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Author: John Turner

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**COMMUNICATING AND NOT COMMUNICATING
IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S 'NEW EVE AND OLD ADAM'**

JOHN TURNER

Shortly after the publication of *The Masterbuilder* in December 1892 Ibsen told a friend that it was wrong to think of unhappy love as the enforced separation of two people who love each other. “‘No’, he said, ‘unhappy love is when two people who love each other get married and feel they don’t suit each other and cannot live happily together’”.¹ This is the situation in D. H. Lawrence’s short story ‘New Eve and Old Adam’, written in the late spring of 1913 about the failing marriage of Peter and Paula Moest, a couple who are unhappy together and unhappy apart. What is intriguing about their situation is that they fail to understand it: the characters, Lawrence says, are fighting the battle “which so many married people fight, without knowing why” (*LAH* 161). In making his characters unconscious of themselves in this way, Lawrence was repeating a tactic that he had already used in *Sons and Lovers*. It is a tactic that benefits the author, since it removes the need for omniscience and spares him pages of analysis; it benefits his characters, who gain an illusion of life-like depth and mystery; and it benefits his readers by challenging them to find explanations for themselves.

Lawrence called the story “autobiographical” (2*L* 21); but if it uses the circumstances of his own life to imagine a possible future for himself and Frieda Weekley, it also uses them to embody the broader cultural analysis signalled in what Mark Kinkead-Weekes called the “generality” of his title.² ‘New Eve and Old Adam’ explores, in largely dialogic form, some of the conflicts between men and women, and the contradictions they feel, as a result of the spread of first-wave feminism. It seems likely, as John Worthen suggests (*LAH* 247 n.7), that the story’s title derives from the novel

written by Rudolf Goldscheid under the pseudonym of Rudolf Golm, *Der alte Adam und die neue Eva* (1895), which had been translated by Edith Fowler and published in Heinemann's International Library in 1898. It was one of the six books that Lawrence had given to his friend Alan Chambers as a wedding present in 1910. The novel is a study of the German New Woman, and describes the suffering of Käthe Hübner as, forbidden from marrying the man she loves, she tries to establish an independent life for herself. In the words of Goldscheid's Preface, "she strains towards a new order of things, but has not the power necessary to free herself from the entanglement of the old".³ Eventually she marries a factory-owner, Herr von Buggenrieth, but their marriage disintegrates into a brutal power-struggle until finally she leaves and sets herself up as a teacher; but this too fails and, broken, she returns home to live out a defeated existence as a wife. Like so many writers and dramatists of his time, Goldscheid wanted "to represent the fate of a woman, who, standing at the turning-point of two epochs, experiences in her own person all the tragedy involved in transition".⁴ Lawrence's story 'New Eve and Old Adam' is poised between the tragedy and the comedy of transition, as its characters search for love in an age where even the word has become problematical. "It is", he told Garnett, "*the* problem of today, the establishment of a new relation, or the re-adjustment of the old one, between men and women" (*IL* 546); and its outcome in 'New Eve and Old Adam' will remain tantalisingly unresolved.

The autobiographical basis of the story is laid bare in a letter that Lawrence had written to Garnett on 21 July 1912: "I shan't let F leave me, if I can help it. I feel I've got a mate and I'll fight tooth and claw to keep her. She says I'm reverting, but I'm not – I'm only coming out wholesome and myself. Say I'm right, and I ought to be always common. I *loathe* Paul Morel" (*IL* 427). Lawrence here was drawing on current ideas of class, hygiene and evolution to naturalise his own sense of what it meant to be a man; and Frieda was opposing him, finding his notion of manliness a throwback that had no place in the future to which she aspired. In 'New Eve and

Old Adam', we have Peter Moest instead of the effete, over-civilised Paul Morel; but the similarity of their initials marks the continuity in their search for manliness. It is Lawrence's own revisionist attitude to feminism, his interest in masculine authority, and yet his fascination with the New Woman, which he dramatises in Peter Moest's conflict with his wife Paula, as she in her turn wavers between new feminist and old patriarchal structures of feeling. If we consider first-wave feminism as a cultural watershed, Paula has crossed it but hankers after what she has left behind, whilst Peter has turned back but hankers after the woman who has crossed over. Lawrence thought the story "good", and said so twice in one letter to Garnett (2L 21). But Katharine Clayton, his typist's wife, disagreed: she thought it "unworthy" of him, and persuaded her husband not to type it up. "Perhaps she's right", Lawrence commented; "it amuses me" (2L 38). In July 1914, he considered it for publication in *The Prussian Officer* volume, but then changed his mind and discarded it, and as result the story was forgotten and remained unpublished until after his death. It is perhaps this history, and its absence from the great collections of Lawrence short stories, that has led to its comparative neglect. Katharine Clayton's judgement has prevailed, and the story has not received its due as a study of miscommunication between the sexes in an age of transition.

I

The story opens on an ongoing quarrel: Peter and Paula are in that frame of mind described by Thomas Hardy in *Jude the Obscure*, another tale of transition, as "the antipathetic, recriminatory mood of the average husband and wife of Christendom".⁵ Although they have been at odds only for the last three months of their year-long marriage, the fact that the story begins *in medias res* generates a sense of timelessness about their quarrelling, suggesting unconscious forces at work, beyond their comprehension. Peter is newly returned from Paris, and Paula rebukes him for his

irritability, implying he should have stayed away. He counters by asking suggestively if he should have stayed overnight, clearly meaning with a woman, and in reply Paula coarsely derides his masculinity. This toying with ideas of separation is an outward manifestation of the inner truth that the presence of each is also an absence to the other, and the absence an abiding presence. In 'The Fountain', Wordsworth's narrator laments that "by none/ Am I enough beloved", and this is the secret complaint of both Peter and Paula Moest.⁶ Peter's hint at an imaginary Parisian woman, through whom he can express his own fantasies of masculine power and simultaneously make his wife jealous, recalls the oedipal "triangle of antagonism" that shaped *Sons and Lovers* (SL 289); and as Lawrence's story develops, such triangles will become a recurrent feature.

It is a process that begins immediately, for Paula, standing by the window, sees a linesman rise above the ridge of the opposite roof, almost as if created by the rivalrous power of her desire, and start to work on a structure supporting a network of telegraph wires; "I like you", she says in her normal voice" (LAH 162). It is a communication intended only for her husband, suggesting that the linesman is more real to her as a subjective phenomenon than as an actual man. He is the first of three men in the story around whom she spins what Kingsley Widmer calls the "bovarysm" of her fantasies of discovering "a simple, warm man who would love me without all these reservations and difficulties" (LAH 167).⁷ It is her response to her husband's hint of finding a woman in Paris, a triangular possibility of her own. Structurally within the tale, the linesman also symbolises the modern world of telegrams and letters, of busy communications manically exchanged in denial of an impoverished inner self held incommunicado. The casual eye-contact between man and woman across the open spaces of the sky epitomises the fleeting contacts, the tantalising potentialities that teem in modern city-life. It is a world with which Paula, a modern woman herself, has an affinity, and Lawrence suggests something of what it lacks in his image of the solitary gull soaring beyond the

web of telegraph wires that trap the sky as if in a net.

The event upon which the story turns will prove to be one of these modern communications that miscarries, a telegram from someone called Richard, delivered by mistake to Peter and Paula Moest instead of to a young German also called Moest who, by one of life's little ironies, lives in the same block of flats. This coincidence, like those upon which Hardy built his sense of the world, is symbolic: it succeeds as a fictional device not because it is unlikely but because its unlikeliness carries a meaning. When Tess's letter to Angel Clare slips under the carpet as well as under the door, the event conveys her sense of unworthiness and shame.⁸ As Rawdon Lilly thinks in *Aaron's Rod*, "surely life controls life: and not accident" (AR 116). The miscarried telegram in 'New Eve and Old Adam', taken up so quickly into the quarrel between husband and wife, signals the prevalence of misrecognition in their conversations. Regularly throughout the tale communications miscarry, as, misled by fantasy, husband and wife regularly mistake each other. They suffer from what Derrida calls a "pathology of destination", making them always misdirect themselves, address themselves to someone else, to something missing from the person in whose company they are.⁹ It is out of these absences, and their attendant desires and jealousies, that the triangles in the tale emerge. Like the linesman suspended in the sky, Richard throughout the story is no more than a name hanging in the air between husband and wife; and when finally the third Moest approaches from the flat below, he never becomes more than "another Moest" (LAH 174). He has no Christian name, and remains uneasily suspended between the quarrelling husband and wife.

It is on Paula and the men drawn into the oedipal drama of her sexuality that the story concentrates, for she is the more restless, powerful person in the marriage. Like so many other New Eves of contemporary fiction, she is full of self-contradiction, the talkative but finally inarticulate victim of a transitional age. On the opening page of the story, we are told that in quarrelling with her husband,

"it was as if she battled with herself in him" (*LAH* 161); and as the story unfolds, the origins of this conflict are traced to the contradiction between her modern desire for "independence" (*LAH* 168) and her more traditional desire to lose herself in a man. It is a contradiction whose roots, the story suggests, lie in childhood ambivalence, and it remains wholly beyond her comprehension: "'That I am a being by myself is more than you can grasp.—I wish I could absolutely submerge myself in a man—and *so I do, I always loved you*'" (*LAH* 182). She wants both independence and subordination. Like Frieda Weekley, disciple of Otto Gross, she appears to recommend free love to her husband, and to contemplate it for herself; and yet she is glad when he returns home faithful from Paris. She is a formidably powerful woman who takes the initiative in approaching her husband and in repudiating him; and yet she is also a "Gretchen" (*LAH* 161) who idealises him as an Apollo, a lord whose foot-soles she would like to warm between her breasts. Goldscheid, like Gissing in *The Odd Women* and Hardy in *Jude the Obscure*, had shown how the need to establish a new basis for sexual relationships involved a struggle for power; and Lawrence too shows how the arguments made by Paula in terms of love are also positionings in a battle for power. Even her submissions are strategies to subdue the man whose unmanliness she scorns.

Her key complaint against her husband is that she has always loved him and given him "her innermost life" (*LAH* 183) but that, whilst she has taken the initiative and thrown herself at him, he has never been there for her. His very presence is an absence, draining her, undermining her, destroying her, depriving her of sleep and making her ill inside. Like a vampire or ghoul, he follows her everywhere, leaving her no peace. She feels a spirit of resistance in him, an aloofness, a fear that to give himself in love would be to give himself away. When he says he loves her, she senses his hatred, and her reaction is ferocious; she mocks his masculinity and calls him paltry, mean and selfish. In words that recall Clara's complaint in *Sons and Lovers*, Paula resents that her partner's

loving is “impersonal” (*LAH* 170). She feels that he takes her mechanically as a woman and not as herself: “She had loved him dearly. And—he had not seemed to realise her. So that now she *did* want to be free of him for a while” (*LAH* 169). Nostalgic for another man who can love her simply and without reservation, she wants the peace of separation.

Whilst some of what Paula says is vindicated by the narrator, such as the way that she takes the initiative in her marriage, much is not. The voices of Peter and the narrator combine to suggest that in crucial ways she is ignorant of herself. At one moment Peter admits she is in earnest and “what she said in earnest he had to believe, in the long run, since it was the utterance of her being” (*LAH* 179); but to be in earnest is not to be enlightened. Partly it is Paula’s inarticulateness that suggests her lack of self-knowledge, and partly it is her impulsiveness, the large gestures through which, in projecting her feelings outwards upon the world, she prevents insight into herself. This is perhaps what Peter means when he describes her as a “tragédienne” (*LAH* 183). She is out of touch with her unconscious, with the ambivalence at the root of her contradictions. Lawrence’s point, moreover, may be more than merely personal: the “generality” of his title implies a wider charge, not dissimilar to the old male jibe about the sexlessness of the suffragettes, that the New Woman is out of touch with her bodily unconscious.

II

It was on 17 January 1913 that Lawrence wrote his famous letter to Ernest Collings declaring his faith in the wisdom of the body: “My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true” (*IL* 503). This belief in the materiality of the self, in what ‘New Eve and Old Adam’ calls the “physical soul” (*LAH* 173), was widespread in the culture, and in *The Trespasser* Lawrence had already conveyed the religious

awe that he felt for the physical motions of life, epitomised in the beatings of Siegmund's heart: "It seemed to go through the whole island, and the whole afternoon, and it fascinated her: so deep, unheard, with its great expulsions of life. Had the world a heart?— Was there also deep in the world a great God thudding out waves of life, like a great Heart, unconscious?" (*T* 79). Here, as in the letter to Collings, it is the motions of the blood that Lawrence emphasises. In breathing and digestion, blood aids the incorporation of what is good for the body and the elimination of what is harmful. Wittgenstein thought that "the human body is the best picture of the human soul",¹⁰ but for Lawrence the bodily functions of incorporation and elimination offered not only a picture of the emotional functions of love and hate, but described them physiologically. We assimilate what we love and expel what we hate. Blood, by transmitting the chemical and emotional messages upon which these processes depend, may thus be described as the great communicator of the body, that not only feels and believes, but also says.

The happiness of his new life with Frieda, together with his new impressions of Italy, clearly intensified these views in Lawrence in 1913, prompting both his letter to Collings and the Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*, with its emphasis on the primacy of Flesh over Word. Doubtless too his trips to the Gargnano theatre to see *Ghosts* on 28 December 1912 and *Hamlet* on 16 January 1913 had played their part. The Italians he found "a spunky lot" (*IL* 508) with "strong blood" (*IL* 460), and he was both shocked and amused by the inappropriateness of Italian village-actors tackling the parts of Oswald and Hamlet. He disliked Ibsen, he wrote a little later, for denying "the universality of the blood, of which we are all cups" (*TI* 71). But it was the incongruity of an Italian playing Hamlet that most appalled him: "I saw the natural man of [flesh and] hot heart, crawling to an anaemic tune, and it made me sick" (*TI* 76).¹¹ His reference to Hamlet's "anaemic tune" is no mere metaphor but a hypothesis, a provisional reading in the biochemistry of life, an attempt to realise in language the unconscious living processes of

the human body in sickness and health. He was confirming what he had already told Garnett, that he loathed the Paul Morel in himself. Oswald and Hamlet were of the same incestuous family as Paul Morel, and his body was rising up in rebellion against the tragic effeteness of the European culture that had produced them all.

The three stories that Lawrence wrote in May and June 1913, 'The Prussian Officer', 'Vin Ordinaire' (later called 'The Thorn in the Flesh') and 'New Eve and Old Adam', explore the nature of bodily consciousness, chiefly through the effects of its neglect or repression; and 'New Eve and Old Adam' is the most remarkable of the three in the directness of its attempt to write the unconscious. Those paragraphs in the second section of the story that describe the night-time communications of the unconscious at work within the blood of Peter Moest represent a striking advance on anything that Lawrence had written previously, including his account of "life wild at the source" in the love-making of Paul Morel and Clara Dawes (*SL* 398). The question they raise is whether Lawrence's Old Adam will prove more apt than his New Eve in responding to the communications of the body.

Peter Moest's right to the title of Old Adam lies most obviously in his belief in the natural authority of man over woman; and yet everything we see of him in the tale suggests he has no such authority himself. He is as full of contradictions as his wife and, reciprocally, he too battles with himself in her. Occasionally he impresses her with his power but mostly the story contrasts his passivity with her enterprise, and shows him compensating for his lack of authority with sarcasms, sneers and ironies. If "the hard stroke of rage went down his veins", it is expressed only in a cheap sneer against his wife's inarticulacy: "'We have come to the incomprehensible'", he says (*LAH* 167). But in a tale in which characters are perpetually misled by their unconscious fantasies of one another, the comprehensible is always lurching into the incomprehensible. Peter is bewildered by Paula's criticisms of his selfishness: "He could not understand what she said about his using her and giving her nothing in return" (*LAH* 170). Similarly he is

baffled by her charge that he cannot come out of himself: "What did she mean? Get outside himself? It seemed like some acrobatic feat, some slippery contortionist trick. No, he could not understand" (*LAH* 179). "'I pour myself out to you'", Paula says, "'and then – there's nothing there – you simply aren't there'" (*LAH* 167). The story shows the truth of this charge; Peter absents himself in spirit from Paula as an act of resistance, determined not to be used as a plaything, a doll to be called into being and then rejected according to whim. Yet still he sees that this might be his fate. Part of his doubt about his own masculinity is that he fears he may, in the future, become enslaved by her: "She would take him and reject him, like a mistress. And perhaps for that reason he would love her all the more: it might be so" (*LAH* 182). An Old Adam in his masculinist ideology, he is a New Adam in his sexual insecurity.

It is the second section of the tale that depicts the culmination of Peter's difficulties in realising himself as a man. Paula has asked him to leave and, in describing his move from home to hotel, the narrator temporarily suspends the dialogic structure of the tale, privileging the consciousness of the man and thereby revealing the asymmetrical disposition of his sympathies. In his own home Peter could still harbour dreams, however forlorn, of masculine authority; but here in the "neutrality" (*LAH* 171) of the hotel, he can only establish "that air of neutral correctness which makes men seem so unreal" (*LAH* 173). His decision to take a shower is unconsciously an attempt to revitalise his body, which has come to resemble the waste that it should produce. But his attempt fails. Fearful of relaxation, he occupies his mind with thoughts of work and, typically, on emerging from the shower, scribbles a note to his wife to tell her his address. Then, when he turns out the light and goes to bed, oppressed by the powerful unconscious motions of "his blood, and the elemental male in it" (*LAH* 172), he finds the darkness and warmth of the hotel suffocating, as though his body were lacking oxygen and dying in its own waste.

This sense of the suffocation of the body is widespread in early Lawrence. Gerald Doherty has described the "open/closed

dialectic” of *Sons and Lovers*,¹² and here again, in the Schopenhauerian sense of the elemental life of the universe going on in the darkness beyond the ordinary perceptual range of its particular organised form in human beings, we find the same tension between open and closed categories of experience. The “elemental male” at work in Peter’s bloodstream rises up against his daytime self and Lawrence’s prose is hard at work to create a sense of this rich alien life moving through his body as he lies in bed, awake but unaware. Metaphors abound in response to the abundance of energy formerly repressed by his daytime self but now heaving and raging “blindly” against him (*LAH* 172). His superficial thoughts dally with the business of the world, “but underneath it all, like the sea under a pleasure-pier, his elemental, physical soul was heaving in great waves through his blood and his tissue, the sob, the silent lift, the slightly-washing fall away again” (*LAH* 173). This extraordinary image shows Lawrence grappling once again with the materialist’s dilemma of how to construct a language and psychology that will represent the life of the mind as an epiphenomenon of the life of the body. His metaphor may point towards what Doherty calls “a domain of non-meaning which no rhetoric can grasp or encompass”;¹³ but it also corroborates the body as a communicative power anxious to heave itself into consciousness.

Peter, however, refuses to attend: at lunch next day he receives a telegram from Paula, inviting him to tea, and despite the “great heave of resistance” within him, the aftermath of the night before, he pays it no heed (*LAH* 173). Here is the turning-point of the story, the critical communication from the bodily unconscious and Peter neglects it: “With his consciousness, he remembered how impulsive and eager she was when she dashed off her telegrams, and he relaxed. It went without saying that he would go” (*LAH* 173). This is the moment of his “fall”, when he shows himself to be an Old Adam in a double sense, not only because he believes in the authority of the man over the woman but also because, when put to the test, he yields that authority to her. It was probably at the end of

March 1913 that Lawrence had inserted into the page-proofs of *Sons and Lovers* his judgment that Walter Morel "had denied the God in him" (SL 88); and Peter Moest might well have incurred a similar judgment. He fails to hear what his blood "feels and believes and says": he cannot assimilate the unconscious communications of his body into consciousness. Within the asymmetrical structure of the tale it is a possibility that is offered only to him. Paula, meanwhile, has already chosen life on the pleasure-pier. In her aspect of New Eve, she is attempting to "disengage her roots" from those depths where the Old Eve had felt at home (LAH 172). Wilfulness does for her what weakness does for Peter, with the result that both of them are cut off from their inner sources of life.

III

When Peter obeys his summons and returns home, his fantasy of a loving welcome is dashed by finding Paula absorbed in a young German whom she had just met that morning. It is a tea-party *à trois* that he has been invited to make up. The German, a young literary man, is introduced by Paula as "another Moest, of whom we have never heard, and under the same roof with us" (LAH 174). His role in the tale is that of a Doppelgänger, "another Moest" indeed, another third person whose coincidental arrival is artistically necessary to explore the full truth of the couple's relationship. Paula is excited by feelings of pity for the young man, whom with missionary zeal she wishes to rescue from literature on behalf of life. Peter recognises a recurrence of his own situation the previous year, when he too had become Paula's "mission" (LAH 176), and his resentment is savage. "She is no woman," he says to himself. "She's got a big heart for everybody, but it must be like a common room: she's got no private, sacred heart, except perhaps for herself, where there's no room for a man in it" (LAH 176). Her kindness resembles "a charitable institution", he goes on: "There was no core to the woman. She was full of generosity and

bigness and kindness, but there was no heart in her, no security, no place for one single man. He began now to understand syrens and sphinxes and the Greek fabulous, female things. They had not been created by fancy, but out of bitter necessity of the man's human heart to express itself" (LAH 177).

Considered autobiographically, the tale here reveals an intensification of the critique of Otto Gross's "new ethic" that Lawrence had already begun in *The Married Man* and that he would later develop in *Mr Noon*. Gross had told Else Jaffe, probably at the end of December 1907, that his therapeutic mission as a psychoanalyst was to free the essential personal style of the individual "from all that is alien, destructive, contradictory".¹⁴ He was replying to Else's criticism of this same missionary spirit in a letter of 15 December: "the prophet has consumed in his fire the last remnants of the human being, Otto, and has taken from him the capacity to love persons individually in their individuality ... For you there are now *only* followers of your teaching (something of this was always there), no longer a particular wife loved for her *essential* self".¹⁵ What is at stake is whether a person's individuality can be fulfilled without a sustained relationship, without what Lawrence later called in *Mr Noon* "the deep *accustomedness* of marriage" which, he thought, contained the secret of past "English greatness" (MN 191). Else too had conducted her argument with Gross in terms of family and marriage, knowing full well that marriage was under attack both in radical Germany as a whole and also, as Sam Whimster has shown, in the circle of friends amongst whom she, Gross and Frieda Weekley moved.¹⁶ In 1912–13 this same marriage question was being fought over by Lawrence and Frieda: "Frieda says she's not keen on marrying me", Lawrence told Garnett on 17 December 1912, "but I want some peace. I want to be able to look ahead and see some rest and security somewhere" (IL 489). In its autobiographical aspect 'New Eve and Old Adam' was a declaration to the woman whom he was fighting "tooth and claw to keep" that richness of life was a function of depth and commitment in relationship.

The young German offers Paula the chance to practise her own missionary skill by freeing him "from all that is alien, destructive, contradictory". He is a "conventionalised literary person", of the type Lawrence called "Asphodels" (*IL* 491), and he comes to life only in "an atmosphere of literature and literary ideas" (*LAH* 174). In this tale of communication and non-communication, he is a professional communicator, "a man whose business it was to say things that should be listened to" (*LAH* 174); but he is not in himself a creative man. He is the disciple of another German writer, and a translator of Shakespeare, and there is something comical in the way that he struggles to communicate in his "kind of Renaissance English" (*LAH* 175), not merely because he is speaking in a foreign tongue or because he is out of his depth in a tense domestic situation, but because his idiom suggests the vicarious nature of his experience. He is living proof of Kierkegaard's dictum that "there are many people who reach their conclusions about life like schoolboys; they cheat their master by copying the answer out of a book without having worked out the sum for themselves".¹⁷ He has lost himself in the second-hand world of literature; his eyes have "the blind look of one thinking hard", and he talks as if addressing "an imaginary audience" (*LAH* 175). It is in this narcissistic solipsism that he acts as a double for Peter and Paula, whose eyes are likewise "blind" and whose talks together are targeted only at an "imaginary audience". How can the self know others in their otherness? The question is one to which Lawrence would return in 'Study of Thomas Hardy', *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. Paula's answer is to dream of offering a sexual relationship to the young German; she fails to see, as Peter sees, that this wish is itself a gratification of her own narcissistic self-image. She refuses to let the German leave until he has promised to return, and then, secure in herself, she turns to reflect on the current state of her relationship with her husband.

Quickly their conversation resumes its familiar tone of mutual recrimination, with both partners unconsciously taking revenge on one another for failing to corroborate their fantasies. Peter grasps

the question of narcissism theoretically, but in practice is baffled by Paula's accusation that he cannot "come out of himself", and "his heart beat like a caged thing against what he could not understand" (*LAH* 179). Then suddenly, bafflingly, the mood changes, in a way that epitomises all that is unsatisfactory about their love. Peter senses that Paula too is suffering and, as she pitied the young German, he pities her. We are back in the oedipal world of Paul Morel, where the man becomes sexually potent only in finding a woman to rescue. In a quiet pulse of masculine authority, he tells her not to bite her finger-nails, and obediently she removes her finger from her mouth. The atmosphere changes, and belief in their love returns. When Peter lapses back into resentment, Paula makes the decisive move, crossing the room to touch him, making the flame run down his blood and his body feel alive again. She also sets the agenda in the reconciliation scene that follows where, because of his passivity, it is her idea of love that predominates. The contradictions of their relationship remain, but for the moment they are muted. He is practical where she is romantic, so that she can still scorn him a little for his lack of spontaneity; and she remains a mixture of yearning and triumph, so that he can still feel uneasy at her power. Still he feels they are lovers rather than truly married. Still, despite her womanly protectiveness, he feels she is girlishly playing at love, idealising herself as submissive and himself as lordly in a literary way that is false and controlling. Still she only loves him, he thinks, because of her own narcissistic need to love, not because of any quality in himself. However, none of this matters now that "the trouble had gone off" (*LAH* 181). It is only later when they are lying in bed making love that he blurts out the question that exposes the fundamental difference between them. Will she be what he wants her to be "flesh of my flesh—a wife—?" (*LAH* 182). She cannot bring herself to answer "I will", and fobs him off.

IV

Whilst the second section of the story ended with Peter's failure to act on the promptings of his bodily unconscious, the third section ends with the frustration of those promptings when they do finally burst into action and compel him to blurt out his desire for his wife to be "flesh of my flesh" (*LAH* 182). As the allusion to *Genesis* suggests, Lawrence's Old Adam wants a wife in the traditional Christian sense, identified at root with his own life, "Hee for God onely, shee for God in him".¹⁸ Paula, of course, is having none of it; she wants the relationship on her own terms. Adrift on the ebb and flow of their ambivalence, they continue to talk past one another, in a Lacanian tragi-comedy where all communication and self-communication is baffled by *méconnaissance*. Peter's appeal to Paula is simply the most recent in a long series of misconstructions that now extends into the brief fourth section of the tale, where extracts from their letters continue the pattern of mutual incomprehension. With Peter in Italy and Paula presumably still in London, the psychological distance of their conversation has become the geographical distance of a correspondence, raising the same problem that perplexed Derrida in *La Carte Postale*: "Do I write to you in order to bring you near or in order to distance you, to find the best distance – but then with whom?"¹⁹ What is the right distance between two people for whom presence has always been a kind of absence, and absence a kind of presence? And to whom are these letters, in all their mutual incomprehension, addressed? To self or to other? Is the story a parable of Lacanian *méconnaissance*? Or does Lawrence have a solution to the impasse that he presents?

How we answer these last two questions depends upon the degree of objectivity that we give to the narrator of the story. Is he a voice within the story, confined by its terms of reference, or is he outside it, omnisciently looking in? He – and it is surely right to think of him as male – appears at his most authoritative at the end of the second section when he describes Peter's sleepless night at the hotel and, penetrating "below his consciousness" (*LAH* 173),

emphasises first his ignorance and then his neglect of the “elemental male” within himself. In speaking of Peter’s unconscious, the narrator necessarily abandons his usual mode of free indirect speech and assumes a measure of omniscience; and we must assume the same omniscience at work behind the structure of the tale itself, drawing the third section to its climax before the studied bathos of the story’s close. The suddenness with which Peter blurts out his wish for “a wife” suggests the importance of his wish to the narrator. Eliot’s words from *The Waste Land* spring to mind: “Blood shaking the heart/ The awful daring of a moment’s surrender”.²⁰ The suddenness of Peter’s outburst suggests that he may be closer to his bodily unconscious than he had seemed to be, and that it may indeed be blood shaking his heart. Is this naturalised masculinism, on whose behalf the narrator speaks so authoritatively, Lawrence’s way out of the impasse of the tale?

Drawing upon a very different tradition from Lacan, the English psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott argues that the “True Self” originates in “the aliveness of the body tissues and the working of body-functions, including the heart’s action and breathing”.²¹ Amongst all the movements prompted by the baby’s physiology there are some that Winnicott calls spontaneous gestures, originating in the “True Self”, and it is the ordinary achievement of most mothers, or other primary carers, to respond to enough of these gestures to corroborate the baby in the primitive sense of omnipotence upon which its future creativity depends. The “True Self”, that is, originates in confirmation of the baby’s bodily life by another person. Gradually, through growth and experience, relationship becomes increasingly possible; the mother ceases to exist as a subjective aspect of the baby’s omnipotence and begins to assume objective reality. The “True Self” enters the world of shared reality and, as this happens, the baby simultaneously develops a “False Self” in order to negotiate those many occasions when even the good-enough mother fails to recognise its spontaneous gestures and communications. This “False Self” becomes in later life the basis of its ability to adapt and compromise. Where the “True Self”

is creative, the "False Self" is compliant; and both are routinely needed in adult life.

This account of health is matched by a corresponding sense of how things may go wrong. The normal role of the "False Self" is to protect the "True Self", but sometimes when the early environment is lacking, the defensive activities of the "False Self" become so exaggerated that the "True Self" cannot get into life at all or, more often, can only get into life in a tantalisingly restricted way. There is a wish to withdraw from real communication with other people, since communication with subjective objects feels more real. According to Winnicott, however, in many cases where hope is a feature, "the False Self has as its main concern a search for conditions which will make it possible for the True Self to come into its own".²² But it is not an easy search, since the defences of the "False Self", including compliance, repudiation and withdrawal, make such conditions difficult to find, or to use when found.

How far is the "elemental male" identified in Peter by the narrator in 'New Eve and Old Adam' Lawrence's equivalent of Winnicott's "True Self"? It too is protected by a host of "False Self" defences, and the extent of its repression suggests a pre-oedipal aetiology, a tantalisingly inadequate corroboration in earliest childhood, now repeated in his relationship with Paula and his fantasies of "syrens and sphinxes and the other Greek fabulous, female things". When Peter ignores the "great heave of resistance" inside himself and returns home, he encounters a wife who, although she looks at him, fails to "see him" (*LAH* 174). In Barbara Ann Schapiro's words, "the story highlights how essential the other's recognition is to the self's experience of its own bodily reality".²³ At this critical moment Paula fails to corroborate her husband and then compounds her failure by ridiculing his jealousy of one man in the presence of another. So narcissistically absorbed is she in her little drama with the visitor from upstairs that she even forgets to pour her husband's tea, with the result that he must take the woman's role upon himself and serve. Small wonder that he becomes angry, with a rage springing as much from his own

passivity as from his wife's unfeelingness. Compliance breeds resentment, *ressentiment* in the full Nietzschean sense, protecting the naïve, innocent core of the man from recognising its own poverty and cowardice. Yet all the while, behind Moest's fury and disgust, the narrator suggests that he is engaged in what Winnicott calls "a search for conditions which will make it possible for the True Self to come into its own"; and when eventually his wife approaches him, and his body responds with warmth, he blurts out the one question which matters: "'But Paula—I mean it—flesh of my flesh—a wife?'" (*LAH* 182). Is this the "True Self" of the narrator's Old Adam struggling to break through the "False Self" of his New Eve? Is this Lawrence's proposed solution to his Lacanian tragi-comedy of *méconnaissance*?

Such a reading, however, rests largely upon a mere handful of words from a narrator who is deeply embedded in his tale and whose degree of objectivity is uncertain; and it is far from "the establishment of a new relation, or the re-adjustment of the old one, between men and women" of which Lawrence had spoken to Garnett (*IL* 546). The idea of a true elemental male self in Peter Moest, or indeed of an equivalent female self in his wife, is rather a hypothesis extrapolated from the tale than a theorem independent of it. It is a tentative solution only, a provisional response to life rather than its measure, and its value is diminished by the continuing dialogic structure of the tale, by the miscommunications that persist until its end. "'You keep safely under cover all the time'", Paula tells Peter in her last letter of the story (*LAH* 183). He has hurt her, she says, and she needs this distance between them in order to recover. The ambiguity of her words expresses the paradox at the heart of their relationship: the recovery of the self is also its recovering. To quote Winnicott again, in a different context, their relationship may be called "a sophisticated game of hide-and-seek in which *it is joy to be hidden but disaster not to be found*".²⁴ Paula hides by acting out a variety of roles, including that of tragédienne, and he by withdrawing into a set of satirical attitudes that make impossible demands upon her, including those of the masculinism

that she will never meet. Nevertheless, at the same time, because it is "disaster not to be found", they continue to reach out to each other for corroboration in their love. It remains uncertain whether the biological "True Self" really exists, or whether it is a symptom of the same split that it offers to cure, or whether indeed it is no more than a convenient fiction, a theoretical reification of a sense of self that is ultimately illusory. What endures is the *méconnaissance* between the lovers, with its roots in the cultural moment of first-wave feminism, a *méconnaissance* that choreographs the dance of communication and non-communication that is Lawrence's real achievement in 'New Eve and Old Adam'.

¹ Quoted in Michael Meyer, *Henrik Ibsen: The Top of a Cold Mountain 1883–1906* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1971), 214.

² Mark-Kinhead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 74.

³ Rudolf Golm, *The Old Adam and the New Eve*, trans. Edith Fowler (London: Heinemann, 1898), xviii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁵ Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. Norman Page (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 233.

⁶ William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, eds. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell UP, 1992), 217.

⁷ Kingsley Widmer, *The Art of Perversity: D. H. Lawrence's Shorter Fictions* (Seattle: Washington UP, 1962), 102.

⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 272.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago and London: Chicago UP, 1987), 112.

¹⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), II:iv, 178.

¹¹ The words in brackets were deleted from the manuscript (see *TI* xxxvii, n.45).

¹² Gerald Doherty, 'The Dialectic of Space in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*', in *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 39 (Summer, 1993), 327–43, 333.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 340.

¹⁴ Quoted in Martin Green, *The von Richthofen Sisters: The Triumphant and the Tragic Modes of Love* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 58.

¹⁵ Quoted in Sam Whimster with Gottfried Heuer, 'Otto Gross and Else Jaffé and Max Weber', in *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 15, Nos 3–4 (1998), 143.

¹⁶ Sam Whimster, 'Introduction to Weber, Ascona and Anarchism', in *Max Weber and the Culture of Anarchy*, ed. Sam Whimster (London and New York: Macmillan), 21.

¹⁷ Alexander Dru, ed., *The Journals of Kierkegaard, 1834–1854* (Collins: Fontana Books, 1958), 53; entry for 17 January 1837.

¹⁸ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV:299.

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, 78.

²⁰ T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, V:402–3.

²¹ D. W. Winnicott, 'Ego Distortion in terms of True and False Self' (1960), in *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), 148. Emphasis in original text.

²² *Ibid.*, 143.

²³ Barbara Ann Schapiro, *D. H. Lawrence and the Paradoxes of Psychic Life* (New York: New York State UP, 1999), 56.

²⁴ D. W. Winnicott, 'Communicating and Not Communicating Leading to a Study of Certain Opposites' (1963), in *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment*, 192.