CHAPTER 1

TRACING FEMALE PRESENCE IN THE TRESPASSER

The second novel of D.H. Lawrence, The Trespasser was first written as “The Saga of Siegmund” in 1910, and was based on the experiences of Helen Corke (friend and fellow teacher of Lawrence at Croydon). Corke had had an affair with Herbert Macartney, a married musician, but in ended soon afterwards with the latter’s suicides in the autumn of 1909. This period also marked the peak of her relationship with Lawrence who came across as a sympathetic and understanding friend. Further advances by Lawrence, however, were refused by Corke. Incidentally, Corke wrote her own fictional version of her relationship with Macartney in Neutral Ground in 1933, twenty-one years after Lawrence’s The Trespasser was published (in 1912). Apart from The Trespasser, Helen Corke figured in a number of short stories and poems early in the literary career of Lawrence, though their friendship did not last beyond the three years they stayed at Croydon.

The manuscript of this novel underwent several revisions with the assistance of Ford Maddox Hueffer (later Ford) and Edward Garnett before it was finally published in 1912. Lawrence was quite defensive about this novel, at times even critical of it, added to which was Ford’s oft-quoted comment that it was “a rotten work of genius” (quoted in Kermode: 15). In fact the novel has more often than not been seen as a forgettable error of Lawrence by most critics. Michael Black, for example, in D.H. Lawrence: The Early Fiction (1985), sees it as “a young man’s book” and “as morose as its outcome” (Black: 79). He, moreover, states:
This is not a representative work of Lawrence’s, indeed it is like nothing else in the canon. It is still immature, though less diffuse and more controlled in its impact than *The White Peacock*. It is too much in one very intense tone, and it is dominated by its subject, in that Lawrence was working from the documented story and the conversational reminiscences of Helen’s Corke, recovering from the trauma of her lover’s suicide. This faithfulness to actual events seems at first to give the novel less breadth of implication than *The White Peacock*.

(Black : 79, superscript removed).

Frank Kermode, in *Lawrence* (first published, 1973), regards the novel as “fashionably Wagnerian... ostentatious, though qualified by irony, since Helen is a neurotic Wagnerite” (Kermode: 14). Furthermore, it is characterized by “a familiar generalization, couched in Ninety-ish prose” (Kermode: 14).

In spite of such adverse comments, however, it is possible to regard *The Trespasser* as a significant landmark in Lawrence’s oeuvre, in that it explores certain themes that he would explore with greater complexity in his later novels: themes such as the compelling need of the individual to break free from one’s allegiances to society, the urge to attain an authentic kind of personal existence through sexual passion, and the energy of the life force that permeates the body as a sexual entity. However, in a fashion similar to a later work *The Fox*, this is largely to be attained by the male protagonist at the expense of the woman, who is held responsible for dragging the man down into an enervating spirituality. It is also an early hint at the perceived necessity in a male-dominated ideological system to prevent the possibility of women coming together in an attempt to provide alternating definitions to their existence and identities than those dictated by the norms of heterosexuality. Of course, this aspect of female bonding is forced to remain at the margins of the novel in the tangential relationships between Helena Verden and her older friend,
Louisa. This chapter will look at three women characters — Helen, the lover of Siegmund; Beatrice, Siegmund’s wife; and Louisa, the latent lesbian friend of Helen — in order to appraise how these women and their realization or consciousness of themselves and their contexts are shaped by the narrative and how the narrative forces them into exclusive territories thereby reinforcing their respective experiences of alienation.

Of all the three women, Helena is most equated with the colour white, and also, frequently, with the moon and its obvious femininity. This is part of a larger pattern of symbols and imagery in Lawrence that finds expression so tellingly in novels such as the one immediately succeeding The Trespasser — Sons and Lovers. As in The White Peacock and in Sons and Lovers, Lawrence here delineates the figure of the possessive woman in Helena.

In a crucial scene in Chapter 13 of The Trespasser, Siegmund has a conversation with Hampson, an acquaintance of the former many years back. Hampson points at the obvious sense of dislocation evident in Siegmund’s postures:

“...I only mean you were staring rather hard at nothing. It’s a pity to try and store out of a beautiful blue day like this, don’t you think?”

(The Trespasser: 65-66)

Here Hampson — donning what has been usually taken as the persona or voice of the author — piercingly lays bare the alienation of Siegmund (and himself) from the vitality and spontaneity implicitly possessed by and contained in nature, especially as it appears in the idyllic and harmonious milieu of the Isle of Wight. Siegmund is disconcerted as Hampson seems to “express something in his own soul”
Hampson seems to intuitively grasp at the dilemma of Siegmund, as he strives to arrive at a sense of oneness with the life-force through Helena, but is constantly repulsed by what seems to be her excessive spirituality. Siegmund, Hampson says, has acquired "a liking for intensity in life" so that he can't do without "vivid soul experience" (The Trespasser: 67). Consequently

[a] craving for intense life is nearly as deadly as any other craving. You become a concentre, you feed your normal flame with oxygen, and it devours your tissue. The soulful ladies of romance are always semi-transparent.

(The Trespasser: 67)

Thus, this intense life connotes a transcendence of the merely physical at the same time as it is a going beyond the spiritual; it becomes a communion between the body and soul; a precarious balance that brings the human into contact with the larger universe and the life-force inherent in nature. For Lawrence, this intuitive state of being that plumbs the depths of one's irrational, unconscious mind can be attained through an ideal relationship between man and woman. Therefore, the characters in most of his novels are frequently in quest of such a state that will ultimately enable them to come to a fulfilling sense of identity and not a fractured one. In Sons and Lovers we can see it in Paul's relationships with Miriam and Clara; at the same time, this is noticeable conversely in the relationships of Miriam and Clara with Paul as well. In Miriam, it is through her relationship with Paul that she tentatively begins to explore her sexuality, only to be thwarted by inhibitions in Paul himself. On the other hand, Clara, while she feels liberated and fulfilled in their act of consummation in a pastoral setting, is compelled by Paul to return to her conventional role as wife.
(and, by implication, mother), so that for both Clara and Miriam their relationships only accentuate their frustration.

Helena Verden in *The Trespasser* is part of the continuum, from *The White Peacock* to *Women in Love* and some later works, in Lawrence, of the possessive, “dreaming” woman who restricts her lover to the realm of the spiritual, inhibiting the latter’s spontaneity and naturalness. Frequently, this figure is cast as being overly religious and mystical, and becomes a rather negative representative of Christianity. Hampson, in *The Trespasser*, comments on the apparent passivity of Siegmund in the face of his entering into marriage and another extra-marital relationship. Hampson puts the blame, however, not on Siegmund but on the woman herself:

The best sort of women – the more interesting – are the worst for us.... By instinct they aim at suppressing the gross and animal in us. Then they are supersensitive – refined a bit beyond humanity. We, who are as little gross as need be, become their instruments. Life is earth; and we take from them their unrealized life, turn it into light or warmth or power for them. The ordinary woman is alone, a grand potential force, an accumulator, if you like, changed from the source of life. In us her force becomes evident.

She can’t live without us, but she destroys us. These deep, interesting women don’t want us; they want the flowers of the spirit they can gather of us. We, as natural men, are more or less, degrading to them and to their love of us; therefore they destroy the natural man in us – that is us altogether.

(*The Trespasser: 67*)

Siegmund’s reaction to this initially is a narcissistic wave of self-love and then a sense of doom as he makes personal connections between Hampson’s statements and his love for Helena. The sun and the heat now become symbols for the natural man who longs for the experience of that sexual communion which will
bring him a sense of self-fulfilment. Hampson here prefigures the Lawrentian hero of later novels like *Sons and Lovers*, *Women in Love* and *Aaron’s Rod* who enjoys, unlike Siegmund, a certain freedom of choice making them active agents in trying to shape their identity. This particular section also anticipates Lawrence’s position in “Study of Thomas Hardy” regarding female characters in Hardy’s novels in particular and the respective personalities and temperaments of women and men.

The contradictions in Lawrence regarding the categories ‘man’ and ‘woman’ become apparent in his splitting of the two into polar opposites inhabiting two different realms. This opposition does not merely occur along the lines of sexual difference but also at a more individual psychic level in that every individual, whether man or woman, is inherently split along the lines of masculinity and femininity, possessing aspects of both. As a result, the relationship between a man and a woman becomes what Daleski in *The Forced Flame* terms “a double reconciliation of opposites, for the man and the woman are required not only to meet as opposites but... to reconcile the opposing qualities within themselves” (Daleski: 23-24). Lawrence terms the two differing states of consciousness the “Will-to-Motion” and the “Will-to-Inertia” (“Study of Thomas Hardy”: 447), both of which comprise the blueprint for his formulation of the male and female principles that he characterizes:

So we may speak of Male and Female, of the Will-to-Motion and of the Will-to-Inertia.

... 

That is the fundamental of female conception: that there is but One Being: this Being necessarily female, whereas man conceives a manifold Being, the supreme of which is male.

...
...The goal of the male impulse is the announcement of motion, endless motion, endless diversity, endless change. The goal of the female impulse is the announcement of infinite oneness, of infinite stability. When the two are working in combination, as they must in life, there is, as it were, a dual motion, centrifugal for the male, fleeing abroad, away from the centre, outward to infinite vibration, and centripetal for the female, fleeing in to the eternal centre of rest. A combination of the two movements produces a sum of motion and stability at once, satisfying. But in life there tends always to be more of one than the other.

(“Study of Thomas Hardy”: 449, 451, 457)

Furthermore, this dualism gives way to the complementary conceptions of Law and Love (or Knowledge):

Now the principle of the Law is found strongest in Woman, and the principle of Love in Man. In every creature, the mobility, the law of change, is found exemplified in the male; the stability, the conservatism is found in the female. In woman man finds his root and establishment. In man woman finds her exfoliations and florescence. The woman grows downwardly like a root, towards the centre and the darkness and the origin. The man grows upwards, like the stalk, towards discovery and light and utterance.

Man and Woman are, roughly, the embodiment of Love and the Law: they are the two complementary parts.

(“Study of Thomas Hardy”: 514)

Lawrence, however, seems to contradict himself in the course of these formulations when he attempts to reduce Judaism and Christianity to these distinctions, equating woman with the Monism of Judaism and man with Christ, who, with his utterance of “Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself” seems to represent the concept of the multiplicity of selves and the ability to extend one’s self into and through others, that is, the concept of “a manifold Being” (“The Study of Thomas Hardy”: 451, 452). This tendency of man to resist Monism leads him to
isolate, differentiate and reduce “each thing” so as to arrive at its intrinsic self, and uphold its uniqueness in the face of diversity and the tendency of the “woman” to boil down every aspect of being and consciousness to one level. Thus the contradiction emerges because the inscription of the difference between man and woman into theology compels Lawrence to blur the boundaries he has set up between the two. In this case, Lawrence’s idea of Being in the natural world entails the subject’s quest for, paradoxically, both singleness or an individual identity and immersion into or communion with a supra-human structure of existence; both are accessible through the individual’s instinctive responses to the natural world, and more importantly, through the sex act between man and woman. Thus, sex becomes the vehicle through which the categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ attain an ideal and complementary union, and through which the individual becomes aware of a unique, resilient self. However, as the contradictions suggest, for Lawrence, this singleness is more positively associated with the male rather than the female. Through characters like Lettie in *The White Peacock*, Helena in *The Trespasser*, Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*, Hermione Roddice in *Women in Love*, and Alvina in *The Lost Girl*, this aspiration for an independent single self is seen as a corrosive aspect of modern industrialized civilization and a disturbing aspect of the modern woman. For Lawrence, this figure is predominantly characterized by her overt spirituality and a platonic conception of love. This happens, for Lawrence, because the woman in this case suppresses her body; physicality and with it all naturalness of being in favour of solely the spirit. This transcendence, paradoxically, is viewed by Lawrence as an attempt to suppress whatever is feminine in the woman even as she tries to approximate masculine spirituality. Lawrence himself constantly blurs such distinctions both in his non-fiction and his fictional works, which, as a result, enables
to divergent readings. A prototype of the Lawrentian ‘dreaming’ or possessive woman is traced by the author himself to the heroines of Hardy, such as Sue in *Jude the Obscure* in “Study of Thomas Hardy”. Both these characters exist in denial of the female principle:

She [Sue] belonged, with Tess, to the old woman-type of witch or prophetess, which adhered to the male principle, and destroyed the female.

... She was born with the vital female atrophied in her: she was almost male. Her *will* was male....she was not the virgin type, but the witch type, which has no sex.

... Sue wished to identify herself utterly with the male principle. That which was female in her she wanted to consume within the male force, to consume it in the fire of understanding, of giving utterance... Sue felt that all must be uttered, must be givens to the male, that, in truth, only Male existed, that everything was the Word, and the Word was everything.

Sue is the production of the long selection by man of the woman in whom the female is subordinated to the male principle.

(“Study of Thomas Hardy”: 496)

As a result of this, Hardy’s novels are ultimately tragic:

And this tragedy is the result of over-development of one principle of human life at the expense of the other; an over-balancing; a laying of all the stress on the Male, the Love, the Spirit, the Mind, the Consciousness; a denying, a blaspheming against the Female, the Law; the Soul, the Senses, the Feelings. But she is developed to the very extreme, she scarcely lives in the body at all. Being of the feminine gender, she is yet no woman at all, nor male; she is almost neuter. He is nearer the balance, nearer the centre, nearer the wholeness. But the whole human effort, towards pure life in the spirit, towards becoming pure Sue, drags him along; he identifies himself with this effort, destroys himself and her in his adherence to this identification.

(“Study of Thomas Hardy”: 509-10)
Such a position is apparently prefigured in *The Trespasser* through the point of view of Siegmund as well as the narratorial voice. For Siegmund,

...Helena was a presence. She was ambushed, fused in an aura of his love. He only saw she was white, and strong, and full fruited, he only knew her blue eyes were rather awful to him.

(*The Trespasser*: 21)

This association, of Helena with whiteness – a symbol of the ‘dreaming’ quality in her, as well as the inhibitions she is shown to be affected by – is extended further into the moon image later on. The effort of this is to equate both Helena and the moon, at one point, with the figure of the Mother, along with its turn away from the primacy of overt heterosexual relations to the exclusive relation (which also becomes Oedipal) between the mother and the child. Another aspect to be noticed here is the anxiety Siegmund feels when confronted by Helena’s gaze, while his gaze seems to impart “an exquisite vividness” and a “native look of joy” to her (*The Trespasser*: 21). There is, already, a subtle working out of the power structure. Part of the reason why Siegmund feels unable to transform himself into Helena’s imagined lover is an unwillingness to acknowledge her individuality or personhood other than as an instrument through which he will make an attempt to arrive at a coherent sense of being. This becomes apparent at moments in the novel in spite of the dominant points-of-view of the protagonist and the author. Siegmund’s wound in his thigh in Chapter 6 makes him look at himself narcissistically and project a virile, vital, and authentic image of manhood into his perceived persona. The pool becomes a mirror into which he looks entranced at himself; it makes him conscious of himself as it seems to look at him. Here, Siegmund builds up an. Imaginary self out of his reflection that gives him a sense of autonomous selfhood:
He glanced at himself, at his handsome, white maturity. As he looked he felt the insidious creeping of blood down his thigh, which was marked with a long red slash. Siegmund watched the blood travel over the bright skin.... “That is I, that creeping red, and this whiteness I pride myself on is I, and my black hair, and my blue eyes are I. It is a Weird thing to be a person. What makes me myself, among all these?

(The Trespasser: 34)

But accompanying such a self-image is Siegmund’s resentment at not being recognized as such by Helena. In her significant and famous account of Woman as the Other, Simone de Beauvoir traces two key ways in which woman is reduced to being an object. In the first case, woman (and by extension Nature seen as an akin, feminine presence) is rendered into “a purely impersonal opposition”, “an obstacle” and “a stranger”, who alienates the masculine subject (Beauvoir: 139). Alternatively, the woman as Other is compelled to a passive submission to man’s will and is assimilated into the masculine code, so that the man “takes possession of her only through consuming her – that is, destroying her” (Beauvoir: 139). In both cases, Beauvoir points out, man retains his unique subjectivity. Unlike Nature, however, Woman as the Other, is not as threatening and hostile, nor does she, unlike men with whom there is a reciprocal relationship of the masculine subject), enjoy a relation of reciprocity, as a result of which she is reduced to mirroring (in the sense used by Beauvoir, not Lacan) the fantasized, larger-than-life image of the man. Her gaze, in effect becomes a derivative gaze of the man through which she views not just herself but the man as well. This leads the man into a complacence regarding his self-image that is now apparently repaired of fractures. But against this derivative looking back is a more potent looking back by the woman as subject; the resistant look that the woman might give to the male looker. Such a look, as Beth Newman in “The
Situation of the Looker-On: Gender, Narration and Gaze in *Wuthering Heights*” has suggested, has the potential to “immobilize him, to deprive him of his self-command, to render him stock — still — practically to paralyze him” leading to “castration anxiety” (in Warhol and Herndl: 451, 452). Siegmund’s dissatisfaction and anxiety at his masculine self not being reflected by Helena’s gaze can therefore be seen as a sense of alienation that confronts him in his interactions not only with her but with his wife and daughters as well. At the same time, such an experience only brings to the fore the subconscious realization of failure and deadening passivity in Siegmund as he refuses to engage in a struggle for self-assertion. This is why Siegmund phrases his resentment in such extreme terms:

“I am at my best, at my strongest”, he said proudly to himself. “She ought to be rejoiced at me, but she is not, she rejects me as if I were a baboon under my clothing.”

(The Trespasser: 35)

The narrative voice seems to endorse such a view as it describes Helena’s nature. The sense of consummation that Helena experiences in the act of kissing Siegmund (conventionally appearing as a preface to the sexual act itself) suggests that it is no longer a metonym for the whole act; it literally becomes the act itself as she “swoon[s] in a kind of intense bliss “(The Trespasser: 26). Again, it was the long, supreme kiss, in which man and woman have one being, Two-in-one, the only Hermaphrodite” (The Trespasser: 26). This foregrounds the narrator’s comments on the kind of woman Helena represents:

She belonged to that class of ‘dreaming women’ with whom passion exhausts itself at the month. Her desire was accomplished in a real kiss. The fire, in heavy flames, hard poured through her to Siegmund, from Siegmund
to her. It sank, and she felt herself flagging. She had not the man’s brightness and vividness of blood.... With her the dream was always more than the actuality. Her dream of Siegmund was more to her than Siegmund himself. He might be less than her dream, which is as it may be. However, to the real man she was very cruel.

...His dreams were the flower of his blood. Hers were more detached and inhuman. For centuries a certain type of woman has been rejecting the ‘animal’ in humanity, till now her dreams are abstract, and full of fantasy, and her blood runs in bondage, and her kindness is full of cruelty.

(The Trespasser: 26-27)

Helena, like Miriam in Sons and Lovers, is cast as the possessive woman who uses various means—“her will to dominate; her ability, sanctified through traditional Christian moral codes, to sublimate her bodily desires; and her attempt to idealize, intellectualize, and distort human relationships”—in order to “subjugate her man, inhibit him, and ultimately recreate him in her own image” (Stoll: 46). This is reinforced by the references to Wagner and Helena’s frequent projection of herself and her surroundings into Wagnerian fantasy. For example, she is convinced in Chapter 3 that the note of the fog-horn is the exact same note that begins the horn call in Wagner’s opera Tristan (The Trespasser: 23-240). Like Miriam who fantasizes herself as a princess disguised as a common girl, Helena also takes recourse to fancy:

The pink convolvuli were fairy horns or telephones from the day fairies to the night fairies. The rippling sunlight on the sea was the Rhine maidens spreading their bright hair to the sun. That was her favourite form of thinking. The value of all things was in the fancy they evoked. She did not care for people; they were vulgar, ugly, and stupid as a rule.

(The Trespasser: 36)
This, however, is only the result of Helena’s fear of her self becoming submerged in the obligations to her involvement in society, beginning with her family. This reality, as in the case of Miriam (who is repeatedly cautioned by her mother about the pains of a heterosexual relationship and subsequent motherhood, and who herself sees the conventional relationship between the woman and her family played out in a sordid, constricting manner) is one that would effectively render Helena’s agency null and void as she takes her place as the daughter looking forward to her social destiny as wife and mother. Her reaction to this is, therefore, to retreat into fancy, an escape which, however, as Lawrence shows, is also doomed to failure because it withdraws from one’s spontaneous life in the physical world. There are hints in the text which bring into relief this dilemma in Helena. One such instance is when Helena reflects on what her relationship to Siegmund has meant to her:

...[S]he ran back over her own history; it consisted of petty discords in contemptible surroundings, then of her dreams and fancies, finally – Siegmund.

“In my life,” she said, with the fine, grating discord in her tones, “I might say always, the real life has seemed just outside – brownie running and fairies peeping – just beyond the common, ugly place where I am. I seem to have been helped in by vulgar circumstances, able to glimpse outside now and then, and see the reality.”

(The Trespasser: 48)

Siegmund is not sympathetic towards such a statement precisely because he refuses to revise his interpretation of Helena is overly spiritual and “hard to get at” (The Trespasser: 78). This leads to her realization of the disparity between her Siegmund as she imaginatively re-creates him and the real Siegmund with his own limitations. Consequently, she is exasperated, “full of discord, of dreariness that set
her teeth on edge. Body and soul, she was out of tune" (The Trespasser: 78). This impasse is extended into their surrounding, which partake death-like qualities – the heat; the warm! Noiseless twilight that rises darkly from the sea: the day melting out the sky; the nosiness dying out of the sunset; the earth as a cold dead heap”; the sky “dark with flocculent grey ash” – filling Helena with psychic horror (The Trespasser: 78-79).

The mutual awareness of strangeness between Helena and Siegmund is expressed by the analogy of the sea that both use for each other. For Siegmund, Helena, like the sea, is a self-sufficient impersonal presence which renders his physical presence negligible and therefore invisible. On the other hand, Helena is daunted by what seems to be Siegmund’s ‘animal’ passion which is as brutal, terrifying and uncontrollable as the sea.

Helena, with her blue eyes so full of storm, like the sea, but, also, like the sea, so eternally self-sufficient, solitary, with her thick white throat, the strongest and most wonderful thing on earth, and her small hands, silken and light as wind-flowers, would be his tomorrow, along with the sea and the downs.

(The Trespasser: 18)

The sea played by itself, intent on its own game, its aloofness, its self-sufficiency, on its great charm. The sea does not give and take, like the land and the sky. It has no traffic with the world. It spends its passion upon itself. Helena was something like the sea, self-sufficient and careless of the rest.

(The Trespasser: 36)

She [Helena] glanced up at Siegmund. Tiny drops of mist greyed his eyebrows. He was looking out to sea, screwing up his eyes, and smiling brutally. Her face became heavy and sullen. He was like the heart and the brute sea, just here: he was not her Siegmund. She hated the brute in him.

(The Trespasser: 42)
"The sea is a great deal like Siegmund," she [Helena] said, as she rose panting, trying to dash her nostrils free from water. It was true; the sea as it flung over her filled her with the same uncontrollable terror as did Siegmund when he sometimes grew silent and strange in a tide of passion.

(The Trespasser: 90)

Helena is further associated with an ethereal quality (she had the most delicate touch in the world, like a faint feel of silk”), a kind of rarefied existence akin to a Christian mystical transcendence of the body to a purely spiritual level of being.

Presently she [Helena] laid her on his breast, and remained so, watching the sea, and listening to his heart-beats. The throb was strong and deep.... It fascinated her: so deep, unheard, with its great expulsions of life.... Was there also deep in the world a great God thudding out waves of life, like a great heart, unconscious? It frightened her. This was the God she knew not, as she knew not this Siegmund.... She listened for Siegmund's soul, but his heart overbeat all other sound, thudding powerfully.

(The Trespasser: 40)

...The sea was blazing with white fire, and glowing with azure as cools glow red with heat below the flames. The sea was transfused with burning, while over it hung the blue sky in a glory, like the blue smoke of the fire of God. Helena stood still and worshipped. It was a moment of astonishment, when she stood breathless and blinded, involuntary offering herself for a thank-offering. She felt herself confronting God at home in His white incandescence, His fine settling on her like the Holy Spirit. Her lips were parted in a woman's joy of adoration.

(The Trespasser: 90)

Consequently, this becomes the ground for her rejection of Siegmund, while she is rejected for her asexual notion of love and her coldness and distance from the real presence of Siegmund. The narrative, thus, which seems to make an attempt to effectively segregate Siegmund and Helena into body and soul, itself provides
instances that counteract such a unidirectional interpretation. These instances are marked by a change, or at least an interrogation of the dominant heterosexual power structure and hence point towards the way in which Helena moves beyond mere instrumentality (as a static symbol of extreme spirituality and as the cause of Siegmund’s destruction) and grapples with her vulnerability in a present reality that seeks to do away with her power and agency as an individual. Helena, as much as Siegmund, is defined by her self-alienation resulting in her ambivalence towards Siegmund and their relationship, and her anxiety and despair at the possible outcome of it. This happens largely because of the discrepancy in her visualization of Siegmund (which is in principle similar to that of Helena by Siegmund), making him a “dual figure”, “the extended or potential embodiment of [her] dreams and desires, and the actual figure” whom she does not understand (Templeton: 24). This results in a breakdown of communication between the two and they become estranged from each other. The sun and moon imagery reinforces this state of affairs, together with colours such as red, golden, and green on one hand and white on the other. Both Siegmund and Helena flee from the constricting realities of life in London to the Isle of Wight which becomes a realm of fantasy and escape from obligation and responsibility, a world seemingly suspended in time and space. It is also significant that the five-day vacation is proposed by Helena, prefiguring her dominant “will” over Siegmund’s passivity. In this location, they hope to escape from confronting their problematic relationship, but it only means that they will, upon their inevitable return to London, experience their alienation all the more intensely. In fact, this problem never leaves them altogether; it is only that with the change of landscape the ambivalence and differences in their personalities and temperaments are extended more into the natural surroundings. Taking the conventional trope of the
pastoral, Lawrence transforms it into a psychic landscape that is both shaped by and works on the subjectivity of the two protagonists.

As mentioned earlier, Helena is described in the novel chiefly in terms of white. As the novel opens, she is seen wearing a high-waisted white dress which swings as “she forced the rhythm [of the violin’s music], determinedly swaying to the time as if her body were the white stroke of a metronome” (*The Trespasser*: 8). On the first evening of their stay in the cottage, she is dressed in white (previously, she had appeared as a “white, strong, full fruited presence” to Siegmund), her white arms showing through the lace. Later in the night, the sacrificial aspect of Helena is brought into overt relief as in her white, clinging dress, cowering between her uplifted arms, she seemed to be offering him herself to sacrifice” (*The Trespasser*: 28, 31). On the other hand, Siegmund’s face is “ruddy” and his hands are like “two scarlet flowers” and then “[O]ne of the flowers awoke and spread towards her” (*The Trespasser*: 30). The differing perceptions of sexuality in Helena and Siegmund are made apparent here in much the same way that Lawrence would do in *Sons and Lovers*. In both, it is the men (Siegmund, Mr. Morel, Paul) who are positioned closed to nature and the life-force, while the women steer away from it, immersing themselves in the light (albeit artificial) of education and civilization. In one of their excursions during the vacation, the narrator contrasts the diffidence of Siegmund (“a Londoner on holiday”) with the sophistication of Helena, who belongs to “the unclassed”. Her sophistication, however, is not that of an upper-class lady, neither is she smart or assertive, but imparts itself through her being “evidently educated”, something that seems to define her whole personality. Moreover, she is “much more noticeably a concentrée” than Siegmund is, and “[U]nless definitely looking at something she always seem[s] coiled within herself” (*The Trespasser*: 71). Here
again, her white voile dress becomes a metonym of her character in being of a clinging kind. For her, as Templeton points out, sexuality is “a sacrifice through which, by granting Siegmund a part of what he so desperately desires, she can in turn achieve the gratification she seeks from him, and to a greater degree than if she did not submit to his passion” (Templeton: 26). This is something that the narrative substantiates:

He [Siegmund] was wonderful to her [Helena]. She loved him, was jealous of every particle of him that evaded her. She wanted to sacrifice to him, make herself a burning alter to him, and she wanted to possess him.

(The Trespasser: 45)

One of the reasons for such holding back by Helena, Templeton suggests, is a “fear of his overwhelming, potentially subjugating sexuality”, while the second reason is that “the effects of lesser forms of physical contact [are] in themselves eminently satisfying; in fact almost more than she can, or wishes to endure” (Templeton: 26-27). This attempt to attain a fulfilling sexual experience through limited physical contact characterizes the psychic deformity of the modern individual, particularly, the modern woman, as far as Lawrence is concerned. The solitariness of Helena thereby is not self-sufficient at all, as stressed in her comparison with the sea, but is a sign of her vulnerability as she is unable to commune with other human beings, not even with her lover. This lack of communication manifests itself also in her unwillingness to become more intimate with nature. Because she supplants nature with her world of “self-created fantasy and romantic idealism” (Templeton: 27), she knew hardly any flower’s name, nor perceived any of the relationships, nor cared a jot about an adaptation or a modification. It pleased her that the
lowest browny florets of the clover hung down; she cared no more. She clothed everything in fancy.

(The Trespasser: 36)

Similar is her attitude towards the stars and other heavenly objects:

She refused to learn the names of the stars or of the constellations, as of the wayside plants. “Why should I want to label them?” She would say “I prefer to look at them, not to hide them under a name.” So she laughed when he asked her to find Vega or Arcturus.

(The Trespasser: 56)

This can be seen as Helena’s strategy to ensure against giving in herself to the reality that manifests itself around her primarily through gender relations. Even in their rented cottage, Helena, thereby, keeps her room “inviolate” (The Trespasser: 33). Naming or labelling has been seen in much of feminist theory as a logocentric activity oriented towards the masculine. Helena’s refusal to “label” things, therefore, may be read as a resistance to the conventions of language and the sexual politics associated with it, a refusal to be inscribed within a male-dominated social reality. Thus, this can be taken as an attempt at overturning the equations inherent in a gender relationship by wrestling mastery from men (and language) as an alternative to the “historical victimization of women by men” (Templeton: 28). While this has its own problems (chiefly that of not being able to break the hierarchy of power after all) Helena’s act becomes crucial to her survival as an individual (who will create her own definitions/ meanings) as well as matter of self-respect, “to desire either the attainment of some kind of equality or, realizing that such a goal is likely never to be reached within contemporary society, the converse of existing social reality: feminine supremacy” (Templeton: 28). As such, though such an alternative involves
fantasy and can therefore be labelled life-denying, characters like Helena and Miriam perceive them as “the means of replacing reality with something else so as to avoid, or convince themselves they are avoiding, the ignominy of surrendering to that reality” (Templeton: 28-29). Given that Helena is not totally devoid of sensuality as the novel seems to project (for example, in the passage where Helena’s gaze looks over Siegmund’s body feature by feature, hinting at the erotic subtext underneath such an act (The Trespasser: 20), the withdrawal of Helena suggests her apprehension of remaining a mere catalyst or instrument facilitating Siegmund’s harmonious communion with nature or the environment. (This is actually what Paul wants from Miriam and what he gets from Clara in Sons and Lovers.) In spite of the negative implications projected in the text regarding Helena’s refusal to know nature in all its technical detail, she is constantly seen as an integral part of the environment:

She had given this new soft beauty. She was the earth in which strange flowers grew. But she herself wondered at the flowers produced of her. He was so strange to her, so different from herself. What next would he ask of her, what new blossom would she rear in him then. He seemed to grow and flower involuntarily. She merely helped to produce him.

(The Trespasser: 31)

They [Siegmund and Helena] lay on the beach like a grey and white seabird together.

(The Trespasser: 39)

She seemed to connect him with the beauty of things, as if she were the nerve through which he received intelligence of the sun, and wind, and sea, and of the moon and the darkness.

(The Trespasser: 37)
Helena, like a white butterfly in the shade, her two white arms for antennae stretching firmly to the bench, learned over her map. She was busy, very busy, out of sheer happiness.

(The Trespasser: 48)

“I [Siegmund] found a little while bay, just like you [Helena] – a virgin bay. I had to swim there.”

(The Trespasser: 49)

Allied with this is the image of Helena as “Hawwa – Eve – Mother” underlining the Oedipal overtones of equating Helena with the earth/mother. As she watches over him on one of the evenings in the Isle of Wight, Siegmund equates her “compassion, her benignity” with “the great motherhood of women” (The Trespasser: 59).

Siegmund is again disconcerted by Helena’s gaze that he feels even in the darkness. The result of such an experience is the “sensation of a wretched sickness” in him, and as he holds out his hand, it appears “as motionless as a dead flower”. (The Trespasser: 61). Siegmund further connects this experience with the memory of his mother nursing him during his brush with diphtheria because he detects that same intensity of feeling towards him in both Helena and his father. Part of the reason why the sex act between Siegmund and Helena is never fulfilling is, thus, the lurking incest motif that seems to work unconsciously on Siegmund as he is both intensely drawn towards and thwarted by Helena.

However, when we take into account the associations of both with natural elements, another aspect of Helena’s identity becomes more apparent, something that is pertinently pointed out in the above passage from the novel. This pertains to what Annette Kolodny in “Unearthing Herstory: An Introduction” terms²:

A daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine – that is, not simply the land as mother,
but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification – enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction.

(Kolodny: 171)

Put in the perspective of colonization, this analogy can be regarded in terms of a violent taking over of the foreign territory, this space of a woman’s subjectivity and reduction of the land/woman into the mere means to an end. Even as Helena appears to Siegmund in the form of a nurturing mother, as the earth from which Siegmund will draw sustenance from, she also becomes synonymous with a “virgin bay”, which Siegmund feels compelled to explore. Helena recoils against such projections which diminish her as a subject. For instance, in one piece of conversation, Siegmund creates an entire family (without the father, possibly, the sun) out of the night sky: “the darkness is a sort of mother, and the moon a sister, and the stars children, and sometimes the sea is a brother: and there’s a family in one house, you see” (*The Trespasser*: 32), where Helena is conspicuously absent. Siegmund casually replies to this by saying that she is the “key of the castle”, her reaction is one of sorrow and pain as she does not find a place in this imagined home of Siegmund. She is merely the key that will open the door to the notion of a complete self (inherent in this formulation) and a complete communion with nature. Since this is not a shared communion with nature, it does not succeed in providing an adequate alternative to the politics of dominance and exploitation. Lawrence was to tentatively provide such an ideal only in a few later works, like *The Fox* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Nature, in *The Trespasser*, as far as Siegmund’s relationship with Helena is concerned, remains for the most part abstracted from its balanced, impersonal entity. In spite of Siegmund’s apparent revelling in the sea and the surrounding landscape,
he is never altogether part of it, as the landscape for the most part becomes relevant as projections of his own ideas of being. On the other hand, Helena, for all her spirituality and withdrawing from nature, is more powerfully identified with it by the narrative. The text lays itself open to readings that paradoxically detect a greater and a more authentic identification between Helena and the environment in the Isle of Wight. As the gap between Siegmund and Helena widens, the possibility of having a living, nurturing relationship between the two of them, and between them and nature remain only a possibility hinted at on rare occasions as when Helena watches over Siegmund as he stubbornly sleeps under the sun. Helena as Eve - Mother, as well as the “earth” cautiously puts her hand on his hair, and finds it “warm, quite hot, as when you put your hand under a setting hen, and feel the hot-feathered bosom” (The Trespasser: 73). The feminization of Siegmund and the implied masculine gesture of projection of Helena suggest the possibility of the two to go beyond the straitjacketing they (and the narrative) have cast themselves into, so that their relationship can enter into a state of equilibrium and ideal consummation. However, this is not realized as both withdraw again into themselves and refuse to recognize more authentic aspects of each other’s selves.

* * * *

Although Beatrice, Siegmund’s wife, and Helena never meet, they are aware of each other and through their respective connection with Siegmund, comes into contact with each other. At times, Helena feels guilty about the change she has forced on the family and the injury she has inflicted on Beatrice and the children. Beatrice is hostile towards Helena, though she does not openly confess this except to herself:
“God strike her dead’. Mother of God, strike her down!” she said aloud in a low tone. She hated Helena.

(The Trespasser: 18)

Helena, however, because of her relative independence from Siegmund (Beatrice, as a housewife, is economically dependent on her husband, and as the novel shows, emotionally as well, though her pride and breeding prevents her from exhibiting much emotion) can afford to be more ironical and at times critical towards Siegmund. This draws her into a bond (though unstated and unrealised) with Beatrice who, in Siegmund’s words, is “as dead – ay, far more dead – than Dante’s” (The Trespasser: 77). This is because as a wife, Beatrice is no longer able to fulfil the desire of Siegmund, who, like Aaron in Aaron’s Rod feels stifled by domesticity. Helena perspicaciously infers that marriage “has been a tight corner you [Siegmund] couldn’t get out of to go to anybody” (The Trespasser: 78). She concludes that

...love, which she chose to consider as single and wonderful a thing in a man’s life as birth, or adolescence, or death, was temporary, and formed only an episode. It was her hour of disillusion.

(The Trespasser: 78)

In her disillusionment, she also sees Siegmund for what he is as a married man:

His radiance was gone, his aura had ceased. She saw him a stooping man, past the buoyancy of youth, walking and whistling rather stupidly -- in short, something of the “clothed animal on end”, like the rest of men.

(The Trespasser: 79)

This disillusionment, however, does not prevent Helena from dreading sending Siegmund back to his family, in spite of the guilt she professed earlier (The Trespasser: 85, 83). As for Siegmund, he exhibits towards Beatrice the same
discomfort he does towards Helena. This has to do with their acts of looking back at him without acknowledging him as the dominant partner. As Helena’s blue eyes disturb him with their seeming self-sufficiency akin to that of the sea. Beatrice with her “furious dark eyes and her black hair loosely knotted back” also comes across as a Medusa figure who with her flaring temper and furious gaze would transform the already enervated Siegmund into a complete mental and spiritual paralytic. Moreover, he hates Beatrice for “drawing on him the grave, cold looks of condemnation from his children” (The Trespasser: 18). In Fantasia of the Unconscious (1922), Lawrence cautioned against making a child a party to adult affairs. This, he reasoned, would hamper the spontaneous and natural development of the child. Throughout Lawrence’s literary career, stress is laid on the emotional and psychic wounds child suffer when their lives are too extremely interfered with by their parents. In most of the novels, the blame is put squarely on the mother as the source of the discord in the family.

Siegmund resists the perceived control his wife achieves over him, and the implied diminishment of his self-esteem and identity indicated by the abbreviated name his wife uses when addressing him. In a gesture of recoil and resistance, he dispenses with it and writes his surname instead, implying both that his wife more of a stranger to him, and that he is attempting to salvage his precarious masculine authority (The Trespasser: 101). In a similar way, he hates Helena as a judge when she takes him to task for siding with the man in the boat during the near-accident (The Trespasser: 108). One of the reasons for this, apart from the above, is that Helena’s stance reminds him of Beatrice’s and his position approximates that of the man in the boat. After his return to his home, he is increasingly conscious of the
alienating effect of domesticity; however, now he is no longer disturbed by the squalor in the house but becomes blind to it, anticipating his ultimate withdrawal in the form of his suicide. This brings one to the way domesticity and motherhood within the family has been projected in Lawrence’s novels. As far as *The Trespasser* is concerned, motherhood, as Linda Ruth Williams argues in *D. H. Lawrence*, is viewed through “the objection of litter, the signs of bodily chaos and disarray which are left when mother and daughters have gone to bed” (Williams: 45). As Siegmund enters the kitchen on the night before his vacation in the Isle of Wight, the drab and dreary room presents a house in disorder:

The table was spread with a dirty cloth that had great brown stains betokening children.... Siegmund looked at his cup. It was chipped, and s stain had gone under the glaze, so that it looked like the mark of a dirty mouth. 

The oil-cloth was warm into a hole near the door. Boots and shoes of various sizes were scattered over the floor, while the sofa with littered with children’s clothing. In the black stove the ash lay dead; on the range were chips of wood, and newspapers, and rubbish of papers, and crusts of bread, and crusts of bread and jam. As Siegmund walked across the floor, he crushed two sweets underfoot.

(*The Trespasser*: 15)

This becomes a compressed picture of the collective failing of the women (the mother and daughters) to keep the house, in Lawrentian terms as well as in more conventional terms, a serious domestic failing. Williams, following Kristeva, moreover, points out that this can be read in terms of “the mother’s body as a site of abjection and dispute” (Williams: 45). Siegmund’s repulsion at this sordid scene is read by Williams as “horror that she [Beatrice] and her daughterly appendages have
infested the whole house, that the house has became the externalization of the female domestic body” (Williams: 45). All these pieces or fragments of household squalor come together in Siegmund’s visualization of Beatrice, in whose domestic space, “the boundaries between the material body and the home itself have become blurred” (Williams: 45-46):

Learning back in his chair, he felt something in the way. It was a small teddy-bear and half of a strong white comb. He grinned to himself. This was the summary of his domestic life — a broken, coarse comb, a child crying because her hair was lugged, a wife who had let the hair ho till now, when she got into a temper to see the job through; and then the teddy-bear, pathetically cocking a black worsted nose, and lifting absurd arms to him.

(The Trespasser, 15)

In this domestic scenario, however, it is Beatrice who occupies the centre, while the father becomes more and more invisible. In spite of the obvious criticism of Beatrice, the narrative, towards the end, seems divided over this issue, as Beatrice comes out of her private housekeeping into a more public arena of taking in boarders, and transforming the unpaid housework into a paying venture. The MacNair family still functions (till Siegmund’s death) on the lines of a patriarchal family in the sense that it is divided along the poles of the male breadwinner and the full-time mother. This is why Siegmund feels compelled to consider the possibility of supporting Beatrice even if they separate. In fact he has already spoken to her of going to a cottage in the country (The Trespasser: 110). In an anticipation of the abject mother/ housekeeper, though, Siegmund reflects on the inefficiency of Beatrice and considers it as a degradation to him, causing him endless embarrassment through her thriftlessness. (The Trespasser: 110). In his imagination, he pictures a usual morning of the family in the country:
Breakfast haphazard at a late hour; the elder children rushing off without food, miserable and untidy, the youngest bewildered under her swift, indifferent preparations for school. He thought of Beatrice in the evening, worried and irritable, her bills unpaid, the work undone, declaiming lamentably against the cruelty of her husband, who had abandoned her to such a burden of care while he took his pleasure elsewhere.

(The Trespasser: 111)

Beatrice in such instances is pictured as the stereotypical nagging, resentful wife to which is added her extreme failure as a housekeeper. She is figured as a degradation to Siegmund precisely because her inability to keep house properly exposes all the more the drudgery of domestic chores. Simone de Beauvoir traces the effects of housework on the psyche of the “married woman”:

Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present.... Eating, sleeping, cleaning – the years no longer rise up toward heaven, they lie spread out ahead, gray and identical. The battle against dust and dirt is never won.

(Beauvoir: 451)

Since Beatrice cannot appear as the coolly efficient housewife her defeat by “dust and dirt” forces Siegmund to confront the ugliness and squalidity of the house. Since he has also been conditioned by the gendered conception of work and family roles, he does not attempt to come to Beatrice’s aid, but seems to withdraw more and more into his own shell. For all his celebration of his natural, physical body and his communion with nature through a sexually charged relationship with Helena, he recoils from the corporeality of dust, dirt and Beatrice. This actually serves to question the apparent distinction made between Siegmund and Helena on the basis
of the body and the mind, since the repulsion felt by Siegmund is akin to the repulsion felt by Helena as she confronts the discordant urban streets, trains and the general hullabaloo of modern life, especially in the industrialized city. The penultimate chapter of The Trespasser thereby is on ironic reconstruction and redefinition of Beatrice’s earlier identity as a slatternly housewife. In contrast to the picture Siegmund creates of her, Beatrice, as she makes her home in Highgate a boarding house nine months after Siegmund’s death, she comes across as a woman who has successfully come into her own as an entrepreneur, and established herself in “a more open, public form of living than that of a domestic circle” (The Trespasser: 159). This picture tends towards another stereotype of the landlady; moreover, Beatrice is still assisted in her venture by both her and Siegmund’s families so that it is not as independent a venture that she had initially dreamed of. However, it provides her with a freedom and an opportunity in which to actually be what she imagines of herself. Though Siegmund is not alive to see this transformation – indeed, had he been alive, there would probably have been none, - there are sufficient indications in the text that the distinctions between the enclosed and confining space of home represented and inhabited by Beatrice, and the vast, open spaces full of possibilities in the Isle of Wight, associated with Helena, so diligently set up by Siegmund, begin to break up as the latter is forced, by the similar resistance of Helena and Beatrice, to see these distinctions as they are – desperate creations of Siegmund in an attempt to patch up his own fragments as he struggles to come to terms with the conflict between the desire to live a full life of instinct and his passivity that prevents him from doing so.

* * * * *
The interaction — present or absent — between the women in *The Trespasser* is problematized further by the figure of Louisa, Helena’s friend who is considerably older to her. Through Louisa, Helena’s contradictory sense of self, in her apparent desire to repudiate her latent-lesbian relationship with Louisa in favor of a purely heterosexual one with Siegmund, is brought into greater relief. In the fiction (as well as non fiction) of Lawrence, male bonding is given a high degree of credence. On the other hand bonding between women is seen with suspicion; it is something that draws the individual woman from arriving at a complete realization of herself through a heterosexual relationship. *The Trespasser* opens with such a charged moment, where Louisa is engaged in extricating Helena from the shattering memories of the latter’s romance with Siegmund, while Cecil Byrne tries to bring her back from her atrophy into the dictated by the cycle of nature. Cecil Byrne impatiently brushes aside any question of there being a “passive existence”; “if you’re alive you’ve got to live”; one cannot help it “any more than a tree can help budding in April – it can’t help itself, if it’s alive; same with you” (*The Trespasser*: 10). Louisa also wants to make Helena get over the past, but the two have differing ideas regarding how Helena could come out of her grief and trauma. Byrne invokes the code of conventional or ‘normal’ womanhood by seeking to secure Helena in the cycle of reproduction and a man-woman relationship. He is, of course, trying to advance his own case as Helena’s lover. The month is February, roughly six months after Siegmund’s death in August the previous year. The sunburn on Helena’s arm is symbolic of the lasting impact of Siegmund (who reveals in the sun/sunlight) on her. As the novel ends, Byrne and Helena are seen making their way about the North Downs in July, almost but not yet, a year after Siegmund’s death. Though Helena
retraces her earlier walks there with Siegmund, she shows a positive leaning towards Byrne, though the symbolic red “sun-inflammation” has not totally disappeared. Byrne, however, hopes to efface that even as he wishfully comments that the scar is wearing off (*The Trespasser*: 170). The opening and closing chapters thus interestingly counterpoint the two differing “codes”, to borrow Nina Auerbach’s term to describe a set of beliefs, customs and so on of particular groups or communities, of female bonding and heterosexual relationships respectively in chapters 1 and 31. It is in this context that Louisa assumes significance.

Louisa is thirty-five years old, and is an intimate friend of Helena, who is twenty-eight as the novel opens. In Chapter 1, their friendship is coming to a crisis:

The two had been intimate friends for years, had slept together, and played together and lived together. Now the friendship was coming to an end.

(*The Trespasser*: 10)

The episode strenuously underlines Louisa’s love and heavy emotional dependence on Helena:

She loved Helena passionately.

...

Louisa looked up with eyes full of affection, like a dreg that did not dare to more to her beloved.

...

With the little groan of one who yields to a desire contrary to her self-respect, Louisa dropped at the feel of Helena, laid her arm and her head languishingly on the knee of her friend.

...the elder woman got up slowly, leaning as she did so all her weight on her friend. ....She was full of small affectations, being consumed with uneasy love.

(*The Trespasser*: 8, 8-9, 10)
Louisa is viewed as unnaturally insistent upon a bond of affection between herself and Helena. Through Byrne, the narrative provides the norm of man-woman relationship as the idea that will enable Helena to live a ‘normal’, ‘natural’ existence. As mentioned earlier, it is substantiated by Byrne’s comparing himself and Helena to the spring season – March and April – with the possible culmination of their relationship in summer – July. The relationship with Siegmund and its traumatic ending takes place in August in the previous year as summer prepares its transition to Autumn; the novel opens when the death and its parallel season – winter – is still holding sway. By creating the pattern of human relationships as parallel to the seasons (in itself a traditional and much used motif), Lawrence tries to endorse his idea of a deeply instinctive and passionate life in tune with the cycles and rhythms of nature as an antidote to the numbing and discordant modern life. Siegmund and Byrne are thus cast as ‘natural’ men: both have an affinity towards animals, evidenced by the fact that dogs generally “chum up” and follow, them (over and above the Wagnerian parallel Helena draws, indicative of her romantic sensibility) (The Trespasser: 165-166). Helena is then reminded of how this streak in her was extinguished early in her life by the insensitivity of an artificial culture – significantly represented by her mother:

“I remember, too”, she said, “a little black-and-white kitten that followed me. Mater would not have it in – she would not. And I remember finding it, a few days after, dead in the road. I don’t think I ever quite forgave my mater that.”

(The Trespasser: 166)

This reminiscence provides the ground for the further consolidation of the ties between Helena and Byrne in their mutual quest for a fulfilling sense of existence.
By contrast, therefore, Louisa and the prospect of her friendship becomes a threatening possibility of female exclusivity that detracts from the individual’s experience at the quick of life. She is by implication the rival of Byrne and is rejected in the end. Earlier, there is an explicit reference to her rivalry with Siegmund as he asks after her before the three friends – Helena, Louisa and Olive – board the train for their trip to Cornwall:

“She is very well, thank you. It is her turn now,” cried Louisa, vindictive, triumphant.

There was always a faint animosity in her bearing towards Siegmund. He understood, and smiled at her enmity, for the two were really good friends.

“It is your turn now,” he repeated, smiling, and he turned away.

(The Trespasser: 138)

At this point, Helena is divided between her twin allegiances to her female friends and to Siegmund. By choosing to go with Siegmund, she seems to have chosen the second allegiance at the expense of the first:

“But,” she began, with harsh petulance, “I do not want to go down to Cornwall with Louisa and Olive” – she accentuated the two names – “after this,” she added.

“Then Louisa will have no holiday – and you have promised,” he said gravely.

Helena looked at him. She saw he had decided that, she should go.

(The Trespasser: 109)

Thus, Helena is already breaking up her community of female friends, and it is only because Siegmund wants her to leave that she submits herself to her promise. While doing so, she makes her dissatisfaction apparent, much to the exasperation and
annoyance of the other two women. Even then, however, she does not totally withdraw from her friendship with Louisa, as she confides to Louisa the details of her trip on the day of her return. Louisa views the love affair as a betrayal of the unwritten code between them and gravely broods on Helena’s confidences, “on the romance and tragedy which enveloped the girl she loved so dearly” (The Trespasser: 130). The death of Siegmund serves only to reinforce the divergence of Helena from Louisa:

The burden of this excessive affection was too much for her.

...  
“I have the arms of Louisa always around my neck,” came her voice, like the cry of a cat. She put her hands on her throat as if she must relieve an ache. He saw her lip raised in a kind of disgust, a revulsion from life. She was very sick after the tragedy.

(The Trespasser: 9, 12)

Louisa’s exchange with Helena is full of erotic overtones on the former’s part – she puts her hands on Helena’s wrists, drawling her assent (to make coffee), “almost groaning with voluptuousness and appealing love” (The Trespasser: 110). For Helena, however, this is hold that is akin to death. Louisa at once goes beyond the pale of accepted codes of femininity (even those established by Lawrence), fear and repulsion within the framework of the narrative. Her eroticism, therefore, is viewed as depraved or perverse, and she ends up as an outcast, banished from the dominant heterosexual civilization and the power accompanying it. It is by overruling the influence of Louisa that Helena can come to terms with her heterosexuality, and thus facilitate the consolidation of previously fragmented identity of the male characters (Siegmund and Cecil) she establishes relations with. The marriage ostensibly seeks to reject the possibility of female agency in these women characters by denying their
identification with and passion for each other as a way of privileging the masculine subject as the norm. This intention, however, is fraught with problems, as the chapter has attempted to explore. A greater treatment of women's community can be seen in Lawrence's later work *The Fox* which carries on the subject of female bonding and the subordination of the masculine subject with greater complexity.

Notes

1. Two of the most immediate comments on this come from Helen Corke and Lawrence himself. Lawrence, in a letter to Edward Garnett (dated January 21, 1929) as a response to the latter's criticism of this "stranger episode", commented: "I give myself away so much, and write what is my most palpitant, sensitive self, I loathe the book, because it will betray me to a parcel of fools" (quoted in Templeton: 46). Again, Helen Corke wrote that this was "DHL's way of indicating his own place in the story. He brought it [the chapter] to me when first written and asked if I had any objection to its inclusion – I had not" (quoted in Templeton: 46).

2. Although Kolodny uses this in the context of American literature, I think it is equally applicable in the present context of Lawrence.
References and Works Cited


Lawrence, D.H. "Study of Thomas Hardy" in *Phoenise*, (pp. 398-516).


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