

understanding of a latent content in his story and, by their change of emphasis, they enable the reader to experience this understanding as an integral part of his reading of the story. The discovery of the typescript of 'Wintry Peacock' and the eventual incorporation of its changes into the new Penguin edition of *England, My England and Other Stories* give us access to a 'restored' text; the section breaks offer us, in their revelation of a previously-obscured symbolism and development, a more fruitful and rewarding story.²¹

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²¹ I am grateful to Peter Preston of the University of Nottingham for the extremely useful comments he made on an earlier draft of this paper.

St. Mawr, The Escaped Cock, and Child of the Western Isles: The Revival of an Animistic Worldview in the Modern World

Takeo Iida

DH Lawrence's *St. Mawr* and *The Escaped Cock* were published in 1925 and 1929, and in 1957, twenty-seven years after Lawrence's death, Rosalie K. Fry's children's story, *Child of the Western Isles*, came out. Although Fry does not seem to have been influenced by Lawrence's works, her work echoes Lawrence's animistic worldview which is described in his two novellas, and we can indicate that both writers share the same tradition of European animism and try to revive an animistic worldview in their own ways in the modern world where man-centred ideology or materialism nearly stifles the lively animistic sense of life, and their trials to recover that sense seem to be their revaluation of the animistic worldview which the modern age has long disregarded or suppressed in exchange for homocentricism or material prosperity. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate by comparing the two writers this thesis which seems to have received least attention from critics so far.²²

In *St. Mawr*, Lou Carrington leads a superficial life with her aristocratic husband, Rico, feeling no fulfilment in her life. Yet one day when she sees the horse named St. Mawr, she is overwhelmed by him, and she worships him as Pan:

²² I once discussed the importance of animism in contrast to Christianity in *St. Mawr* in my essay on the novella (Iida, 32-46)

But now, as if that mysterious fire of the horse's body had split some rock in her, she went home and hid herself in her room, and just cried. The wild, brilliant, alert head of St. Mawr seemed to look at her out of another world. It was as if she had had a vision, as if the walls of her own world had suddenly melted away, leaving her in a great darkness, in the midst of which the large, brilliant eyes of that horse looked at her with demonish question, while his naked ears stood up like daggers from the naked lines of his inhuman head, and his great body glowed red with power. . . . What was his non-human question, and his uncanny threat? She didn't know. He was some splendid demon, and she must worship him. (30-31)

Comparing St. Mawr's vitality with her husband's superficial way of life among the upper class, Lou finds that Rico entirely lacks real life. The same with his upper class friends. Finally she rejects Rico's world of superficiality and takes St. Mawr's world of vitality. For her, St. Mawr, having the title of saint, is a special, sacred animal: he appears to her out of "another world", that is, the animal world, the untold value of which she has never known. He is as it were a visitor from the animal world, coming to her with the new message of vital life. And later in the novella a similar message was given to her by the spirit of place when she goes back to America. At a ranch in the Arizona desert, she finds the spirit of place calling to her:

... it was the place Lou wanted. In an instant, her heart sprang to it. The instant the car stopped, and she saw the two cabins inside the rickety fence, the rather broken corral beyond, and behind all, tall, blue balsam pines, the round hills, the solid uprise of the

mountain flank: and getting down, she looked across the purple and gold of the clearing, downwards at the ring of pine-trees standing so still, so crude and untameable, the motionless desert beyond the bristles of the pine crests, a thousand feet below: and beyond the desert, blue mountains, and far, far-off blue mountains in Arizona: "This is the place," she said to herself. (140) [Lawrence's italics]

And she decides to live there, serving its spirit. Thus, St. Mawr as Pan and the American land as spirit of place lead Lou to real life force and let her revere them and establish a living relationship with them or nature. In the novella Lewis, her Welsh groom, believes also in tree fairies and moon fairies. He explains to Mrs Witt about how moon-people or fairies make the air clean:

"You sit on the pillow where they [the moon-people] breathe, and you put a web across their mouth, so they can't breathe the fresh air that comes from the moon. So they go on breathing the same air again and again, and that makes them more and more stupefied. The sun gives out heat, but the moon gives out fresh air. That's what the moon people do: they wash the air clean with moonlight." (108)

Or about tree fairies he says:

"They say that ash-trees don't like people. When the other people were most in the country - I mean like what they call fairies, that have all gone now - they liked ash-trees best. And you know the little green things with little small nuts in them, that come flying down from ash-trees - pigeons, we call them - they're the seeds - the other people used to catch them and eat them before they fell to the ground. And that

made the people so they could hear trees living and feeling things. (107-08)

In Lewis' worldview, which sounds like Celtic or Germanic, the ash-trees and tree-fairies have an equal status of life in this world as men do. Man is not considered to be a centre of the universe but part of it. The heroine Lou is also led to a similar worldview as the story develops. Therefore, the central philosophy of *St. Mawr* is that man is not the centre of the universe but lives side by side with the cosmos as part of it, as Margot Norris indicates (Norris, 298). In other words, the Cartesian worldview "cogito ergo sum" is rejected, and the cosmo-centred worldview or animism is adopted instead: man is not the measure of creation but is part of the cosmos. The same idea echoes in Lawrence's poems, "Fish" and "Climb down, O Lordly Mind," in which man's ego-centricism or absolutism of the human mind is severely criticised (*Complete Poems*, 334-40, 473-74)

In *St. Mawr* there is another different type of character: Rico and his upper class English friends: their worldview is all man-centred, as is typically seen in their fierce hatred against *St. Mawr* and their will to geld the horse; and in America, too, there is a New England Woman whose stubborn will to conquer nature with the fixed and dogmatic belief of Almighty God is extremely homo-centric. Unlike them, Lou and Lewis stand in the opposite worldview of believing and serving the life of the cosmos. When she feels Pan and the spirit of place, her perception is Greco-Roman and Celtic, and when Lewis, of

Welsh blood, feels tree fairies and moon fairies, his perception is also Celtic. Since Lewis is a more static figure in the novella, Lou represents European animism more dramatically than the Welsh groom.

Similarly, European animism is revived in *The Escaped Cock*. It can be considered to be a novella of the marriage between Christianity and animism, or to use James C. Cowan's words, of "'the trembling balance' between Christianity and the Osiris myth" (Cowan, 184), because the man who dies gets married with the Isis-devotee who is in search for Osiris. While the Isis-devotee stands for Egyptian animism, the man who died represents Christianity, which is severely criticised in the novella; Lawrence makes the man who died ponder on the bodilessness and lifelessness of his love preaching, in other words, the rigid Christian doctrine:

Suddenly it dawned on him: I asked them all to serve me with the corpse of their love. And in the end I offered them only the corpse of my love. This is my body - take and eat - my corpse -

A vivid shame went through him. - After all, he thought, I wanted them to love with dead bodies. If I had kissed Judas with live love, perhaps he would never have kissed me with death. Perhaps he loved me in the flesh, and I willed that he should love me bodilessly, with the corpse of love - (594)

Traditionally Christianity emphasises spirituality too much and thus disregards man's physicality or the vivid contact with nature, which, the man who died comes to believe, is to be balanced with spirituality. This balance is recovered when he

gets married with the Isis-devotee. In other words, the Egyptian animistic life principle "revitalise[s]" (Cowan, 174) the man who died, and thus the "creative balance" (Cowan, 185) between the two life principles is established. The Isis-devotee is depicted as part of the cosmos, serving Isis, goddess of vegetation, in a temple situated in a wood; the man who died is led to realise that "I am part of the great Rose of space," that is, the great cosmos.

But the man looked at the vivid stars before dawn, as they rained down to the sea, and the dog-star green towards the sea's rim. And he thought: How plastic it is, how full of curves and folds like an invisible rose of dark-petalled openness, that shows where dew touches its darkness! How full it is, and great beyond all gods. How it leans around me, and I am part of it, the great rose of Space. I am a grain of its perfume, and the woman is a grain of its beauty. Now the world is one flower of many-petalled darkness, and I am in its perfume as in a touch. (597)

He is thus led to share the same animistic worldview as that of the Isis-devotee, establishing, with her aid, the living relationship with the cosmos which he had long disregarded.

In *Apocalypse*, Lawrence accuses Christians of having escaped from the immediate contact with the cosmos and turned it into "a mechanism of fate and destiny, a prison" (78) for two thousand years; "Christianity and our ideal civilisation has been one long evasion" (78) of the lively contact with the cosmos. He insists, therefore, that if modern men get to be

filled with vivid life, they recover, with "a sort of worship" (78) in their heart, that contact with the cosmos which pre-Christian ancient people vividly had. When the man who died gets married with the Isis-devotee in *The Escaped Cock*, he recovers the long-lost contact with the cosmos. *The Escaped Cock* and *Apocalypse* were written at the end of Lawrence's life, and this novella as well as the last essay show Lawrence's urgent and last appeal to the Christians who have long lost the cosmic life.

A similar animistic worldview found its way in Rosalie K. Fry's children's story, *Child of the Western Isles*, in 1957. Her work is based on a Scottish or Welsh legend of a mermaid called "The Lady of Llyn y Fan Fach", just as *St. Mawr* is partly based on a Celtic belief which is embodied in Lewis's belief of fairies. According to the Scottish or Welsh legend, a fisherman sees a beautiful lady on the beach. However, when she is seen by him, she suddenly disappears in the sea. She is a siren or a fairy. He cannot forget her and comes to the beach to see her again day after day, and finally offering her the bread which was specially made with the advice of his mother, he asks the siren to become his wife. She consents to his proposal on condition that if he strikes her three times in their marital life she will leave him forever. After they get married, they have three children, and he strikes her twice forgetting his promise to her not to do so; then when she laughs during a funeral service, he strikes her for the third time, to warn her not to laugh, and again without realising his promise; as he has broken his

promise to her, she instantly leaves him and her children and goes back to the sea. Since she cannot forget her children, however, she returns one day to the eldest boy to teach him the art of healing so that he can serve his countrymen with this art. In the Llyn y Fan Fach legend the siren gives her husband children and teaches the children medical knowledge. The siren, who is endowed with a human soul, is treated equally as a human being, and the religious background of this legend is pure Celtic animism. (This legend is also used in Fry's other novel, *Whistler in the Mist*, whose setting is the Black Mountain with the Van Pool nearby in Wales; in this story, the heroine Rosemary and her Aunt Betony are said to be descendants of the siren and Aunt Betony is a specialist of herbal medicine which, in the story, is a skill that has been handed down from the three sons of the siren.

As in Lawrence's *St. Mawr* and *The Escaped Cock*, European animism is obvious in Fry's *Child of the Western Isles* too. As the grandfather of the heroine Fiona McConville tells her, all his family members are descendants of Mrs Ian McConville, a siren or fairy. One day Ian found a beautiful woman in Ron Mor Skerry or Isle and got married to her, and from their marriage their children were born, and their offsprings inherited the siren's blood generation after generation, together with the gifted skill of catching lots of fish. Their skill was what the sea fairy had originally given her children, and fishery is their traditional profession protected by seals. While the "seal woman" teaches the eldest boy the art

of healing in the legend, she gives her descendants the skill of catching fish in Fry's story.

In Fry's story, Celtic animism is contrasted with and placed against modern materialism. Compared with Lawrence's severe criticism of modern man's materialism and egocentricism in *St. Mawr*, Fry's criticism in *Child of the Western Isles* is more soft-toned; naturally in the children's story, Fry makes an implicit criticism, by saying that Fiona's family deserted Ron Mor Isle, their homeland, in order to look for, as her grandfather comments, "the rush and the noise of the cities" (17). Her father was not satisfied with a fisherman's simple life and decided to leave the island with his family to seek a new fortune, that is, material prosperity and success, in a city. He is an earnest aspirant for material success in urban life, leaving the sea and abandoning the McConvilles' generations' long joy of "learning the way of the wind when the tide is on the turn" (17). What he obtained as a factory worker in the city after he left the island was, however, a busy life and hard work - "all day at the factory" (10) in the "horrid" city, "all grey and dirty, with people, people everywhere" (9). Living in the city, Fiona herself suffers, falling victim to city life and then is advised by a doctor to refresh herself in the old island where she spent her early years, and she goes back home. (Here again we notice another parallel between Fry's story and Lawrence's short story "Sun", in which following her doctor's advice, Juliet recuperates with lots of sunshine on her body on the island of Sicily in the Mediterranean Sea after she fell sick in New York, a crowded modern city [424-33].)

Fiona's grandparents now live in a larger island where they and their McConville relatives had been forced to move when Fiona's father left them. Following her doctor's advice to recover her health, Fiona goes back to the Ron Mor Isle and visits her grandparents. She has another plan for herself during her stay with them: to look for the lost brother Jamie whom a strong current of the sea had taken away from his father's hand when the father tried to take the boy with his family to the city. Fiona later finds that Jamie had long been protected by seals.

In Fry's story seals are protectors of Fiona, her cousin Rolie and her grandparents as well as her brother Jamie; especially the "Chieftain" seal is their chief guardian; the life of the McConvilles, young and old, on the island and whilst sailing on the sea are always watched over by the Chieftain seal. The Chieftain seal in this story is, just as the horse in *St. Mawr*, a visitor from "another world", an animal or a fairy world, whose tie had been cut off from Fiona for four years; Fiona, now ten years old, had left the island at the age of six. When she comes back, the Chieftain seal and his companions welcome her into their animal world. While she looks for Jamie, her cousin and grandparents also share the community of the girl and the seals. When they all decide to go back to their original home island from the present location, the seals are also pleased with their happy reunion there with all these descendants of the seal woman.

Fry suggests, in making a brief reference to "the sound of a [church] bell" (46), that Fiona's social background is the Christian world, yet her contact with the seals and sea gulls on the islands brings Fiona and her relatives that happy co-existence with the sea creatures which the Christian world fails to give them: thus, in the *Child of the Western Isles* too, the animistic world is revived in the modern world. Since the animistic worldview is what Christianity fails to evaluate, Fry turns to the old Celtic wisdom of vivid life, just as Lawrence turns to European animism whether Greco-Roman, Celtic, or Egyptian in *St. Mawr* and *The Escaped Cock*, so that modern people can recover, or remember at least, the vivid sense of being alive in nature by having immediate contact with it just as ancient people did.

The modern age which is characterised by homocentricism or material prosperity disregards or suppresses the world of gods or animistic world and tries instead to establish the dominating power of humans over nature and to seek ever-increasing material prosperity by destroying natural environments inhabited by the gods. Consequently, the animistic world has been lost. However, Lou's or the woman of Isis or Fiona's recovery of animism is, in other words, Lawrence's or Fry's rejection or denial of the modern homocentric values. Lawrence's and Fry's statements can be said to be modern acts of searching for a different value from the moderns. Lou, the woman of Isis, and Fiona may be called modern female seekers or aspirants to a vital life by returning to

the old animistic worldview. They are full of a pagan sense of vitality and are fully acknowledged as such in the stories. It is worth noticing that women and girls, not men and boys, are given more important roles in *St. Mawr*, *The Escaped Cock*, and *Child of the Western Isles*. Since they are or get to be deeply rooted in Mother Earth or nature, their vivid sense of life works fully in the animistic world.

Lawrence's other attempt to recover animism in the modern world is found in *The Plumed Serpent*. Yet, it is an attempt to recover Mexican Indians' animism in Mexico, not European animism, in contrast with the destructive force of Western Christianity which eradicated the Indians' belief in gods, such as Quetzalcoatl or Huitchlopochtli. This novel would be better discussed in the wider perspective of a counter attack of the suppressed animistic worldview of the Indians against the destructive and dominating power of Western Christianity in Mexico. Therefore, I have excluded the Mexican novel from the present discussion focusing on the modern revival of European animism which is vividly described both in Lawrence's *St. Mawr*, *The Escaped Cock*, and Fry's *Child of the Western Isles*.

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