



## D. H. Lawrence's The Fox : The Triumph of the Man's World

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## D. H. Lawrence's *The Fox*

—The Triumph of the Man's World—

Takashi Toyokuni

The first version of *The Fox* published in 1923 is included in *A D. H. Lawrence Miscellany* edited by Harry T. Moore. The first version written in 1919<sup>1)</sup> is a short tale of only 21 pages, while the second version consists of 69 pages, about three times as large as the first one. Comparing these two versions in detail, from page one to page seventeen of the second version, there is not much revision—only the revision of words (for example, “whenever” in the first version is changed to “when” on page eight of the second), the change of punctuation, and a few insertions of three or four lined sentences. As for the development of the story, there are two alterations: first, the ages of heroines, March and Banford, are amended from “over thirty” to “near thirty”; secondly a man who once lived in Bailey Farm is not Henry's father (the first version) but his grandfather (the second version).

On and after page eighteen of the second version, there is considerable revision, especially of the narrative. The scene from page twenty to page twenty-one, in which Henry makes up his mind to marry March, is greatly altered. The image of hunting and “the hunter and the hunted” theme—Henry is a huntsman and March is his game—are newly added to the second version. As for the succeeding scene of Henry's proposal to March, in the first version March finally replies in her semi-consciousness, “Yes—yes,” when Henry asks her, “Say then you'll marry me. Say—say?” On the contrary, in the second version March sharply retorts, “Don't try any of your tomfoolery on me,” as soon as Henry says, “Well—I wanted to ask you to marry me” (p. 22). Consequently, a bitter strife takes place between Henry and March, the hunter and the hunted, and March gives no definite answer to Henry on the spot.

Furthermore, the first version is ended in only two pages after the above-mentioned scene. Being told by Henry that March has accepted

his proposal, Banford reluctantly agrees to their marriage though she feels intense anger and hate in her soul. She, as well as March, is defeated by Henry's "passionate male will."

Somewhere, Banford now disliked him intensely, almost mystically. But she did what he wanted. She was quite helpless. And the sight of the wide-eyed, lost March angered her and almost broke her heart. But she was powerless as if enmeshed in fine electric cobwebs.<sup>2)</sup>

Thus, a couple of days later Henry marries March, and she is to live in "the world of the fox and the boy, or the fox and the old man."<sup>3)</sup>

However, in the second version March barely turned down Henry's obstinate pursuit before, she is forced to reply, "Yes! Yes! Anything you like! Anything you like! Only let me go! Jill's calling," as Henry persistently asks her to give him a definite answer to his proposal in Banford's absence. Banford, told by Henry about their engagement, objects to their marriage. Thus a bitter scramble for March takes place between Henry and Banford. This fierce strife between a man and a woman is described from page thirty-one to page sixty-four, more than half of this novel. The latter part of the novel also includes the fox's killing by Henry, March's dream about the death of Banford, Henry's trip to Canada and his return to Bailey Farm, the murder of Banford, Henry's marriage with March, and their marriage life.

After having compared the second version with the first, we find there is considerable difference between them. The newly added part of the second version, which covers over thirty pages, depicts both the strife between a man and a woman and the man's final triumph over the woman. This study is an attempt to analyze the world of *The Fox*, throwing light on the conflict between the two worlds—the world of man and that of woman—and the triumph of the man's world.

## I. The World of Woman

March and her girl friend Banford, both of whom are spinsters near thirty, live a self-sufficient life in Bailey Farm as if they were man and wife. Although they make a living by raising poultry, they

are disgusted at the fowl's tendency to strange illnesses, at their demanding way of life, and their obstinate refusal to lay eggs. The world of chickens is a projection of the world of March and Banford who live by themselves excluding men. The chicken which refuses to lay eggs is not merely the very image of March and Banford who keep a perverse and fixed woman to woman relationship, a kind of lesbianism, but also the symbol of the barrenness of modern woman. Lawrence furiously attacks such a woman as having lost the essential characteristics of a woman, saying, "Of all things the most fatal to a woman is to have an aim, and be cocksure about it."<sup>4</sup>) Both March and Banford are unaware that the fowls they despise as stupid are nothing but their own images.

Although they were usually the best of friends, because Banford, though nervous and delicate, was a warm, generous soul, and March, though so odd and absent in herself, had a strange magnanimity, yet, in the long solitude, they were apt to become a little irritable with one another, tired of one another. (p. 5)

As the months pass away, they seem to lose hope as well as ground to live by themselves, because they reject the real man-woman relationship<sup>5</sup>) and, consequently, live a life separated from society. Cathcart, the hero of *The Man Who Loved Islands*, has to perish in the white snow which symbolizes abstract knowledge because he denies such relationships between a man and a woman, or a man and a man. Besides, the world of woman they live in is the world which attaches greater importance to "knowing" than to "being," just as the women of the Brangwens in *The Rainbow* wish to know more. March's dressing like a young man to refuse her female being, Banford's spectacles and her extreme fondness of reading, and the view of "the wide country stretching hollow and dim to the round hills of the White Horse" represent the world of abstract knowledge.

Lawrence claims in a lot of his works, "The more man knows, the less he becomes." He says, "To know is to lose. When I have a finished mental concept of a beloved, or a friend, then the love and friendship is dead . . . . To know is to die."<sup>6</sup>) The world of March and Banford is a world whose aim is to increase abstract knowledge, which

develops into "intellectualism," "spiritualism," or "idealism" passionately disclaimed by Lawrence. Accordingly, the world of woman is completely ruled by the conscious, i.e. "mental consciousness." The way of living of March and Banford who disregard the unconscious, "blood consciousness," which lies at the root of the human consciousness, is naturally enough rejected and attacked by the author himself.

Lawrence depicts March as follows :

When she was out and about, in her puttees and breeches, her belted coat and her loose cap, she looked almost like some graceful, loose-balanced young man, for her shoulders were straight, and her movements easy and confident, even tinged with a little *indifference* or *irony*. But her face was not a man's face, ever. The wisps of her crisp dark hair blew about her as she stooped, her eyes were big and wide and dark, when she looked up again, strange, startled, shy and *sardonic* at once. Her mouth, too, was almost *pinched* as if in *pain* and *irony*. There was something *odd* and *unexplained* about her. (italics mine) (p. 4)

Such words as "indifference," "irony," "strange," "sardonic," "pinched," "pain," "odd," and "unexplained," reveal the perversity and abnormality of March who does not fully live. Banford is described as an acute self-conscious woman, using such adjectives as "nerve-worn," "nervous," "despondent." The perverse, isolated, and self-conscious world of woman without physical contact with men in it must be destroyed in any way. It is both the fox and Henry that appear as destroyers of the world of woman.

## II. The World of Man

Graham Hough explains the fox which kills the chickens in Bailey Farm as "a bit of wild nature hostile to their [March's and Banford's] way of life."<sup>7)</sup> As Goodheart says, the fox is also "a symbol of natural sexual vitalities."<sup>8)</sup> One day March comes across the fox, a kind of demon.

She saw his dark, shrewd, unabashed eye looking into her, knowing her. She felt him invisibly master her spirit. She knew

the way he lowered his chin as he looked up, she knew his muzzle, the golden brown, and the greyish white. And again she saw him glance over his shoulder at her, half inviting, half contemptuous and cunning. (p. 7)

The fox which clearly and vividly impresses itself on March is a voice longing for a living relationship between man and woman in her subconsciousness. When March decides to find out the fox by all means, the fox also becomes to her the symbol of her subconscious craving to escape from the conscious world of woman. The fox rules her consciousness and obsesses her as if in a spell. It is not only a forerunner of Henry Grenfel in the world of man, but also March's frustrated desire toward man in her subconsciousness. Why March and Banford are both afraid of the "continuous darkness" is that they have a horror of the world of man, the unconscious, at the basis of their own world, the conscious. When Henry arrives on the scene, March naturally identifies him with the fox, the symbol of both maleness and unconsciousness.

But to March he was the fox. Whether it was the thrusting forward of his head, or the glisten of fine whitish hairs on the ruddy cheek-bones, or the bright, keen eyes, that can never be said: but the boy was to her the fox, and she could not see him otherwise. (p. 11)

That night March dreams of the fox.

She dreamed she heard a singing outside which she could not understand, a singing that roamed round the house, in the fields, and in the darkness. It moved her so that she felt she must weep. She went out, and suddenly she knew it was the fox singing. He was very yellow and bright, like corn. She went nearer to him, but he ran away and ceased singing. He seemed near, and she wanted to touch him. She stretched out her hand, but suddenly he bit her wrist, and at the same instance, as she drew back, the fox, turning round to bound away, whisked his brush across her face, and it seemed his brush was on fire, for it seared and burned her mouth with a great pain. (p. 16)

This dream is, as it were, a transformed wish-fulfilment of March, and has a sexual inference as Freud maintains. "Corn" and "brush" in her dream represent phallus, namely, maleness. As Vickery says, the singing fox is considered to be the symbol of the world of Dionysus<sup>9)</sup> who is a terrible god of both life and death because the Dionysian world represents the darkness and music according to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. The word, "corn" is also fit for modifying the fox from the Dionysian world because Dionysus is a deity of agriculture and the corn. Accordingly, such adjectives as "soft" and "melodious" are frequently used when Henry, who is identified with the fox, speaks. Both Henry and the fox are inhabitants in the world of Dionysus. The fox in March's dream is, therefore, her ardent wish for masculinity, and at the same time a desire to get hold of vivid primitive life in the Dionysian world, "the crude Source."

### III. The Conflict between Man and Woman

Although his idea to marry March first occurs to Henry out of his self-interest to have Bailey Farm for his own, he has been already attracted to March's strange charm before. In other words, Henry's male being is attracted to March's "essential femaleness." So, F. R. Leavis regards *The Fox* as "a study of love."<sup>10)</sup> Lawrence himself elucidates Henry's psychology to obtain March as follows:

First of all, even before you come in sight of your quarry, there is a strange battle, like mesmerism. Your own soul, as a hunter, has gone out to fasten on the soul of the deer, even before you see any deer. And the soul of the deer fights to escape. Even before the deer has any wind of you, it is so. It is a subtle, profound battle of wills which takes place in the invisible. And it is a battle never finished till your bullet goes home. When you are *really* worked up to the true pitch, and you come at last into range, you don't then aim as you do when you are firing at a bottle. It is your own *will* which carries the bullet into the heart of your quarry. The bullet's flight home is a sheer projection of your own fate into the fate of the deer. It happens like a supreme wish, a supreme act of volition, not as a dodge of cleverness. (pp. 20-21)

This "the hunter and the hunted" theme is newly added to the second version of *The Fox* as mentioned before, and exists throughout this novel. At the beginning of the story, the fox is a hunter and chickens are the hunted. Then, in the latter part, Henry is essentially a hunter though he is a soldier by profession, and both March and Banford are the hunted, victims. The conflict between Henry and the two women is, in short, the conflict between the "male passionate will" and the "female will." When March is asked by Henry to marry him, she repeats, "Oh, I can't." However, she has already been obsessed by the fox, i.e. Henry, and the bullet is, as it were, in the body of March, Henry's game. For in her subconsciousness, she herself longs to have relations with a man and, consequently, to form a living man-woman relationship.

While Banford feels only repugnance against Henry.

She did not like to meet his clear, watchful eyes, she did not like to see the strange glow in his face, his cheeks with their delicate fine hair, and his ruddy skin that was quite dull and yet which seemed to burn with a curious heat of life. It made her feel a little ill to look at him: the quality of his presence was too penetrating, too hot. (p. 25)

Banford entertains antipathy against Henry's maleness and vitality, because she is an inhabitant in the mental world of woman which denies "warm physical contact." She can be considered to be a denier of life, or a symbol of anti-life as is the same with Loerke in *Women in Love*.

When Henry tells Banford that March has accepted his proposal, Banford objects to their marriage in rage and despair. This is the fierce conflict between a man's will and a woman's will, between the two foreign worlds—the world of man and that of woman. Nevertheless, March seems to flourish in this conflict between Banford and Henry. She sits between the two antagonists with a little wicked smile on her face, enjoying herself (p. 33). It is because she has the duality to escape from the world of woman into that of man where Henry lives.

The fox's killing by Henry is a holy sacrifice, revealed in the phrase, "the fox's skin nailed flat on a board, as if crucified." It can also be



said that the fox is no more necessary to Henry once that Henry's maleness is deeply impressed on March. The dream March had that night is that she covers the dead body of Banford with a fox-skin. This dream not only functions as an underplot of Banford's death, but also reveals the wish-fulfilment of March who wishes Banford's death in the subconscious in order to enter the world of man, the world of Henry-fox. For all that, awaking from her dream, the subconscious world, March, still influenced by Banford, offers a stubborn resistance to Henry. It is impossible for him to extricate March from the world of woman as long as Banford lives, because she is a great obstacle to the world of man.

The Banford would have little iron breasts he said to himself. For all her frailty and fretfulness and delicacy, she would have tiny iron breasts. But March, under her crude, fast, workman's tunic, would have soft, white breasts, white and unseen. (p. 45)

The fatal fight takes place between Henry and Banford, with March as the central figure. Finally Henry, the hunter, seems to win a victory over women by his persistent male will, but the situation reverses itself due to Henry's going to Canada. Under the influence of Banford, March writes to him, "I love Jill and she makes me feel safe and sane with her loving anger against me for being such a fool." Henry's sudden return from Canada puts the finish to such a situation which is like a seesaw game.

#### IV. Man's Triumph over Woman

The climactic scene of *The Fox* can be said to be the scene in which Henry, returning from Canada, kills Banford by felling down a tree. Henry decides to murder Banford in his heart because he cannot get married to March so long as Banford lives. In this scene "the hunter and the hunted" theme is also used—Henry, the hunter and Banford, the game.

And as he looked into the sky like a huntsman who is watching a flying bird, he thought to himself: "If the tree falls in just such a way, and spins just so much as it falls, then the branch there

will strike her exactly as she stands on top of that bank." (p. 63)

In this scene Henry becomes a superhuman being beyond good and evil, and, moreover, the measure of all things, an almighty God. He is Dionysus who gives life to March, his future wife, and death to Banford who is an obstacle to his wishes. Although this scene lacks in persuasive power from the standpoint of realism, we can regard the scene as tolerable because *The Fox* is a sort of totemic myth.<sup>11)</sup>

There was a moment of pure motionless, suspense, when the world seemed to stand still. Then suddenly his form seemed to flash up enormously tall and fearful, he gave two swift, flashing blows, in immediate succession, the tree was severed, turning slowly, spinning strangely in the air and coming down like a sudden darkness on the earth . . . . And he watched with intense bright eyes, as he would watch a wild goose he had shot. Was it winged or dead? Dead! (pp. 63-64)

Henry, the huntsman, shoots Banford, the bird. In other words, it is man's triumph over a woman. Such a man's dominance over woman develops into the dominance of the primitive race (the blood-consciousness) over the white race (the mental-consciousness) in his later novel and short stories such as *The Plumed Serpent* and *The Woman Who Rode Away*. The last scene of *The Woman Who Rode Away*, describing the death of a white woman by a primitive man, represents man's triumph over a woman in a certain sense.

Then the old man would strike, and strike home, accomplish the sacrifice and achieve the power.

The mastery that man must hold, and that passes from race to race.<sup>12)</sup>

As Cipriano, a savage general, demands a complete submission from Kate, a white woman, in *The Plumed Serpent*, so in *The Fox* Henry who has married March, claims man's superiority over woman.

And he! He did not want her to watch any more, to see any more, to understand any more. He wanted to veil her woman's spirit, as Orientals veil the woman's face. He wanted her to commit

herself to him, and to put her independent spirit to sleep. He wanted to take away from her all her effort, all that seemed her very *raison d'être*. He wanted to make her submit, yield, blindly pass away out of all her strenuous consciousness. He wanted to take away her consciousness and make her just his woman. Just his woman. (p.68)

What Henry wants of March is that she should live with him in the world of man, the unconsciousness, abandoning the conscious world of woman. He rejects woman's spirit "to watch," "to see," and "to understand." However, his claim that March should become "just his woman," giving up "woman's independent spirit," reveals a one-sided insistence of Lawrence's egotism as a male. Lawrence repeatedly insists on man's dominance over woman in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*.

Make her yield to her own real unconscious self, and absolutely stamp on the self that she's got in her head. Drive her forcibly back, back into her own true unconscious.<sup>13)</sup>

But combat her in her sexual pertinacity, and in her secret glory or arrogance in the sexual goal. Combat her in her cocksure belief that she 'knows' and that she is 'right.' Take it all out of her. Make her yield once more to the male leadership: if you've got anywhere to lead to.<sup>14)</sup>

Lawrence's claim on man's dominance is an emphasis upon the unconscious against the conscious, upon "being" against "knowing." It is also a charge against the spiritualism or intellectualism of modern women. Lawrence's deep attachment to man's dominance can be explained in terms of the duality in Lawrence as H. M. Daleski says:

I believe that initially he made a strenuous effort to reconcile the male and female elements in himself but that he was unable to do so, that he was by nature more strongly feminine than masculine, and that his insistence in the *Fantasia* on an absolute degree of masculinity is evidence of an extreme reaction, a refusal even to acknowledge the existence of feminine components in his make-up.<sup>15)</sup>

Furthermore, Lawrence's insistence on man's dominance is his reac-

tion against the spiritualism of his mother and Jessie Chambers, Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*, and at the same time, his resistance against his wife Frieda who is a "devouring mother."<sup>16</sup> It is, on the other hand, a kind of conservative opinion that man must lead woman, and at the bottom of it, there exists his nostalgia and longing for the world of miners, or men, where his father once lived.

Thus far, we have analyzed *The Fox*, putting the spotlight on the conflict between the world of man and that of woman, and the final triumph of the man's world. The remarkable thing worth noticing is that the close of *The Fox* still suggests the conflict between Henry and March, between man and woman.

For her own part, death was not her destiny. She would have to leave her destiny to the boy. But then, the boy. He wanted more than that. He wanted her to give herself without defences, to sink and become submerged in him. And she—she wanted to sit still, like a woman on the last milestone, and watch. She wanted to see, to know, to understand. She wanted to be alone: with him at her side. (p.68)

As is easily known from the above quotation, March cannot desert the world of woman though she seeks the world of man. Such a dichotomy or duality, in some sense, develops into the harmony of the two worlds in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* or *The Man Who Died*. In his later works Lawrence does not maintain "one up-one down" relationship, but the eternal strife of opposites and their harmony as Heraclitus says. Although Lawrence passionately insists upon man's dominance over woman in *The Fox*, this ending without a definite conclusion is the very proof that he is one of the greatest writers with universality going beyond his own narrow egotism as a male.

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### Notes

- 1) Harry T. Moore ed., *A D. H. Lawrence Miscellany* (London: Heinemann, 1961), p. 26 n.
- 2) *Ibid.*, p. 45.

- 3) *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- 4) D. H. Lawrence, "Women Are So Cocksure," *Phoenix*, ed. Edward D. McDonald (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 169.
- 5) See Takashi Toyokuni, *Women in Love: A Study of the Man-Woman Relationship, The English Literature in Hokkaido*, XVI.
- 6) D. H. Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (London: Heinemann, 1961), p. 68.
- 7) Graham Hough, *The Dark Sun* (London: Duckworth, 1968), p. 176.
- 8) Eugene Goodheart, *The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 53.
- 9) Cf. John Vickery, "Myth, and Ritual in the Shorter Fiction of D. H. Lawrence," *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 5 (Spring, 1959), p. 80. Vickery says, "To anyone familiar with *The Golden Bough*, the above description of the fox suggests that he is to be identified with the primitive fertility deity or, more specifically, with Dionysus as the corn-spirit. Significantly enough, during harvest season the man who hits the last corn with his sickle is called the Fox and during the evening dances with all the girls."
- 10) F. R. Leavis, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), p. 272. Dr. Leavis says in this invaluable book, "But in *The Fox* the conviction is more fully explored and presented, and what we have is much more fully and unequivocally a study of love. For that is what *The Fox* is, even if it doesn't answer to the ordinary notion of a love-story. It is a study of human mating; of the attraction between a man and a woman that expresses the profound needs of each and has its meaning in a permanent union."
- 11) John Vickery, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-82. He says, "A quite different kind of myth is employed by Lawrence in *The Fox* and *St. Mawr*, namely, the animal or totemic myth. In totemism an intimate relation is assumed between certain human beings and certain natural or artificial objects, the latter being called the totems of the former. The outlines of the totemic myth are most apparent in *The Fox* partly because it is shorter and partly it is a much less complex story than *St. Mawr*."
- 12) D. H. Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away," *The Complete Short Stories*, vol. II (London: Heinemann, 1965), p. 581.
- 13) *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, p. 188.
- 14) *Ibid.*, p. 189.
- 15) H. M. Daleski, "The Duality of Lawrence," *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 5, p. 11.
- 16) *The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Harry T. Moore (London: Heinemann, 1965), vol. I, Letter to Katherine Mansfield dated (?) 21, Nov. 1918, p. 565. Lawrence says in his letter, "In a way Frieda is the devouring mother. It is awfully hard, once the sex relation has gone this way, to recover. If we don't recover, we die."