of wonder" is also exemplified by this story. The doctor's love for Mabel came only after witnessing her spiritual transformation, which shocks him into a transformative awe of his own: the angel becomes a true man. It becomes difficult to deny Lawrence's feminist leanings when he writes of a character who witnesses a woman come into a sort of power and is inspired to give her his love and devotion.

The angel is not the only mythical figure that scholars find in Lawrence's work; the doctor can also be seen as vampiric:

The idea that images of vampirism in Lawrence represent his view of a power struggle between the sexes is a useful one because it identifies Lawrence's association of desire with a problematically manifested masculinity. The problem for masculinity is that the excesses of vampirism suggests that masculinity loses control both over itself and over a feminine Other. Vampirism, as plotted here by Wilt, removes the subject from their body, but this transcendence means that the body is left vacant for 'ghostly visitations' which now animate, and so control, it. (Smith 151)

The notion that one is resurrected or disembodied when a character reaches the border of their known experience and becomes Other fits well into the narrative of "The Horse-Dealer's Daughter," because this vampiric "definitively modernist" self "asserts both its power (its inherently masculine power) and its negation (the disappearance of its body)" (151). Eye contact with Mabel, physical touch, and proximity to death combine to push the doctor outside of his

previous experience of life, of self, of love, and of his manhood. Smith states: “[the] figure of the vampire, as an agent of change, necessarily inaugurates a new order, one which kills off the old ‘humanity’” (164). Whether through the figure of the angel or the vampire, the argument holds: the doctor undergoes a transcendence that annihilates his old identity, and axiomatically his masculinity is transformed. By the end of the story, he offers up love and marriage freely, evidently no longer fearing submission to his feminine counterpart’s will; and in fact, Mabel becomes the one who is uncertain, as she is now facing a drastically transformed man. The transformation comes, ultimately, when the doctor is confronted with himself, his fears and hang ups, and the tenuous nature of his place in the world (a near-death experience). When we meet our true selves, it is often a turning point for radical change.

Another story in which Lawrence leans heavily into the transformation of the unconscious mind through direct confrontation with the self is “The Man Who Loved Islands.” In this tale, the male character in question, Cathcart, lives on three separate islands in the course of the story, each even more isolated than the last. The first has a small community besides him, the second is occupied solely by him and his wife, and by the time he reaches his third island, he is completely alone. In the other stories discussed in this paper, the male characters often struggle with what Reid calls “the inability of the male to exist independently of the female” (154). This struggle is symbolic of Lawrence’s and the modernists’ real-world struggle to integrate new ideas of masculinity into their work. Lawrence is more than a one-trick pony in this arena, however. He does not possess an inability to interrogate man’s sense of self independently, but in fact also uses the short story “The Man Who Loved Islands” to illustrate what this struggle looks like when it is not confined by limitations such as simply responding to the emergence of the New Woman in literature. There is a wealth of discussion of the separation of mind and body in

Lawrence, his passionate love and spiritual epiphanies, which has previously been touched on in this paper as well. In "The Man Who Loved Islands," however, Lawrence gives us a chance to explore the mind-body split and crisis of identity/masculinity not in connection or reaction to the New Woman or even to a larger society at all. The titular subject in this story is confronting himself in isolation, questioning his place and his role in the world in relation to the cosmos, to the deep inner recesses of his mind, and to the immediate terrain of the little spot of land which he occupies.

A Lacanian reading of "The Man Who Loved Islands" offered by Stoltzfus states that "[in] dreams, condensation and displacement disguise the content of the unconscious in the same way that metaphor and metonymy veil the pulsive forces of the subject's (author's) desire whenever he or she uses language" (27). In other words, in order to get to the heart of Cathcart's character, Lawrence uses the metaphor of the islands as the layers covering Cathcart's unconscious being and his displacement from them as a kind of stripping away of those layers. Stoltzfus describes Lawrence's formula:

Cathcart experiences the effects of *doxa* [public opinion and prejudice] on the first island and he rejects them. The Imaginary is that displaced self that has to come to terms with the postponement of satisfaction, the repression of desire, and the nurturing of discontent. The second island is the one on which Cathcart nurtures discontent. The Imaginary reinforces the individual's desire for union with the mother while enabling the subject to define himself or herself in relation to others. Cathcart cannot define himself constructively in relation to others either on the first or on the second islands. Finally the Real, in terms of discourse, is the individual's unconscious relationship with death, and it is the Real that directs Cathcart's discourse on the third island. (Stoltzfus 28)

In many ways, Cathcart shows a version of displaced men that goes into the true depths of the psyche rather than capping off at the layers of society and relationships. The other stories analyzed here all experience displacement in relation to others, yet in “Islands” we get to see Lawrence take us past where all other people who can have influence reside, and show us what happens to a displaced man when they are in total isolation.

This is a more straightforward tale of displacement—or, put another way, a more physical and metaphysical representation of displacement than the others, which deal primarily with a sense of displacement from insular marriages and narrow societies. In this story, the main character is in search of a goldilocks island—not so big that it is basically “a continent,” but not so small that his thoughts become like living things themselves in his isolation. “In the city,” Lawrence tells us, “...you are quite safe from the terrors of infinite time. The moment is your little islet in time, it is the spacial universe that careers around you” (288). Cathcart becomes the point in space around which all else revolves, and for the first time he realizes the magnitude of space and his miniscule position inside of it, prompting an existential fear. “Lawrence discerns fear as the fundamental affective orientation pervading modernity” (Stewart 198), effectively using fear as the yardstick for subjectivity, and in this case in particular, to take the measure of the man.

In this story’s most compelling moment, Lawrence then begins to construct a graphic representation of this type of displacement: “once you isolate yourself on a little island in the sea of space, and the moment begins to heave and expand in great circles, the solid earth is gone, and your slippery, naked dark soul finds herself out in the timeless world,” Lawrence writes. While the reader’s mind is careening to find purchase in a concept so vast, he throws more action at us, continuing, “where the chariots of the so-called dead dash down the old streets of centuries, and

souls crown on the footways that we, in the moment, call bygone years. The souls of all the dead are alive again, and pulsating actively around you. You are out in the other infinity” (288).

Lawrence describes here a metaphysical displacement from the realm of the living, finite time we spend here on Earth and ushers us into a shattering realm of limitless, endless time and space populated not with bodies bound to life but with souls unbound from the past. The sheer magnitude of this experience evokes the terror of which he cautions us just a few sentences earlier. This is reflective of Lawrence’s “desire to recompose this masculine body through moments of self-inquiry which explore where the borders of the body lie” (Smith 151). The visceral experience of attempting to imagine along with the text gives some small glimpse into the experience of Cathcart, deeply entrenched in this vision while completely alone in total darkness, civilization across a body of water, slowly separating from his senses. Lawrence uses this story to “[explore] the violence and destructiveness of the bodily unconscious, but his own emphasis is invariably on the desperate struggle to attain wholeness” (Harrison 82). By traversing Cathcart’s subconscious alongside Lawrence, the reader is invited to meet themselves and interrogate their own self-identity, within each of the same stratospheres that Cathcart does: community or *doxa*; Imaginary or Ideal (or within romantic or spiritual relationships); and the Real, in Stoltzfus’s terms.

Reid sums up the collection of male figures in Lawrence’s work thusly: “domesticated and untamed manhood is shared by Lawrence’s male outsiders” (152); some of these men struggle to find new footing while others retreat into themselves, but all are exploring new definitions of masculinity and new meaning behind what it is to be a man in their world. The meaning of this insight aligns with the supposed lessons of Lawrence’s stories of displacement: belonging is not a destination but a state of being which we are all tasked to create for ourselves.

There is a space for us in the future, but it bears molding for us to fit well inside of it. While the shape of that space may be as yet ambiguous, and therefore quite worthy of the wariness with which Lawrence's characters regard it, one thing that remains clear is that *there is no place for us in the past*. Those places have expired; their true occupants have all gone and taken those stepping stones in our evolution with them.

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