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THE HORSE AS SYMBOL IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S *ST. MAWR*

BY

DOLORES ELIZABETH HORWOOD

A thesis submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree Master of Arts, Major in
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1972

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D. H. LAWRENCE'S ST. MAWR

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Thesis Advisor Date

Head, English Department Date

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I 1

CHAPTER II 13

CHAPTER III 24

CHAPTER IV 29

CHAPTER V 35

PREFACE

What is most important about a novel like St. Mawr? The horse-symbol which dominates both the novel and this thesis? The "doctrine of spontaneity" which Lawrence espoused and wrote about on almost every page of the short novel? Or simply the fact that Lawrence's language is as spontaneous and powerful as the natural world of which he wrote? All of these are St. Mawr, and all are, to some degree, reflected in this thesis. Also reflected in this thesis is my admiration both for the works of Lawrence and for the man himself--and they are really one in the same.

Because St. Mawr would not have been the subject of this thesis without his help and his library, Mr. Dexter Martin receives my sincere thanks. And to Dr. John Kinyon, my thesis advisor, I owe a special debt of gratitude for the time he took to suggest, to argue--and to encourage.

CHAPTER I

In 1924, on a visit to England from America, D. H. Lawrence wrote a letter in which he sketched what was to become his short novel St. Mawr:

> Over here the horse is dead . . . Oh, London is so awful: so dark, so damp, so yellow-grey, so mouldering piece-meal . . . Horse, horse, be as hobby as you like, but let me get on your back and ride away again to New Mexico.[1]

At the writing of this letter, Lawrence believed that he had found in America a new life of vitality and natural power. After returning to this new world, he began St. Mawr,[2] in which the life he had found at his Taos ranch comes alive for his heroine. The central symbol for this novel is a horse, a flaming stallion named St. Mawr, who becomes for the novel's heroine, and for the reader, a way out of the damp, yellow-grey, mouldering life of civilized society and a symbol of a purer, more wholly natural existence which Lawrence believed possible.

The figure of the horse was hardly a new symbol for

[1] Harry T. Moore, ed., The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, II (New York: Viking Press, 1962), 768, as quoted by Moore, The Intelligent Heart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1954), pp. 330-31.

[2] D. H. Lawrence, St. Mawr and The Man Who Died (1925; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1953). Subsequent references to this edition will appear in the text.

Lawrence when St. Mawr was written in 1924. William York Tindall, in his introduction to the novelette, writes, "For years horses, serving as incidental symbols, had haunted Lawrence's imagination."[3] Two of his more famous early novels, The Rainbow (1915) and its sequel, Women in Love (1920), contain scenes which foreshadow the symbolic stallion Lawrence was to create for St. Mawr. In The Rainbow, a band of stallions assumes, for Lawrence's heroine Ursula, the mystical, almost mythical, proportions that he would assign to the stallion St. Mawr. In Women in Love, the reader is confronted with man's domination over the horse, a creature of the natural world.

In St. Mawr, the horse is both the representative of spontaneous natural life and the mysterious emissary from an ancient "other world." But in this short novel, the horse becomes a character in his own right, with a meaning independent of, yet acting upon, the human characters in the story. And he becomes a fully developed symbol of the "new life" that Lawrence wanted for those characters--and for all mankind.

It is Lou Witt in St. Mawr who is most affected by the powerful horse; it is through her that Lawrence reveals to his reader the meaning of his horse-symbol. Lou is, at twenty-five, a displaced young American woman, married to an

[3] William York Tindall, "Introduction," The Later D. H. Lawrence (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 4.

ineffectual English nobleman, the handsome poser Rico. They and Lou's mother, Mrs. Witt, a domineering, middle-aged, and very rich American, live in polite English society and attempt to maintain a facade of gracious living. Until she meets and buys the stallion St. Mawr, however, Lou is both sexually and spiritually frustrated, finding in England--and in Rico--no vitality or substance. Indeed, the world in which she moves is a phantom world, and the people in it are cardboard unrealities.

With the discovery of the potent St. Mawr, however, Lou becomes aware of another world which is at once mystical, religious, and natural. The bay stallion is a beautiful but deadly animal, having to his credit the injuries of two men, one fatal. But to Lou, he is glorious, filled with flaming life, and she knows, without knowing exactly why, that she must have him. Certain events which follow their meeting increase her awareness of St. Mawr's power and Rico's impotence: the episode in the London park in which St. Mawr attempts to run away with the repressive Rico; the move to Bloomsbury, with its sterile, ultra-civilized Englishmen such as the Vyners and Flora Manby; and, finally, the crisis at Devil's Chair. It is at Devil's Chair that Lou's sense of futility and fear reaches its zenith. The stallion, with Rico astride him, is frightened by a dead snake, rears, and is pulled down by his rider. St. Mawr falls on Rico, maiming him. And in so doing, the horse dooms himself to be shot,

or worse, castrated.

To save the horse--and herself--from the fatal hands of Rico and his sterile friends, Lou takes the horse to America, accompanied by her mother and the two grooms, Lewis and Phoenix. In America, Lou finds her New Mexico ranch and realizes the promise of St. Mawr. For at Las Chivas she comes in contact with reality--the "elemental life of the cosmos" in which Lawrence believed.[4] St. Mawr is allowed to return to the natural world and Lou becomes a kind of priestess, the disciple of a primitive, mystical, and wholly natural religion.

But while it is Lou around whom the action of the story revolves, it is the stallion who makes the action possible, and it is he who embodies Lawrence's own belief in man's ability to come into direct contact with the forces of his universe. The horse's most obvious function in the novel is that of representative of the natural world. As such, he is the life force which rises from the earth and is present in uncorrupted, i.e. non-societal, man. One of Lawrence's most noted critics, F. R. Leavis, feels that St. Mawr stands "for the deep springs of life"[5]--the real life. To Lawrence, the horse was the symbol of "creative being, which recognizes

[4] D. H. Lawrence, "New Mexico," _Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence_, ed. Edward D. McDonald (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1936), p. 146.

[5] F. R. Leavis, _D. H. Lawrence: Novelist_ (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 239.

natural good" (pp. 71-72), but which, at the same time, is constantly being undermined by the "social mechanism" of the modern world.

In St. Mawr, the horse is set against the social mechanism of English society, so completely embodied in Rico, the handsome Lord Carrington. Rico is the antithesis of St. Mawr. In him, the noble spirit of the horse has failed, and he is merely "like a horse . . . that might go nasty any moment" (p. 10). "Just like a horse that is edging away from its master"--but completely mastered (p. 3). The contrast between the two is striking. As societal man who denies his natural sexuality, his natural creation, Rico is a sham, a poser, an unreal product of dark, damp, yellow-grey London. And because he is so completely a part of his sterile world, he is virtually impotent, unable to establish a sexual relationship with Lou.

A symbol himself, Rico is one of the emasculated products of the modern world, drawn in sharp contrast to St. Mawr, the free, natural agent of the force of life, whose qualities--sexual potency, vitality, aliveness--are extinguished in modern man. Lou says of St. Mawr: "We call him an animal, but we never know what it means. He seems a far greater mystery to me than a clever man. He's a horse. Why can't one say in the same way, of a man: He's a man?" (p. 48). But Lou knows that the stallion is true to his animal nature in a way that her husband cannot be true to his manhood.

Two other human characters in the story, horse-like in the Lawrentian sense of the word, further help define St. Mawr's natural world. Phoenix, the Indian from Arizona, and Lewis, the Welsh groom, live in the horse's shadow and share his vitality. To Phoenix, in whose face is "all the race-mystery of the dispossessed Indian," the aboriginal man, London is "a sort of dark mirage" (p. 20). He is a misfit in the mouldering London, for he, like the horse, is one with natural forces. His eyes see "the pale deserts of Arizona shimmering with moving light, the long mirage of a shallow lake ripple, the great pallid concave of earth and sky expanding with interchanged light" (p. 20). What is real to him in the sterile society of London is "a horse-shape" which looms "large and portentous in the mirage, like some prehistoric beast." And in his eyes is the same intense light which is in St. Mawr's: "the dagger-point of light" which gleams unbroken (p. 21).

Lewis, too, "cared nothing about the world"--the modern world--"except, at the present, St. Mawr" (p. 22). With the horse, the aboriginal little Welshman has "another world, silent, where each creature is alone in its own aura of silence, the mystery of power. . . . A world dark and still, where language never ruffled the growing leaves, and seared their edges like a bad wind" (p. 99). Lewis is a horse-man, and it becomes apparent to both Lou and her mother that he belongs entirely to that primitive and wholly natural place.

Mrs. Witt says of him, "Isn't it curious, the way he rides? He seems to sink himself into the horse. When I speak to him, I'm not sure whether I'm speaking to a man or to a horse" (p. 23). What the three--Phoenix, Lewis, and St. Mawr--have in common is their origin. Each springs from a savage place, the natural world, and each has the power of that place--the awareness of his oneness with the forces of nature.

It is, however, important to distinguish between the two men in their relationships to St. Mawr, for each man represents only one aspect of the horse. Phoenix is revealed in the novel as pure animal. When he ultimately returns to the land of his birth, he becomes not a vital, powerful, mystical male, but a servant: "a man whose psychic limitations have left him incapable of anything but service, and whose strong flow of natural life, at the same time, made him need to serve" (p. 137). And if Rico is the emasculated social man, Phoenix is the questing animal, all sensuousness.

Lewis, on the other hand, while part of the natural world, is capable of a mysticism unknown to Phoenix. Lewis has the same ancient knowledge that St. Mawr possesses, and like the horse, he holds himself aloof, rather than be corrupted by the society around him. He is so much a part of the ancient "other world" that he is virtually self-contained, needing only St. Mawr to be fulfilled. And he is not to be separated from the horse in the course of the novel.

As it is Lou Witt, however, who is the central character

in the novel, it is her reaction to the horse which most clearly defines the animal to the reader. As the horse comes to her, she sees too well the contrast between "that great ruddy body" of life and the pale poser who is her husband. St. Mawr forces Lou to choose between two worlds--that of a "pure animal man . . . burning like a flame" and that of the "fixed automatic thing . . . grinding on the nerves" (p. 50). And it is this conflict which is the basis of the novel.

While St. Mawr is indeed representative of the natural world, however, he is not merely a sex symbol, but much more. Lou recognizes in the stallion, despite his refusal to mate with the English mares, a sexual power that the men in her life do not have. But Lou also seeks an "invisible fire," a primitive connection with elemental forces which transcends sex itself. Through St. Mawr, Lou is promised not a purely sexual relationship, but a union, both sensual and spiritual, with the ancient world of natural creation.

As the representative of the ancient natural world, St. Mawr embodies what Lawrence felt to be the products of that world--spontaneous emotion and natural intuition. In his analysis of _St. Mawr_, Mr. Leavis describes these as "all that deep spontaneous life which is not at the beck and call of the conscious and willing mind, and so in that sense cannot be controlled by it, though it can be thwarted and defeated.

And St. Mawr, the stallion _is_ that life. And in presenting the drama in which the stallion figures so centrally Lawrence leaves us little doubt that his essential--and triumphant--concern is to vindicate 'love, joy, delight, hope, true indignant anger, passionate sense of justice and injustice, truth and untruth, honor and dishonour,' and the capacity for real belief."[6]

It would be erroneous, however, to imply that Lawrence did not believe in the "willing mind." Another critic writes that Lawrence "did not deny the part played in life by the intellect and will. But he believed that in the modern world they had got out of hand. They had usurped the place of man's 'spontaneous self,' for which they should have been mere instruments."[7] Indeed, Lawrence felt that the "real mind" would be one that is "quick like fire," spontaneous, alive and flaming (p. 49). He found this kind of mind in primitive men: "To them a thought was a completed state of feeling awareness, a cumulative feeling, a deepening thing, in which feeling deepened into feeling in consciousness till there was a sense of fullness. A completed thought was the plumbing of a depth like a whirlpool of emotion."[8]

[6] Leavis, p. 231.

[7] W. W. Robson, _Modern English Literature_ (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 82.

[8] D. H. Lawrence, _Apocalypse_ (New York: Viking Press, 1932), p. 80, as quoted by Eugene Goodheart, _The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence_ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 45.

And this kind of mind is what St. Mawr represents: the thinking which comes "straight from the source" of life (p. 50). It is in exalting the intellect and denying the emotions (and therefore the body) that mankind has fallen.

This is the crux of the battle between St. Mawr and Rico. Each time Rico attempts to ride--and conquer--the stallion, the conflict grows stronger, finally culminating in the crisis at Devil's Chair, when St. Mawr becomes, according to Monroe Engel, "the figure of unrepressed man ridden by repressed man, Rico."[9] For Lou's emasculated husband is a phony in "social tailoring": "if his head had been cut off, like John the Baptist's, it would have been a thing complete in itself, would not have missed the body in the least" (p. 18). This repression of living passion, inextricably linked in Rico with his sexual impotency, is the evil against which St. Mawr rebels. The horse is tainted by the man at every contact, "a little bit extinguished, as if the virtue had gone out of him" (p. 53).

In their final confrontation at Devil's Chair, Rico becomes an even greater force of evil. As the stallion balks at the dead adder, Rico pulls the reins so tightly that both horse and rider are thrown backwards. Watching horrified, Lou sees "the pale-gold belly of the stallion upturned, the hoofs working wildly, the wicked curved hams

[9] Monroe Engel, "The Continuity of Lawrence's Short Novels," D. H. Lawrence: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Mark Spilka (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 98.

of the horse, and then the evil straining of that arched, fish-like neck, with the dilated eyes of the head" (p. 69).

As part of natural creation the adder, in its deadness, is evil; for it, like modern man's natural spontaneity, lies "crumpled, its head crushed, its gold-and-yellow back still glittering dully, and a bit of pale-blue belly showing, killed that morning" (p. 68). The living fire of the horse must rebel against it. And in attempting to thwart St. Mawr's natural intuition, says Mr. Leavis, Rico--with "assertively developed, insulated head and 'speaking' face--blindly and brutally ignores the living sentience beneath him . . ."[10] Unable to recognize the evil because he is such an integral part of it, Rico must destroy St. Mawr even as the snake has been destroyed. And the horse is dragged down, "reversed and purely evil" (p. 69).

In the face of evil such as Rico embodies, natural creation itself becomes corrupted, and the natural man that St. Mawr represents becomes as cruelly impotent as his rider. And in watching the contortions of the horse, Lou "saw the same in people. They were thrown backwards, and writhing with evil. And the rider, crushed, was still reining them down" (p. 69). Lawrence believed that this reversal of the natural state was a gradual process, having occurred through generations of unsuspecting man. While man was once capable

[10] Leavis, p. 239.

of the "completed thought," the repression of natural spontaneous emotion, with its resulting spiritual and sexual impotency, has taken him away from his source, the "deep springs of life."

When St. Mawr is at last freed and allowed to recover from his fall, he stands apart, as if seeing "legions of ghosts, down the dark avenues of all the centuries that have lapsed since the horse became subject to man" (p. 68). The horse as symbol, then, is the free, undominated, passionate man of real emotion--the ancient man of "feeling awareness." The subjugated horse, however, is civilized man:

> Mankind, like a horse, ridden by a stranger, smooth-faced evil rider. Evil himself, smooth-faced and pseudo-handsome, riding mankind past the dead snake to the last break.
>
> Mankind no longer its own master. Ridden by this pseudo-handsome ghoul of outward loyalty, inward treachery, in a game of betrayal, betrayal, betrayal. The last of the gods of our era, Judas supreme! (p. 70).

Such is Lawrence's indictment against modern man.

CHAPTER II

But St. Mawr as a Lawrentian symbol is more than merely a natural creature of spontaneous emotion. The horse is also priest of a natural religion founded in an ancient, pre-civilized world in which man and universe were united in a kind of pantheistic "All." Lawrence called his religion "a vast old religion, greater than anything we know: more starkly and nakedly religious." And in this primitive religion, "everything was alive, not supernaturally but naturally alive. There were only deeper and deeper streams of life, vibrations of life more and more vast."[1] For the greater part of St. Mawr, the horse is emissary of this religion, and it is the promise of a union with "the elemental life of the cosmos" that he brings to Lou Witt.

From the time of his introduction into the novel, it is apparent that St. Mawr is endowed with a power and a knowledge that make him more than mere animal. He becomes a god out of some distant age, powerful and threatening with his "terrible, gleaming, questioning eyes, arching out of darkness, and backed by all the fire of that great ruddy body" (p. 15). He is a "special animal," sensitive--and hostile--to the confines of a London stable. As Lou sees St. Mawr for the first

[1] Lawrence, "New Mexico," p. 146.

272139

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time, she understands the promise that the stallion holds: "It was as if she had had a vision, as if the walls of her own world had suddenly melted away, leaving her in a great darkness, in the midst of which the large, brilliant eyes of the horse looked at her with demonish question, while his naked ears stood up like daggers from the naked lines of his inhuman head, and his great body glowed red with power" (p. 14). The fire-colored horse is, from the first, an intruder in her world of unrealities, and she immediately begins to feel the "ban on her heart," the "uncanny authority" that the animal has over her (p. 15).

Moreover, one of the first things Lou is told about the horse is that he is celibate: "They raised him for stud purposes--but he didn't answer. There are horses like that: don't seem to fancy the mares for some reason" (p. 12). His separateness--his priestliness--is established; as a part of an ancient and holy religion, he must hold himself aloof from the corruption of the modern world. Despite his tremendous vitality and potency, he cannot mate with the horses of England. He cannot respond to Rico and his friends because of the sterile world of which they are a part.

But St. Mawr is more than merely celibate. He is full of a secret power. He is an active agent, a "lightning conductor," in this dark religion of other worlds. In his "dark eye, that looked, with its cloudy brown pupil, a cloud within a dark fire, like a world beyond our world, there was a dark

vitality glowing, and within the fire, another sort of wisdom" (p. 26). St. Mawr is a fire symbol, with his "great ruddy body" and his "dark, passionate blaze of power" (p. 15). He partakes of the mystery and power of "another darker, more spacious, more dangerous, more splendid world than ours" (p. 27). And Lou, in need of this world, sees him for what he is: "She realized that St. Mawr drew his hot breaths in another world from Rico's, from our world. Perhaps the old Greek horses had lived in St. Mawr's world. . . . It was an older, heavily potent world. And in this world the horse was swift and fierce and supreme, undominated and unsurpassed" (pp. 19-20). And it is to this world that Lou, with the help of St. Mawr, wants to go.

In contrast to this place in which the horse reigns supreme is England--dark, damp, yellow-grey England--where "the horse is dead." It is here that men are not men but "handsome young bare-faced unrealities" (p. 27). And that "people, all the people she knew, seemed so entirely contained within their cardboard let's-be-happy world. Their wills were fixed like machines on happiness, or fun, or the-best-ever. This ghastly cheery-o! touch that made all her blood go numb" (p. 27). Lou is appalled at the "bluff" and "attitude" of the civilized world, realizing that "with men and women, everything is attitude only when something else is lacking" (pp. 15-16). What is lacking in England is the aliveness, the potency, and the mystery of an ancient and holy world.

Elsewhere Lawrence wrote, "We have to choose between the quick and the dead. The quick is God-flame in everything. And the dead is dead . . . And the sum and source of all quickness, we will call God. And the sum and total of all deadness we may call human."[2]

In defining the two opposing worlds, Lawrence made the horse the reality, the "quick" flaming life force. The stallion is part of a relatedness of natural forces, and with the exception of Lou and the two grooms, the human characters in the story are not. They are, collectively, modern man, whom Lawrence found sterile--and corrupt: "What can a man do with his life but live it? And what does life consist in, save a vivid relatedness between the man and the living universe that surrounds him? Yet man insulates himself more and more into mechanism, and repudiates everything but the machine and the contrivance of which he himself is master, god in the machine."[3]

What Lawrence wanted to replace this mechanism and its resulting repression of natural life was a return to a pre-civilized state of oneness with cosmic forces: "No man, or creature, or race can have a vivid vitality unless it be moving towards a blossoming . . . . Blossoming means the

[2] D. H. Lawrence, "The Novel," "Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine" and Other Essays (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 110.

[3] D. H. Lawrence, "Pan in America," Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Edward D. McDonald (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1936), p. 27.

establishing of a pure, new relationship with all the cosmos. This is the state of heaven. And it is the state of a flower, a cobra, a jenny-wren in spring, a man when he knows himself royal and crowned with the sun, with his feet gripping the core of the earth."[4]

This relationship with the cosmos which Lawrence wanted for mankind was, to him, holy--a "pure religion." He believed in a kind of pantheism in which a man and horse, or a man and a tree, would have the same life urge, the same God-flame. And he asked if it were not "truer to life to know, with a pantheistic sensuality, that the tree has its own life, its own assertive existence, its own living relatedness to me: that my life is added to, or militated against, by the tree's life?"[5] A man who understood his true relationship with natural creation would be a "pure animal man . . ., burning like a flame fed straight from underneath. And he'd be part of the unseen, like a mouse is, even. And he'd never cease to wonder, he'd breathe silence and unseen wonder, as the partridges do, running in the stubble. He'd be all the animals in turn, instead of one fixed, automatic thing, which he is now" (p. 50).

In the stallion St. Mawr is the hint of this man: the horse's "sun-arched neck," so hot and alive, gives to Lou an

[4] D. H. Lawrence, "Death of a Porcupine," "Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine" and Other Essays (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 214.

[5] Lawrence, "Pan in America," p. 26.

"ancient understanding" of this living relatedness of man and nature. And in him also is the living image of the Great God Pan, the central figure of Lawrence's religion. Although he abandoned the direct use of the Pan figure in later works, in St. Mawr Lawrence used the mythical god as center of his cosmos. But it is the unfallen Pan, said Lawrence, before "he became old and grey-bearded and goat-legged, and his passion was degraded with the lust of senility."[6] In the hours before St. Mawr and Rico clash for the final time, Lou has a conversation with Cartwright, the goat-like artist, who speaks of the unfallen Pan: the Pan before the fall was what might be seen with the "third eye. . . which sees only things that can't be seen"; and if this eye is open, "you may see the Pan within the thing"--within the tree or animal or fountain--"hidden" (pp. 54-55).

As a mediator in this Pan religion, St. Mawr opens Lou's third eye and allows her to see beyond modern man into a pre-Christian era which was full of God, but a God in which aspects of the many-sided Pan were fused. Lawrence did not limit himself to one fixed concept of God, for, said he, "no god, that man can conceive of, could possibly be absolute or absolutely right. All the gods that men ever discovered are still God: they contradict one another and fly down one another's throats, marvelously. Yet they are all God: the

[6] Lawrence, "Pan in America," p. 23.

incalculable Pan."[7] This Pan is that which cannot be seen with the naked eye, but he is nevertheless a part of all creation. And he is dangerous, awesome, a thing "to be feared, not loved or approached. A man who should see Pan by daylight fell dead, as if blasted by lightning. Yet you might dimly see him in the night, a dark body within the darkness. And then, it was a vision filling the limbs and the trunk of a man with power, as with new, strong-mounting sap. The Pan-power!"[8]

Lawrence believed that in England, as in all civilized society, Pan had virtually disappeared. In commenting on the conversation between Lou and Cartwright, Bob Smith says that "the spirit of the vitality of life itself in all things died with Pan, according to their discussion, because Pan was the hidden mystery, the hidden cause, the Great God. . . . The age of Pan . . . had given way to successive generations of ages during which Pan was either refined out of existence or assigned the duties of the Christian devil." And in the process, Mr. Smith continues, "the use of the horse as horse was modified again and again as 'progress' overwhelmed the world until the horse became a 'hobby-horse'."[9] For St. Mawr, Lawrence's imagination created a symbol of the unfallen Pan

[7] Lawrence, "The Novel," p. 119.

[8] Lawrence, "Pan in America," p. 22.

[9] Bob Smith, "D. H. Lawrence's St. Mawr: Transposition of Myth," Arizona Quarterly, 28 (Autumn, 1968), p. 200.

in the mystical stallion, the horse in whom the ancient world still lived. And in Lawrence's England, St. Mawr was the last vestige of this world.

In America, however, Lawrence found a still-living Pan. In the New Mexico ranch to which Lou ultimately goes, as in the Taos ranch which was, for a time, Lawrence's home, there is evidence of the existence of the spirit of Pan--in the enormous pine trees, in the warrior-like woodpecker, in all the menacing landscape. For in America, as in the horse St. Mawr, there is another element which Lawrence considered essential to his religion. In her autobiography, Frieda Lawrence quoted her husband as saying, "Life is life only when death is part of it."[10] Dennis DeNitto, in writing of Lawrence's primitivism, notes Lawrence's belief in "the fundamental cycle of nature--that of life and death."[11] Mr. DeNitto continues, "'Life' in one context was for Lawrence the principle of existence (the life force) operating in the flux of time, without which there could be no universe. This principle demands the ultimate death of each 'thing'; in fact, it sustains itself in time through the rhythm of physical life and physical death."[12] In St. Mawr, Lawrence himself

[10] Frieda Lawrence, "Not I, But the Wind. . . ." (New York: Viking Press, 1934), p. 148.

[11] Dennis DeNitto, "Modern Literary Primitivism in the Writings of D. H. Lawrence and Other British Novelists," Diss. Columbia, 1966, p. 126.

[12] DeNitto, p. 127.

says, "Man must destroy as he goes, as trees fall for trees to rise. The accumulation of life and things means rottenness" (p. 71).

Lawrence believed that "life must destroy life, in the unfolding of creation," not in the undermining of man's nature. In the novel, however, Lou realizes that modern man wants to "save up life at the expense of the unfolding, till all is full of rottenness. Then, at last, we make a break" (p. 70). She sees

> . . . the evil! The mysterious potency of evil.
> . . . .
>
> People performing outward acts of loyalty, piety, self-sacrifice. But inwardly bent on undermining, betraying. Directing all their subtle evil will against any positive living thing. Masquerading as the ideal, in order to poison the real.
>
> Creation destroys as it goes, throws down one tree for the rise of another. But ideal mankind would abolish death, multiply itself million upon million, rear up city upon city, save every parasite alive, until the accumulation of mere existence is swollen to a horror. But go on saving life, the ghastly salvation army of ideal mankind. At the same time secretly, viciously, potently undermine the natural creation, betray it with kiss after kiss, destroy it from the inside, till you have the swollen rottenness of our teeming existence" (pp. 70-71).

In the novel, Lawrence asks, "What's to be done?" Then answers, saying, "The individual can but depart from the mass and try to cleanse himself. Try to hold fast to the living thing, which destroys as it goes, but remains sweet. And in his soul fight, fight, fight to preserve that which is life in him from the ghastly kisses and poison bites of

the myriad evil ones. Retreat to the desert, and fight. But in his soul adhere to that which is life itself, creatively destroying as it goes: destroying the stiff old thing to let the new bud come through" (p. 71). Thus, ideally, death meant, in Lawrence's religion, a creative process through which new life, both physical and spiritual, springs.

As a priest of the Pan-spirit, the horse St. Mawr brings to Lou the knowledge that to gain entry to his world, she must be prepared to penetrate the surface of life and have the courage to embrace the new danger which Lawrence prescribed for man. She must be willing to face both the threat of physical death which awaits her in the new world, and the death of the human will which keeps her from entering, reborn, into a living relatedness with earth forces. It is the recognition of the evil in civilized man, and the awareness of another, purer world that St. Mawr, as priest and symbol of the Pan-power, brings to Lawrence's heroine.

Lou welcomes the danger, the threat, of St. Mawr--and of the ranch to which she will go--not in a death-wish, but in an attempt to escape into what Lawrence called an "older vision of life."[13] She recognizes the need for a "great yielding" of the individual ego, a thing which Rico has fought desperately to protect, so that a new life might come

[13] D. H. Lawrence, _The Letters of D. H. Lawrence_, ed. Aldous Huxley (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1932), p. 605.

out of it. In order to live, she must reject Rico and all he stands for, and flee to the "spirit that is wild" in the New Mexico ranch (p. 159). And it is for this that she needs St. Mawr. With the stallion as preceptor, she becomes a novice in the Pan religion and prepares to sacrifice Rico, sell her possessions, and follow the horse as he leads her away from corruption and deadness. St. Mawr, then, is a strongly religious symbol, a demon-priest who is used as a mediator between Lou and the cosmic forces of Lawrence's primitive religion.

CHAPTER III

It has disturbed some critics that St. Mawr is not part of Lou's final journey to her New Mexico ranch. Instead, he is left behind in Texas, stripped of his priestly powers and, seemingly, of his importance to the story, to take up with a Texas filly. Eugene Goodheart writes of the stallion that "he does not convey all that Lawrence wants him to convey. The brilliant, though troublesome, final portion of the tale in which a fierce landscape of western America is evoked and St. Mawr virtually forgotten is Lawrence's imagination breaking out of the symbolic limitations which the horse has imposed."[1] But Lawrence was being neither "troublesome" nor inartistic. His creation of St. Mawr as a symbol of natural life, as a priest of a primitive religion, gives the horse the important function of being the instrument in Lou Witt's achievement of oneness with elemental forces. Without St. Mawr, the events of the last pages would be impossible.

What is necessary to the understanding of this novel is that, despite its title, St. Mawr was never intended to be the dominant character of the story. As the embodiment of the unfallen Pan, as a symbol of the flame of life which has

[1] Eugene Goodheart, The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 60.

its source in the natural world, St. Mawr in his mystery holds the secret to vital, mystical, savage life. But the horse himself is not the source of this life. He is but the intermediary between Lou and the world he represents. It is about Lou that Lawrence wrote his novel, it is through Lou that Lawrence revealed St. Mawr's power, and it is to her that Lawrence offered the life he wanted for all mankind.

Lawrence was to write of the horse some four years after the publication of St. Mawr: "He is a dominant symbol: he gives us lordship: he links us, the first palpable and throbbing link with ruddy-glowing Almighty of potence: he is the beginning of even our godheads in the flesh . . . The horse! the symbol of surging potency and power of movement, of action, in man."[2] The flame that is St. Mawr was, for his creator, the hope of finding the "wild spirit" that means rebirth out of corruption into purity. Gradually the horse comes to mean the same thing to Lou, and the story becomes her alone.

Says Mr. DeNitto, "Lou's change of emotional attachment from the horse to the land is a necessary progression in her spiritual rebirth."[3] From the first Lou realizes that St. Mawr holds a promise of "another world, an older heavily potent world" in which must lie her salvation (p. 29). She

[2] Lawrence, Apocalypse, as quoted by Moore, p. 331.

[3] DeNitto, p. 221.

finds the sterility of modern English society intolerable. She becomes aware of the evil only half buried in the manners of a "safe, finicky drawingroom" (p. 7), and she becomes increasingly unable to "bear the triviality and superficiality of her human relationships" (p. 14) and the deadening futility of her life in England. Yet her hope lies not in the horse himself, but in the mysterious other-worldness he promises: "When he reared his head and neighed from his deep chest, like deep wind-bells resounding, she seemed to hear the echoes of another darker, more spacious, more dangerous, more splendid world than ours, that was beyond her. And there she wanted to go" (pp. 26-27).

The crisis at Devil's Chair and the danger of extinction which threatens St. Mawr give Lou a reason to leave England, the world of impotent men, and go back to "big, dangerous America," land of her origin. But there is more behind the exodus than St. Mawr's safety. There is Lou's safety; for she herself is in danger of being exterminated by the corruption around her: "She felt so weak that unless something carried her away, she would go on rattling her bit in the great machine of human life till she collapsed, and her rattle rattled itself out, and there was a sort of barren silence where the sound of her had been" (p. 87).

It is in being the "something" that "carried her away" that St. Mawr fulfills his primary function in the novel. However important he has been to Lou, the horse is but the

means of achieving flaming life. Lou herself says that she does not "want to be an animal like a horse . . ." (p. 49), but wants instead to get her life "straight from the source, as the animals do" (p. 50). To Lawrence, too, the horse was but a means of reaching the fire, the center of life buried in the ancient primitivism of another world. St. Mawr conveys exactly what Lawrence wished him to, Mr. Goodheart to the contrary. The horse is a way out of an intolerable existence to a full, vital life, to a new sexuality, even to a new religion: "Nothing matters but that strange flame of inborn nobility that obliges men to be brave, and onward plunging. And the horse will bear him on" (p. 75).

That the stallion does not follow Lou to the ranch in New Mexico is not, as Monroe Engel suggests, "a touch that surely fails to add to the seriousness of the story."[4] Of his religion, the "contact with the elemental life of the cosmos," Lawrence said, "This effort into sheer naked contact, <u>without an intermediary or mediator</u>, is the root meaning of religion."[5] If St. Mawr is not physically present at the end of the novel, it is because in reaching Texas he has accomplished his mission, bringing Lou into contact with this religion, and he is free to return to his source--and to his animalness. No longer a potent alien in a sterile world, he

[4] Engel, p. 99.

[5] Lawrence, "New Mexico," p. 146.

ceases to be an active character. He is fulfilled.

Lou's exchange of one symbol for another in no way weakens the continuity of the story. For as she goes on to New Mexico, she finds the same flaming quality of life in the land that she found in the stallion. But because she is not an animal, because she is a woman of awakened senses, Lou has a need to reach deeper into the wildness of her life for regeneration. She must go on alone to "live for something that matters, way, way down in me" (p. 157).

CHAPTER IV

The "something that matters" for which Lou comes to America is to be found in the wilderness of the New Mexico ranch. Earlier in the novel she has realized that she must "retreat to the desert and fight" (p. 71). And this is what she does. Leaving St. Mawr in Texas Lou goes with Phoenix to New Mexico, and in so doing, fulfills the promise of the stallion. It is for the "little tumble-down ranch" with its "little trickling spring of pure water" that Lou has left England with the magnificent horse. As she arrives at the ranch, she says, "_This is the place_." And indeed, she feels the holiness, the sacredness, of the "motionless desert," the blue mountains, and the "tall, blue balsam pines" surrounding her (p. 141). At this point in the novel, the story becomes Lou's alone. But while St. Mawr is no longer the central figure in the story, he is still very much a part of Lou's response to the ranch. And in order to fully understand Lawrence's exchange of symbols, it is necessary to understand, first, the ranch in relationship to St. Mawr, and, second, Lou in relationship to Las Chivas.

In the first place, the horse and the ranch have certain things in common. The "mysterious fire of the horse's body" (p. 14) is comparable to the "latent fire of the vast landscape"

(p. 140). Both animal and place are distinctive in the blazing life they share. Even more important, the horse embodies the conflict which Lou finds magnified in the ranch: St. Mawr is a "splendid demon," a threat, but "really glorious: like a marigold, with a pure golden sheen, a shimmer of green-gold lacquor, upon a burning red-orange" (p. 17). So, too, is the ranch: "It was always beauty, always!" (p. 148); but it also has an "undertone of savage sordidness" (p. 150). The "tangle of long drops of pure fire-red . . . cleanest fire colors, hanging in long drops like a shower of fire-rain that is going to strike the earth" (p. 150) is but part of a battle, a battle which Lou has seen throughout in the stallion. Like St. Mawr himself, the land of New Mexico is aloof, dangerous--and splendid.

But St. Mawr is a symbol. And it is in this that horse and ranch are fundamentally different. If St. Mawr is a symbol, the ranch to which Lou goes, so vividly described at such length, is more than a symbol. It was a reality to Lawrence. Lou's response to this splendid, savage place is an echo of Lawrence's own feelings about New Mexico: "The moment I saw the brilliant, proud morning shine high up over the desert of Santa Fe, something stood still in my soul, and I started to attend. . . . In the magnificent morning of New Mexico, one sprang awake, a new part of the soul woke up suddenly, and the old world gave way to the new."[1] In

[1] Lawrence, "New Mexico," p. 142.

this new world he found the source of his primitive religion: "I had looked over all the world for something that would strike me as religious. For religion is an experience, an uncontrollable, sensual experience, even more so than love: I use sensual to mean an experience deep down in the senses, inexplicable and inscrutable. . . . And I had no permanent feeling of religion till I came to New Mexico and penetrated into the old human race-experience there."[2]

Lawrence found in New Mexico, near his own ranch, a primitive people who embodied the spirit of Pan. In explaining the Pan myth, Lawrence said, "In the days before man got too much separated from the universe, he was Pan, along with all the rest." And in the Pueblo Indians that man still lived: "The tribe this day is adding up its male energy and exerting it to the utmost--for what? To get power, to get strength: to come, by sheer cumulative, hurling effort of the bodies of men, into contact with the great cosmic source of vitality which gives strength, power, energy to the men who can grasp it, energy for the zeal of attainment."[3]

To Lawrence, the land of these primitive people was one of the last of the savage places. To be sure, he found such places elsewhere, even in England: one scene in St. Mawr is the Devil's Chair, "one of those places where the spirit

[2] Lawrence, "New Mexico," pp. 144-45.

[3] Lawrence, "New Mexico," p. 146.

of aboriginal England still lingers, the old savage England, whose last blood flows still in a few Englishmen, Welshmen, Cornishmen" (p. 63). But he also wrote of an England "at the moment in shadow. . . . Cloud was coming--the English side was in shadow. Wales was still in the sun, but the shadow was spreading" (p. 65). Lawrence's New Mexico was still a place of "splendid silent terror," of a "vast far-and-wide magnificence which made it way beyond mere aesthetic appreciation. Never is the light more pure and overweening than there, arching with a royalty almost cruel over the hollow, uptilted world."[4]

And the terrible conflict which he found in this place was essential to Lawrence. To him, the cruelty of the land lay in the unending struggle of the elements for supremacy over man: the New England woman who first lives at Las Chivas is constantly aware of "some mysterious malevolence fighting, fighting against the will of man. A strange invisible influence coming out of the livid rock-fastnesses in the bowels of those uncreated Rocky Mountains, preying upon the will of man, and slowly wearing down his resistance, his onward-pushing spirit. . . . A curious disintegration working all the time, a sort of malevolent breath, like a stupifying, irritant gas, coming out of the unfathomed mountains" (p. 144). In the midst of the "bristling life" of the

[4] Lawrence, "New Mexico," p. 143.

landscape is the "strange invidiousness that ate away the soul" (p. 145). All nature seems on guard against intrusion by man, even the pine trees: "Never sympathetic, always watchfully on their guard, and resistant, they hedged one in with the aroma and the power and the slight horror of the pre-sexual primeval world" (p. 146).

But the conflict is essential. Lou recognizes the forces that "will hurt me sometimes and wear me down sometimes" (p. 158). Like the New England woman, however, she knows that it is at once more awful and more splendid than anything she has ever known. And it is real. Critic Bob Smith says that Lawrence believed in "a world in which vitality and virility were necessary to existence, a world in which continued struggle was imperative to survival. In short, he sought for the precise opposite of the hollow tinsel world of Rico's England."[5]

And yet, paradoxically, Lawrence also wanted for Lou, and for man, a kind of submission to the forces of this natural world, or at least a recognition that "you have to live to live, not to conquer."[6] The indomitable will of man must be sacrificed if he is to achieve the reconciliation with nature that Lawrence believed possible: "Because, when all is said and done, life itself consists in a live relatedness

[5] Smith, p. 198.

[6] Lawrence, "Pan in America," p. 29.

between man and his universe: sun, moon, stars, earth, trees, flowers, birds, animals, men, everything--and not in a 'conquest' of anything by anything. Even the conquest of the air makes the world smaller, tighter, and more airless."[7]

Lou does submit, and willingly, to these elemental forces. As she leaves St. Mawr behind for the New Mexico ranch, she takes the final step in becoming a part of the living relatedness of all natural things. She embraces the danger of the new life to hold herself free from the corrupting influence of the civilized world. And in this terrible land, where the unfallen Pan still lives, she erects an inner temple of holiness. Says Mr. Smith, "Lou, . . . the daughter of Pan, makes the discovery and devotes her life to maintaining a temple for the Spirit of Pan, seeking a deeper understanding of that spirit, and living for the sheer joy of living."[8] This is the life which the horse as symbol has made possible for Lou. The "vitality and virility" of St. Mawr--his "male energy"--have been, for Lou, but a hint of the greater reality which Lawrence himself found in the landscape of New Mexico.

[7] Lawrence, "Pan in America," p. 31.

[8] Smith, p. 208.

CHAPTER V

Lou's progression in the novel has been from an aimless, gypsey-like existence in a meaningless world to a state of readiness for a deeply sacred life on the New Mexico ranch. In coming to New Mexico, she pledges to "keep myself for the spirit that is wild, and has waited so long here: even waited for such as me" (pp. 158-59). She has come where she wants to be, "right deep in America, where there's a wild spirit wants me, a wild spirit more than men . . ." (p. 159). As St. Mawr has been fulfilled on a dusty ranch in Texas, so Lou must wait for her own fulfillment, holding herself in readiness for the new life she is prepared to embrace. But as the way of achieving this new life has come from the horse himself, it is necessary to fully understand what St. Mawr means to Lou. It is through her that St. Mawr is most clearly defined for the reader. And it is she who is most dramatically affected by the stallion.

By the end of the novel, Lou has, with the help of St. Mawr, undergone a spiritual transformation. At the beginning of the story, before Lou finds the horse, she is "completely at sea," unable to find purpose or direction in her rootless existence. "Dutifully married" to a man with whom she can have no physical or spiritual communion, she is vaguely aware

of the emptiness of her life. She is a displaced person: she doesn't "quite belong." Although she attempts to join in the futility of the society around her, "playing at being well-bred, in a sort of charade game," she is always aware of the "lurking sense of being an outsider everywhere" (p. 3).

Even before she finds St. Mawr, Lou has felt an affinity for horses. She remembers the horses of her Texas childhood, and in her superficial London life, the stables and her sorrel mare become the only points of reality for her: "her life with Rico in the elegant little house, and all her social engagements, seemed like a dream, the substantial reality of which was those mews in Westminster, her sorrel mare, the owner of the mews, Mr. Saintsbury, and the grooms he employed" (p. 10). Dimly she realizes that the horse is a creature of promise. Somehow she understands that it is in contrast with the noble sensuality of the horse that her life with Rico seems so shallow. She tells her husband, "Rico dear, you must get a horse" (p. 9), meaning instead, "Rico dear, you must be a man." But it is this that Rico can never be.

When the red-gold stallion becomes hers, the contrast between horse and husband is painfully evident. As she looks at St. Mawr for the first time, resting her hand on the horse's sun-arched neck, "dimly, in her weary young-woman's soul, an ancient understanding seemed to flood in" (p. 13). Although at this point the knowledge of St. Mawr's other world is no more than a vague realization of its existence,

Lou's transformation is begun. The dream-life she has shared with Rico becomes insignificant beside the "vivid, hot life" of the horse. Small wonder, then, that she is prepared to sacrifice Rico to follow St. Mawr.

But before Lou can be "ready" for her final experience at the ranch, she must do more than realize that another world exists. She must actively reject the corruption of the social world around her, even as St. Mawr rejects it. And the revelation which comes to her at Devil's Chair helps her do this. She becomes finally and horribly aware that the hollowness of England is an aggressive evil which seeks to destroy natural creation, and with it, man's chance for reconciliation with the forces of the natural world. As Rico pulls the great horse down with him, suddenly and clearly Lou sees what she has only guessed before: "she had a vision, a vision of evil . . . rolling in great waves over the earth. . . . She could see it all the time, in individuals, in the press" (pp. 69-70). And in Rico: "Ah, Rico! He was one of mankind's myriad conspirators, who conspire to live in absolute physical safety, whilst willing the minor disintegration of all positive living" (p. 73).

Her reaction to the horror of this revelation is an aching sensitivity to life and to the world around her. She cries, "Noli me tangere, homo!" For the thought of intimacy with man fills her "with aches." Like St. Mawr, she must embrace what Lawrence called elsewhere the

"irrevocable noli me tangere which separates the re-born from the vulgar."[1] She longs to "go away to the West, to be away from the world like one dead and in another life, in a valley that life has not yet entered" (p. 118).

Finally, of course, she does leave England, as leaving the "dim, dissolving edges of a dream, without inward substance" (p. 125). And she reaches the West--away from the "horrors of man's unnatural life, his heaped-up civilization" to the Gulf of Mexico and the "marvellous beauty and fascination of natural wild things!" (p. 128). She begins to feel exhilarated, the depression of civilization is lifted, and she begins to feel the spell of the "hot, wide sky, and the hot, wide, red earth" from which "there _did_ come something new, something not used up" (p. 129).

Up to this point, Lou has moved through two stages in a progression toward spiritual rebirth--one in which she becomes aware, with the help of St. Mawr, of a new life; and one in which she rejects, after the crisis at Devil's Chair, the life she has known before. The revelation in America enables her to move into still another, and final, stage--the acceptance of the new life awaiting her. And it is only now that she can leave St. Mawr and the others behind. What the horse has been to her, the ranch in New Mexico becomes.

[1] D. H. Lawrence, "The Man Who Died," _St. Mawr and The Man Who Died_ (1925; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1953), p. 194.

But at the ranch she learns what she could only guess through the horse: "she understood now the meaning of the Vestal Virgins, the virgins of the holy fire in the old temple. They were symbolic of herself, of women weary of the embrace of incompetent men, weary, weary, weary of all that, turning to the unseen gods, the unseen spirits, the hidden fire, and devoting herself to that, and that alone. Receiving thence her pacification and her fulfillment" (p. 139). In a spirit of readiness she looks at the new place--where "the hidden fire was alive and burning in the sky, over the desert, in the mountains." And she says, "For me, this place is sacred. It is blessed" (p. 140).

This readiness is in sharp contrast to the life of Mrs. Witt, who accompanies her daughter Lou to New Mexico. As an alternate title for _St. Mawr_, Lawrence suggested _Two Ladies and a Horse_.[2] And indeed, there was reason for his doing so. For in Mrs. Witt may be seen what Lou might have become without St. Mawr and the ranch. In Mrs. Witt, at fifty-one, can be seen the "terror of too late" (p. 86). Both women react to the stallion's virility, both see him as a Pan representative, but only Lou has the ability to use him as a means of transformation.

What Mrs. Witt fails in ultimately is her role as a

[2] Lawrence, _Letters_, ed. Huxley, p. 614.

woman. Although at the beginning of the novel both women are discontented with their surroundings, it is Mrs. Witt who is in hostile rebellion against it. And in her rebellion, she is what Lawrence abhored, an emasculator. She is characterized from the first as a disillusioned, cynical harridan. But more than that, she is described as a weapon: "Mrs. Witt was *so* like a smooth, levelled, gun-metal pistol," pointing and shouting, "Your virility or your life! Your feminity or your life!" She is bent on destroying with her indomitable will the poser Rico, and she is clearly intent on exposing the lack of maleness in all English society: to her, all "*young* Englishmen . . . seem . . . like ladies, perfect ladies" (p. 31). But in searching for the "real man," Rachel Witt is guilty of destroying those with whom she comes into contact.

The one real man she finds is Lewis, the groom, the horseman who seems to stand in the shadow of St. Mawr. But he is untouchable. For he knows what she does not--that a woman who conquers a man destroys him: "Nothing in the world . . . . would make me feel such shame as to have a woman shouting at me, or mocking at me, as I see women mocking and despising the men they marry. No woman shall touch my body, and mock me or despise me. No woman" (p. 108). It is true that Mrs. Witt recognizes the evil in the world around her, but in her own way she is as bad as Flora Manby, who openly thanked her stars that she did not live in an age when "a

woman had to cringe before mouldy domineering men" (p. 64). Mrs. Witt despises weak men, and longs for one who can prove himself stronger than she. And hers is the tragedy. For while Flora deliberately wishes to geld her men (and her horses), Mrs. Witt destroys them without wishing it--and laments their destruction.

A second flaw in Mrs. Witt's character is her need for a man with a mind. Although she is "at the stage when the malevolent male in man, the old Adam, begins to loom above all the social tailoring" (p. 5), she makes the mistake of being unimpressed by the "mere animal in man" (p. 48). She is anti-Lawrentian in her belief that "real mind is all that matters in man, and it's _that_ that we women love" (p. 49). She does not agree with Lou that a man must be "a proud living animal," whose thought is "quick like fire" because he is an animal (p. 50). Believing as she does, Mrs. Witt can never attain the hope of regeneration which Lou finds in St. Mawr. Mrs. Witt never really sees the horse for his potential, and in leaving Europe she forgets him.

But the novel suggests that Mrs. Witt cannot be "re-born" for still another reason. At fifty-one, she is simply too old. She has "had her day" (p. 96). She has passed the age of reproduction and vital sexuality. She has been girl, wife, and mother without having been deeply and vitally touched by life. And she faces death, but with such morbid preoccupation that she both frightens and repulses Lou.

Despite the fact that she feels "on the verge," that she is sure her "third eye" is about to open, she fails. And when Lou surveys the ranch in the final scene, Mrs. Witt can only "see it is lovely" (p. 155). She cannot feel it.

It is one of the novel's ironies that Mrs. Witt is described in the same terms as the horse St. Mawr: she is "savage," a "potent well-dressed demon, full of uncanny energy and a shattering sort of sense" (p. 7), and she is an accomplished horse-woman. In a kind of pun, Rico calls her "la Belle Mere," and Mrs. Witt accepts it wryly. But Rachel Witt is not the horse-woman in the Lawrentian sense of the word. Lou is. Lou may be compared to her mother in really only one way: she, too, seeks something real--a real man, a real world.

In almost every other way, however, the two women are different. All that which Mrs. Witt is, Lou is not. She cannot bear the battle of wills between Rico and her mother which is "gradually numbing and paralysing her" (p. 25). She wishes not to destroy, but to escape. For she learns, after her first meeting with St. Mawr, the secret of yielding, the "new joy" of doing "absolutely nothing" but establishing contact with the forces of nature, represented by the horse (p. 42). Lou respects the animal nature of St. Mawr, and wishes to find this in a man. She is "weary," but she is not disillusioned or cynical once she meets the stallion. She fully expects to find the spirit which St. Mawr

embodies, whether it be in a man, as she first believes, or in the vital life of a savage place, as she ultimately knows it to be.

It is her determination to find and embrace this wild spirit that distinguishes Lou from still another of the novel's characters, the New England woman who has been driven away from "Las Chivas." Like Lou, the woman was at first thrilled by the "sense of beauty" in the ranch, and loved the ranch passionately. It was she who had the energy to fight when her husband was defeated by the cruel forces of nature. And as Lou learns, so the New England woman learned to accept the cruelty of this primitive place, rejecting her Christian concept of God: "_There is no Almighty loving God. The God there is shaggy as the pine trees, and horrible as the lightning. . . . What nonsense about Jesus and a God of Love, in a place like this! This is more awful and more splendid. I like it better_" (pp. 149-150).

But, unlike Lou, the New England woman was afraid--of the "currents of fierce, electric fluid, waiting to discharge themselves," of the "underlying rat-dirt, the everlasting bristling tussle of the wild life, with the tangle and the bones strewing" (p. 152). The little New England woman did not come to the ranch for regeneration. She did not come to escape a life which she could not bear. And she never understood, even after living on the tumble-down ranch, that man cannot hope to win in a battle with natural forces.

Lou does understand, through St. Mawr, and she refuses to be worn down by the elements. In creating the New England woman, Lawrence created still another foil for Lou, still another failure in understanding the questing spirit and the higher life in which he believed. Lou welcomes the wildness and the natural spirit of the ranch, and she even accepts the "gods of the inner mountain . . . grim and invidious and relentless" (p. 153). In coming to Las Chivas, Lou prepares to enter, unafraid, into "contact with the elemental life of the cosmos," and become a living, vital woman.

One final problem, however, confronts the reader of this short novel: Lou's transformation, which has taken her from one continent to another, from a civilized world to a primitive one, from a husband, however ineffectual, to no one at all, is not complete at the end of the story. The "new life" for which she is prepared does not unfold, and the reader is left with only Mrs. Witt's ironic remark that the twelve hundred dollars Lou paid for the ranch is "cheap, considering all there is to it" (p. 159). What, indeed, does become of Lou? To envision her living at Las Chivas alone, year after year, seems somewhat impractical (Lawrence himself spent only one winter in the place). What, then, lies in store for this particular heroine?

There are at least two possible alternatives for Lou Witt--that she will somehow remain aloof, shut away from the

world, with only infrequent visits to some village below, in an attempt to preserve her new purity; or that she will become a true emissary for the Lawrentian religion, fulfilling the role Lawrence created for other heroes, and working to insure other men of the same "contact with the elemental life of the cosmos" which Lou herself has attained.

The first alternative is, admittedly, that suggested most strongly by the novel itself. When she first comes to Las Chivas and is overwhelmed by the clean, living beauty of the earth around it, Lou realizes that she must finally escape the corruption of the outside world: "She had to mind the dirt, most carefully and vividly avoid it and keep it away from her, here in this place that at last seemed sacred to her" (p. 140). By Lawrence's own admission, "generally speaking, nothing" is to be done about the corruption of the modern world (p. 71). It is therefore possible to assume that Lou will indeed remain at Las Chivas, or at least nearby, away from the "dirt" of an unclean world.

Moreover, in her last conversation with her mother, in the closing pages of the story, Lou says that she plans to remain in New Mexico because "it's my mission to keep myself for the spirit that is wild, and has waited so long here: even waited for such as me" (pp. 158-59). Lawrence, in writing of Lady Chatterly, discussed his women, saying that "a great many men and women to-day are happiest when they abstain and stay sexually apart, quite clean; and at the same time when

they understand and realise sex more fully."[3]

Perhaps Lou is one of these women. Certainly she understands St. Mawr's virility, his sensuality, as clearly as she sees Rico's impotency. Her distaste for men does not mean that she is "conventy." She hates men not "*because* they're men, as nuns do, but because they're not men enough . . ." (p. 158). And she states unequivocally that "either my taking a man shall have a meaning and a mystery that penetrates to my very soul, or I will keep to myself. --And what I know is that the time has come for me to keep to myself" (p. 158). Perhaps it is as Dennis DeNitto says, that Lou "rejects men and society," and that "for all the novel's affirmative attitudes toward nature, *St. Mawr* is the most misanthropic, anti-social of Lawrence's longer works."[4]

But there is evidence within the novel, as well as outside it, that Lawrence planned something more for Lou than a solitary existence on a wild and lonely New Mexico ranch. In *St. Mawr*, Lawrence's answer to the world's evil lies in man's being reborn out of corruption to a new and better life:

[3] D. H. Lawrence, *Apropos of Lady Chatterly's Lover* (London: William Heinemann, 1931), p. 15, as quoted by Father William Tiverton, "From 'The Death of the Gods'," *The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Harry T. Moore (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), p. 191.

[4] DeNitto, p. 223.

> And every civilization, when it loses its inward vision and its cleaner energy, falls into a new sort of sordidness, more vast and more stupendous than the old savage sort. An Augean stable of metallic filth.
> And all the time man has to rouse himself afresh, to cleanse the new accumulations of refuse. To win from the crude wild nature the victory and the power to make another start, and to cleanse behind him the century-deep deposits of layer upon layer of refuse: even of tin cans (pp. 153-54).

But if man is to cleanse the earth, it must be an effort of all men. For Lou to hide herself away with her new-found knowledge would be to deny the basis of Lawrence's religion. Mankind must be born again, and there must be leaders, believers in Lawrence's new world, to bring about this rebirth. In his Utopian Vision, Eugene Goodheart writes that "Lawrence's imagination was oriented toward the future, . . . its characteristic impulse was to discover new forms of life immanent, though not actual, in the world, and . . . his principal discovery was the bodily or physical life that he believed man had once possessed in his pre-civilized past and must now fully recover if future civilized life is to be possible."[5]

One of Lawrence's own poems reflects this belief, and offers mankind the hope of a hero who will not hide himself away, but will save the world:

> If you will go down into yourself, under your
> surface personality
> you will find that you have a great desire to
> drink life direct

[5] Goodheart, p. 1.

from the source, not out of bottles and bottled
personal vessels.

. . . .

Life from the source, unadulterated
with the human taint.

Contact with the sun of suns
that shines somewhere in the atom, somewhere
pivots the curved space,
and cares not a straw for the put-up human
figments.

. . . .

The cool, cool truth of pure vitality
pouring into the veins from the direct contact
with the source.
Uncontaminated by even the beginnings of a lie.

The soul's first passion is for sheer life
entering in shocks of truth, unfouled by lies.
And the soul's next passion is to reflect
and then turn round and embrace the extant
body of life
with the thrusting embrace of new justice,
new justice
between men and men, men and women, and earth
and stars, and suns.[6]

The parallels between the soul of Lawrence's poem and that of his heroine in St. Mawr are obvious. Lou's first step in her transformation is to break the surface of her life in a need to "drink life direct from the source." She finds in St. Mawr the power to escape to this source, "unadulterated by human taint," away from the "put-up human figments" of her life in England. But the last lines of the poem suggest that a Lawrentian hero--or heroine--must take still another step. He must make this "new justice" possible for

[6] D. H. Lawrence, "Primal Passions," The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence, Vol. I, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts (New York: Viking Press, 1964), pp. 481-82.

all men.

In analyzing Lawrentian heroes, Dennis DeNitto says, "The hero obviously finds his purpose in life in his mission. Less rare individuals find purposefulness beyond genuine relations with a woman through the hero--in accepting and following him."[7] As Lou has rejected a relationship with sterile civilized man and followed St. Mawr, so may not she herself become the priestess-heroine whose mission is to act, like St. Mawr, as an intermediary between other men and the "elemental life" Lawrence believed present in the natural world? Lou's refuge--the primitive Las Chivas--may indeed be her source of energy to bring others to a reawakening. As Mr. DeNitto says, "What is needed now is for brave aristocrats of the spirit to turn their back on the mechanism of contemporary society and use the power of nature--partially harnessed but in no way broken--to revitalize themselves and recreate the world."[8]

It is quite possible that St. Mawr is no more than what Lawrence called it--a "sad" story, "true to what is."[9] And that Lou's retreat to the desert is no more than a touch of Lawrentian misanthropy. Perhaps Lawrence meant, after all, that "generally speaking, nothing" is to be done about the

[7] DeNitto, p. 206.

[8] DeNitto, pp. 222-23.

[9] Lawrence, Letters, ed. Huxley, p. 618.

rottenness of society. But perhaps, instead, St. Mawr and Lou are parallels, and the function of the horse as priest in the novel is but a foreshadowing of Lou's "mission" after the story ends. It is possible that Lou's realization that she must fight to "hold fast to the living thing" (p. 71) contains instead a challenge and an affirmation. And that this is what the fiery stallion, with his irresistible, splintering hoofs, that can kick the walls of the world down,"[10] meant to Lawrence when he wrote St. Mawr.

[10] Lawrence, Letters, ed. Huxley, p. 592.

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