WOMEN IN THE SHORT STORIES OF D. H. LAWRENCE

To read D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) is to be revived by “the electric current of energy that flows through his words. Lawrence was a living conduit, an electrical force whose existence took the form of a man” (Rudman 40). He respects no established vein of thought and recognizes no customary mode of expression. His thinking is original, fresh and stimulating. Ambiguous, enigmatic, contradictory, Lawrence and his work are vibrantly alive. In other words, Lawrence is one of the life-changers because of his original views on life and man-woman relationship. And, like all life-changers he is highly controversial.

Lawrence makes his appearance at a very critical juncture of history – a period of profound human crisis. As in the very opening of Lady Chatterley’s Lover (1929) he says,

Ours is essentially a tragic age…. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We’ve got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen. (5)

Lawrence traces the roots of this tragedy to the over-intellectualization of life. He has a great mistrust of science which, according to him, emphasizes reason and destroys the intuitional and instinctive life of man. He strongly believes that reason is likely to distort man’s vision of reality but his impulses, if unspoiled by any external influence, will never mislead him. In this respect Lawrence is somewhat
akin to the Romantics – Rousseau and Wordsworth – who wish to return to the
elemental simplicities of life, and to Keats who yearns for a life of pure sensations.
It is one of the typical bourgeois responses to the World War and post-World War
reality wherein the dream for better life and society was shattered. To escape the
traumatic aftermath of War some turn escapists and retreat to the simplicities and
sensations of life while others become self-seeking double dealers ruthlessly
pursuing material prosperity. However, Lawrence is not always or absolutely against
intellect – he advocates a kind of synthesis of the rational and the instinctive to
achieve a life of organic wholeness, or the prioritization of instinct tempered by
reason.

In his pre-War stories Lawrence devotes substantial space to highlighting
women’s voices, feelings and emotions. However, like most patriarchal males, in his
post-War stories he does a u-turn when he finds that women are gradually becoming
educated, liberated, assertive, and conscious of their identity and encroaching
domains previously reserved for men. Consequently, in his post-War fiction,
Lawrence shrewdly manipulates the feelings and emotions of these advanced and
liberated women in such a way that their ultimate contentment seems to be in
submitting to male supremacy. Thus he creates a fictive space to bolster the male
ego as a compensation for its decreasing dominance in the real world.

From his first novel The White Peacock (1911) to his last travelogue
Eutrusean Places, published posthumously in 1932, Lawrence writes in many
genres and on many subjects – fiction, poetry, travelogue, stories, criticism and
philosophy. As in his novels psychological exploration of human characters, man-
woman relationship, and a passionate belief in the physical world of nature which modern man has lost contact with are the major themes of his stories. Lawrence also favours, what might be termed the feminization of experience or the female mode of being. “Woman or Flesh is the source of our instinctive or blood-knowledge. The Son, Man constantly moves out, like a bee, from the Queen, Woman to his work of conscious or intellectual endeavour, and back to her again for renewal” (Steele xxv). But there is a sharp distinction between Lawrence’s interpretation of the female mode of being and its actual implications. He has recorded woman’s feelings and emotions, urged men to come closer to women and be altered by them but in reality he posits women as sustainers and nurturers of male superiority.

As this chapter explores the treatment of women in Lawrence’s short stories, I focus on those stories where women play prominent role and where Lawrence’s views on women stand revealed. Lawrence’s stories, period-wise, can be broadly divided into two sections: the pre-War and the post-War stories. His pre-War stories may again be divided into three groups: the Nottingham stories (1907-08), the Croydon stories (1908-11), and the Mining stories stimulated by the strike of 1912.

“The White Stocking,” “A Modern Lover,” “The Shadow in the Rose Garden” are a few stories of the Nottingham period in which Lawrence depicts women dissatisfied with conjugal life and material constraints. The duality of women’s character, the assertion of male power in conjugal life and the consequent subjugation of the wives are also discernible in these stories. Elsie in “The White Stocking” is portrayed as ultimately subservient but likes fulfilling her feminine and
material desires. Muriel in “A Modern Lover” is both defiant and pliant and the
wife in “The Shadow in the Rose Garden” does not intend to play the role of a *yes woman* which frustrates her husband. All the three women are portrayed as
harbouring a lingering desire for freedom but they are forced to be subservient
because they are neither economically independent nor are capable of being so.
They have also been conditioned to accept male supremacy.

Elsie in “The White Stocking,” is married to Whiston for two years. She
seems happy, “He always was the ground of her happiness, but she got used to him,
as to the air she breathed” (245). Apparently she finds her liberty within marriage
but it is a liberty without any responsibility. Elsie is presented as a shallow and
flighty character. She thinks that the cup of her happiness is full with Whiston, but
her flighty nature is revealed when she does not hesitate to take gifts from her
former employer, Sam Adams. Lawrence suggests that it is the inherent nature of
every woman to feel attracted by another man even though she is married to
someone. It gives her pleasure to note that she can attract male attention even after
marriage.

Lawrence’s portrayal of this desire of woman to be attractive to all men
constitutes woman as a willing sex object. Elsie does not decline the Valentine
present sent by Sam nor does she refuse to dance with him at the Christmas-party.
Rather, inwardly and instinctively, she feels delighted to dance with him. And the

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4 All quotations of D. H. Lawrence are taken from D. H. Lawrence, *The Collected
dance becomes a metaphor for the sexual act between man and woman, wherein woman’s pleasure lies in being completely dominated,

That dance was an intoxication to her ... she herself was held real against her partner, and it seemed she was connected with him, as if the movements of his body and limbs were her own movements, yet not her own movements – and oh, delicious! .... His fingers seemed to search into her flesh. Every moment, and every moment, she felt she would give way utterly, and sink molten: the fusion point was coming when she would fuse down into perfect unconsciousness at his feet and knees. (240; emphasis mine)

And again, “The time came for her to dance with Adams. Oh, the delicious closing of contact with him, of his limbs touching her limbs, his arm supporting her” (242).

The highlighted words and phrases transform the dance into a sexual act that gives Elsie immense pleasure.

It is clear that Lawrence thinks the act to be perfect only when the woman totally dissolves melts away and gives herself up to the man. This extremely erotic description of the dance, doubling as a metaphor for sexual intercourse, is also about the unequal power relation embedded in the act. This sexist definition of pleasure as the willing subjugation of the female id to the male – the largely unconscious structure of the psyche containing libido which regulates the desire for sexual activity and psychic energy, and ego – indicates Lawrence’s chauvinism and is very much in keeping with Freudian psychoanalytical theory:

The transition from the pleasure principle to the reality principle with all its ensuing ramifications for the psyche … is actually achieved
neither all at once nor along a uniform front. While the ego drives are undergoing this development, the sexual drives diverge in a highly significant way. Sexual drives initially behave auto-erotically, finding their satisfaction in the subject's own body. (Freud, The Unconscious 5-6; emphasis mine)

Sexual drives take place in unconscious state and those drives impel Elsie to derive contentment in her body while dancing with her former employer. The delicious feeling of “his limbs touching her limbs” and his fingers igniting “her flesh” testify her bodily pleasure. She subconsciously desires recognition but her patriarchal conditioning allows her to seek it only in appreciative male gaze directed at her both within and without marriage. Ironically, this appreciative male gaze treats a woman as an object of desire without recognizing her individuality. Elsie herself interiorizes and endorses this perception, passively concurs with it and is gratified by Sam Adam’s active gaze objectifying her. It is a commodification of the woman to which she herself subscribes.

This dual nature is also evident in Muriel who is groomed by Mersham but in his absence she feels attracted to an electrician and marries him as per Mersham’s directive and manages to construct it as an act of defiance denoting her independence. But she fails to find happiness in marriage and is again drawn to Mersham. In the process she does not emerge as a gainer, for she is not happy with her choice.

Both Elsie and Muriel are presented as objects of sexual attention. Their
desire for other men is not true independence but an interiorisation of the patriarchal practice of female commodification. They tend to shift their allegiance to other men for fulfilling their feminine aspirations but they do not try to achieve economic independence nor does the society allow them to do so. They will again have to subjugate their bodies, emotion and feelings to derive conventional sexual fulfillment.

The woman in “The Shadow in the Rose Garden” is portrayed as defiant because she does not reciprocate to the overtures of her husband or settle down to a harmonious conjugal life. There is contradiction in her nature: on one hand she does not like her husband, on the other hand she does nothing to come out from the shackles of marriage. The duality of her nature comes to fore when the author informs us that her heart longs for some other man. But in the long run she is made to buckle when her lover in his insanity fails to recognize her and her husband rejoices in her defeat.

The triumph of masculinity is discernible in these stories. Whiston, Mersham and the husband in “The Shadow in the Rose Garden” are initially disturbed by their inability to establish male hegemony and control their defiant possessions but in the long run, Lawrence makes their counterparts capitulate because apparently it is the only way to enjoy a stable and secure life. These women have secured relative material independence through marriage and have been conditioned to feel contented with it. However, they are inwardly dissatisfied within this arrangement and their defiance springs from an inherent tendency to respond to their instinctive desire. Lawrence’s construction of women as pathologically
promiscuous is symptomatic of both male fantasy about woman’s enigmatic sexuality and male anxiety about complete control over female sexuality. Patriarchal values privilege men but they are unsure of their hold over female sexuality. This contradiction is intrinsic to the capitalist system that prioritizes property ownership. Since the source of property acquisition is competition there is always the fear of being robbed by one’s competitor. Women as property or possession in such a system pose a dual problem; they can be snatched away by other male competitors and, as live properties, they might themselves facilitate this process.

Initially Elsie does not intend to disclose her acceptance of Valentine gifts because she knows that Whiston’s sense of propriety will be hurt. Also the accepted notion that a wife is not expected to take any gift from another man in her husband’s absence pricks her conscience. Whiston predictably, becomes furious when he comes to know and is filled with indignation because his male ego is injured. And when Elsie assumes a defiant posture saying, “Do you think I’m frightened of you?” (248), he feels enraged and strikes her across the mouth. But in the long run after Whiston has subjugated Elsie physically and mentally he feels pity and is reconciled with her. But this reconciliation is premised upon the subjugation of the female partner and the domination of the male. Male ego, for Lawrence, can only be assuaged by a reassertion of male power and violence and brute force are the major means of this reassertion. Thus, despite new insight into male/ female sexuality, Lawrence reiterates the stereotype of the assertive male ruled by primal instincts. In fact, violence and brute force are crucial elements in Lawrence’s fiction. Michael Squires points out that the world now faces unprovoked attacks, random shootings and genocide (85). Such acts, though an appalling comment on our civilization, lie
embedded in its fabric. Lawrence has anticipated such acts in his writing. Beatings, shootings, suicide, murder, and a systematic use of language as hatred all define his work. Historians agree that conditions that spawn systemic social disorder – such as threats to peace and prosperity or the sustained oppression of one group by another – spawn personal disorder (Squires 85). Squires observes,

In his fiction, he offers a set of circumstances that his characters challenge; they demand neither social nor intellectual recognition but personal empowerment…. In Lawrence's early writing, violence is localized – in a family or job…. In "The White Stocking" (composed and revised 1907-1914), Elsie Whiston's flirtatious bid for Sam Adams's affection is a disguised plea for her husband Ted to discipline her capricious behavior. No longer occupied by work, having quit her warehouse job to get married, she is bored. Her "mischievous" nature attracts Sam's florid, half-sincere attentions. Unable to bear her disloyalty, Ted strikes his wife…. Once Ted has folded her in his arms, the reader understands that Ted's hard slap will foster healing and restore harmony. Violence bridges Ted's inarticulate passion for Elsie and Sam's whimsical game with her confused need for attention. In the story's emotional equation, Elsie's blood is the price of her dalliance. Chastised, she may now mature into a woman who values afresh her husband's quiet strength. (85-86; emphasis author’s)

Elsie belongs to a phase of history when middle class women do not work after marriage. She enjoys comfort, security and freedom within the orbit of
marriage but as stated earlier, it is a freedom in a cage – a limited freedom without any responsibility. And this allows her to flirt with Sam Adams at the party as the responsibility of drawing the bounds rests with the husband, not her. And Whiston does this by slapping her for her misdemeanour just as a trainer tames his pet by using the stick to keep it in line. It is a sort of awakening or empowerment for Elsie to rouse her husband’s jealousy and possessiveness and his use of violence is, for Elsie, a manifestation of his passion for her. It restores balance and harmony in marriage by providing a satisfactory solution to both the husband and wife: Whiston reasserts his domination and ownership of Elsie while Elsie is assured that she is still a valued possession for her husband. The patriarchal hierarchy designated between the sexes in marriage is re-established. In the process Lawrence’s ingrained male chauvinism comes to the fore since “The White Stocking” seems to suggest that Elsie needs punishment and subjugation to get her quantum of happiness.

This desire to assert male power is also reflected in “A Modern Lover.” Mersham, a modern lover, intends to mould Muriel according to his wishes,

No woman and he could ever understand each other so well as he and Muriel whom he had fiercely educated into womanhood along with his own struggling towards a manhood of independent outlook. They had breathed the same air of thought, they had been beaten with the same storms of doubt and disillusionment. (10-11)

The interlinking of Mersham’s fierce education with his struggle for achieving manhood not only implies male supremacy and the ability to control women but also that the former is a necessary rite of passage for achieving
manhood: Muriel is a pliant woman who needs Mersham’s support and guidance to blossom into womanhood and Mersham must succeed in the making of Muriel to assert his manliness. Mersham belongs to working class whereas Muriel comes from the upper class. The inclusion of class factor lends an interesting facet to the story since the patriarchal discourse of male hegemony is undercut by class discourse here. Mersham’s sexual supremacy as a male is undermined by his inferior class position vis-à-vis Muriel. Two established sources of power – sexual supremacy and class supremacy – are apparently in conflict here. Mersham’s complete authority over Muriel, especially in her shaping stage not only asserts his masculinity, it also denotes the victory of the lower orders over their superiors. Woman’s body and will become the site of class struggle and sexual conquest is conflated with class victory. Lawrence’s own working class antecedents (he was the son of a miner) lend a poignant autobiographical undertone to the Mersham-Muriel encounter: fiction enables him to get back at women of superior class and intellect he has encountered in his own life.

This need to assert one’s manliness in terms of sex and class is also evident in “The Shadow of the Rose Garden.” The husband in the story is at a loss, for despite his best efforts he cannot draw his wife’s attention towards him, “She looked apart from him and his world, gazing away to the sea. It irked her husband that she should continue abstracted and in ignorance of him; he pulled poppy fruits and threw them at the window. She started, glanced at him with a wild smile, and looked away again”(208). He feels cheated and is enraged at the role reversal in their marriage: as a wife it is her duty to be loving and subservient, instead it is he who loves her and is anguish by her unresponsiveness. This effeminizes him and
challenges his masculinity. That is why he is infuriated by her extremely condescending behaviour towards him:

All his suppressed anger against her who held herself superior to him filled and blackened his heart. Though he had known it, yet he had never really won her, she had never loved him. She had taken him on sufferance. This had foiled him. He was only a labouring electrician in the mine, she was superior to him. He had always given way to her. But all the while, the injury and ignominy had been working in his soul because she did not hold him seriously. And all his rage came up against her. (216)

Love within marriage, as far as the husband sees it, is in reality the assertion of male supremacy over the wife. It is a game of power where the wife must be subjugated and made subservient to her male counterpart. The reversed power relation ensuing from their class positions, turns the table, as it were, and fills the husband with a sense of frustration and inadequacy. Lawrence exposes the hypocrisy of male love particularly in relation to the spouse – it is nothing but the desire of the male for complete ascendancy over the female – but at the same time he seems to empathise with the husband.

Elsie, Muriel and the wife in “The Shadow in the Rose Garden” are subjugated in the long run. “The White Stocking” is expressly concerned with love between husband and wife and its struggle with the primitive attraction that, Lawrence thinks, exists between every man and woman. But underlying this explicit tension between social and instinctive bond between the male and the female, is the
implicit desire of the writer to establish that both bonds reach perfection only with
the complete capitulation of the woman to male hegemony. In “A Modern Lover”
Muriel and Mersham share the same view about many things but there is a lurking
doubt in both of them about what the future holds for them. And the possibility of a
breach comes when Muriel, having achieved womanhood under Mersham’s
guidance, bids goodbye to her first love and chooses an electrician as her life-partner
hoping for greater satisfaction and happiness. It is worth noticing that Muriel is both
defiant and subservient because she chooses another in the hope of happiness but is
not quite happy in marriage as Mersham still holds sway over her:

Mersham went slowly in the house. Muriel was clearing away the
supper things, and laying the table again for the men’s breakfasts. But
she was waiting for him as clearly as if she had stood watching in the
doorway. She looked up at him, and instinctively he lifted his face
towards her as if to kiss her. They smiled and she went on with her
work. (17)

Lawrence’s own latent chauvinism gets reflected in his treatment of the
wife-lover episode in “The Shadow in the Rose Garden.” Two nuclii of power
contend with each other for the possession of the female: the power of the husband
that is socially legitimized and the power of the educator/lover. But Muriel is the
target for both. Her contemptuous indifference towards her husband must be cen-
sured, if not within marriage then outside it. So the lover is made to deny her in the
most absolute terms. She yearns for recognition, renewal of contact but in his
insanity he cannot even recognise her, “Her eyes searched him, and searched him to
see if he would recognise her, if she could discover him” (214). It is the total denial
of her person that shatters her confidence “she wondered, craving if he recognised her – if he could recognise her. She sat pale with anguish” (213).

Though the story ends apparently with the estrangement of the couple, the fact that despite her anger and defiance, the husband forces her to confess and rejoices in her defeat – “He chucked you?” said the husband brutally, wanting to hurt her into contact with himself” (218) – suggests that he has been avenged. She will no longer be able to impose her superiority over him. Curiously enough, through the lover’s spurning, the husband has been finally made equal to the wife. In fact, if the concluding line is any indication, he has gained ascendancy over the woman, “After some minutes he left her and went out” (219).

So, in “The White Stocking,” “A Modern Lover” and “The Shadow in the Rose Garden,” Lawrence foregrounds female sexuality and views heterosexual relation as a power-based relationship and this was indeed the breaking of new grounds in the literature of the time but he is not really championing the cause of woman. Here he is not really championing the cause of women. Elsie, Muriel and the wife in “The Shadow in the Rose Garden” are all dissatisfied in one way or another in the claustrophobic atmosphere of their marriage and they all have lingering desire for freedom. Elsie remains subservient despite deriving feminine pleasure while dancing with her former employer. Muriel dares to marry the electrician for a contented life but returns to Mersham only to be rejected. The wife in “The Shadow in the Rose Garden” looks down upon her husband but ends up leading an estranged life.
Before the First World War Lawrence had urged for the feminisation of experience and underlined the need for recording women’s voices. However, feminization is not equal to feminism or to articulating desires; it is focused more on sensitivity and emotional orientation. In the stories of the Nottingham period too, we do not find distinctive, independent women’s voices. Lawrence foregrounds the domination of male power in man-woman relationship. He underlines the need for recording women’s voices and liberating them from social and familial bondage but in the stories discussed above, he seems to be encouraging the assertion of male power and the subjection of the female to masculine supremacy. Although he shows how husbands in particular are unable to master their wives and that marital relationship is basically a newer relation wherein socially accepted superiority of the male is often challenged and disbalanced by the woman, ultimately it is always the male who triumphs either through direct use of brute force as in the case of Whiston or through the humiliation of the woman by another male as in “The Shadow in the Rose Garden.” This is the only means of attaining status quo in marriage according to Lawrence who equates it with conjugal bliss. In other words, Lawrence endorses hierarchy and male dominance as vital ingredients of a happy man-woman relationship.

Lawrence’s Croydon period (1908-1911) is fruitful in terms of literary output. Like Nottingham period, it draws from Lawrence’s life experiences. The instinctive sympathy with children that informs his ‘School Master’ poem sequence surfaces in the school stories as well but he is quite disgusted with the mundane life of a teacher. More important, at Croydon Lawrence’s life is full of turmoil and tribulation. His health is generally fragile and
vulnerable, his mother’s death (1911) creates an emotional vacuum in his life, he suffers from great mental tension, boredom and weariness, even before her death and breaks off his engagement with Jessie Chambers around this time. Jessie had become an emotional necessity for him but his mother was afraid that his growing intimacy with Jessie might draw Lawrence away from her. So Lawrence has the agonising experience of being pulled in different directions by two women – his fiancée and his mother – a kind of reverse gender relation to Muriel in “A Modern Lover.” This experience has been reflected in the Croydon stories, especially, in the stories concerning man-woman relationship.

“The Shades of Spring,” “The Old Adam,” “Second Best,” “The Daughters of the Vicar” are a few stories of this period that deal with man-woman relationship, duality in nature, desire of women to assert their individuality, assertion of male power and ultimate subservience of women. Hilda in “The Shades of Spring” is presented as an assertive, bold and sensual woman who grooms and tutors her lover John Syson and sends him abroad to inculcate education and culture in him but in his absence is sensually attracted to Arthur, a gamekeeper. Hilda reminds us of Constance in Lady Chatterley’s Lover who finds sexual fulfillment through her husband’s game-keeper, Mellors and, contrary to social convention, decides to leave her husband, marry and settle on a farm in Canada. Hilda faces a similar situation resulting in a dilemma which is both economic and sexual. Her previous attachment to Syson prevents Hilda from siding whole-heartedly with the game-keeper. She is not economically independent and is also apprehensive that the gamekeeper is not financially resourceful enough to provide her lasting security and comfort. Yet she longs for a solution to this dilemma and conflict. The symbolic significance of the
gamekeeper in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and “The Shades of Spring” is obvious: it suggests both raw animal and male sexuality and woman as game to be hunted and tamed.

Syson’s former relationship with Hilda reminds us of Paul and Miriam of *Sons and Lovers* (1913) who are cast in the same mould. But Miriam remains passive and spiritual whereas Hilda becomes bold and sensual. She shows no inclination of returning to Syson and finally chooses Arthur, the gamekeeper as her lover. She considers herself like a plant which can grow on her own soil and feels that she is now the master of her own life. But all the same she has to take a man to find real happiness. Lawrence seems to suggest that whatever Hilda may think about her own judgement and ability, she is in need of a man to fulfil her. Similar duality in nature and a lingering desire for freedom is evident in Mrs. Thomas of “The Old Adam” who feels lonely and dissatisfied with her husband, Mr. Thomas, as he is preoccupied with his office and punctually unpunctual in arriving home. But with the arrival of Mr. Severn her loneliness is, to some extent, diminished:

He was watching her closely. She seemed to him pathetically helpless and bewildered; she was eight years older than he. He smiled in a strange, alert fashion, like a man who feels in jeopardy. She bent over her work, stitching nervously. There was a silence in which neither of them could breathe freely.” (28; emphasis mine)

In portraying Mr. Severn as “alert” and Mrs. Thomas as “helpless” and “nervous” Lawrence puts Severn in control of the situation. However, Severn also feels like a man “in jeopardy” which suggests that he is apprehensive that the
attraction and presumed submissiveness of Mrs. Thomas is only temporary. His feeling of gaining an upperhand vis-a-vis Mrs. Thomas may also be in “jeopardy” because of the social barriers put up by patriarchy against such liaisons. A tension between patriarchy and primal male sexuality is suggested here.

Mr. Severn’s male gaze directed at Mrs. Thomas commodifies her instead of treating her as an individual person. Significantly, Mrs. Thomas remains passive and interiorises Mr. Severn’s perception of herself as an attractive object. The psychological effect of this gaze is that Mrs. Thomas loses a degree of autonomy and colludes in her own commodification. Consequently, he emerges as the dominant power, and reiterates patriarchal hegemony. Laura Mulvey’s illustration with reference to films is equally applicable here:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy into the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed…. Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium…. A woman performs within the narrative; the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude. (19)

Women are objectified in films because heterosexual men are in control of the camera. Male gaze is a feature of gender power and a reflection of unequal power
between the gazer and the gazed; it is also a conscious or subconscious attempt to develop that inequality. Mrs. Thomas is not looked upon as a being with a mind of her own. In a patriarchal society a woman is viewed as a possession, a child-bearing and food-making machine for fulfilling the needs of a man. She is cast in the role of the muted subordinate in most culture and conditioned to internalize it. Here too, Severn’s gaze reduces Mrs. Thomas to a depersonalized object of desire who can derive contentment only as long as she acquiesces to the gaze. Lawrence again seems to reiterate that a woman can be happy only when she is associated with a man, who, as the above excerpt indicates, will become increasingly assertive and render her helpless.

Lawrence has always prioritized private feelings and intuitions and its conflict with established norms. Probably both Mr. Severn and Mrs. Thomas know that it is scarcely possible to come closer because of the latter’s marital status. All the same, they feel instinctively attracted towards each other,

Both glanced at the window, then at each other. For a moment it was a look of greeting; then his eyes dilated to a smile, wide with recklessness. He felt her waver, lose her composure, become incoherent. Seeing the faint helplessness of coming tears, he felt his heart thud to a crisis.... Severn sank in his chair, half suffocated by the beating of his heart. Yet, time after time as the flashes came, they looked at each other, till in the end they both were panting, and afraid, not of the lightning but of themselves and of each other. (28-29; emphasis mine)
Their close proximity iterated by the italicized phrases is suggestive of copulation very like the *dance episode* in “The White Stocking” where Elsie feels herself “melting away” in the arms of Sam Adams as in a sexual intercourse. Mrs. Thomas, denied sexual and emotional gratification by Mr. Thomas, is instinctively drawn to Mr. Severn for fulfillment. Freud’s observation on Libido Theory may partially explain her responses. Libido is the instinctive energy contained in the id – the unconscious structure of the psyche. It is “a quantitatively variable force which could serve as a measure of processes and transformations occurring in the field of sexual excitation…. This sexual excitation is derived not from the so-called sexual parts alone, but from all the bodily organs” (Freud, *Three Essays* 94). In other words, libido is a person’s desire for sexual activity and a general desire for sex propagates the need for intimate relationship in both men and women. This psychosexual energy or libido is described as the driving force behind behaviour. But Freud’s libido as a motivating force behind human behaviour is not endorsed by neo-Freudians like Carl Jung, Alfred Adler and Erich Froman. They argue that the basis of personality development is not instinctual or libido but social or interpersonal. Freud believes that sex and aggression motivate all behaviour but Adler believes in a sense of inferiority and a lifetime of compensation motivates all behaviour. He observes that the conflict is between the individual and the environment. He proposes the idea of “striving for superiority” and that mental disorders are used to safeguard the individual from the reality of inferiority (*www.alfred-adler.htm*). Erich Froman believes that society and culture play a significant role in individual human development and interpersonal relationship, “The individual ceases to be himself; he adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns; and therefore becomes exactly as all others are
and as they expect him to be” (160). So, neo-Freudians deviate from Freud’s perception that sexual drive and the drive for self-preservation are the two basic motivations of human behaviour; they focus on culture and interpersonal relationship for the development of personality.

Lawrence seems to amalgamate and anticipates these ideas in “The Old Adam.” Mrs. Thomas fails to fulfil her physical desire with Mr. Thomas. Her “faint helplessness” and “panting” in close proximity with Mr. Severn shows her libido but this libidinal drive conflicts with the conventions of civilized behaviour which does not condone extramarital relationships. Her behaviour in close contact with Mr. Severn can also be illustrated by Freud’s views on drive – instinctive sexual desire – which aims at satisfaction. Their exchange of looks and expressions like “her waver, lose her composure, become incoherent” reveal their intense desire for sexual intercourse. Freud suggests, “They [drive stimuli] therefore make much greater demands on the nervous system, causing it to undertake intricate, convoluted activities that alter the outside world sufficiently for it to provide satisfaction to the inner source of stimulation” (The Unconscious 16). The drive stimuli in Mrs. Thomas urges her to initiate sexual relations with Mr. Severn. But mere drive is not the motivating force of her behaviour. Consciously she is thinking that society will not permit her to perpetuate this relation. The process of individuation – integration of various parts of a person, including the conscious and the unconscious for becoming his or her true self, as propounded by Carl Jung – also plays a significant part in moulding her behaviour. Jung also states that human psychology exists in three parts: the ego (the conscious mind), the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. Collective unconscious is a reservoir of all the experiences
and knowledge of the human species. Mrs. Thomas *consciously* does not dare to
defy societal conventions regarding extramarital relation and hence in the end both
are *afraid* of themselves. Mrs. Thomas apprehends adverse social reaction against
her extra marital relationship and so her *drive* does not translate into action.
Lawrence has always prioritized private feelings as the source of happiness but with
Elsie and Mrs. Thomas he shows the conflicted relationship between instinctive
sexual drive and the culturally conditioned drive for self-preservation.

Their desire to chart a new path springs from dissatisfaction with present
state of affairs as in Woolf and Mansfield. But in Woolf and Mansfield women’s
dissatisfaction/ desire is not always linked to female sexuality nor is it linked to male
attention. In Lawrence it is primarily to do with sexuality which is always
heterosexual female desire and this in itself hierarchies the man-woman relationship
privileging the male. It is laudable Lawrence gives a *space* to his women in these
stories and highlights their sexuality but his ingrained male chauvinism is manifest
in the submission of his women to the males in one way or another for ultimate
happiness.

The double standards applied to judge male and female moral/sexual
behaviour are also foregrounded in some of these stories. In “The Shades of Spring,”
Hilda helps Syson to acquire culture, education, refinement and become a
gentleman. So whatever Syson achieves is because of Hilda. Ironically, Syson’s
education instills in him a sense of superiority, and though he has married and in that
sense betrayed Hilda, he returns supremely confident that Hilda will remain faithful
to him. Hilda’s indifference towards him and her choice of another life-partner jolts
him and to get his own back, he blames Hilda for all his actions, including his marriage to a lady, in the most unjust manner:

‘It was you who sent me the way I have gone.’

‘I!’ she exclaimed, in pride.

‘You would have me take the Grammar School scholarship – and you would have me foster poor little Botell’s fervent attachment to me, till he couldn’t live without me – and because Botell was rich and influential. You triumphed in the wine merchant’s offer to send me to Cambridge, to befriend his only child. You wanted me to rise in the world. And all the time you were sending me away from you – every new success of mine put a separation between us, and more for you than for me. You never wanted to come with me: you wanted just to send me to see what it was like. I believe you even wanted me to marry a lady. You wanted to triumph over society in me.’ (195)

Syson’s smug belief that Hilda will accept him despite his marriage and his subsequent accusations reveal the stereotypical patriarchal attitude of transferring the burden of guilt on the victim. It also shows that a man can betray one and marry another for his needs but similar behaviour is unacceptable in a woman.

Interestingly Syson has not protested against Hilda’s efforts of improving him socially and culturally and yet he blames her for transferring her attention to the keeper in his absence and also for his own marriage to another woman. This typical male tendency of transferring the guilt on to female ironically acknowledges her role in shaping him and yet denies her the freedom of choice that he himself has exercised. “A Modern Lover” complements this story with a reversal of the
situation. Here Mersham sets himself to educate Muriel in accordance with his desires. Muriel remains primarily submissive and regrets the loss of Mersham, whereas Hilda, no matter what her innermost feelings are, puts Syson in his place at least as far as her actions are concerned. Syson feels commodified and used as an instrument in Hilda’s war against society and protests against this *patriarchal feminisation* of the male. Patriarchy habitually naturalises the objectification of women through male agents but when the roles are reversed it is deemed an unnatural *feminisation* of man by a woman unjustly appropriating male prerogatives.

The two men – Mersham and Syson – are depicted in a contrasting manner. Mersham thinks that he is well-suited to shape Muriel’s character to fulfil his ultimate needs. On the other hand, Hilda’s education and culture make her believe that she can mould Syson’s character to enjoy lasting happiness. But eventually both women have to suppress their desires and subjugate themselves for the sake of security and bear the humiliation imposed by their counterparts.

The gamekeeper’s apprehensive response to Syson’s return and Hilda’s attempts to assure him are also significant, “‘You know I love you. He has gone quite out of my life – don’t trouble about him….’ He kissed her, murmuring. She laughed hollowly. ‘Yes’ she said, indulgent. ‘We will be married, we will be married. But not just yet’” (198). And again, “But why should we be married at once?’ she said. ‘What more would you have, by being married? It is most beautiful as it is’” (199). Hilda’s “hollow” laugh however, is not entirely reassuring. It might have been invoked by her awareness of the futility of her attempt at *educating* but it could also indicate her regret at *losing* Syson. Her conflicting emotions and desires
are highlighted by her simultaneous assurances of love to the keeper and the refusal
to marry. Hilda’s ambivalence in love goes beyond the realm of the average woman.
Julian Moynahan comments, “‘The Shades of Spring’ is kind of arch which ties
together the erotic dilemma of Sons and Lovers and the final solution of the dilemma in Lady Chatterley” (184). In Sons and Lovers Paul Morel who is a fictional
representative of Lawrence himself, fails to establish any enduring and satisfying relation with Miriam and Clara because of his deep attachment to and the possessive love of his mother. But in Lady Chatterley’s Lover (1929) this dilemma is resolved by making Lady Chatterley defy the conventional norms of marriage and start a new life with Mellors, the game-keeper.

This ambivalence in love is also explored in Mrs. Thomas. Mr. Thomas becomes furious and his male ego is hurt by his wife’s interest in Severn. Then in a trivial incident regarding the placement of the house-maid’s box in the right place he lands two blows on Severn’s jaw who retaliates by hitting him severely. Here, the fight between two men reduces Mrs. Thomas to a prize catch and so, an object of possession. It also reveals the fact that a woman is vital for bolstering the male ego. Thomas hits Severn not only because he falls down but also because he cannot brook Severn’s presence beside his wife and needs to assert his superiority by venting his feelings. Mrs. Thomas’s decision to spend the rest of her life in self-abnegation and treat Severn purely on polite and formal terms reveals the subjugation of her feelings and emotions to the prerogative of the husband which is endorsed by society. It is not a genuine resurgence of love for Mr. Thomas but a sense of security that prompts her to return to the fold. The story obliquely blames Mrs. Thomas for being hypocritical and choosing the safer path:
One of the crises of her life was passing. She must no longer allow herself to hope for anything for herself. The rest of her life must be spent in self-abnegation: she must seek for no sympathy, must ask for no grace in love, no grace and harmony. Henceforward, as far as her own desires went, she was dead. She took a fierce joy in the anguish of it. (35)

Hesitation and indecision in love are also reflected in “Second Best” that delineates the frustration of Frances, an educated and cultured woman, in getting a man of her choice and her subsequent subjugation to a man beneath her station. Frances and Anne are two sisters. Frances is beautiful, clever, whimsical, spasmodic and attracted to Jimmy Barrass, a Doctor of Chemistry. She gives up on him when she realizes he is totally indifferent to her. This is a sort of defeat for her self-perception and self-belief. Instead she chooses Tom, a rustic and unrefined youth with a weakness for her. In Frances’s choice of Tom Lawrence has very adroitly shown her submission to the supremacy of male power. It is Frances’s inability to win Jimmy Barrass, and his indifference towards her that have prompted her to take Tom as the second best. Lawrence has shown reversal of class hierarchy as a double victory of man. Tom, being close to nature is implicitly projected as more sexually alluring than Jimmy and Frances apparently succumbs to this allure. Lawrence uses the hackneyed stereotype of the instinctive man and his superior sexual prowess. An advanced and perceptive woman choosing an unsophisticated and uneducated man over an educated and refined man suggests that attraction of masculine virility supersedes all sophistication. The stereotype of civilization as emasculating and nature as primal and potent implies a reversal and subversion of social order. Tom’s
possession of Frances entails a double victory in terms of social and sexual
ascendancy. While the male subjugates the female in a heterosexual relationship,
through this very dominance he also symbolically challenges the existing social
status quo between the upper and the lower class.

Tom is a man bubbling with vitality – full of physical strength and mental
vigour. Lawrence combines the myth of primitive man and working class vitality to
demarcate virility and sexuality as absolute and sole indicators of masculine
superiority. He also assumes that heterosexual gratification is the apotheosis desired
by all women irrespective of their social and cultural standing. The farm-labourer’s
vitality is closely linked with primitivism and bestiality – full of sensuality and
animal energy – that propels Frances towards him. Primitivism is associated with the
celebration of the unconscious wherein libido – the psychic energy and the desire for
sexual activity – lies. So Frances seems to have attained the ultimate gratification by
tying the knot with the farm-labourer.

However, the title “Second Best” seems ambiguous: on one hand it
suggests that a woman of Frances’ stature can and ought to be happy on choosing
the second best; on the other hand it implies that she is incapable of getting the best
because Tom is only the second best. This lends an interesting twist in the tale
leaving the reader to ponder over Lawrence’s ultimate aim. If we look back at “A
Modern Lover” and “The Shades of Spring,” we will notice a similar conflict
between the intellectual and the instinctive man. This thematic similarity traces the
ambivalence and the ultimate submission of women to male hegemony perpetuating
double victory – victory of the working class and the subjugation of women of
higher class and has biographical overtones. Lawrence’s father, Arthur John Lawrence, was a coal-miner and he had closely observed the dominance of his mother, Lydia Lawrence, with her refined taste, ambition and upper class upbringing, and the consequent annihilation of his father’s identity. Lawrence’s attitude to his parents’ relationship is complex. He thinks that his father’s identity is oblitered because of his mother’s domination. Lawrence’s allegiance to his class is ambivalent because inwardly he wishes to adopt his mother’s sophistication and at the same time he cherishes the subordination of independent, educated women to male hegemony. The double victory that Lawrence envisages is not the victory of working class per se: it is the sexual triumph of the working class (male) over the higher class (female) that compensates for the former’s economic deprivation and exploitation. The act denotes both the typical male tendency of making woman’s body the site of class war and the effeminisation of the superior class.

In “A Modern Lover” Muriel is moulded by an intellectual and a refined man, Mersham. But on graduating to womanhood she has to decide as to who is best suited to be her life-partner – Mersham, an intellectual, or an electrician, a commonplace person. Ultimately, she decides on the latter. Almost similar is the situation in “The Shades of Spring” where Hilda, the central figure of the story, is tossed between Syson, an advanced and educated fellow and a local-gamekeeper and finally decides to embrace the advances of the local game-keeper after Syson’s marriage. Herein lies the conflict between the intellectual and the instinctive man. It exposes Lawrence’s class and gender bias. Lawrence belongs to the working class and he strongly believes that as “workers were in direct and continual contact with machines, nature and other men, they tended to be uncomplicated and direct among
themselves. They experienced sex deeply and spontaneously” (Scheckner 10). Lawrence has also used the commonplace myth that women of higher class believe that men of the lower class have more sexual potency than those of their own class. These assumptions lead Lawrence, in many of his works, to show educated and advanced women of higher class stooping to lower classes for their life-partners. For example, in *Sons and Lovers*, Walter Morel is presented as a non-intellectual and warm person. He has a potential for humaneness unmatched by the upper class. Lydia Morel loves him passionately and decides to take him as her husband, despite the fact that she is an intellectual and independent woman. Similarly in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lady Constance, a retired, advanced and emancipated woman of higher class decides to spend her life with Mellors, a lowly gamekeeper, for he is believed to be passionate, uncomplicated and experiences sex deeply and spontaneously.

Women of higher class opting for men of lower class as their life-partners also incorporates the myth of women’s insatiable sexual urge. This use of class for gender exploitation lends a new dimension to his women characters. Lawrence suggests that a man or woman, particularly the latter, can realise a fuller life by subordinating intellect to instinct and opting for partners who are in contact with nature and supposedly more sexually potent. His construction of *real man* is linked with primitivism which is associated with the celebration of the unconscious.

Although Lawrence stresses sexual gratification, he does not project his female protagonists as happy and satisfied. Hilda is disillusioned with the keeper because of the difference in taste and intellect, Mrs. Thomas ultimately submits to
her husband Mr. Thomas, Frances opts for the “second best” and is not entirely happy with it. For Lawrence, the educated and cultured woman can only find partial happiness by stooping and needs to prioritize the sexual over the intellectual for this purpose. This reveals his deep distrust of the refined woman which perhaps springs from his own discomfort and sense of inferiority in his interaction with them.

Submissiveness of women is also evident in “Daughters of the Vicar.” Miss Mary and Miss Louisa, the two daughters of the Reverend Ernest Lindley, are swamped by patriarchal norms in spite of being educated abroad and having refined tastes. They have independent feelings and perceptions. Their mother, Mrs. Lindley, a shallow, materialistic woman, takes pride in the fact that they belong to the upper class. She is eager to marry off her daughters to upper class bachelors with sufficient income. She is elated when Mr. Massy joins the church as a clergyman, for he belongs to an old Cambridgeshire family and will get a good stipend. There is an affinity between Lawrence’s Mrs. Lindley and Mrs. Hibbert in Woolf’s “Phyllis and Rosamond” who is also interested in marrying off her daughters without considering their taste and temperament. These mothers have been conditioned by patriarchal forces that they willingly serve as its agents by upholding conventional family customs and male hegemony actively. Lawrence has anatomized Mrs. Lindley’s mind, “At the back of her mind, she remembered that he was an unattached gentleman, who would shortly have an income altogether of six or seven hundred a year. What did the man matter, if there were pecuniary easy?” (135-36)

Mr. Massy is neither healthy nor good-looking but his fellow-feeling and erudition earn Miss Mary’s respect and attention. In the course of time both feel
attracted to each other and decide on marriage. She hopes it will help her to escape from the restrictive, routine-bound rectory and enjoy freedom.

She would be good and purely just, she would live in a higher freedom than she had ever known, she would be free of mundane care, she was a pure will towards right. *She has sold herself*, but she had a new freedom. She had *got rid of her body*, for a higher thing, her freedom from material things. (143; emphasis mine)

The highlighted phrases suggest that Miss Mary bargains away physical spiritual and emotional freedom. But for Lawrence it is scarcely possible to liberate oneself by negating one’s body. So Mary is soon disillusioned, for she realises that Mr. Massy is without strong feelings and emotions and that it is not possible to negate her body completely. She feels frustrated as she realises, “The male in him was cold and self-complete, and utterly domineering. Weak, insufficient little thing as he was, she had not expected this of him. It was something in the bargain she had not understood.... She knew, vaguely, that she was murdering herself” (143).

There is a great deal of similarity between Mary and Dorothea Brooke of *Middlemarch*, a lady with noble aspirations. She is lofty, idealistic, straight-forward and wants to achieve something really noble. She thinks that she is entirely free from the little vanities and frivolities of the fair sex. She decides to marry to Edward Casaubon, a scholar, who, she thinks can touch her inner world. But, like Mary of “Daughters of the Vicar,” Dorothea too, is disillusioned with Casaubon. He is a moral sponge who sucks the finer juices of her nature. She fails to understand the real character of Casaubon – that he is a prig, a pedant, a wooden character incapable of love or jest for life.
Meanwhile, Mary’s sister courts Alfred Durant whom she meets through the illness of his mother. Like Mrs. Lindley, Mrs. Durant too, is a hard and materialistic mother. Durant, like Paul Morel of *Sons and Lovers*, is deeply attached to his mother and so he cannot respond to the overtures of Miss Louisa. But unlike Mrs. Lydia Morel of *Sons and Lovers*, Mrs. Durant does not like Alfred’s complete reliance on her,

To her he did not seem the man, the independent man her other boys had been. He was her baby – and whilst she loved him for it, she was a little bit contemptuous of him.... She loved him most, but she was not satisfied with him because he was not free of her. He could not quite go his own way. (153)

Miss Louisa is frustrated by Alfred’s disinterestedness but it can be explained as an Oedipal complex. Lacan qualifies Freud’s views on parental role in the child’s fixation by emphasizing on the mother’s role:

I am not at all saying that the Oedipus Complex is of no use, nor that it has no relationship with what we do…. Psychoanalysts are becoming increasingly involved in something which is, in effect, excessively important, namely *the mother’s role*....

The mother’s role is *the mother’s desire*. That’s fundamental. *The mother’s desire* is not something that is bearable just like that, that you are indifferent to. It will always wreak havoc. A huge crocodile in whose jaws you are – that’s the mother. One never knows what might suddenly come over her and *make her shut her trap*. That’s what the mother’s desire is. (112; emphasis mine)
This desire of the mother is manifest in Mrs. Durant’s role in upbringing her sons and managing the family,

She was a woman who would have liked to be easy in her life, but to whose lot had fallen a rough and turbulent family, and a slothful husband who did not care what became of himself or anybody….

There was about her, too, that masterful aplomb of a woman who has brought up and ruled her sons. (131)

Alfred appears to be shut in his mother’s trap, “Without knowing it, he had been centralised, polarized in his mother. It was she who had kept him. Even now, when the old housekeeper had left him, he might still have gone on in his old way” (165). Lacan’s views on mother fixation and its impact is reflected in Mrs. Durant’s power over son’s subconscious. She nurtures and grooms her sons resulting in Alfred’s over-reliance on her which hinders his relationships with women. Herein mother’s desire acts as a trap from which Durant, like Paul Morel, is unable to wriggle out.

However, after Mrs. Durant dies, Alfred gradually feels attracted to Louisa and decides to marry her. But Mrs. Lindley does not consent easily because of her pride in her upper class origins cannot allow her daughter to choose a working class partner. So the young couple emigrate to Canada where Lawrence sends March and Henry in “The Fox,” which was intended as the original destination of Lady Chatterley and the gamekeeper. The deeply entrenched inhibitions of the British society prevent Miss Louisa, March and Lady Chatterley from getting their happiness. Lawrence’s championing of private feelings for physical and mental
contentment is perceived by him as being at odds with the *stiff-upper-lip* British society. Such restrictions would be applicable in *old world*, i.e., across the European society whose mores have ossified over time. In contrast the North American society is imagined by Lawrence as a *new world* where the mores are still taking shape. Canada, a newer settlement than USA, is perceived by Lawrence as a largely uncharted territory where life is close to nature and social mores are more flexible. So Canada becomes, in Lawrence’s imagination, a land of physical and sexual liberation for both men and women. Lawrence’s Canadian haven is both a capitulation to escapism and a critique of patriarchal commodification of women through social rather than sexual bondage (the latter, as illustrated earlier, constitutes freedom for women according to Lawrence). Ironically, both discourses perceive Canada as uninhabited, ready to be occupied territory, very like Lawrence’s women characters and obliterate in the process the underpinning of exploitative colonial discourse.

The stories of the Croydon period manifest Lawrence’s own experiences at Croydon. He was engaged to Jessie Chambers and tasted the bitter-sweet experience of love. However, cocooned in the web of his mother’s protective love, he was unable to respond to Jessie freely and fully. Life was, in effect sandwiched between matriarchal and heterosexual. As a result he failed to establish any fruitful and enduring relationship with any woman for quite some time. He had also witnessed the domination of his mother over his father and gradual annihilation of his father’s identity which upset him considerably. Lawrence sources these experiences specially in stories where man-woman relationship is predominant. “The White Stocking” of the Nottingham period and “A Modern Lover,” “The Shades of
Spring,” “The Old Adam” of the Croyon period depict male assertion, duality of women and tensions of husband-wife relationship. The connecting link in all these works is the explicit tension between the social and instinctive bond between the male and female underpinned by Lawrence’s emphasis that both bonds can attain perfection only with the complete subjugation of the woman.

Before the First World War, Lawrence, in his *The Study of Thomas Hardy* and Other Essays, advocates the need for recording of women’s voices, champions the individuality and autonomy of women and urges them to shake off the bonds of family and society. But in his creative writing, apart from a few exceptions, he has not expressed similar ideas. For example, Elsie in “The White Stocking,” Muriel in “A Modern Lover,” Hilda in “The Shades of Spring” and Mrs. Thomas in “The Old Adam” have a lingering desire for a world where they can derive happiness. The positive factor in these stories is that Lawrence has recorded the feelings of women and acknowledged their sexuality by foregrounding the conflict between their social and instinctive urges. Only Muriel and Hilda are able to fulfil their desire for independence and autonomy to some extent by severing their relationship with Mersham and Syson. But, in the long run they fail to fulfil their desires, for Muriel has a latent desire for subservience and Hilda has a nostalgic yearning for her ex-lover. Lawrence seems to suggest that both Muriel and Hilda may have some independence and the ability to grow but they cannot achieve real happiness unless they subjugate themselves to their male counterparts. On the other hand, both Elsie and Mrs. Thomas have an instinctive desire to defy familial and social bonds but they lack the guts to do so and ultimately prioritise their husbands’ prerogative. Frances in “Second Best” torn between the intellectual Barras and the more earthy
Tom, eventually chooses the latter spontaneity, passion and humaneness but the title itself indicates that her choice is only second best. Mary and Louisa of “Daughters of the Vicar” have good upbringing and education but are portrayed as subservient characters. Mary marries Mr. Massy, a mediocre man who is unable to connect with her inner world. On the other hand, to please and win the miner Alfred, Louisa does deliberately adopt a humble and subservient role.

As stated earlier, Lawrence uses the class factor to reiterate male hegemony and this owes partially to his family environment where, despite his love and admiration for his mother hailing from the upper class, he resented her domination over his working class father. The germs of anti-feminism, sowed by his early life and difficulties in establishing relationships with sophisticated women in later life, are laid bare in his portrayal of upper class women’s hankering after working class men presumably for their sexual prowess. Frances and Louisa’s choice of labouring men as partners for physical needs foregrounds women’s sexuality but it is simultaneously projected as a voluntary submission of civilized women to lower class unsophisticated men. Despite this ambivalence he does break new grounds by focusing on women’s sexuality and sexual gratification as an essential component of contented, wholesome existence. Peter Nazareth observes,

Lawrence has been grossly misunderstood by most readers. Yes, Lawrence does write about sex. But sex is a vital part of life; through sex, we have our very beings. How can it be wrong to write about what is vital to life? Lawrence is not a crude writer who writes about crude, depraved sex to give his readers a cheap thrill. Sex, to Lawrence, does not mean only copulation. Sex is the whole process
of systole and diastole – the balance of male and female in the universe. (39)

Nazareth however, does not discuss the imbalance of power embedded in Lawrence’s treatment of the ‘systole-diastole’ interconnection.

The Mining stories form a third group of Lawrence’s short fiction, which is again partially inspired by his experiences as a collier’s son. Although he is deeply distressed by the fact that the British miner is either hypnotized by materialism or dead in spirit, he identifies with this class and this is precisely why workers appear in all his major works,

I cannot make the transfer from my own class into the middle class. I cannot for anything in the world, forfeit my passionate consciousness and my old blood-affinity with my fellow men and the animals and the land, for that other thin spurious mental conceit which is all that is left of the mental consciousness once it has made itself exclusive.

(qtd. in Scheckner 9; emphasis mine)

However, Lawrence’s allegiance to his class as instanced above, is rather complex because he simultaneously identifies himself with the working class and rejects it because of his desire for upward mobility. This translates into the fictional subjugation of upper class, refined women to working class men projected as more macho and virile, thus linking male supremacy to sexual ability.

The colliery troubles of February 1912 deeply disturbed Lawrence and he wrote a number of stories empathizing with the striking miners. This proves that Lawrence’s class background and the rigid class structure of England impacted him
deeply. He strongly believes that class barriers prevent the free flow of love – human kindness, fellow feeling and generosity – the best features of humanity. But by social class Lawrence means a great deal more than production or property relations. He subscribes to the stereotypical idyllic myth about the lower orders by claiming that because workers are in direct and continual contact with machines, nature and other men, they tend to be uncomplicated and direct among themselves. The opening pages of *The Rainbow* (1915) provide the spectacle of intimacy and spontaneity in the lives and work of Brangwen farmers. “So much warmth and generosity and pain and death did they know in their blood ... that they lived full and surcharged, their senses full fed” (3).

In *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence’s account of the collier, Morel, as soft, warm and non-intellectual, is fairly characteristic of the miners in his Mining stories. His typical worker is passionate, uncomplicated and unsophisticated. In *Sons and Lovers* he has dramatized the conflict between his parents as something more than a conflict between two individuals; it is a war between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* too, sexual and romantic passions conflict with the gamekeeper’s social consciousness, “These social and sexual contradictions were never resolved, and they provide the dynamism for Lawrence’s works” (Scheckner 13). In his Mining stories male and female characters are partially based on his own parents. “Odour of Chrysanthemums,” “Her Turn,” “A Sick Collier” are a few Mining stories, where the woman plays a vital role and occupies a wider space than is usually allowed to her by Lawrence. Lucy in “A Sick Collier,” Mrs. Radford in “Her Turn” are resourceful, intelligent and assertive and Elizabeth Bates in “Odour of Chrysanthemums” is stoic and resilient. They have minds of their own and do not
wholly depend on their husbands for major domestic decisions. More resourceful and cultured than their counterparts, they are mostly attracted towards them not because of the affinity of taste and temperament but because of their physical charm. Most of them belong to relatively affluent class. Neither superfluous, decorative creatures nor mere child-bearing home-makers, they are conscious of their roles in their families and try to assert themselves with regard to running their families. Lawrence reverses the conventional gender relationship in the domestic sphere projecting the husbands as good for nothing guys, irresponsible and incapable of improving the family condition. This prompts the women to take up decision-making roles in their families. However, running a family does not always vest authority, it is an imposed and confining necessity as well. These women depend on their counterparts for their economic security but as they contribute little else to the family, the women have no other option but to take on the responsibility of running the families and caring for the children or else they would all perish.

Lucy in “A Sick Collier” is resourceful, capable and strong-willed woman who marries a miner, Willy. She is, as the writer says, “too good for him” (252). The class-gender question comes to the fore as Lawrence repeatedly invokes the myth of working men’s hypersexuality which supposedly draws women of superior class to them. Here, he emphasizes the physicality of Willy, “He was so muscular he seemed so intent on what he was doing, so intensely himself, like a vigorous animal” (253). Mrs. Radford in “Her Turn” is also more refined and more intelligent than her husband but she feels attracted to her husband’s animality and physicality, “He has a strong neck, with the crisp hair growing low. Let her be angry as she would yet she had a passion for that neck of his, particularly when she saw the great vein rib under
the skin” (39). Similarly Elizabeth’s relation with her husband in “Odour of Chrysanthemums” is solely on a physical plane. She has laid her living flesh against his and out of these conjunctions have come children and a child yet to be born — new life that is unbound, unpredictable and alive with possibility.

Willy and Lucy are happily married but Lucy is vested with individuality and superior intelligence by Lawrence: “So although he seemed a bit simple, without much intelligence, but having a sort of physical brightness – she considered, and accepted him” (252). It is interesting to note that Lawrence repeatedly starts with unequal relationships where women appear to be superior to their male counterparts but are ultimately reduced to submissiveness and servility as in “The Old Adam,” “The Blue Moccasins,” “The Woman Who Rode Away,” “The Princess.” “A Sick Collier” too, progresses along similar lines.

A colliery strike is declared and trials and tribulations descend on the lives of the miners. Worse, Willy has an accident and appears to be unhinged but is not fully mad. When excited and in a frenzied state of mind he shouts, “‘kill her, kill her’”: “‘The peen – I ha’e such a lot o’ peen – I want to kill’er’” (257). “Kill her” is apparently an outburst of his suppressed male ego which feels undermined by his wife’s stoicity. Although Lawrence does not delve into this, Willy’s outburst is a kind of transferred rage as well: his being incapacitated is related to the professional sphere but he cannot fight back against capitalist exploitation, hence his impotent frustration directs itself to the domestic sphere and targets the woman. The pain and helplessness caused by his work conditions conjoins with the anguish of being inferior to his wife to channel all resentment towards his wife. But Lucy’s cool and
composed behaviour (which perhaps infuriates Willy even more), remains unchanged. Her primary aim is to comfort him and alleviate his pain and, more importantly, to prevent the news of Willy’s madness from spreading as the Union would then stop paying compensation fee:

‘Oh, I hope they haven’t heard anything! If it gets about as he’s out of mind, they’ll stop his compensation, I know they will.’

‘They’d never stop his compensation for that,’’ protested Ethel.

‘Well, they have been stopping some –’

‘It’ll not get about. I’ll tell nobody.’

‘Oh, but if it does, whatever shall we do ….’ (258)

The pragmatic fear of losing economic dispensation combines with the middle class sense of respectability and makes her explain away her husband’s anger directed towards her as resulting from his distraught condition. The dilemma of maintaining social respectability without foregoing economic security prompts her to tolerate her husband’s anger than advertise his madness. In the process, Lucy comes across as an intelligent, resourceful and strong-willed woman trying her best to turn the table in her favour in adverse circumstances.

Mrs. Radford in “Her Turn” is also depicted as strong-willed and able to manage domestic affairs more efficiently than her husband. During the strike, Mr. Radford keeps the strike pay for himself without any concern for family needs. Moreover, he frequently visits the publican’s wife at the Golden Horn. Mrs. Radford is clearly disturbed by his easy-going, irresponsible ways. While Mr. Radford and other miners hope that their strike will eventually bring fortune, their wives are more concerned with their immediate domestic plight. Probably unaware of the social and
economic factors that impel the miners to go on strike, they view the strike as the immediate cause of their domestic problems. Lawrence aptly focuses on the divergent perspectives and priorities of the miners and their wives which is likely to be based on his childhood experiences: his mother’s attempts to cope with family requirements despite his father’s indifference to such matters.

During the previous colliery strike Mr. Radford had squandered his strike pay and does the same thing again. On both occasions Mrs. Radford tries to remind him of his duty and responsibility but to no avail. So, to teach him a befitting lesson, Mrs. Radford buys some unnecessary items in order to show that if they squander their meagre money on useless things, they will have to face a lot of trouble and tension. She succeeds in her endeavour for the miner realizes his folly and submits to the will and power of his wife, “The next week he handed her his half-sovereign without a word; you’ll want some for yourself, she said, and she gave him a shilling. He accepted it” (42). A woman succeeding in persuading her husband to toe her line without paying the consequences is very rare in Lawrence’s stories and, as stated earlier, it is based on his observation of his mother’s skill in household management which forced his father to accede to her in domestic affairs. This rare endorsement of a woman’s power over her husband in Lawrence is because her defiance and independence is oriented towards domestic function and space. She defies the stereotype of the submissive wife to uphold the stereotype of the mother: the nurturer and care-giver of the family. The primary issue here, is economic not sexuality and it upholds the patriarchal norms of a woman’s role in the family.

Elizabeth Bates in “Odour of Chrysanthemums” is another resourceful
woman who is tense, unhappy and exhausted because of her collier husband’s evening visits to the pub which result in drastic reduction of the scanty housekeeping allowance. The family atmosphere, established by the scene of the supper and the talk between brother, sister and mother, is warm and close but is surcharged with tension and anxiety because of the father’s prolonged absence on this particular evening. Elizabeth identifies this as a typical sign of fecklessness and irresponsibility. The daily drinking bouts causes an estrangement between the couple and the children react anxiously to these disturbing features of the shared family life. Here too, Lawrence draws upon his family experience. His father was an uncouth, passionate, alcoholic collier while his mother was sophisticated, educated and cultured. Physically at times they came close but mentally they were mismatched and estranged.

Elizabeth is dissatisfied and disillusioned with her husband. But, unlike Lucy and Mrs. Radford, she does not assert her authority or rebuke her husband for being irresponsible and indifferent towards the family. She is projected as a responsible and tolerant woman who fails to enjoy conjugal bliss because she is mentally and emotionally alienated from him. She does not cry on receiving the news of her husband’s death and appeals to her weeping mother-in-law, “Be still, mother, don’t waken th’ children: I wouldn’t have them down for anything” (279). Her stoic acceptance of his death reveals her fatalistic resignation and surrender to destiny without hope for the future.

In the main scene which gives an account of the laying out and washing of the miner’s body by Elizabeth and her mother-in-law, we are provided with an
insight into her mind. She feels that her mental aloofness had prevented her from
doing proper justice to him. She should have tried to feel his pulse and persuade him
to rectify his shortcomings. The total lack of intimacy between the husband and the
wife continues even after death:

Elizabeth felt countermanded. She saw him, how utterly inviolable
he lay in himself. She had nothing to do with him. She could not
accept it. Stooping, she laid her hand on him, in claim. He was still
warm, for the mine was hot where he had died. His mother had his
face between her hands, and was murmuring incoherently. The old
tears fell in succession as drops from wet leaves; the mother was not
weeping, merely her tears flowed. Elizabeth embraced the body of
her husband, with cheek and lips.

She seemed to be listening, inquiring, and trying to get some
connection. But she could not. She was driven away. He was
impregnable. (282)

The image of his inviolate reality in death lingers and tortures her in her
grief. She attempts to lay claim upon him through the inert body but fails in death as
she has in life. Her attempts to connect with her husband after his death demonstrate
her new found realization that she had interacted with her husband only on a
physical plane and that her mental and emotional aloofness from him had gradually
destroyed their conjugal relationship. The story highlights how in an apparent search
and recognition of truth, the onus and guilt are located in the woman in a typical
patriarchal style. Elizabeth has failed to be a true wife and as a kind of punishment
has lost her husband for ever.
So “A Sick Collier,” “Her Turn,” “Odour of Chrysanthemums” introduced us to Lucy, Mrs. Radford, Elizabeth whose husbands are relegated to a subordinate role because they do not participate in running the household despite being the bread-earners. These husbands also feel inferior because of their lack of education and the assertive nature of their wives. Unlike the stories of the Nottingham and Croydon period, in the Mining stories, the women are not projected as seekers of sexual contentment. Their defiance and assertion are not linked to sexuality but stem from superior management skills related to domestic space. However, they are still financially dependent on their husbands who are irresponsible. The household is their source of power and elusive security and comfort because they have no income or room of their own. Lawrence’s relationships project two types of assertion – the assertion of the wives in domestic affairs and the dominance of the husbands in sexuality. Hilda, Muriel, Winifred, Elsie, Mrs. Adams are presented primarily as women concerned with love; love which is explored as a power-relationship with a strong physical undercurrent wherein the males dominate. Women in the Mining stories are imbued with other facets as well. They not only draw our attention to the physical and psychological ties involved in marriage but also the economic aspect of family life. How women have to organize financial matters in the family and how resourceful and capable they are of doing this, is given fair space in the stories. Lawrence also exposes the dual aspects of a strike. While it is a political struggle for the miners which fills them with the hope for a better future, for the wives and families it means penury, more hardships and desperate measures to make ends meet.

One drawback in the Mining stories is that the superiority of the women is to
some extent class-oriented which apparently equips them to be skilled household managers and model caretakers vis-à-vis the family. They are depicted as individuals striving hard for survival and nurturing but not for financial or personal liberation. In many ways they resemble Lawrence’s mother, Lydia who was distressed by her husband’s uncouthness and indifference to family needs.

There is a marked change in Lawrence’s treatment of women in the different phases. Several women in the pre-War stories are not articulate, advanced or independent. For example, Mrs. Thomas in “The Old Adam,” Mary and Louisa in “Daughters of the Vicar” play second fiddle to their husbands despite a lingering desire to escape from routine-bound life. By advanced and emancipated Lawrence probably means a woman, who is educated, cultured, refined and exerts her own feelings and emotions but in order to become perfect Lawrence implies that a woman should accept male supremacy and that a smooth and satisfactory man-woman relationship can only be achieved through such subjugation. This is an anticipation of a new way of containment as submission seems to be a tool to ratify the status quo. The germ of anti-feminism was already embedded in Lawrence before the War. It became more entrenched after the First World War and in the post-War stories he has palpably vindicated male superiority. There is a shift in the violence level. So later stories are more physically abusive because the War and the violence of war invade the personal space as well.

Lucy, Mrs. Radford, Elizabeth Bates – the women in the Mining stories are treated differently, as illustrated above. They are in no way inferior to their male counterparts and quite capable of running their families on their own
without depending on their husbands for any vital decision in domestic affairs. They are able to judge the pros and cons of any situation even better than their husbands. So, in the Mining stories Lawrence has vested relative autonomy and independence in the women.

At one level Lawrence believes that women should break away from the bondage inflicted upon them by society. But Lawrence’s definition of instinctive femininity is itself chauvinistic for it is defined totally in terms of sexual desire excluding entirely the role of intellect. And even this sexuality needs to be subservient. In the stories of Croydon Period, women are invested with feelings and desires but whenever they tend to assert their intellect, conflict and tension assails their relationships which can only be resolved by female subservience. However, the women in the Mining stories are resourceful, progressive and assertive but limited to domestic management as their husbands are uneducated and indifferent to it. Further, most of the women are educated, well-informed and they stoop to the men of working class because of their physicality.

The fragility of and the tension in man-woman relationship also reflects the biographical factor of his engagement and subsequent break off with Jessie Chambers and the embittered relationship between his parents. Lawrence’s relationship with Jessie Chambers does not last long primarily because of his mother’s protective love and his psychological dependence on it. But his chauvinism is perhaps accentuated by his frustrated male ego which fails to assert its supremacy over his wife, Frieda Weekley, and the remembrance of the relationship between his parents, which according to Lawrence fails to mature because his mother exerts not
only her feelings and emotions but also her intellect over his father which gradually erodes his *male* identity and results in tension, frustration and embitterment in their lives. To this biographical factor is added the sweeping socio-economic changes taking place during and after the World War which creates a new visible space for women. War plays a catalytic role in changing the position of women and men’s perception of them. Apart from getting education women are given the opportunity to work in those fields which were till then exclusive male domain. These factors enable them to be articulate and realise their individuality but this new assertive space has been achieved by default. Men had gone to War and many of them died and their absence provides the liberating space for women.

Lawrence’s espousal of feminism does not last long. As previously mentioned, the First World War changes women’s position in society as well as Lawrence’s perception of it. Women’s access to men’s world exhibits their mettle in diverse ways. Lawrence comes in close contact with women with liberated and progressive views like Sallie Hopkins, Alice Dax, Helen Corke, and is deeply distressed by the radical feminist movements. He feels the need for a kind of male renaissance to counter women’s ascendancy and so becomes concerned with establishing sexual hierarchy in place of his former propagation of balance and relatedness between the sexes. His post-War stories portray intelligent, independent and advanced women succumbing to male power, hints of which are prevalent in some of his earlier stories like “The White Stocking,” “A Modern Lover,” “Daughters of the Vicar” etc.

“Tickets, Please,” “The Horse-dealer’s Daughter,” “Monkey Nuts,” “You
Touched Me,” “The Princess,” “The Lovely Lady,” “The Woman Who Rode Away,” “Mother and Daughter,” “The Blue Moccasins” are stories from the post-World War period that introduced us to a variety of sensitive, assertive, sophisticated, dominating and daring women who are all made to submit to male power either voluntarily or through coercion.

Thematically, a number of Lawrence’s stories deal with mature and assertive women, their outlook, and their ultimate decision to give in to male prerogative. Virginia Bodoin and her mother in “Mother and Daughter,” Miss M’Leod in “The Blue Moccasins,” the Princess in “The Princess,” Pauline Attenborough in “The Lovely Lady” and the strange woman in “The Woman Who Rode Away” are all mature, independent, articulate women who have married males inferior to them as in the Mining stories discussed earlier except that the colliers’ wives are not as well informed about the outside world.

However, the sophistication of the women in post-War stories is not portrayed as appealing; they are deemed attractive only when they become passive and subservient. In fact, their assertiveness inevitably leads to fissures in their relationships. In reality, Lawrence projects a barely veiled aversion for advanced and educated women and privileges male chauvinism through their subjugation. Both Woolf and Lawrence have advocated women’s emancipation in theory but while Lawrence foregrounds sexuality Woolf includes both mental and physical components albeit on a more muted level. Woolf’s women shy away from confrontational situations; consequently their desire for autonomy and their grievance are repressed. Their sense of propriety checks self expression but there is
a muted resistance against patriarchy and male hegemony. Lawrence’s women, however, interiorize the notion of happiness as equivalent to subjugation to male. His promotion of servility as the only means of female contentment in a heterosexual relationship is both patriarchal and chauvinistic. Woolf, on the other hand, records the aspirations and individuality of women and underscores the material need of an income and a room of one’s own for woman’s happiness which indicates her sensitiveness to woman’s issues despite her aversion to action-oriented feminism.

“Mother and Daughter” portrays two adult and forward-looking women – Virginia Bodoin and her mother Rachel Bodoin. Mrs. Bodoin has a mind of her own, “Like an independent woman, she used her wits, and decides most emphatically not to be youthful or skittish or appealing. She would keep her dignity, for she was fond of it. She was positive. She liked to be positive. She was used to her positivity” (751; emphasis mine). Mrs. Bodoin is endowed with several traits of a feminist as perceived by Lawrence – she is educated, cultured, liberated, and even autocratic as she imposes her will on her daughter and shapes her character to a large extent. She is positive in the sense that she is bold and unafraid to follow her inner impulses. Lawrence deliberately projects her in a demeaning manner by relating her assertiveness to old age and loss of sexual appeal, “It was strange muscular energy which possessed Mrs. Bodoin, as it possesses, curiously enough, many women over fifty, and is usually distasteful in its manifestations. Perhaps it accounts for the lassitude of the young” (751). And again, “Her figure, though not stout, was full, strange, and cambre. Her face had an aristocratic arched nose,
aristocratic, who-the-devil-are-you grey eyes, and cheeks rather long but also rather full. Nothing appealing or youthfully skittish here” (751).

Virginia’s passivity and feminine docility are presented as appealing contrasts,

She picked up languages with extraordinary ease…. This helped her enormously with her job. She could prattle away with heads of industry, let them come from where they liked. But she didn’t know any language, not even her own. She picked things up in her sleep, so to speak, without knowing anything about them.

And this made her popular with men ... she was very useful. She worked with men, spent most of her time with men, her friends were particularly all men. She didn’t feel easy with women. (752)

Virginia’s lack of language posits her as a construct based on received language and opinions who interiorizes the existing customs. Interestingly it is Virginia’s passivity that makes her useful. She is moulded and tutored by her mother to play the role of an active patriarchal agent. She also feels comfortable with men because she is not assertive and domineering. Virginia’s qualities like “amiable” “pleasant” and “appealing” are not objective traits but are directly related to male perception of her which makes her acceptable to them. Her acceptability and comfort with men result from her passivity. Mrs. Bodoin’s positivity is projected as barren, negative and self-defeating as it does not care for male approval precisely because it cannot garner male attention – an essential quality of true women according to Lawrence.

Miss M’Leod in “The Blue Moccasins” is also an aging and independent
woman who, like a true feminist, despises that image of tyranny, her father. She intends to lead her own life as she pleases and refuses to be drawn into the vortex of family and society. To this end she tours a lot. Moreover, she detests contact with any man, “She started off in life to be really independent…. She was having no nonsense with men. She was kicking over the masculine traces, and living her own life, manless”(768). Lawrence records the feelings and emotion of such liberated women but projects them in an unfavourable manner. Miss M’Leod thinks that she will be able to lead a fruitful life without a partner but is gradually attracted to Percy Barlow, a bank clerk, much junior to her and wishes to know if he would be interested in marrying “an old thing like me” (769). Her interest in a man junior in age and inferior in status, education and culture is categorized as stooping and considered brazen, degrading and servile which exposes Lawrence’s own male chauvinism.

“The Lovely Lady” centres around a strange woman of seventy two, Pauline Attenborough, who seems to have access to everlasting youth and vitality. The predatory quality of her vitality is noted by her son Robert, “She was beautiful, and she fed on life. She has fed on me as she fed on Henry. She put a sucker into one’s soul and sucked up one’s essential life” (722). Lawrence projects her as a vicious and duplicitous creature who uses her everlasting youth to camouflage a perverted hunger for power particularly over her son. She works her charm on Robert but with her niece, Cecilia, she does not trouble to keep up the pretence. Robert cannot reciprocate Cecilia’s love because of his mother’s strong influence over him. As discussed earlier, this tussle between two women over a man is reflected in Mrs. Morel-Paul-Miriam triangle in Sons and Lovers and sourced from the tussle between
Jessie Chambers and Lydia Lawrence over Lawrence. Pitting two women against each other for male attention is a stereotypical way of presenting women’s lives as essentially male-centric and reeks of chauvinism.

“The Woman Who Rode Away” is about a woman of thirty three with two children who feels neglected and frustrated because her workaholic husband regards home and family as merely an extension of his work, “He was boss of his own works, and marriage was the last and most intimate bit of his own work” (510). He prioritises his work as his tastes and temperament are incompatible with that of his wife and consequently he devotes little time to his family. However, his treatment of marriage as “last” and yet “most intimate” sounds contradictory. His lack of sexual hunger makes him regard his wife and family as a kind of business investment which is supposed to guarantee emotional return, “He was a squeamish waif of an idealist, and really hated the physical side of life. He loved work, work, work, and making things. His marriage, his children were something he was making, part of his business, but with a sentimental income this time” (510; emphasis mine). Absence of sexual intimacy frustrates his wife and this emphasizes Lawrence’s belief that women are driven primarily by sexual instinct.

Mrs. Bodoin, Virginia, Miss M’ Leod and Pauline are all mature, educated and liberated women but Lawrence portrays them in an unflattering light and in the final analysis, as succumbing to patriarchal hegemony. Despite their avowed objective to remain independent, they ultimately feel the need for a man. They remind us of Isabella Tyson in Woolf’s “Looking Glass: A Reflection” and Miss Anning in “Together and Apart” who initially favour autonomy and avoid
permanent relationship with any man but later feel the need for men to be happy.

Lawrence believes that a woman can and should be educated and refined but her final destiny is to admit the ascendancy of man. So, he displays woman’s feelings and an ultimate desire in such a way that it seems a woman needs a male manager to conduct her life effectively and efficiently. Lawrence proposes that it is hardly possible for any woman, whatever her education or level of economic independence, to be complete and contented without a heterosexual relationship and for this she will voluntarily sacrifice all – thus demonstrating a pronounced anti-feminist bias in perception.

Unlike Virginia Woolf, Lawrence does not focus much on woman bonding or sisterhood and where he does, it usually emerges as a disruptive and negative force. In “Mother and Daughter” mother and daughter are referred to repeatedly as “witches”: “The two witches howled” (749); “an old witch with muscles like the Sphinx, and a young, spell-bound witch, elvish, and weak, who utterly spoilt him but ate his marrow” and again, “She was a young, weak, spendthrift witch, accomplice of her tough clawed witch of a mother” (749). Their relationship is likened to most perverted kind of incest:

Mrs. Bodoin thought that it was now time to make a move. So she and Virginia took a quite handsome apartment in one of the old Bloomsbury squares, fitted it up and furnished it with extreme care and with some quite lovely things, got in a very good man, an Austrian, to cook, and they set up married life together, mother and daughter. (753; emphasis mine)

Also,
Virginia, for the first time in her life, had the pleasure of making a home. She was again entirely under her mother’s spell, and swept away, thrilled to her marrow…. Almost like a child, like a bride, Virginia threw herself into the business of fixing up the rooms. ‘Of course, Virginia, I consider this is your apartment,’ said Mrs. Bodoin, ‘dame de compagnie, and shall carry out your wishes entirely, if you will only express them.’ (753)

Mrs. Bodoin and Virginia’s decision to live together in an apartment in one of the old Bloomsbury squares and their ultimate fate seems to be a dig at Woolf. Their living together suggests lesbianism and incest, both rigorously ostracized by patriarchal society. Lawrence explores same sex attraction, both male and female, and glorifies the former. Women are shown as dominating over each other and their bonding is projected as impure and self-centred which ultimately destroys the relationship. In “Mother and Daughter,” Virginia decides to part with her mother and it is occasioned by the presence of a man: both mother and daughter seek a lasting relationship with Arnault. Thus female bonding, even those strengthened by familial kinship, are viewed as fragile and based on competition rather than camaraderie. By contrast, Lawrence highlights male bonding as strong and positive. In “You Touched Me” Hadrian, the charity boy lives with the father of Matilda and Emmie. Both the male members pressurize Matilda and successfully force her to choose Hadrian as her partner in spite of Matilda’s dislike for him. As with individuals, so also with groups, the gender relationship is hierarchised and power based in Lawrence’s writings. He is apprehensive of women’s unified power usurping male supremacy and exhibits a veiled aversion towards lesbianism
coupling it with incest to suggest its baseness and unnaturalness. Lesbianism is harshly condemned because it challenges male hegemony by excluding the male from the sexual sphere.

Similar bias against women’s unity is seen in “Smile”. Here, Matthew visits the Blue sisters to see his wife Ophelia who unfortunately dies. His discomfort in the midst of the sisters is viewed as a natural response to their curiosity and interest in him as well as their living together both of which are projected as unhealthy.

In “Mother and Daughter,” Henry Lubbock, Virginia’s partner for four years, bids her good-bye as he is unable to withstand her mother’s interference:

Bur her mother had another, much subtler form of domination, female and thrilling, so that when Rachel said: “Let’s squash him!” Virginia had to rush wickedly and gleefully to the sport. And Henry knew quite well when he was being squashed. So that was one of his reasons for going back on Vinny. (748)

The strange power of female bonding squashes Henry. References to their witch like quality suggest an eery, demonic association which tramples upon the wishes and desires of others, especially males like Henry and Adrain. To counter this unacceptable male defeat Lawrence introduces the Armenian, Arnault – the perfect patriarch – into their lives who thoroughly subjugates Virginia:

The moment he realized that she would succumb into his power, he took full charge of the situation, he lost all his hesitation and humility. He did not want just to make love to her: he wanted to
marry her for all his multifarious reasons. And he must make himself master of her. (763)

Arnault is concerned less with love than marriage as a means of exerting his masculinity and disrupting Virginia’s bonding with her mother. He successfully snaps the cord between them and exposes Rachel’s life as barren and sterile. The Armenian is an outsider and there is added an insult in the other lording over Virginia – sullying of native blood through hybrid encounter. The contrast between Virginia’s relationship with Henry and Arnault is also striking. The former succumbs to and the other overrides the domineering Rachel. Herein lies the difference of perception between Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence: Woolf endorses women’s bonding for self empowerment while Lawrence considers it a threat to male hegemony.

After Henry’s departure Mrs. Bodoin herself realizes that a woman’s real happiness lies not in living alone and becoming financially independent. So she invites a few guests in the hope that her daughter may fall in love with one of them. Her plan succeeds with a vengeance as Virginia decides to marry Arnault, for whom Mrs. Bodoin harbours nothing but contempt. Arnault’s attitude towards Virginia is that of a typical opportunist. Initially, he is hesitant; apprehensive of his ability to satisfy an educated and emancipated woman like Virginia, but the moment he realises that he will be able to exercise his authority over her, his attitude changes:

When he took her hand in his own soft still hands, there was something so caressing, so possessive in his touch, so strange and positive in his leaning towards her, that though she trembled with
fear, she was helpless…. He used all his will. Looking back at her heavily and calculating that she must submit. (763)

Virginia is a willing collaborator in the project as though she is eager to escape from her mother’s stifling hold over her: “She gave a fleeting, half poignant, half vindictive thought to her mother. Then she felt in the air the sense of destiny, destiny. Oh, so nice, not to have to struggle. To give way to destiny” (763-64).

Succumbing to male supremacy is interiorized by Lawrence’s women as the ultimate self-fulfilment. The assertive and independent Mrs. Bodoin is projected as domineering and suffocating and so must lose her daughter to Arnaunt who grants Virginia freedom from the burden of responsibility very like Elsie who enjoys her dance with Sam Adams in “The White Stocking” precisely because all responsibility for her actions lies with her husband. Both Elsie and Virginia are voluntary captives enjoying freedom in a cage in exchange for emotional security and sexual gratification. Elsie’s husband was the permanent basis from which she could hardly move anywhere. At night, like chickens & curses, she would return home and be caressed by him. Virginia is similarly “caressed again into a luxurious sense of destiny, reposing on fate, having to make no effort, no more effort, all her life” (767). The triumph of male ego is more resonating in the case of Arnault as a financially independent and confident woman like Virginia is happy to be dominated by Arnault as his wife and willingly join, if need be, his harem while for him her value is not intrinsic but associated with the wealth and property she brings into the marriage. Both Elsie and Virginia are, in a sense, commodified possessions and delighted to be so.
The about turn of Miss M’Leod in “Blue Moccasins” is even more amazing. One who used to tour a lot in order to escape male contact in her youth, finally succumbs to masculine charm as she grows old. Percy Barlow is only twenty two when he meets the forty-five year old Miss M’Leod. She feels attracted towards him but initially he only feels, “She’s miles above me” (769). By contrast, Miss M’Leod’s brazen assertiveness is evidenced in the way she proposes to Percy, “It wouldn’t be right for you to marry an ole thing like me, would it?” (769). Yet it also suggests a self-conscious diffidence as the proposal is framed like an enquiry. Her attitude lays bare the chink in her armour created by years of patriarchal conditioning. Women are conventionally required to be young and attractive in order to draw male attention and Miss M’leod’s hesitation springs from the awareness that she has neither of these attributes as she is well past her prime. Lawrence seems to suggest that in a heterosexual relationship physical and sexual aspects are of primary importance and no amount of intellectual and familial competence can compensate for that.

Though shy and awkward among women, he gradually develops a fascination for her:

He was a bit startled by her white hair. However, he shut his eyes to it, and loved her. It always seemed awkward to her, that he should come wandering into her room in his pyjamas when she was half dressed, and brushing her hair. And he would sit there silent, watching her brush the long swinging river of silver, of her white hair, the bare, ivory-white, strange mechanical motion, sharp and forcible, brushing down the long silvery stream of hair. (770)
It is interesting that Lawrence eroticises the one physical attribute of Mrs. M’Leod which no young woman can possess. It is her difference from the rest that makes her a valued possession for Percy which augments his conquest of a far superior lady.

With the passage of time Percy Barlow becomes popular in society because of his amiable manner. Miss M’Leod does not like his democratic nature of pleasing each and every one, “How can you have so much good nature? I have to be catty to some people, but you’re nice to everybody” (772). As the story progresses, Miss M’Leod’s superiority and confidence are eroded. The tables are turned in Percy’s favour with the ultimate public humiliation of Miss M’Leod at the climax of the story by which time she realises that she is also afraid of Percy:

She twisted him round her little finger, as the saying goes. And yet secretly she was afraid of him. In the early years he had displayed a clumsy but violent sort of passion, from which she had shrunken away. She felt it had nothing to do with her. It was just his indiscriminating desire for woman, and for his own satisfaction. (773)

In course of time Percy feels attracted to Mrs. Howells and during the rehearsal of a play they come closer. Here, Lawrence again sets one woman against another for a man who, interestingly, sits back and delightfully watches the fight over him. Lawrence perhaps fails to see that in constantly pitting women against each other for male attention he simultaneously commodifies the man as an object of possession. M’Leod’s defeat and humiliation reach their height when in the final performance of the play her blue moccasins which she has kept very carefully for a long time and which symbolically stand for her love to Percy lie at Mrs. Howells’s
feet. It suggests that she and her love are at the mercy of Mrs. Howells. And what is most galling to her is that this humiliation takes place in public which mocks her superiority and drives home the point that despite social and economic achievements, a woman achieves ultimate happiness both physically and emotionally only by being an object of male desire.

“The Princess” is another illustration of a woman’s need for a man hinging upon her subjugation. Colin Urquhart marries to Miss Prescott when he is forty. They have a daughter whom they call Princess. He tutors her and moulds her character and personality as he wishes. This reminds us of Mersham in “A Modern Lover” who tries to educate Muriel into womanhood. So, both Colin Urquhart and Mersham intend to impose their will on the woman who is close to them and entertain the idea that when they graduate to womanhood they will follow their footsteps.

Gradually an acquired snobbery creeps into Princess’s mental make-up just as her father had intended:

‘My little Princess must never take too much notice of people and the things they say and do,’ he repeated to her. ‘People don’t know what they are doing and saying. They chatter-chatter, and they hurt one another, and they hurt themselves very often till they cry…. You are the last of the royal race of the old people the last, my Princess. There are no others. You and I are the last.’(444)

This superciliousness prevents her from developing a full fledged personality. She fails to establish any relationship except the one with her father. The years roll on
but she remains unconcerned about her future. Lawrence refers to her as a changeling not quite human because she has not developed a fully adult personality and remains submerged in the world created for her by her father.

After her father’s death she finds herself looking at men more shrewdly with an eye to marriage. There is a great deal of similarity between the Princess and Woolf’s Miss Willatt in “Memoirs of a Novelist” for they are both suffocated by their confinement in the patriarchal societal incubator, and experience freedom only after the death of their respective fathers. Yet interestingly, the Princess is still neither interested nor attracted towards men physically, “The Princess learns her lesson early – the first lesson, of absolute reticence, the impossibility of intimacy with any other than her father; the second lesson, of naïve, slightly benevolent politeness. As a small child, something crystallizes in her character, making her clear and finished, and as impervious as crystal” (444-45). Throughout “The Princess” Lawrence displays the art of stating something but implying the opposite. She is attracted to men but seeks her father’s image in them and rejects them as none can match that image. This suggests an Electra complex which is considered as an abnormal obsession in Freudian psychoanalysis. Although Lacan prioritizes mother fixation over the obsession with the father in shaping one’s childhood, Lawrence’s psychological portrayal of the Princess is closer to the Freudian concept of “first identification” (Lacan 88) since she had lost her mother when she was two years old and her father grooms and dominates her in every walk of life:

Father and child were inseparable. He was not a recluse. Wherever he went he was to be seen paying formal calls going out to luncheon or
to tea, rarely to dinner. And always with the child. People called her
Princess Urquhart, as if that were her christened name. (443)

Her father teaches her how to behave with the people around her and how to
maintain her distance from common people to showcase her importance and
nobility:

They are not royal. Only you are royal, after me. Always remember
that. And always remember, it is a great secret, darling. I am a prince,
and you a princess, of the old, old blood. And we keep our secret
between us, all alone. And so, darling, you must treat all people very
politely, because *noblesse oblige*…. But you are the Princess, and
they are commoners. Never try to think of them as if they were like
you. (444; emphasis author’s)

The Princess’s fixation and identification with her father is so strong that he
seems to preside over all her thoughts and activity. As a result of her father’s
complete control over her nurturing, *man* seems to be more an idea created in the
Princess’s mind than a being in himself. However, while staying in Spain she is
strangely attracted to Domingo Romero, a debonair, attractive fellow. Her latent,
subconscious desire for sexual contact suddenly emerges when she comes closer to
Domingo Romero, but she is confused about the exact nature of her desire,

What did she want? Oh, what did she want? She sat in bed and
rocked herself woefully. She could hear the steady breathing of the
sleeping man. She was shivering with cold; her heart seemed as if it
could not beat. She wanted warmth, protection, she wanted to be
taken away from herself. And at the same time, perhaps more deeply than anything, she wanted to keep herself intact, untouched, that no one should have any power over her, or rights to her. It was a wild necessity in her that no one, particularly no man, should have any rights or power over her, that no one and nothing should possess her.

(470)

The above passage reveals the conflict between the Princess’s libido and Electra complex. She desires physical intimacy with Romero but is terrified of being swamped and subsumed by him. This curious mixture of desire and revulsion runs through her encounter with Romero, “And he was warm, but with a terrible animal warmth that seemed to annihilate her. And she was given over to this thing” (471). She is also assailed by the guilt of betraying, replacing and dislocating her father. Lawrence toes the Freudian line while tracing the duel between patriarchal conditioning and the gradual surfacing of her subconscious desire for sexual contact: “The sexual instinct has to struggle against certain mental forces which act as resistances, and of which shame and disgust are the most prominent…. ” (Freud, Three Essays, 40)

The simultaneous desire and revulsion of the Princess can further be explained through Freud’s concepts of “sexual instinct” and “life instincts”:

A drive stimulus emanates not from the outside world, but from inside the organism itself. For this reason it affects the psyche differently and different actions are needed to remove it…. The effect of a drive, on the other hand, is never that of a momentary impact,
but always that of a constant force. And because it impinges not from outside, but from inside the body, flight is of no avail against it.

(Freud, *The Unconscious* 14-15)

The Princess cannot suppress her sexual drive for long. The goal of drive is satisfaction and ultimately she submits herself to Romero who overpowers and satisfies her. While Romero exults in his sexual conquest of the Princess, she herself registers a more ambivalent response. Her mind seems to resist it but her body welcomes it. She is both the victim and the willing facilitator of that victimhood:

‘You want me to make you warm?’

‘Yes.’

As soon as he had lifted her in his arms, she wanted to scream to him not to touch her. She stiffened herself. *Yet she was dumb.*

And he was warm, but with a terrible animal warmth that seemed to annihilate her. He panted like an animal with desire. *And she was given over to this thing.*

She had never, never wanted to be given over to this. *But she had willed that it should happen to her.* And according to her will, *she lay and let it happen….*

And she could feel a curious joy and pride surging up again in him: at her expense. Because he had got her. She felt like a victim there. And he was exulting in his power over her, his possession, his pleasure. (471; emphasis mine)

Lawrence believes in the importance and magnitude of the sexual motive, but views sexual instinct as only one of the dominant motives for man’s actions. He
uses the female sexual drive as an instrument of undermining autonomous, independent women in his stories because it can only be satisfied through willing submission to masculine virility. They have to become objects of male “possession” and “pleasure” for ultimate sexual gratification. However, the Princess is never independent; she simply transfers domination from one male to another. She has so interiorized the patriarchal values that she never tries to have a place or own income of her own and instead seeks security and comfort in subordinating herself to one male or another.

Lawrence, in this story, deals with several levels of subjugation and curiously also allows the woman an escape from permanent and absolute domination by a male. The superior and lofty Princess (who is the “nurtured” creation of a male – her father) succumbs to a mere guide who is “almost a typical Mexican” (451). The Mexican quality is emphasized by the reference to Romero’s Indian looks – black eyes and hair, dark, heavy face and brutal, heavy mouth. Conventional European perception would situate Romero both as a social and racial inferior. In succumbing to him, the Princess demonstrates the absolute triumph of male power – the woman who refused to consider men as human beings is deflowered almost willingly by a man of the lowest possible origin. For Lawrence it is also a triumph of the primitive man over the civilized world – a theme dealt with in much greater detail in “The Woman Who Rode Away.” Interestingly, in both the stories the mode of triumph is the subjugation of the white woman. Lawrence, however, stops short of eulogizing primitivism. Romero, the Caliban whom she has feared all her life, cannot own her permanently – he is rejected by the Princess immediately after the encounter and finally killed, perhaps because his utility both to the Princess and the
white male world is over. Free from the fear of being subsumed by the sexual and emotional desire for a male, as had happened with Romero, she ultimately marries an elderly man who presumably will not have such a hold over her. The one positive factor in the story is the presentation of the sexual encounter between the male and female as a power relationship – a struggle for ascendancy and possession of one over the other – and not as the romantic consummation of love between the sexes.

Pauline Attenborough in “The Lovely Lady” is presented as a power-hungry and perverted woman because she intends to preserve her charm for ever and has a strange hold over her son, Robert. Lawrence frequently deals with the tussle between two women over a man, and in most cases makes the weaker and subservient woman victorious in the long run. Cecilia is almost given a god-send opportunity to thwart Pauline and ultimately destroys her through suggestion. While relaxing on the terrace she hears Pauline’s voice floating up to her. Bewildered at first she realizes that Pauline is sitting on the porch right under a pipe talking to herself as old ladies do unaware of the fact that she can be heard elsewhere. Inspired by a sudden idea the hitherto weak and nondescript Cecilia speaks down the tube to Pauline without identifying herself, warning her to release her hold over Robert. Shocked by this eerie voice from nowhere, Pauline finally dies and Cecilia gets her Robert. The story is rather macabre and illustrates the extent to which Lawrence can make his woman characters stoop in order to get what is vitally important to them: in this case the attention of Robert, an extremely uninteresting person who is nevertheless important simply because he is a man. Value is vested in him again through the tussle of two women over him which, ironically commodifies Robert as a prize catch at the same time. The importance of the male is predicated upon the
extent of female attention he garners. It reveals that a woman is vital to bolstering male ego.

The woman in “The Woman Who Rode Away” does not derive any physical or mental satisfaction from marriage since her husband is absolutely contrary to her in nature and temperament, “Her husband had never become real to her, neither mentally nor physically. In spite of his late sort of passion for her, he never meant anything to her, physically. Only morally he swayed her, downed her, kept her in an invincible slavery” (510). To escape this slavish monotony she decides to seek satisfaction and solace elsewhere. She learns about the Chilchui Indians and thinks she will find among them what she is looking for. Lawrence deploys primitivism to critique civilized life as artificial and restrictive of instinctive desires. There is also a romanticized assumption about the centrality of sexuality in non-Western cultures as opposed to European or European settler societies. Her condition reminds us of Rosalind in Woolf’s “Lappin and Lapinova” who is depressed by her husband and his patriarchal family, and to counter this claustrophobia she transposes her relationship with her husband to the realm of fantasy transforming it into a game of hare and rabbit. Rosalind’s retreat into an imaginary primitive animal world is indicative of desire to transfer and transform one’s location. As stated earlier a change of location sometimes augurs a change of attitude and provides fresh opportunities for fulfilling one’s desires. In “Phyllis and Rosamond” Woolf has shown how change of location brings about a change of perception in Phyllis on marriage and individuality. Like Rosalind, the woman in “The Woman Who Rode Away” seeks an escape route instead of confronting and combating her lack of autonomy and independence. On reaching her destination her preconceptions
regarding the primitive man’s supposedly superior and spontaneous sexuality breaks down as she perceives no sexual element in their attitude towards her. They make her undress, but strangely she does not feel ashamed, “And she wondered, almost, sadly, why she did not feel shame in her nakedness. She only felt sad and lost. Because nobody felt ashamed” (525). This is a complex story of constructing and deconstructing primitivism, its attitude to women and the othering of the self. Her attempt to flee from claustrophobia, stultification and marital entrapment is praiseworthy from a feminist standpoint since she is conscious of her needs and takes the initiative to realize it. Through her physical experience among the natives Lawrence questions the Western construct of primitive sexuality and simultaneously exorcises it in his unique way.

As though under the spell of some unknown force, the lady does not protest the Chilchui Indians’s impersonal and dispassionate treatment, “Always they treated her with this curious impersonal solicitude, this utterly impersonal gentleness as an old man treats a child” (527). She willingly becomes the sacrificial victim. That the woman passively acquiesces to the strange behaviour and rituals of the Indians is indicative of her pleasure and demonstrates the triumph of the primitive world over the civilized world. The mode of triumph is the subjugation of the white woman. The efforts of the woman to flee away from the entrapment of her conjugal life and her ultimate subjugation to the primitive world has been illustrated by Mridula Kapoor,

In “The Woman Who Rode Away” (1924) the American woman rides away from isolation, from death, from the terrible cul-de-sac of marriage…. In her marriage she had material comfort but her
emotional growth was completely attenuated. In Chilchui village she has no freedom of movement but her consciousness develops into heightened perceptions, the universe. With the help of an Indian drink she comes into a new sensual awareness of the cosmos … The egoistic woman in her has to die before she comes alive to this primeval connection. Conversely through the human sacrifice the Red Indians acquire new power again. The defeated become victorious, and in the woman’s willing death Lawrence depicts the collapse of Western individualism. (45)

But the story is not merely a critique of Western individualism. Apparently it crosses cultural and racial barriers. The simple, natural, primitive world is able to cater to the instinctive desires of human beings which the supposedly superior civilized world cannot. But Lawrence turns the discourse of racial liberalism around to constitute the sublimation of the self as submission and total annihilation of the female with her ecstatic participation in it. Thus, a very regressive and reactionary truth is established in the end – the woman who feels emotionally and instinctively superior to the world of the white male and dares to discard it endures an even worse fate in the primitive world. And what is supremely ironic is that she will interpret this greater humiliation and total non-recognition (the very things for which she left the white man’s world) as the ultimate fulfillment.

Moreover, violence and brutal force in Lawrence’s fiction often acts as an awakening or empowerment or a restoration of balance. Michael Squires feels that the woman attains a heightened consciousness of the cosmos and her place in it
through her encounter with the Chilchuis and the egoistic woman in her dies. According to Squires this thematic concern is reiterated stylistically as well,

In this story [The Woman Who Rode away], however, Lawrence artfully creates forms of consciousness and expression that precede language. He attempts to locate consciousness in silence before utterance alters its purity. Hence the story's sentences move back and forth between motion and stillness, passion and withdrawal, male cruelty and female compassion – usually without dialogue. The Indians, unified in their passionate anger, view the Woman as their catharsis. She will open the cosmic path to their revitalization. (94)

In the post-War stories discussed, Lawrence records the desires and emotions of a few mature, educated and liberated women in a manner that views association between women in a negative light which is distinctly different from the standpoint taken by Woolf on the issue. As Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* points out he is the most talented of sexual politicians who adroitly conveys his chauvinist message through female consciousness (242). Post World War conditions had liberated female sexuality to a considerable extent. Lawrence anticipates two possible outcomes of this sexual revolution. First, he is afraid it will grant women an autonomy and independence. Secondly, he feels that it could be manipulated to create a new order of dependence and subordination which would perpetuate in effect, a new compliance to male prerogative. The apparent contradiction in Lawrence’s anticipation of female sexuality is reflected in the special status accorded to Mrs. Bodoin, her daughter Virginia and Miss M’ Leod as fiercely independent and then making them succumb to male power.
In “The Horse-dealer’s Daughter” and “You Touched Me” Lawrence explores issues involving physical contact. “The Horse-dealer’s Daughter” centres round Mabel, a sullen-looking woman of twenty-seven, who is rescued by the neighborhood doctor while trying to commit suicide. When she learns that the doctor has had to undress her in the process, her suppressed desire is aroused. She thinks that there is at least one person with whom she can get happiness. So, she fervently kisses him and urges him to take her as his wife,

‘Do you love me, then?’ she asked.

He only stood and stared at her, fascinated…. ‘You love me,’ she murmured, in strange transport, yearning and triumphant and confident. ‘You love me, I know you love me, I know.’

And she was passionately kissing his knees, through the wet clothing passionately and indiscriminately kissing his knees, his legs, as if unaware of everything. (424)

In Mabel’s supplication to the doctor we notice an abject surrender with a sexual overtone. But her complete submission which she tries to exploit, and the element of devotion which acquires religious fervour is particularly disturbing. The doctor appears to be her God. But the doctor’s attitude is also significant. He feels initially amazed and bewildered by Mabel’s supplication. He has never thought of or wanted to love her, his whole will is against yielding. He had only done his duty as a doctor. But her embrace and supplication bring out his instinctive sexual urge. He also experiences the pleasure of domination and, entrapped by his sense of superiority and her humility, is forced to accept her love. He feels pity for her, and this pity urges him to declare his love for her and his intention to marry her.
In “The Princess,” “The Blue Moccasins” and “The Lovely Lady” Lawrence has depicted the defeat of the more humble and subservient woman whose triumph takes the form of finding a male partner to whom she can submit and feel fulfilled. In “The Horse-dealer’s Daughter” he has shown how even the humility and dependence of a woman can entrap a man and force him to admit a love which he does not feel. The weakness and subservience of women conventionally extolled as rightful womanly virtues are transformed into powerful weapons of blackmail.

“You Touched Me” is another instance where physical touch plays a vital role in shaping the fate of a woman. The two sisters, Matilda and Emmie are old maids with contrasting features: Matilda, “tall” and “graceful,” “refined and sensible” is the more artistic of the two whereas Emmie who looks after the housekeeping is more homely and has “no accomplishment” (370). Matilda is clearly the superior one with greater personality, so it is she who must be sacrificed at the altar of male ego. Hadrian, the charity boy, whom Matilda and Emmie’s father has raised, is recalled from Canada to be beside his dying patron. His plebian origin and scheming mind is emphasized in the story. The women are contemptuous of his attempt at familiarity and Matilda correctly judges Hadrian’s character, “She had always said of Hadrian that he had no proper respect for anybody or anything, that he was sly and common” (374). Yet her duality is exposed by the fact that she dresses specially to impress him:

She had thought it all out how she would receive Hadrian, and impress him. And he had caught her with her head tied up in a duster, and her thin arms in a basin of lather. But she did not care. She now dressed herself most scrupulously, carefully folded her long,
beautiful, blonde hair, touched her pallor with a little rouge, and put
her long string of exquisite crystal beads over her soft green dress.

(373-74)

One night Matilda, wanting to wish her father good night, mistakenly enters
Hadrian’s room and touches his brow. The tenderness of Matilda’s hand awakens
Hadrian in more senses than one. He tells the old man that he would like to marry
her, and strangely, he claims his right on the basis of the touch interpreting it as an
expression of her love. As he says, “You’ve been no mother to me. Let us marry and
go out to Canada – you might as well – you’ve touched me” (383). To Matilda this
is a bolt from the blue because she had only wanted to impress him with her class
and superiority without harbouring any desire for sexual or marital relationship.
Lawrence shows this superiority to be extremely vulnerable as the males conspire to
bring her down: while Hadrian claims matrimonial rights over her, her father
threatens her with disinheriance if she refuses. It is this second threat that makes her
succumb. The ultimate ignominy is that she not only has to marry Hadrian but at the
express wish of her father also acknowledge her role of a devoted and obedient wife
through the token of kissing him. Thus patriarchy operates through sexual and
economic channels in “You Touched me” to dominate women. Both Matilda’s
father and Hadrian blackmail her into submitting to the dictates of patriarchy.

The effects of the First World War and Lawrence’s interaction with his
radical and liberated wife, Frieda Weekley, show him at close quarters the scope and
power of women’s emancipation and turn him into a male chauvinist. The women’s
economic independence and visibility makes him view it as a threat to male
dominance. As mentioned earlier, one of the most important by-products of the First World War is the way it changes the attitudes to sex. The War is indeed an emancipating experience for most women. Released from domestic space and responsibilities into the professional and public space they acquire a new level of confidence and consciousness. “Tickets, Please,” “Monkey Nuts” and “The Fox” are written against such a social, political and economic backdrop. Although “The Fox” is a novella, it is included here because of its significance in the context of the other two stories. Annie in “Tickets, Please,” Miss Stokes in “Monkey Nuts,” and March and Banford in “The Fox” are projected daring, assertive and enterprising. They do not hesitate to assume roles hitherto reserved for men. Annie works as a woman conductor, Miss Stokes takes the initiative in wooing and winning the reluctant Joe, March and Banford don soldier’s uniforms indicating their desire and ability to encroach upon men’s realm. Yet Lawrence has to subjugate them to male prerogative in the long run.

“Tickets, Please” concerns a group of conductresses who unite to humiliate and punish their womanizing inspector, John Thomas Raynor. But a close scrutiny reveals that despite all their efforts Thomas triumphs and that in destroying him they destroy themselves. The transport system in England underwent a radical change after the War. Due to the lack of effective workforce, government began employing women in jobs exclusively reserved for men. Many girls were appointed as ticket conductors. The girls in “Tickets, Please” are the face of the new female workforce:

The girls are fearless young hussies. In their ugly blue uniform, skirts up to their knees, shapeless old peaked caps on their heads, they have all the sangfroid of an old non-commissioned officer. With a tram
packed with howling colliers, roaring hymns downstairs and a sort of antiphony of obscenities upstairs, the lasses are perfectly at their ease. They pounce on the youths who try to evade their ticket-machine. They push off the men at the end of their distance. They are not going to be done in the eyes – not they. They fear nobody – and everybody fears them. (315)

Lawrence deliberately uses the term “girls” suggesting that their inexperience, immaturity and femininity can be exploited. It also undermines their status as full-fledged workers. The manner of depicting of these working girls indicates Lawrence’s apprehensions regarding their power to destabilise the patriarchally established hierarchy between the sexes. Moreover, the reference to them as “hussies” in “ugly,” “shapeless” uniform, their pouncing upon youths and pushing “off the men at the end of their distance” presents them as unwomanly and masculine. The implication is that first, women lose their essential femininity when engaged in man’s work; second, this makes them undesirable and repulsive; and finally, they have to take on the attitude, behaviour and outlook of the male in order to succeed in their jobs, i.e., as women they would never be efficient conductors. It also implies obliquely that all jobs in the public domain are the prerogative of the male. Lawrence could never accept the idea of women assuming the role and place of men and hence his inherent antipathy towards women conductors.

Inspector John Thomas Raynor is good-looking and tall, but he is also a womanizer who casts his glance on Annie, an epitome of the liberated woman. Thomas is interested only in having an affair and not in establishing a serious
relationship with any woman or committing himself to any single woman. Annie is courageous, self-possessed and economically secure and independent. In other words, she appears to be her own life-manager. But all the same Lawrence has shown that she desires the attention of a man without which her life does not seem complete. However, she wants something beyond sex. She is thus different from Elsie in “The White Stocking,” Mrs. Thomas in “The Old Adam,” Frances in “Second Best,” Miss Mary and Miss Louise in “Doctors of the Vicar” who are primarily motivated by sex in their relationships.

Thomas evades commitment and desires relationship without responsibility. He remains a “nocturnal presence” in Annie’s life (318). But Annie wants to be recognized as a human being and seeks a long-term partner who will respect her individuality and provide emotional security. Her ego is shattered when Thomas abandons her after a while. It is, indeed, a severe blow to her womanhood as constructed by Lawrence. But she will not take it lying down and decides to inflict a befitting lesson. So she enlists the help of Thomas’s former sweethearts to punish and humiliate him for his promiscuity. Annie’s resourceful determination is revealed in her capacity to organize people but the fact remains that they are all Thomas’s former sweethearts chagrined by his rejection. One Sunday evening they trap him in a room at the depot and subject him to friendly taunts and humiliation that gradually turn visceral.

As in Woolf’s “A Society” and “A Woman’s College from Outside” in “Tickets, Please” too, we find the significance and the need of women bonding in order to empower themselves and elicit justice. Annie dares to punish Thomas
because she is able to muster the solidarity of other women. However, Lawrence projects this bonding as negative because all the women, including Annie, seek vengeance for being jilted and so their sorority is temporary, driven by hurt ego and deployed for negative purpose. After the incident Annie is made to feel a curious sense of loss of her femininity.

The major impulse behind the attack on Thomas is to force him to choose one of the women, to distinguish between them as individuals because Thomas has for so long treated them merely as sex objects. The way the women conductors seek vengeance is masculine – verbal and physical abuse. So there is a temporary role reversal during the attack. But this appropriation of male behaviour is deftly used by Lawrence to throw the women back to their feminine selves as at the end of the encounter each of them ends up with a peculiar sense of loss and a suppressed desire to be Thomas’s chosen one. The desire to be recognised by a man even in women who will not take ill treatment lying down, shows that their ultimate happiness lies in being recognized by a man. It reiterates Kate Millett’s statement that Lawrence has conveyed his masculine message through a feminine consciousness (242). To Lawrence sexual dominance becomes a metaphor for other forms of dominance. He feels that the new woman in other words, the liberated woman can be mastered in bed as everywhere else. Such notions, as Kate Millett rightly points out, could and did become, in Lawrence’s hand superb instruments for the perfect subjugation of women (242).

Like the daring Annie, Miss Stokes in “Monkey Nuts”, too, takes a bold initiative to realize her love. Going against conventional stereotypes, Miss Stokes
takes the initiative in wooing and winning the reluctant Joe. Joe and Albert are always referred to by their Christian names but Miss Stokes remains Miss Stokes. It iterates the reversal of sexual hierarchy as she is designated as superior to the two men. She has an ironic, detached attitude towards her desire for Joe; it is a kind of desire which is generally associated with men. And it is clear that Joe is not merely physically attractive to her; his humbleness and pliant nature arrest her attention. She places Joe in the unusual position of a man subjected to explicit female sexual attention. This *counter gaze* of the female empowers her and helps her to get an insider’s view of how the forces of patriarchy work. Generally a woman is looked upon as a sexual object and she interiorizes this perception as with Elsie in “The White Stocking” but here *female gaze* is directed at a man, implying a possible commodification (which would however, be reversed by Lawrence later in the story). Initially, Albert is flummoxed by his friend’s nonchalant attitude towards Miss Stokes’s overtures but when he realises that the reluctant Joe is being coerced by Miss Stokes into submission he tries his best to win back his friend. There is, however, an element of jealousy in Albert’s attempt as he too, desires to be perceived as attractive by Miss Stokes. His male ego is wounded and the inherent competition between two men for the female attention comes to the fore.

Joe’s shy attitude disheartens Miss Stokes but she is most disturbed when one day at the appointed hour Joe sends Albert to meet her:

*Where’s Joe?*

‘He thought *you’d like a change*: they say *variety’s the salt of life* – that’s why I’m mostly in pickle.’
‘Where is he?’

‘Am I my brother’s keeper? He’s gone his own ways.’

‘Where?’

‘Nay, how am to know? Not so far but he’ll be back for supper.’

She stopped in the middle of the lane. He stopped facing her.

‘Where’s Joe?’ she asked.

‘He is not conducting the service to-night: he asked me if I’d officiate.’ (353; emphasis mine)

The highlighted phrases expose Albert’s perception that women like Miss Stokes are not committed lovers and change partners whenever the opportunity arises. Lawrence uses such expressions to demean her sincerity and steadfastness. It is also clear that Albert does not wish to reveal the details of Joe’s whereabouts. He is simultaneously distressful of Miss Stokes and yet desires her. His attitude to Joe is similarly ambivalent – both envious and protective. It is a classic instance of transferring the guilt on to the woman – Miss Stokes’s love initiative is projected as a disruptive force visa-a-vis male bonding and categorized as brazen lust through Albert’s speech replete with sexual innuendoes and lewd suggestions.

In “Tickets, Please”, Lawrence shows that though the girls have beaten and battered Thomas, they are all eager to be wooed and won by Thomas:

‘I wouldn’t touch him,’ she [Annie] said.

But her face quivered with a kind of agony, she seemed as if she would fall. The other girls turned aside….

‘Oh, if he’s chosen’ – said Polly.
‘I don’t want him – he can choose again,’ said Annie, with the same rather bitter hopelessness.

‘Get up,’ said Polly, lifting his shoulder. ‘Get up.’

He rose slowly, a strange, ragged, dazed creature. The girls eyed him from a distance, *curiously, furtively, dangerously.*

‘Who wants him?’ cried Laura, roughly.

‘Nobody,’ they answered, with contempt. *Yet each one of them waited for him to look at her, hoped he would look at her.* All except Annie, and something was broken in her. (324; emphasis mine)

The concluding sentences suggest that every woman’s ingrained impulse is to be considered as sexually alluring and their instinctive overt masculine behaviour is a mere façade used to disguise their heterosexual desires and vulnerability to male dominance. In “Tickets, Please” Lawrence’s treatment of working women is rather complex. He begins with an uncharitable description of the women, labels their freedom as brazenness, mannish and unattractive. He goes on to depict their power, particularly organized power as capable of avenging itself against male ill-treatment of women as sexual objects. But this is ultimately presented as a veneer which hides the pining for male attention, as evidenced in the furtive and dangerous glances at Thomas. Thus Lawrence reiterates in various forms, through his works, a sexual stereotype of the essential female who, despite all posturing, finds sublimation solely in her commodification as a sexual object.

Miss Stokes opts for the more pliant male hoping to control him.

Joe is hesitant and apprehensive when faced by the domineering Miss Stokes.

Albert fails to impress Miss Stokes with his aggressiveness but succeeds in breaking
off the relationship. It is his vengeance on Miss Stokes for ignoring him. Miss Stokes’s final attempt to wrest Joe away from Albert is in vain,

She faced up at the truck where the two men stood.

‘Joe!’ she called,

‘What?’ he turned unwillingly.

Joe was crouching already to jump off the truck to obey her, when Albert put his hand on his shoulder.

‘Half a minute, boy! Where are you off? Work’s work, and nuts is nuts. You stop here.’

Joe slowly straightened himself.

‘Joe?’ came the woman’s clear call from below.

Again Joe looked at her. But Albert’s hand was on his shoulder, detaining him….

‘Take your hand off him, you!’ said Miss Stokes.

‘Yes’ Major,’ retorted Albert satirically.

She stood and watched.

‘Joe!’ Her voice rang for the third time.

Joe turned and looked at her, and a slow, jeering smile gathered on his face. (354)

This is a variation of the triangular conflict of love and power instanced in several short stories of Lawrence discussed earlier but the first where persons of opposite sex fight over a male. Predictably, the domineering woman loses to the domineering male. Joe’s indecisiveness replaced by the “jeering smile” helps Albert to achieve the double victory of depriving Miss Stokes and repossessing Joe. Both
female and male bonding act as disruptive forces in the stories discussed so far but while the former is projected as negative, the latter is endorsed by Lawrence since it rescues Joe from loss of sexual identity and prevents him from playing the woman to Miss Stokes’s dominant persona. Ironically, he ends up playing the same role with Albert who supposedly restores Joe to the male world of companionship and camaraderie but effeminizes him in the process by making him succumb meekly to Albert’s diktat.

Like the girls in “Tickets, Please,” Miss Stokes’s individuality is bolstered by her uniform which has a desexualising effect on both. The uniform helps her to muster courage and act as an equal to men. This is underscored in Albert’s first vision of Miss Stokes:

So he saw a young woman approaching him. She was wearing a wide hat of grey straw and a loose, swinging dress of nigger-grey velvet. She walked with slow inevitability. Albert faltered a little as he approached her. Then he saluted her, and his roguish, slightly withered skin flushed. She was staring straight into his face. (352; emphasis mine)

The highlighted sections show Miss Stokes’s forthrightness as well as Albert’s awkwardness and discomfort in the presence of a smart, confident and self-possessed woman. It also indicates a role reversal as Miss Stokes upstages Albert with dress and deportment.

“The Fox,” a novella, is a testimony to power. It is about the incursion of Henry, a soldier, into the lives of two independent women. In “The Fox” Lawrence
presents a soldier who breaks up an already established relationship between two women by simultaneously wooing March and Banford. We have observed a similar situation in “Mother and Daughter” where two emancipated aging women pursue the same man Arnault with the aim of being sublimated through subservience.

In “The Fox,” the soldier’s ultimate aim of subjugating and possessing the women proves successful. Here too, the uniform acts as a liberating agent for the women but only as long as it is not confronted by male gaze. March, habituated to shorts and shirts, becomes acutely embarrassed of her desexualized attire in Henry’s presence. She is extremely self-conscious of her exposed knee and feels ashamed to sit down in front of him. The focus on the uniform as an indicator of identity initially suggests that it provides women courage and confidence by effecting a desexualisation. But the effect proves superficial and temporary when subjected to male gaze suggesting that essential femininity of these uniformed women can never be obliterated.

Such fictional representation of women is in stark contrast to his advocacy of complementarity of the sexes in his letter to McLead, “I think the one thing to do, is for men to have courage to draw nearer to women, expose themselves to them, and be altered by them: and for women to accept and admit men. That is the only way for art and civilization to get a new life, a new start…” (qtd. in Steele xxvi). Some of the pre-War stories hold forth such ideas to some extent as in “The Shades of Spring,” “A Modern Lover” and in the Mining stories discussed here. In these stories, women are vested with feelings, personality and individuality to a considerable extent especially in the domestic sphere. This is mostly attributed to
their superior class affiliations although they are not economically independent. The post-War stories acquaint us with liberated and independent women almost always capitulating to patriarchal hegemony. Very subtly, and in a variety of ways, Lawrence shows, specially in “Mother and Daughter,” “The Blue Moccasins,” “You Touched Me,” “Tickets, Please,” “Monkey Nuts,” how all women – independent, autonomous or otherwise – must and do find happiness only when subservient to the male. This volte face vis-a-vis the presentation of women may be traced to the germs of male chauvinism embedded in Lawrence. His antagonism towards liberated and assertive women is indicated by their submission. What upsets him most is that the women in whom he had placed much of his hope for the future have merely become more like men. He envisages women’s independence, freedom and the new order purely spiritual, mental and essentially feminine. Like all middle class men he is afraid of militancy, especially female militancy. This fear needs to be contextualized against the post-War trauma when much of the middle class dreams, illusions and their sense of social and political power are shattered. No longer the masters of the world they live in, they still nurture the dreams of returning to former glory. So the attention turns inward to the family and the weaker sex as new sites for exercising power. Female insubordination becomes the symbol of social anarchy and has to be subjugated ruthlessly to keep the world in order. Lawrence is the literary expression of this phenomenon.

Lawrence’s interaction with a handful of intelligent and progressive women before the Wars and his attachment to his mother makes him initially identify women as agents of change in a moribund socio-political set up. So, he urges men to come closer to and learn from women. This espousal of feminism, although for a
brief period, envisages the equality of sexes only on the theoretical plane
discounting totally its material aspects. Consequently, most of the women characters
of this period are presented in terms of their sexuality although his representation of
this sexuality is primarily heteronormative, yet, occasionally a Hilda in “The Shades
of Spring” or a Mrs. Radford in “Her Turn” do gain a small degree of autonomy and
earn small victories. But the traumatic experience of War, the outcome of the
various feminist movements, the extricating of himself from the influence of his
mother and various women change Lawrence’s view on feminism and sexuality.
Lawrence, initially a latent male chauvinist, becomes an astute sexual politician,
“Lawrence believes passionately in the supremacy of the male” (de Beauvoir, 228-
29).

Lawrence surmises that the militant feminism of the suffragists stressing
political forms of equality negates the romantic and spiritual side of women’s
emancipation. This emphasis on the spiritual rather than the material indicates a
bourgeois impulse which stresses inner liberation within the status quo. His
apprehension regarding militant feminism is also reflected to some extent in Woolf.
Like Lawrence, she, too, is afraid of what she considers radical feminism which
prevents from portraying women as openly assertive, defiant and dominating.

To Lawrence, radical feminism seems a manifestation of perverted will and
idealism. His mother’s hold over him and his physical weakness generated anxieties
about effeminization at a personal level. He counters this perceived threat by
advocating a masculine renaissance premised upon female subjugation. This strain is
more evident in the post-War stories as discussed in this chapter. Masculinity, for
Lawrence, is the assertion and domination of male power while *femininity* denotes gentleness, humility and submission. This desire to exhibit male supremacy predicated on female surrender and submission has invited a lot of flak,

To annihilate the female instability demanding physical satisfaction from the man who cannot give it her – the female who has thus annihilated him – this is Lawrence’s desire. To make her subject again, to re-establish his manhood – this is the secret purpose of *Women in Love*. In imagination, he has his desire. He creates a sexual mastery beyond the phallic, wherein he is the lord; and he makes the woman acknowledge the existence of this ultra-phallic realm, and his own lordship in it. (Middleton Murry, 72)

Sexual revolution, in terms of a change in attitude, and even in psychic structure, is essential to any radical social change. But, as Millett observes, this is far from what Lawrence has in mind,

Lawrence believed that modern man is ineffectual, modern woman a lost creature. The world will only be put right when the male reassures his mastery over the female in that total psychological and sexual domination which alone can offer her the *fulfillment* of her nature. (242; emphasis mine)

In his later life Lawrence is concerned with establishing a sexual hierarchy in place of his former emphasis on balance and relatedness. Lawrence feels that there is a time when we need a feminization of experience and again a time when male supremacy needs to be established and that the post World War period is one such
time. There is more continuity than discontinuity in his chauvinist stance: in the early works there is pleasure for women without death and violence but in his later works these frequently become the preconditions of their sublimation.

The educated, economically independent but self-possessed women of Lawrence’s later fictions instinctively know that ultimate satisfaction lies in enslavement to men. And in such triumphant display of a liberated woman’s secret desire, Lawrence emerges as an anti-feminist although, it is to be admitted that Lawrence is one of the earliest authors to foreground female sexuality and in doing so counters the ethereal, romantic representation of women as above sex. He goes wrong in categorizing female sexuality as primarily heterosexual and by tracing its apotheosis to absolute domination by the male.