

J·D·H·L·S

Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies

Citation details

Article: 'Senses of Touch: Henry Moore, D. H. Lawrence and the First World War'

Author: Jane Costin

Source: *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2014)

Pages: 87–109

Copyright: individual author and the D. H. Lawrence Society.
Quotations from Lawrence's works © The Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli. Extracts and poems from various publications by D. H. Lawrence reprinted by permission of Pollinger Limited (www.pollingerltd.com) on behalf of the Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli.

**A Publication of the
D. H. Lawrence Society of Great Britain**

**SENSES OF TOUCH:
HENRY MOORE, D. H. LAWRENCE AND
THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

JANE COSTIN

In 2001 a mass grave from the First World War was found near Arras. In it were the remains of twenty men, all thought to be from the 10th battalion of the Lincolnshire regiment, one of the “Pals Battalions”. The bodies in this grave are now referred to as the “Grimsby Chums”. These men had all come from the same area, had joined up together, lived in the trenches together and had died together going “over the top” on 9 April 1917, the first day of the battle of Arras.

What is remarkable about this particular war grave is that the bodies have been carefully placed side by side and arm in arm. This unusual positioning of the corpses emphasises the sympathetic connection between them, illuminating that even in death they are together in spirit and in touch with each other. It also shows the strong sense of compassion between the dead soldiers and their living comrades who tenderly placed the bodies to make this compelling statement about the importance of interdependent relationships. In death, as they were in life, these men are sensitively in touch with each other, with those who laid them there and with the soil in which they are placed. This indicates that a sense of touch goes beyond just living human beings and foreshadows D. H. Lawrence’s description of the “threefold relationship” in *A Propos of ‘Lady Chatterley’s Lover’*: “First, there is the relation to the living universe. Then comes the relation of man to woman. Then comes the relation of man to man. And each is a blood-relationship, not mere spirit or mind” (*LCL* 331).¹ Lawrence goes on to lament the death of this relationship, and particularly of the “man to man” relationship. Yet this grave gives

hope that such relationships are not dead and indicates that one of the most fundamental human desires is to be in touch.

Although concern with ideas of touch can be dated back to Plato, as Mark Paterson reminds us, the Enlightenment compounded "the primacy of vision" that Plato instigated and, accordingly, "within an academic climate that celebrates visual culture ... touch remains largely forgotten".² But in more recent years a renewal of interest has prompted the use of the term "haptic" to describe the study of touch and the cutaneous senses which also encompasses an expanded understanding of ideas of touch. However, my use of the term haptic here is confined to its traditional meaning of "related to or based on the sense of touch" and is not intended to convey the wider meanings explored by writers such as Abbie Garrington.³

An emphasis on the haptic is often seen as a common response to the trauma of the First World War, as evidenced in the work of many artists of that time, such as Stanley Spencer and John Singer Sargent. Nevertheless, when thinking of the haptic some striking similarities between Lawrence and Henry Moore suggest links between these two particular artists, which have not been fully explored and, moreover, the two existing comparative studies are both difficult to access and limited to exploring representations of the feminine.⁴ By contrast, this essay is more concerned with what Lawrence described as the "the relation of man to man" (*LCL* 331) and, more specifically, with the influence of Lawrence on Moore and how both men were touched by the First World War.

As both artists drew on their life experiences as an inspiration for their work, the essay begins by drawing attention to some similarities in their backgrounds, with particular emphasis on Moore since it is assumed that readers of this journal will be less familiar with his background and artistic influences. The focus then moves to the connections between *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and some of Moore's later sculptures that can be seen as his developing response to the war. This leads to the suggestion that these two artists moved beyond the idea of sympathetic touch as

simply a reaction to the horrors of the First World War, to present an emphasis on the haptic as a remedy for the even greater catastrophe they perceived: the fragmentation of the modern world that instigated that war.

There is a tendency to regard Moore as a post-World War Two artist because that was the era of his most widespread fame and many people alive today remember his death in 1986. Yet Moore was born in 1898, just thirteen years after Lawrence, so he can be regarded as Lawrence's contemporary. There is no evidence that the two artists had any direct contact. But Moore records that in the late 1920s he "began reading with 'excitement' the novels of D. H. Lawrence and ... began to modify some of [his] own ideas on art",⁵ and Roger Berthoud notes that Moore acknowledged Lawrence as one of the writers who had a "considerable influence" on his work.⁶

We also know something of how Lawrence viewed sculpture as an expression of the society in which it was produced. This is perhaps most clearly revealed in *Women in Love* (1920), which contains many references to sculpture, including Lawrence's striking descriptions of two very different sculptures that act to illuminate the contrast he saw between the older, dark and instinctive knowledge that was in harmony with nature and the modern emphasis on mechanisation and the triumph over nature. The first such sculpture is the "dark wood, glossy" West African statuette of a "tall, slim, elegant" woman that Birkin remembers seeing at Halliday's flat, describing her as "one of his soul's intimates" with "thousands of years of purely sensual, purely unspiritual knowledge behind her" (WL 253). Later, we are told of Loerke's frieze for a granite factory that he is carving in granite. This choice of stone hints either at inexperience or a grim determination to master nature because granite is a notoriously difficult stone to work, particularly with much fine detail, since it is extremely hard and coarse (something Moore learned early in his career, keeping his efforts as a reminder). Nevertheless, Loerke's "colossal" frieze as described by Gudrun, another sculptor, is reminiscent of Mark Gertler's painting *Merry-Go-Round* (1916): "It

was a representation of a fair, with peasants and artizans in an orgy of enjoyment, drunk and absurd in their modern dress, whirling ridiculously in roundabouts" (WL 423).⁷ In contrast to the sensuousness of the African statuette, Loerke's sculpture exalts the mechanisation of modern life by showing how man should work, how "the machine works him instead of he the machine", an expression of Loerke's creed that "Art should *interpret* industry, as art once interpreted religion" (WL 424, original emphasis).

However, beyond these generalised affinities between Moore and Lawrence there are more specific similarities in the two artists' backgrounds. Although born miles apart in different counties (Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire), Lawrence and Moore were both the sons of coalminers who were distanced from their fathers.⁸ Both men also acknowledged that they had overly close relationships with their domineering mothers, which developed into a key theme in their work.⁹ As children they developed a keen interest in the natural world and spent much of their free time wandering around the countryside and helping with the work at nearby farms. But, as was normal at that time, they were brought up within strictly defined parameters of sexual identity. Moore explains:

In the mining area where I was brought up, you had to look tough and manly, which meant you had to have a girlfriend. If you didn't, you were thought cissy ... If you got to about ten or eleven and didn't have a girlfriend, you were looked upon as if there was something wrong with you.¹⁰

This confinement later led both artists to rebel against orthodox conformity through their work. Lawrence's determination to express freely all aspects of sexuality is well-known, as are his resulting battles with the censors. But, in view of his later popularity, it is less appreciated that Moore's early sculptures, which presented "unrealistic" images that challenged traditional thinking about figurative sculpture, provoked such fierce hostility

that calls were made for him to be sacked from his teaching position.¹¹

Moore's lifelong fascination with words initially led to his plans to become a writer and, like Lawrence, he expressed himself in different forms, writing plays and essays as well as poetry, which he regarded as "the biggest and most marvellous of human activities". But Moore recognised that both poetry and sculpture could enable people "to express their feelings about life, about nature and about their response to the world" – and Moore chose sculpture.¹² Nevertheless, literature continued to have considerable importance for Moore: for example, he acknowledged that books he had read – including those by Lawrence – had a greater impact on his life than painting or sculpture: "I think that people with a gift for words have had the biggest influence of all our past ... the one thing that we've got that allows us to exchange ideas and help each other are words".¹³ By his early twenties, Moore had read all of Lawrence's published works and his library confirms that this interest in Lawrence's writing was maintained throughout his life.¹⁴ Furthermore, Moore was a prolific, yet careful, writer who took pains to shape his language to best convey his ideas in order to touch his reader.¹⁵

However, perhaps of more significance is Lawrence's and Moore's common belief in the religious power of art to put human beings back in touch with each other and with their world. Neither man can be described as religious in an orthodox sense, but they shared a strong, wider sense of religious belief which they saw as inherent to their art. Lawrence expressed the connection he saw between religion and art as early as 1913: "I often think one ought to be able to pray, before one works – and then leave it to the Lord ... One has to be so terribly religious, to be an artist" (*IL* 519). Thereafter he repeatedly emphasised the religious dimension of art, for example in his claims that "The business of art is to reveal the relation between man and his circumambient universe at the living moment" (*STH* 171) and "An artist *can* only create what he really religiously *feels* is truth, religious truth really *felt*" (*P* 562, original

emphasis). These sentiments are echoed in statements Moore made in the 1960s:

I believe that art itself is akin to religion, art is, in fact, another expression of the belief that life is worth living – and that is what religion is basically about ... all good art is religious ... All art is religious in a sense that no artist would work unless he believed that there was something in life worth glorifying. This is what art is about.¹⁶

Both Lawrence and Moore were also fascinated by the very different culture associated with Mexico and made visits there.¹⁷ Lawrence's trip to Mexico in 1923 was bound up with a desire to explore his ideas of blood-consciousness and he drew heavily on his experiences in Mexico for his novel *The Plumed Serpent* (1926). Although Moore was influenced by Lawrence's novel, he was not able to visit Mexico for many years. However, Moore was inspired by the photographs he saw of primitive Mexican sculpture, his visits to exhibitions of Mexican art at the British Museum and, in particular, by his visit to Paris in 1925 when he saw a plaster replica of a Chac Mool,¹⁸ later acknowledging that "Pre-Columbian Mexican sculpture has been the most important single influence in my own sculpture".¹⁹

However, when thinking about the haptic, it was both artists' exposure to another style of primitive art, that of the Etruscans, that is of particular interest. Lawrence visited various Etruscan sites in April 1927 and recorded his experiences in *Sketches of Etruscan Places* and, as James C. Cowan's article 'Lawrence and Touch' points out, although Lawrence explores ideas of touch in earlier works it was his trip to the painted tombs in Tarquinia that was instrumental in revitalising his interest in touch.²⁰ For Lawrence saw in those grave paintings a powerful depiction of the haptic, which led to the important distinction he made between touch and contact:

That again is one of the charms of the etruscan paintings: they really have the sense of touch; the people and the creatures are all really in touch. It is one of the rarest qualities, in life as well as in art. There is plenty of pawing and laying hold, but no real touch. In pictures especially, the people may be in contact, embracing or laying hands on one another. But there is no soft flow of touch ... Here, in this faded etruscan painting, there is a quiet flow of touch that unites the man and the woman on the couch, the timid boy behind, the dog that lifts his nose, even the very garlands that hang from the wall. (*SEP* 54)

Lawrence's revived interest in the significance of the haptic underlies his novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which we know Moore read together with a 1933 edition of Lawrence's book on the Etruscans (Moore also saw exhibitions of Etruscan art at the British Museum). Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that Lawrence, whose work offers a "vast ... catalogue of haptic material", helped to instigate Moore's interest in touch, which, as we will see later, is perhaps most clearly seen in his family group sculptures.²¹

Nevertheless, one of the most significant outside influences on both artists was the First World War. Lawrence was bitterly opposed to the war from the start and was a non-combatant (not that he was fit enough to join the military as subsequent medical examinations proved when conscription was introduced). But he battled in novels such as *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to convey his full sense of horror about the war. In contrast, Moore fought in the trenches; he was sent to Arras in August 1917 before taking part in the battle for Cambrai just a few kilometres away. He was lucky to survive his first battle as the majority of his comrades did not, but he suffered serious injuries to his lungs from having been gassed. Moore was sent back to England to recover and although, like Lawrence, he made light of his disabilities, he suffered from lung problems for the rest of his life.

Whilst the two artists' war experiences were very different, their art shows a similar horror of the war, albeit expressed in contrasting

ways. Lawrence openly and vociferously opposed the war from the start as can be seen in his letters and, although not published until 1920, the final version of *Women in Love* was written during the war and was intended to show the bitterness of war. His evident hostility to the war was a long-lasting aspect of Lawrence's writing that has attracted much critical interest.²² As Doris Lessing's introduction to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* makes clear, "This novel is permeated with the First World War, the horror of it, like so much of his work".²³ But Moore did not voice any public opposition to the war until many years after it ended. It was around 1920 before Moore even felt able to briefly confide to a close friend about "the great bloodshed and the pain, the insufferable agony and the depravity, the tears and the human devilishness of war", and throughout his life Moore remained reluctant to discuss the war.²⁴

This resistance to talking about the war was characteristic of soldiers of Moore's generation, and many ex-soldiers, like Lessing's father, regarded it as "The Great Unmentionable".²⁵ Soldiers who felt unable to touch on their memories of that time responded by denying their feelings. This emotional isolation was compounded by societal constraints that equated emotion to weakness and the "feminine", to the extent that shell-shock was seen as a "feminising" disease. Therefore, reminiscent of the tin masks that war casualties used to hide their facial deformities, men who survived the unimaginably terrible conditions of trench warfare presented a false face to the world, concealing any emotion. But Sarah Cole considers that this distinctive silence was also indicative of a wider "brokenness" in society, whereby "the soldier's emblematic silence, a product of modernity's attack on the human person, resonates as an emblem of the culture's broader narrative disabilities".²⁶

Viewed in this light, Moore's art would seem to express what he could not articulate in words: the horror of the war that is epitomised by isolation. Predominantly the faces of his figures are blank, showing no emotion and, characteristically, there is no visual contact between figures in his group sculptures, not even between

mother and child. Nevertheless, it is possible to determine a turn towards the haptic in some of Moore's later work. Comparing two of Moore's sculptures, a reclining figure and a family group, suggests the development of his thinking about touch and hints at Lawrence's influence on Moore.

Moore's reclining figures are challenging because, as many commentators have noted, they are inevitably female, suggesting the strength of his mother's influence, and yet they also reflect Moore's war experience amongst men. Therefore this conflation of the war with representations of his mother's body suggests the violation of the war and makes an even more powerful statement about how the horror of the war touched Moore. As mentioned earlier, Moore attributed the vacant expressions of his reclining figures to his fascination with the replica of the Chac Mool, but this blankness also reflects the emotional isolation typical of ex-soldiers and Jeremy Lewison points out that this lack of expression was reminiscent of "Clifford Chatterley or Oliver Mellors in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* whose exposure to war left them unable to feel".²⁷ Indeed, in later figures Moore increasingly emphasises this disconnection between the figure and the surrounding world – including the viewer – in the way he shapes the figure's head. In some instances the head becomes little more than an abstract shape; the lack of facial features denying the viewer any easy connection with the figure.²⁸ In other sculptures, possibly in an allusion to the war, the head resembles a helmet, perhaps suggesting a need for defence or the injured soldier's tin masks. But a helmet or mask also indicates the figure's desire to be out of touch and isolated from the horrors of the outside world.

This sense of detachment is also accentuated by the body posture of Moore's figures which lie on their backs as if drawing away from the viewer, their seemingly passive state emphasising their lack of engagement. This sense of isolation is even more pronounced in Moore's reclining figures from the mid-1930s onwards. The figures become almost nightmarish, which draws attention to the potentially damaging effects of a lack of touch. As

can be seen in Figure 3, Moore hollowed out the ribcages of some of his reclining figures as if to emphasise the damage to the lungs caused by gas attacks, something that is also suggested by his comment: "When I carve into the chest, I feel as if I were carving into my own".²⁹



Figure 3: Henry Moore, *Reclining Figure*, 1938 (LH 192).
Reproduced by permission of The Henry Moore Foundation.

This sculpture is characteristic of Moore's later reclining figures which are dehumanised by their lack of facial features. As Berthoud suggests, the shape of their bodies alludes to the war, the torso being reminiscent of the injured bodies Moore saw in France, or the bomb craters Moore saw on the battlefields; some are even pierced with holes to suggest a physical assault on the body that renders it permanently damaged.³⁰ These figures are also uncanny reminders of the victims of gas attacks, whose suffering isolates them from

their comrades and their surroundings. Mary Britnieva's account of the gas-injured soldiers she nursed not only brings to mind Moore's sculptures, but also highlights the men's horrific isolation, a situation Britnieva found more harrowing than watching men die:

They lay on their backs mainly, their upturned faces terribly swollen and livid – some almost blue – choking and coughing, their blood-shot eyes protruding, unable to utter a word, yet fully conscious, only their eyes and their occasional spasmodic feeble movements proclaiming the supreme agony that they were enduring ... We felt utterly helpless, there was no remedy, we were powerless.³¹

Thus Moore's reclining figures suggest how gassed soldiers were forcibly put out of touch and Singer Sargent's painting *Gassed* (1919) makes a similar statement, providing a graphic impression of how a gas attack isolated its victims.³² But, remarkably, this painting also shows how the gas attack reveals an instinctive sense of touch between the soldiers. In this scene of hellish pandemonium a line of gassed men moves through a collage of other injured soldiers lying on the ground while another such line can be seen in the distance. The men are blinded, stumbling onwards, their eyes bandaged. Yet, as in Lawrence's short story 'The Blind Man' (1920), this enforced blindness seems to have instigated the revitalisation of a sense of touch between them and also between them and what remains of their world. Those sitting down are in contact with the earth and are so closely in touch with each other that it is difficult to see where one body starts or ends. Santanu Das's description of the painting also draws attention to Singer Sargent's striking use of light, which connects this painting to literature of the time:

Ten blindfolded soldiers move haltingly in a single file across the twenty foot canvas ... each touching the man in front. What each soldier perceives is what the hand feels – rucksack, rifle or

the rough uniform-clad body in front ... The sense of touch defines space and guides the rhythm of their movement, as if new eyes have opened at the tip of the fingers ... the human subject is cast as a set of anxious, vulnerable limbs, groping in a dark world ... The most striking feature in the painting is the strange use of light: the spectacle of blindness is represented through the drama of chiaroscuro. The trance-like figures seem to be moving in an imaginary space amidst the scattered light, as if replaying a scene from one of the traumatic war-dreams that haunt First World War writings.³³

Das points out how this sense of touch developed between men who endured the unimaginably awful conditions of trench warfare. He suggests that soldiers, groping their way around in the dark in what was more cesspit than mud, deprived of most physical comforts and shadowed by death, developed a sympathetic connection between themselves as a human response to the horror they faced.

Singer Sargent's painting thus resonates with Lawrence's short story 'The Blind Man' where it is suggested that Maurice's blindness – the result of injuries sustained from fighting in the First World War – has instigated, or revitalised, this crucial sense of touch. The tale centres on a visit made by Bertie Reid, a barrister (and so it is assumed a non-combatant), to his distant cousin Isobel and her husband, Maurice. But, in a reversal of what might be expected, Lawrence shows Maurice's life as having been enriched by his blindness as it has put him more in touch with his wife and surroundings. Suggesting that "Maurice's lack of sight has connected him to the tactile", Garrington usefully compares Maurice with the blind man in James Joyce's *Ulysses* whose existence is diminished by his blindness and concludes that "The disability of the story is not Maurice's blindness, but Bertie's inability to connect through touch".³⁴ This perhaps suggests that it is only Bertie's lack of combat experience that puts him out of touch, but the story actually has a far more profound message,

because it reveals the important connection between the haptic and Lawrence's ideas of blood-consciousness.³⁵

Several critics have recognised this connection, including Das though he declines to explore this further because his interest lies elsewhere.³⁶ However, Michael L. Ross explains the story in the context of Lawrence's oft-quoted letter to Bertrand Russell about blood-consciousness (2L 470–1), observing that in "the way it links together darkness, blood-knowledge and sexuality, it strongly foreshadows the path he would follow in 'The Blind Man'".³⁷ Furthermore, Ross views the story as "a programmatic recasting of Lawrence's letter to Russell about blood-consciousness", and goes on to explain how "Throughout 'The Blind Man' Lawrence objectifies his abstract and highly personal theory of blood-consciousness by embodying it in a convincingly imagined fictional situation".³⁸ Nils Claussens's analysis of this story makes a similar link and clarifies the connection between touch and blood-consciousness: "Maurice's new mode of consciousness is figured through touch, especially in the darkness, and consists of an unmediated experience of otherness ... Blood-consciousness is like the immediacy of touch in darkness, in contrast to sight, which depends on light".³⁹

Thus Claussens also draws attention to how Lawrence shows, both in the letter to Russell and this short story, the polarities he perceives between sight and light on one hand and darkness and blood-consciousness on the other. Garrington's discussion of this story avoids blood-consciousness, but she recognises Lawrence's depiction of touch as "a counterpoint or, more properly, a corrective to what the author views as a specious valorisation of the visual sense", and briefly comments on Lawrence's opposition to "the unimpeachable kodak" (STH 164).⁴⁰ However, Stefania Michelucci explores this point more carefully to explain how Lawrence was opposed to the "Kodak idea" because he saw it as responsible for putting humankind out of touch: "For Lawrence, the Kodak image of the surrounding world represses and distorts our instinctual approach to life; it is a source of division not only between man and

the outer world, but also within the human psyche itself'.⁴¹ This suggests that Lawrence's "threefold relationship" has been broken by modern life – an important theme in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which makes a powerful argument for the importance of the haptic by depicting those who are out of touch. This prefigures Moore's bleak emphasis in his strikingly detached reclining figures. Beyond the war-induced blankness that Lewison suggests, Moore's sculptures make a powerful statement which – like Lawrence's novel – is all about the lack of sympathetic connection in the modern world. Moore's sculptures and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* both depict the plight of people who are disconnected and living in a broken world. They have retreated into a shell-like isolation, surviving by trying to create an impenetrable barrier between themselves and the outside world. They have no sense of touch.⁴²

From the very start of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence portrays a lack of connection as characteristic of the modern world. He emphasises how everything is broken and disjointed, "we are among the ruins ... skies have fallen", and dwells on Clifford's emotional detachment from society: "Having suffered so much, the capacity for suffering had to some extent left him ... in his face one saw the watchful look, the slight vacancy too ... he had been so much hurt, something inside him had perished, some of his feelings were gone" (*LCL* 6). The reader, like Lewison, might assume that Clifford's blankness is war-induced, a result of being "shipped home smashed".⁴³ But Lawrence emphasises that although the war was a contributory factor, it was not the root of the problem, the greater horror was the inherent disconnection in society. Everything was out of touch. In describing Clifford's father, although Lawrence is unable to resist voicing a personal opinion, this acts to emphasise Sir Geoffrey's isolation: "So cut off he was, so divorced from the England that was really England, so utterly incapable, that he even thought well of Horatio Bottomley" (*LCL* 11). In describing Clifford's background Lawrence draws attention to this detachment:

The Chatterleys, two brothers and a sister, had lived curiously isolated, shut in with one another at Wragby ... They were cut off from the industrial Midlands in which they passed their lives. And they were cut off from their own class by the brooding, obstinate, shut-up nature of Sir Geoffrey. (*LCL* 12)

Lawrence's subsequent repetition of the phrase "gulf impassable" emphasises the lack of connection between the inhabitants of Wragby Hall and those who live in Tevershall village. Lawrence stresses there was "no communication" between them and that there was an ethos of "You stick to your side, I'll stick to mine!", which he acknowledges is "A strange denial of the common pulse of humanity" (*LCL* 14). Thus Lawrence demonstrates how human life was being impoverished because modern life lacked this vital sense of touch and he refutes the easy assumption that this was something that had been solely instigated by the effects of the war.

Describing Connie's relationship with Clifford, Lawrence makes the same point. While, initially, Connie wants to be in touch with her injured husband – she "stuck to him passionately" (*LCL* 15) – she finds this increasingly difficult as she becomes aware that the disjointed life he offers her is fundamentally wrong. Connie quickly recognises that Clifford is not just physically broken by the war, but is also psychologically damaged by modern society and has become "cut-off" from everything:

He was not in touch. He was not in actual touch with anything or anybody ... nothing really touched him. Connie felt that she herself didn't really, not really touch him. She had never finally got at him: perhaps there was nothing to get at, ultimately: just a negation of human contact ... bodily they were non-existent to one another ... They were so intimate, and utterly out of touch. (*LCL* 16–18)

Whilst Connie recognises that her physical connection to Clifford is broken, the inference is that this points to a more fundamental disconnection in society: as Cole suggests, "Clifford's injured body becomes a metaphor and catalyst for a psychic and spiritual breakdown among his class".⁴⁴

However, in an echo of Kate in *The Plumed Serpent*, Connie recognises that she needs to change her life. She acknowledges that her life with Clifford was "like the simulacrum of reality" (*LCL* 18). Connie regards the wood as "her one refuge, her sanctuary", but, in an allusion to Lawrence's "threefold relationship", she acknowledges that she is also out of touch with the natural world: "She never really touched the spirit of the wood itself ... she knew she was out of connection: she had lost touch with the substantial and vital world" (*LCL* 20). This is the important difference between Connie and Clifford. Their problems are not so much about his physical disabilities and inability to father a child, but about the loss of Lawrence's "threefold relationship". Connie knows that she has lost touch, whereas Clifford was never in touch.

Das also recognises that Lawrence's ideas of touch extended beyond the relationships between soldiers in the trenches and identifies how he saw the revitalisation of the haptic as something that could combat the ills of modern society: "Lawrence ecstatically and passionately championed the sense of touch as the supreme of senses; to him it could rescue modern man from his cerebral, industrial crust, and put him back in contact with his inner sensuous being".⁴⁵ This is perhaps most evident in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* when Mellors suggests that developing a sense of touch was a necessary remedy for the ills of modern life in England: "it's touch we're afraid of. We're only half conscious, and half alive. We've got to come alive and aware. Especially the English have got to get in touch with one another, a bit delicate and a bit tender. It's our crying need" (*LCL* 277). I suggest that it is this sense of touch in Lawrence's later work that made such a profound impression on Moore's thinking that he translated it into his work. For whilst Moore's reclining figures from the 1930s express the nightmare of

a lack of the haptic, his later family groups from the 1950s suggest a new sense of harmony between the figures who are in touch with each other, as can be seen in a family group sculpture that was commissioned by Harlow Town Council and first unveiled in 1956.⁴⁶



Figure 4: Henry Moore, *Harlow Family Group*, 1954–55 (LH 364).
Reproduced by permission of The Henry Moore Foundation.

In *Harlow Family Group*, in marked contrast to the isolation of *Reclining Figure* (1938), the figures are all in touch with each other and their world. The male and female figures sit side by side on a bench with a child sitting on a blanket draped over the adults' knees, a softness that connects them all. The male is in touch with the female, his arm resting lightly on her shoulder in a friendly gesture. The female holds the child, but the child also touches the female and underneath the connecting blanket the legs of the male and female are touching. The child sits not on the female's lap – as might be expected – but between the adults and in touch with both. The sex of the child is not clarified, perhaps suggesting the need for a universality of touch in future generations. The child and the female also both clasp a package that obscures the child legs, as if rooting it with the family.

This sculpture would seem to show a development of the thinking that underpins Moore's reclining figures. The expressions seem calm rather than blank and although not joyous, in an era now dominated by the tensions of the Cold War, this perhaps suggests uncertainty about the future. This hesitancy also marks the ending of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, where there is no happy resolution. The two lovers are parted and Mellors writes a long letter to Connie in the hope that his flow of words can make the sympathetic connection with her. But there is no convincing vision of an optimistic future. Although Mellors ends his letter with "a hopeful heart", there is no disguising the ambiguity that pervades it. He tries to comfort Connie, assuring her that they "Fucked a flame into being" (LCL 301). But that very metaphor also conveys the fragility of that flame of hope that could be so easily snuffed out.

Yet, throughout this novel, there is also the suggestion that re-establishing Lawrence's "threefold relationship" could revitalise the modern world and that a renewed emphasis on the haptic could help bring about the new world that Lawrence had sought for so long. Whilst Lawrence had lamented the death of this relationship and particularly of the man to man relationship, Singer Sargent's painting *Gassed* and the discovery of the "Grimsby Chums" had

offered some hope that the war had acted *in extremis* to uncover and encourage the instinctive connections between men that had been suppressed by modern society. But the aftermath of that horrific event was that men were left even more out of touch, with each other and with the fragmented communities in which they lived, as is vividly described in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and evidenced both by Moore's reluctance to talk about the war and his creation of reclining figures. Thus, bearing in mind Lawrence's acknowledged influence on Moore and the many links between them, it is perhaps unsurprising that both artists move beyond ideas of sympathetic touch as a response to the war. Work like Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Moore's *Harlow Family Group* show the artists extending concerns beyond the man to man relationship towards the re-establishment of the "threefold relationship". This emphasis on the haptic as a solution to the even greater tragedy they perceived of the more general disconnect in society which had instigated that war, thus reveals the affinity between two artists who believed that the power of a sense of touch could help to mend the broken world in which they lived.

Acknowledgements: My thanks go to Michael Phipps of The Henry Moore Foundation for his interest in my work, the details he provided about other work in this area and Moore's reading, and for sharing his doubts about any connections between Moore's *Harlow Family Group* and Lawrence's painting *The Holy Family*.

¹ Also see Yi-Fu Tuan, 'The Pleasures of Touch', in *The Book of Touch*, ed. Constance Classen (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 75, for an exploration of a passage from *Women in Love* that discusses Birkin being in touch with nature through his skin.

² Mark Paterson, *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 1.

³ Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013).

⁴ Both studies are held by the Henry Moore Institute but are not currently available for study (October 2014). Joyce Dallaportas's Ph.D.

thesis *D. H. Lawrence and Henry Moore: The Positive and Negative Manifestations of the Archetypal Feminine* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1988) is held by eight libraries in America and a brief précis is available electronically from Syracuse University which notes that: "Selected works of D. H. Lawrence and Moore are analysed against the background of the universal motifs of the Archetypal Feminine as explained by Erich Neumann. This study examines the interrelations of Lawrence's characters and then discusses the counterparts as expressed in Moore's sculptural works, namely his mother and child theme and the reclining female figure". Yamakawa Kozo's book *Adventures in Thought: Novels of D. H. Lawrence* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1974) looks at primitive vitality and the importance of the feminine in Lawrence's novels to conclude that Moore's sculptures reflect Lawrence's thinking.

⁵ Murry Roston, *Modernist Patterns in Literature and the Visual Arts* (New York: New York UP, 2000), 236.

⁶ Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 54.

⁷ Lawrence saw a photograph of Gertler's *Merry-Go-Round* in October 1916 when he was writing *Women in Love* and wrote to Gertler describing it as "terrible and dreadful ... it is the best *modern* picture I have seen" (2L 660). Lawrence also states that he is "trying to imagine what this picture will be like, in sculpture" (2L 661). For further discussion of this see J. B. Bullen, 'D. H. Lawrence and Sculpture in *Women in Love*', in *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 145 (2003), 841–6.

⁸ As is suggested by Lawrence's depiction of Paul and Arthur Morel's fraught relationship in *Sons and Lovers* and Moore's autobiography which describes his father as "a complete Victorian tyrant": Henry Moore, *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, ed. Alan Wilkinson (Berkeley, Los Angeles: U of California P, 2002), 31.

⁹ Moore recognised that rubbing liniment into his mother's naked back was "one of the first specifically sculptural experiences" in his life, even with all its "oedipal overtones", Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore*, 26. Like Lawrence, Moore acknowledged the strength of his attachment to his mother and was aware of how this influenced his work: "I suppose I've got a mother complex ... She was to me the absolute stability, the whole thing in life that one knew was there for one's protection. If she went out, I'd be terrified she wouldn't return. So its not surprising that the kind of

women I've done in sculpture are mature women rather than young", *ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰ Moore, *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, 34.

¹¹ It is possible that, at that time, the two artists were more closely linked in the public's imagination than we now appreciate because, as a result of Dorothy Warren's determination to promote the work of working class artists, both exhibited at the Warren Gallery in consecutive years, although with markedly different results. Whilst in 1928 Moore's sculptures prompted favourable reviews and were bought by influential artists such as Jacob Epstein, Augustus John and Henry Lamb, in 1929 Lawrence's "obscene" paintings were seized by the police.

¹² Moore, *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, 38.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁴ The Henry Moore Institute advised that books by Lawrence, including a 1933 version of *Sketches of Etruscan Places* and a book about the trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, were in Moore's library at the time of his death.

¹⁵ For further discussion about Moore's output of writing and the way he revised his work see Alan Wilkinson, 'Introduction', in Moore, *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, 10–29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 129–30.

¹⁷ Following the Mexican Revolution (1910–20), there was a concerted effort by the government in Mexico to glorify the pre-Hispanic past of the country as a definition of Mexican identity. Artists were encouraged to decorate the walls of public buildings in order to reinforce these political messages, which resulted in the influential Mexican modernist (or muralist) movement.

¹⁸ A Chac Mool is a particular type of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican sculpture depicting a reclining figure supported on its elbows with the head at 90 degrees to the front of the body, often associated with the Mayan rain god Chaac.

¹⁹ Moore, *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, 70.

²⁰ James C. Cowan, 'Lawrence and Touch', in *D. H. Lawrence Review*, vol. 16: 2–3 (1985/6): 121–35.

²¹ Garrington, *Haptic Modernism*, 155.

²² See also *Kangaroo*, his short story, 'The Blind Man', and his novellas, *The Fox*, *The Captain's Doll* and *The Ladybird*, which all deal with the aftermath of the war. Recent critical reflections on Lawrence's artistic response to the war include Adrian Barlow, *The Great War in British*

Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) and Ann-Marie Einhaus, *The Short Story and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013).

²³ D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (London: Penguin, 2000), xvi.

²⁴ Jeremy Lewison, *Henry Moore* (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2007), 8.

²⁵ Roberta Rubenstein, *Literary Half-Lives: Doris Lessing, Clancy Sigal, and Roman A Clef* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 189.

²⁶ Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 196.

²⁷ Lewison, *Henry Moore*, 21.

²⁸ Bringing to mind Cole's description of Clifford Chatterley as one of the "strange shapes" of war: Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship and the First World War*, 191.

²⁹ Lewison, *Henry Moore*, 46.

³⁰ Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore*, 47.

³¹ Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 190–1.

³² This painting, commissioned by the Imperial War Museum to commemorate the casualties of the First World War, was prompted by the artist's experience of the aftermath of a gas attack that he witnessed near Arras.

³³ Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, 1–2.

³⁴ Garrington, *Haptic Modernism*, 163.

³⁵ Garrington does not make this link in *Haptic Modernism*.

³⁶ Das states: "Lawrence remains one of the most exciting figures in whose writings discourses of war, intimacy and the male body come together as he shows us, again and again, how touch gets under the guard of consciousness", *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, 235. Das also makes some interesting comments about the "erotic and violent" resonances between 'The Blind Man', the poetry of Wilfred Owen and the wrestling scene in *Women in Love*, and sees a link between Lilly's massage of Aaron in *Aaron's Rod* and a soldier's care for his dying comrade: *ibid.*, 234.

³⁷ Michael L. Ross, 'The Mythology of Friendship: D. H. Lawrence, Bertrand Russell, and "The Blind Man"', in *English Literature and British Philosophy*, ed. S. P. Rosenbaum (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1971), 297.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 298–9.

³⁹ Nils Claussons, 'Practising deconstruction again: Blindness, Insight and the Lovely Treachery of Words in D. H. Lawrence's "The Blind Man"', in *College Literature*, vol. 34.1 (Winter 2007), 114.

⁴⁰ Garrington, *Haptic Modernism*, 156.

⁴¹ Stefania Michelucci, 'D. H. Lawrence's Representation of the Body and the Visual Arts', in *Writing the Body in D. H. Lawrence: Essays on Language, Representation and Sexuality*, ed. Paul Poplawski (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 20.

⁴² In discussing writing about the war Sarah Cole points out, "It is hard to overstate the ubiquity of the language of brokenness as a dominant metaphor to depict both the physical and psychological conditions of former servicemen": Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship and the First World War*, 191–2.

⁴³ Lewison, *Henry Moore*, 46.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁴⁵ Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, 233.

⁴⁶ Whilst this bears some resemblance to Lawrence's painting, *The Holy Family*, there are many differences in composition that indicate that Lawrence's painting was not a direct influence on this sculpture, although the ethos of the haptic that underlies both works is clearly a common thread.