

A Trio from Lawrence's
England, My England and Other Stories:
Readings of "Monkey Nuts," "The Primrose
Path," and "Fanny and Annie"

Weldon Thornton

D. H. Lawrence's *England, My England and Other Stories* (1922) has been called his "most outstanding accomplishment as a writer of short stories" (Cushman 27) and has been the most discussed among his collections of short stories in terms of its integrity as a volume (see the essays by Cushman, Mackenzie, and Smith). While the volume appears to be held together mainly by the experience of World War I, several stories have nothing to do with the war, either directly or in retrospect. The less overt, more subtle thematic connection among all of the stories is suggested by a passage from "Monkey Nuts," in which Joe's sense of relief upon evading the approaches of Miss Stokes is said to be greater than when the firing ceased and the armistice was signed. Lawrence, like Hemingway, saw that the risks involved in venturing into human relationships can be just as intimidating and potentially traumatic as those in battle.

The volume contains some of Lawrence's greatest achievements in the genre and some of his most frequently anthologized stories, such as "England, My England," "Ticks Please," "The Horse-Dealer's Daughter," and "The Blind



Weldon Thornton is William R. and Jeanne H. Jordan Professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a member of the *DHLR*'s Editorial Board. Author of *D.H. Lawrence: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1993) and *The Antimodernism of Joyce's "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"* (1994), he is completing a book on authorial presence and narrative voice in *Ulysses*.

Man.”¹ But other stories in this volume are rarely attended to and never analyzed in any depth. The present discussion demonstrates the psychological subtlety of three of these neglected stories and in doing so suggests more clearly what the underlying integrity of the volume consists in. “Monkey Nuts,” “The Primrose Path,” and “Fanny and Annie” are subtle explorations of the characters’ situations and motives, amply rewarding scrutiny and showing that we cannot afford to dismiss any of Lawrence’s stories.

If not one of Lawrence’s most compelling stories, “Monkey Nuts” is nevertheless skillful and subtle, and fathoming its psychological currents and eddies requires careful attention. Written in May 1919, it is one of several stories in the *England, My England* volume in which the characters’ war experiences strongly affect their present needs and modes of response.² E. W. Tedlock, Jr. rightly begins his brief account by saying, “‘Monkey Nuts’ is a terse vignette of the emotion-paralysing after-effects of the war” (111). But the story is primarily about the emotional vicissitudes of Joe and Miss Stokes, and another dimension is added by the rather sinister campaign of Albert to “protect” young Joe.

To “contextualize” this story—to appreciate the distinctive forces presently at work in these characters—we should first consider how the lives of Joe, Albert, and Miss Stokes have been conditioned by their war-time roles and experiences. Joe, the central character, has been most strongly affected by the war. The opening and closing paragraphs report that he was directly involved in the action, and the final sentence strikingly asserts that upon Miss Stokes’s departure, Joe “felt more relieved even than he had felt when he heard the firing cease, after the news had come that the armistice was signed” (*EmyE* 76). These brief statements, framing the narrative, provide important clues to why Joe reacts as he does to the events of the story. Having just survived the traumas of the war, Joe has too long been subject to life-threatening forces beyond his control, and he has no intention of falling into any similar situation in his personal life. The last thing he wants at present is an emotional relationship asking

more of him than he can understand.

We are told less of Albert's reactions to the war, but this older and more experienced soldier has presumably found his *modus vivendi* for the pressures of war and of life generally: not taking anything too seriously, and maintaining a facade of facetiousness. And in a sense Joe is presently Albert's understudy—or at least Joe feels that he could do worse than emulate Albert. Joe's deference to Albert emerges in several ways, such as his imitating Albert's observing the world with blank absorption, though Lawrence informs us that Joe "could not become blankly absorbed as Albert could" (*EmyE* 65).

We are told little as well about Miss Stokes's war-time experience but can infer that she (as the women in "Tickets Please") has been cast by the war into roles of physical labor and of self-reliance, and that her emotional and psychic needs have suffered. Since she was not at the front, the war has affected Miss Stokes quite differently from Joe. She has both suffered deprivation of meaningful relationships and learned how to take things into her own hands.

Knowing so little about Miss Stokes's background, we can hardly speculate about her, beyond recognizing that she is hungry for a meaningful relationship and is willing actively to pursue it. Clearly the potential relationship with Joe means a great deal to her. In the first place, she is keenly alert to his latent capacity for relationship (in contrast to Albert's practiced diffidence). Secondly, she aggressively pursues the relationship, repeatedly running the risk of making herself look forward and foolish. Finally, she is so strongly affected by Joe's termination of the relationship that she visibly blanches and nearly falls from the wagon, and immediately afterward she gives up her job and departs.

As the story opens, Joe has just come through the traumatic experience of the war, so that his psyche now needs a period of respite, rather than a launch into new domains. This is suggested by the pleasant, tidy description of Joe's situation in the opening paragraph: the men have straightforward, physical work to do, they understand what

is asked of them, and they are in effect their own bosses. Sunny weather and flowering apple trees make the place almost Edenic, and we are pointedly told that “After Flanders it was heaven itself” (*EmyE* 64). But no sooner has Joe begun to relax into this simply-structured existence than Miss Stokes begins to make demands on him—demands that, while somewhat appealing, confuse and frighten him and seem almost physically threatening. His evolving experience with Miss Stokes is repeatedly described in terms of physical violence—of his feeling as if he had taken blows (*EmyE* 66, 69), his feeling staggered (*EmyE* 70), his feeling as if he had been shot, and his saying that murder will be done (*EmyE* 73).

The situation is in some respects the obverse of that in “The Fox,” for here we have an undemanding, sterile relationship between two men obtruded upon by a young woman. Not that Miss Stokes is as callow or vicious as young Henry Grenfel; she needs a relationship far more than Henry does—or at least more than he realizes he does—and in this respect she has more in common with Annie in “Tickets Please,” both of whom need a relationship so much that they overextend themselves and become vulnerable and hurt. Nor does the comparison with “The Fox” imply any sexual relationship between Joe and Albert; if there is any such—which I doubt—it plays no consequential role in the failure of the relationship between Miss Stokes and Joe. The counterappeal Albert makes to Joe depends not on a homosexual bond, but on a homeostatic life-style that promises immunity to the unforeseeable risks of demanding relationships. And we shall see that Albert is far more cunning and formidable in defense of his life-mode than Banford is of hers. Finally, the major difference between the two situations is that while March deeply longs for some novelty to come into her life, Joe wants structure and tranquility more than anything else.³

Miss Stokes’s pursuit of Joe rather than Albert bespeaks not simply her own need, but her intuitive sense of Joe’s capacity for relationship. We are told “there was something in the turn of Joe’s head, and something in his quiet, tender-looking form,

young and fresh—which attracted her eye” (*EmyE* 65). Nor is Joe indifferent to his impression on others: “Careful about his appearance, he shaved every day” (*EmyE* 64). He is not one of Lawrence’s aggressive males whose capacity for relationship is buried under several layers of cultural accommodation to stereotypical masculinity. Of such characters in Lawrence (among them Henry Grenfel and Hadrian Rockley), the most superficial and invulnerable is John Thomas, in “Tickets Please,” who remains safely aloof from any implications of his flirtations. But Joe seems cut from different cloth, capable of responding more fully and deeply than these predatory males. This capacity is shown by the real turmoil and confusion Miss Stokes causes within him. Joe’s problem is not a cocksureness that forestalls any possibility of relationship, but real ambivalence about the feelings Miss Stokes causes in him, and fearfulness about his inability to understand and control their relationship. This fear is exacerbated by Miss Stokes’s forwardness; doubtless she would fare better with Joe if she were wily enough to be indirect and alluring, but her undeniable need undermines such tactics. Joe’s withdrawal arises mainly from his not being willing at this time to take on a meaningful relationship, and his preferring the familiar safety of his present undemanding job and the mode of life exemplified by Albert, to the always fearful *terra incognita* of personal involvement. It is doubtful, though, that this need for security runs so deep in Joe’s psyche that he will remain permanently in retreat from relationships and replicate the life-pattern Albert proffers; his present feelings react to the vulnerability and vicissitudes of his post-war situation.

While Joe is the focal character, Albert’s role becomes more important, and more sinister, as the story unfolds. At first glance Albert seems pathetic in his forced jocularity and his penchant for mischief, which is “only his laborious way of skirting his own ennui” (*EmyE* 64)—though this manner has presumably carried him through some traumatic experiences, including the Great War. But perhaps to his own surprise, the relationship between Miss Stokes and Joe becomes virtually a challenge to Albert’s life mode, evoking from him resourceful defensiveness. From early on he

is piqued and even threatened by the relationship between the younger couple, for it somehow calls into question the sufficiency and desirability of his own life mode. Albert would like to think that his mode of life represents his real wants, but Miss Stokes's directness in bypassing him in favor of the reluctant but vulnerable Joe at first irritates and then disturbs him. Not that Albert is seriously interested in Miss Stokes; probably he has played his role of fun and nonsense and has held life at arm's length for so long that he could not respond even if Miss Stokes were interested in him. But he is miffed by her blatantly ignoring him; he would like the decision not to court her to be his own. Similarly, his observing at close quarters how this relationship affects young Joe disturbs Albert in several ways. On one level the smooth flow of his own psyche is disturbed by the turmoil in that of his fellow soldier and roommate. On another, the episode causes Albert, now "about forty" years old (*EmyE* 64), to recognize the unlikelihood of his ever having such a relationship—perhaps to fear that his own capacity for such emotion is past—and he finds himself envious of his younger mate's life-qualities, in a way echoing the situation between officer and orderly in "The Prussian Officer." Albert's response to this frustration has several aspects, several phases, but it comes down finally to his regarding the young woman as a challenge and to his vindication of his own life-mode by winning Joe back to it. This underlying motive on Albert's part plays an increasingly important role as the relationship progresses.

To appreciate Albert's crucial role, we must understand that he could never have gained the leverage he does if it were not for Joe's truly ambivalent feelings about Miss Stokes. At this juncture in his life, Joe does not know what he wants, and he finds himself incapable of making a decision; torn as he is between the appeal of the relationship with Miss Stokes and his wish for a tranquil and structured life like Albert's, he is buffeted between two virtual antagonists.

Joe's ambivalence is evident early in the relationship. When he gets the telegram from "M. S.," we are told "[h]e had not the faintest intention of meeting her," but also

that “he had not the faintest intention of telling Albert” (*EmyE* 66). Later he does “suddenly” show the wire to Albert, but he is incapable of telling Albert why he did not respond, beyond saying “I didn’t want to” (*EmyE* 67). During the next week the telegram is unmentioned, but when Albert proposes that the two of them accompany Miss Stokes to the circus, Joe makes a response that surprises them all: “‘Too many by half,’ blurted out Joe, jeeringly, in a sudden fit of uncouth rudeness that made both the others stare” (*EmyE* 68), and Albert responds by revealing his knowledge of the telegram. But when Miss Stokes responds to his query about the meaning of “M. S.,” Joe “flushed dark, and cursed Albert in his heart” (*EmyE* 69). Albert senses from Joe’s reaction that he has moved too quickly against Miss Stokes, and he subsequently proceeds more circumspectly.

Joe’s attraction to Miss Stokes is shown by his feeling “electrified to see [her] face” at the circus; by the fact that her pretending not to see him “was a blow to him, and it made him angry. He would not even mention it to Albert” (*EmyE* 69); and by his acquiescence to her taking his hand in the dark. His counter emotions surface when he “bark[s] out [. . .] in an uncouth voice” “‘I’m not keen on going any further [. . .] She bain’t my choice’” (*EmyE* 70)—but then go on with her he does, under the influence of her subtle pressure. Sensing that the relationship must be permitted to run some further course, Albert withdraws, signaling his present capitulation with a bow and a salute—one of the many military metaphors and phrases that run through the story. During the following days (and nights), the developing relationship between Joe and Miss Stokes has an effect on Albert: while he occasionally speaks to Joe as his corporal and sometimes presumes to twit Miss Stokes mildly, Albert makes no overt move against her. He becomes “irritable, soon made angry,” and “[h]is fun and nonsense took a biting, sarcastic turn”; “with his nerves on edge, [Albert] began to find the strain rather severe” (*EmyE* 72). His own lifestyle is increasingly affronted by what is happening between the two.

The story’s crisis occurs on the Saturday night when Joe returns to their room

“more black-browed than ever” (*EmyE* 72). The crisis has come about because Joe, who has been seeing Miss Stokes “[a]lmost every evening[. . .], returning late” (*EmyE* 71), feels the relationship has reached a turning point and is about to take on a new direction that seems to him irreversible. Joe’s strange statement ““There’ll be murder done one of these days”” (*EmyE* 73) is not an actual threat of murder, but a reflection of the chaos in his psyche, and of his temptation to resort to a violent, soldierly mode of resolution.⁴ Subtly sensing the crisis in Joe’s feelings on this Saturday night, Albert “determined to have it out with him” (*EmyE* 72).

Whether consciously contrived or not, Albert’s manipulation of the wavering Joe is masterly and achieves exactly the effect he wishes. Aware that he had earlier underestimated the hold of Miss Stokes on Joe and offended him by revealing his knowledge of her telegram, Albert knows that he must be circumspect. By presuming something has “gone wrong” (he uses the phrase twice), Albert brings Joe to articulate his own vague feelings about the relationship’s constraints and his resulting resentment he feels of it (*EmyE* 72, 73). Sensing that the confused, wavering young Joe is virtually incapable of breaking the bond for himself, Albert at just the right time praises him for being “too soft-hearted” (*EmyE* 73) and offers to take his place with Miss Stokes, thus skillfully taking Joe out of the picture.

Albert’s meeting with Miss Stokes the next day reveals his own mixed motives, as well as his dissatisfaction with the jocular, diffident role he has so long assumed. That his aim has become more than simply breaking off the relationship for Joe is shown by his own repeated attempts to get Miss Stokes to attend to him. Where he thinks their relationship would lead is unclear, but his power to attract Miss Stokes has become important to Albert. All of his careless, nonchalant, and funny attempts at courtship fail abjectly, eliciting from Miss Stokes only a shocked silence and tears that disconcert him; the result is that “he turned on his heel, cursing silently, puzzled, lifting off his cap to scratch his head” (*EmyE* 75). While he has succeeded (he hopes) in severing the link between Miss Stokes and Joe, he has failed to vindicate his own

continued capacity for relationships.

Whether Miss Stokes pursues her confrontation with Joe the next morning so directly because she is blindly confident of her capacity to win Joe over, or because she has thrown caution to the wind, we cannot be sure. On that last morning, when she makes her direct appeal to Joe, in Albert's presence and in broad daylight, we are told first of all, ominously, that "her 'Whoa!' rang out like a war-whoop"—in which case Miss Stokes is out of her element—and then, more ambivalently as she makes her request of Joe, that "[s]he made a queer movement, lifting her head slightly in a sipping, half-inviting, half-commanding gesture" (*EmyE* 75). Joe still wavers, as shown by his preparing to jump off the truck to obey Miss Stokes, but Albert remains as cunning in this final counter-appeal as he has been in his earlier manipulation of Joe. He is, of course, Joe's military superior and is capable subtly of pulling rank on his younger friend, but now he rather lays his hand on the young man's shoulder (as he did during the Saturday night crisis), calls him "boy"—a word, used at crucial junctures earlier, that serves both as a term of endearment and as a reminder of Albert's greater experience and higher rank—and reminds Joe of the work they have to do. When Miss Stokes directly challenges Albert to remove his hand, he responds "'Yes, Major,'" ironically invoking the military chain of command that he feels is now in his favor. And as soon as Joe voices his taunt to Miss Stokes, Albert assumes a military role, yelling to the porters to come assist them: "He could yell like any non-commissioned officer upon occasion" (*EmyE* 76).

Joe's taunt—"Monkey nuts!"—is the *coup de grace* to Miss Stokes's pursuit of him, but we are told that even after the wagon was unloaded and Miss Stokes gone, Joe and Albert "had a weight on their minds, they were afraid," and that they were reassured when she came no more. And then we have the dramatic, revealing statement, "Joe felt more relieved even than he had felt when he heard the firing cease, after the news had come that the armistice was signed" (*EmyE* 76).

As with so many Lawrence stories, we feel the need, as part of our interpretation,

to speculate on what lies ahead for the characters. We should not presume from Joe's rejection of Miss Stokes that he has once and for all taken on the mold of Albert, for he simply does not seem of Albert's jocularly defensive type. Miss Stokes did awaken in him a considerable interest and turmoil. But in his present circumstances, Joe's deepest needs and those of Miss Stokes are simply running on different tracks, and in opposite directions—"Trams that pass in the night," as Lawrence puts it in "Tickets Please" (*EmyE* 35).

Kingsley Widmer says of this story, which he regards as one of Lawrence's fictions that "have not been given their due," that "[i]n this simple but precise comedy of the covert erotic struggle, the masculinity of the soldier pals has won its revenge, not only on the female, but on their own sexual longings" (245; 137). Keith Cushman basically concurs, saying "though the aggressive woman is humiliated, the net result is that the deathly relationship between the unformed, malleable Joe and the emotionally sterile Albert will continue. This is another story in which the battle leads to no victory" (35). While I in part agree with these evaluations, I would like to draw out an implication about the kinds of judgments Lawrence's characters evoke from us (a topic discussed more fully in my *D.H. Lawrence: A Study of the Short Fiction*). While Miss Stokes might seem to epitomize the "aggressive woman," she is the one who is trying most, however imperfectly, to acknowledge her needs and keep relationships alive; she is putting something on the line, and for that she deserves our sympathy and even admiration. Not that we utterly disdain Albert and Joe: Albert's is a sad situation, for he has barely averted confronting his life's hollowness. Joe cannot be held entirely to blame for his withdrawal into safety, since he needs just now a period of tranquility and structure to help him put the war behind him. But the vulnerable Miss Stokes is the story's heroine in her desperate attempts to force into being the relationship she so badly needs.

Another of the stories in this volume, "The Primrose Path," involves characters who are virtual antitypes in terms of their willingness to venture something. Many

Lawrence works are built around complementary or opposed characters. We can recognize a number of such dichotomous types, such as those involving mental consciousness/blood consciousness (e.g. “The Prussian Officer”), or the refined, educated man/natural, spontaneous man (*The White Peacock*, “Shades of Spring,” *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*), or the active pragmatic type/reflective aesthetic type, as in “England, My England.” Contrasting pairs are common among Lawrence’s female characters as well: many of Lawrence’s stories and novels focus on a pair of women, often sisters, who are temperamentally very different—“The Daughters of the Vicar,” *Women in Love*, and Banford and March in “The Fox.”

Though this may not be immediately obvious, “The Primrose Path” is another study in contrasting temperamental types.⁵ The two Daniels, uncle and nephew (the latter presumably named for the former), while “obviously kin” (*EmyE* 123), share little beyond their name and their slight physical resemblance, for their temperamental life-orientations are diametrically opposed. The types dramatized here are perhaps not so easily recognized as those listed above, though they do occur elsewhere in Lawrence’s work. The story involves a species of psychological voyeurism, in which the guarded, self-aware and critically-minded Daniel Berry stands apart from and observes the more engaged, immersive life-mode of his uncle. Viewed from this perspective, the story reveals kinship with other Lawrence stories involving similar pairs—“The Prussian Officer” (officer/orderly), “Monkey Nuts” (Albert/Joe), and more clearly “Wintry Peacock,” in which the nameless narrator wishes to feel the *frisson* of Maggie Goyte’s presence and to observe the tensions, the dynamics, of Maggie and Albert’s relationship but remains at a safe distance from the action.

In this story Daniel Berry is intensely interested in his uncle’s mode of life; the younger Daniel probes and judges his uncle, all the while cautiously keeping his own counsel and revealing virtually nothing of himself. It is noteworthy how much he learns from the older man about his personal life and attitudes, how little he reveals of himself. Their conversation consists almost entirely of questions by Berry, some

quite personal, all designed to elicit information about the life of the older man. On the other hand, to Sutton's "And how're you going on, lad?" Berry apparently responds only with a question of his own: "Who are you living with in town?" (*EmyE* 126). Berry's probing curiosity is felt even by the publican at the Railway Arms, who "leaned back in the dark corner behind the bar, his arms folded, evidently preferring to get back from the watchful eyes of the nephew" (*EmyE* 128).

The older Daniel is, then, the focal character of the story, though not the perspective character, and in the course of the narrative we do learn a great deal about him. We quickly learn that Sutton has a number of unappealing traits, and it is not immediately clear why he is an object of such interest to his nephew. We see from the outset his blustery manner, involving a mixture of aggression and defensiveness. We soon see as well his abject fear, in response to the news of his sister's death from cancer, and his cynicism about his fellow human beings and about the meaning of life:

"You've only to look at the folk in the street to know there's nothing keeps it going but gravitation. Look at 'em. Look at him!"—A mongrel-looking man was nosing past. "Wouldn't *he* murder you for your watch-chain, but that he's afraid of society? He's got it *in* him.—Look at 'em."

[. . .] "Did ever you see such a God-forsaken crew creeping about. It gives you the very horrors to look at 'em. I sit in this damned car and watch 'em, till, I can tell you, I feel like running the cab amuck among 'em, and running myself to kingdom come—" (*EmyE* 124)

The impression this makes is only slightly ameliorated by our being told (in the account of Berry's dead mother, Sutton's older sister) that as a young man "[t]hings were made too easy for him, and so he thought of no one but himself, and this is the result" (*EmyE* 125). This explanation seems perhaps sanctioned by the *Hamlet* allusion of the story's title, the implication being that Sutton's mode of life is the result of his having had things his own way in youth,⁶ but the deep-seated temperamental differences the story turns on can hardly be so simply accounted for.

The scene in which he visits his dying wife, Maud, whom he abandoned many years earlier for a younger woman, confirms Sutton's terrible vulnerability and virtual cowardice in the face of death. The scene is skillfully presented, conveying well the barely controlled chaos and terror of his feelings, the small defensive maneuvers he uses to protect himself from acknowledging the hopeless situation of this woman whose life has been so intertwined with his own. But even less appealing is his lack of regard for the feelings of others, involving a "bullying" that has already cost him two relationships and that seems to characterize his present one as well.

In short, this "chaos of a man" (*EmyE* 126) seems doomed to a life of fear, bullying, fragmented relationships, and ultimate loneliness by his temperament, exacerbated as it may have been by his indulgence as a youth. All in all, this is not a very appealing portrait, nor is it a happy prospect for Berry if he should conclude that the man he is sitting beside is "an older development of himself" (*EmyE* 125).

But the uncle is more complex and in some respects more appealing, for the chaotic intensity at the core of his character is the basis of his nephew's voyeuristic interest in him, as well as his fascination for the reader. The root of this complexity is that though Sutton deeply fears the pain that relationships—or even life itself—can involve and has developed an array of crude devices to keep himself insulated or in control, he cannot simply forego human relationships, and he invests a great deal of energy in them. He *requires* relationships for his psychic sustenance, even though he is incapable of sustaining a harmonious relationship with anyone. Because of his very sensitivity—he is described as having "an emotional man's fear of sentiment" (*EmyE* 126)—he has found ways to hold others at arm's length and to stay in control of his relationships with them. Thus his profound human need is persistently frustrated by his utter ineptitude in carrying on meaningful relationships with others, virtually insuring their failure. Yet being an "emotional man," he is destined always to go from one relationship to another, for he cannot exist without that sustenance.

The scene at Sutton's house, with his new girl (and his dogs) exemplifies his

problems and makes us almost as uncomfortable as it does Berry. Sutton's rough, aggressive treatment of his young woman is obvious, but so is the passion of their relationship and the appeal this older man holds for her. We are even told that glancing at him she was "unable to see anything else," for "[t]heir eyes met, and she was carried away" (*EmyE* 134-35). After she coaxes him out of the great coat that has served as one of his defenses, especially in the scene with his dying wife, we are told that Elaine "stood close to his chest. She wanted to touch him and to comfort him. There was something about him now that fascinated her" (*EmyE* 135). Immediately after, it appears that even Berry's curiosity has been sated: "Berry felt slightly ashamed that she seemed to ignore the presence of others in the room" (*EmyE* 135).

Given the negative characterization of Sutton, even in this scene of his return home, we must wonder—and Berry surely does—what this young girl sees in him. The answer must be that for all his failings, which will probably destroy this relationship just as his earlier ones, Sutton emanates vitality and passion. Yet the germ of disaffection has already infected this relation, for we are told "[s]he was playing with passion, afraid of it, and really wretched because it left her, the person, out of count. Yet she continued" (*EmyE* 135). And then we are told that "there came into [Sutton's] bearing, into his eyes, the curious smile of passion, pushing away even the death-horror. It was life stronger than death in him. She stood close to his breast. Their eyes met, and she was carried away" (*EmyE* 135). For all his fear and defensiveness, Sutton cannot suppress in himself a life-urge even stronger than his fear.

Obviously this "chaos of a man" (*EmyE* 126) doesn't know how to express affection, whether because of a flaw in temperament or because he was so indulged as a young man. With his first wife, his "emotional man's fear of sentiment [...] helped to nip his wife from putting out any shoots" (*EmyE* 126), and in spite of her real love for him, their feelings toward one another never had any chance to develop. He greets his new young woman almost antagonistically and directs his "really intimate movement" toward his dogs rather than toward her (*EmyE* 134). But her strong feeling

for him is obvious nonetheless. Thus while we cannot approve of Sutton, the more we understand his complex nature, the more we see that his bluster and his bullying are a facade maintained for so long that he cannot set it aside, a facade made necessary by his vulnerability and by the chaotic power of his emotions.

The younger Daniel is not so explicitly characterized. For the most part he provides the story's "perspective"—though we are told more than he could know—and so we must infer his character from relatively little information.⁷ Berry is frequently described as a "young man," and we know that he is on some business trip, suggesting that he is at least in his early to mid-twenties, while Sutton is thirty-five or thirty six (twenty years younger than Berry's mother who died recently at fifty-five), so that the two men are separated by only ten or twelve years (*EmyE* 124, 125). We have no knowledge of whether the younger man is married—no mention is made of a wife—but we do know that by Berry's age, Sutton was several years into his first marriage. In any event, the younger man feels some latent identification with the older and wishes a chance to observe, to study, this uncle whom he has never really known. And it may be that his mother's recent death has caused him to take stock of his own situation.

After his uncle's outburst against the scene around them, Berry thinks "He uses words like I do, he talks nearly as I talk, except that I shouldn't say those things. But I might feel like that, in myself, if I went a certain road—" (*EmyE* 125), and we are told that "Berry felt curiously as if he were sitting beside an older development of himself" (*EmyE* 125). But while Berry's acknowledgment may suggest a similarity in world-view between the two, it also reflects a basic difference in temperament, for the older man blurts out these terrible sentiments while the younger reflects silently, acknowledging that even if he felt like that in himself, "I shouldn't say those things."

The younger man, then, is more cautious and restrained, more capable of weighing rationally the pros and cons of personal involvements, and shrewder about their assets and liabilities. His uncle's reckless life-mode both fascinates and repels

him; in a sense he envies it, but more fundamentally he is glad to be free of the chaos of emotion that his uncle continually lives in. It would be interesting to know what life-lesson the nephew infers from this example he is studying; it appears that what the nephew learns is the need to keep himself aloof from all such entanglements.

There are two possible motives for Berry's curiosity about his uncle. The first is that he sees in the older man some subsequent version of himself, and he wishes to study him as a cautionary example. Even though this is explicitly suggested by the story—"I might feel like that, in myself, if I went a certain road" (*EmyE* 125)—I incline toward the second explanation, which is that the nephew is fascinated by the spectacle of a man so emotionally chaotic and profligate, so different from himself, that he simultaneously is fascinated by and detests him, but most of all simply wants to observe (from a safe distance) this life-mode in action.

I say this because, while the nephew's tone toward his uncle is hard to determine, it is critical and judgmental rather than sympathetic. That is, if the young man really did see in Sutton a future version of himself, he should be more sympathetic toward him than he is. His critical attitude comes through most clearly in the story's final lines, where the younger man perceptively says, "That girl will leave him," he said to himself. "She'll hate him like poison. And serve him right" (*EmyE* 136).

I say this also because the young man persistently manifests a cool detachment and curiosity impossible for his uncle. He enjoys putting people into emotionally awkward situations and observing their response. He directs this scrutiny not only at his uncle and at the barman, but even at his uncle's new *menage*, when he unnecessarily tells them of his uncle's recent visit to his first wife and follows this by "I think she wanted him to take the child" (*EmyE* 133). Observing their response, Berry rather precipitately infers from it that "his uncle had bullied them, as he bullied everybody" (*EmyE* 134). Doubtless Berry is right in this judgment—and we are explicitly told as much by the story's final three words—and doubtless he has learned from this episode with his uncle something about what he does not want his own life to be.

Berry's observation of his uncle involves mixed, complex motives he does not fully understand himself. But his self-awareness, his circumspection, and his "voyeurism" make it unlikely that his life-experience will replicate that of his self-centered, blustery uncle who plows on through life with so little regard for the feelings of others. On the contrary, the lesson, the moral, that the younger Daniel probably sees in his uncle is the danger of overmuch involvement in life—which is just the opposite from the message that this cautious young man needs. The story suggests that rather than Berry's life mode replicating that of his uncle, he will remain a safely distanced observer rather than a participant.

In this tale of two temperaments, we are not simply to condemn Sutton and agree with Berry. Here as elsewhere in his works, the evaluation that Lawrence evokes—as I argue elsewhere—turns not so much on a character's overt success or failure as on whether he is trying, however imperfectly, to live rather than to protect himself from life. Finally, then, Lawrence wants us to understand that for all his unappealing traits, there is more of life in the uncle than in the nephew because the older man, for all his vulnerability, engages life, while the younger simply observes and critiques it.

While "Fanny and Annie" has attracted more critical comment than the two preceding stories, and while its situation has more in common with certain other of Lawrence's narratives, critics have not yet fully appreciated the interplay between venturesomeness and self-protection that works itself out in Fanny's psyche. That Lawrence's works so frequently involve recurrent situations and recognizable types yet remain subtle and variable is a reflection of his writing's exploratory nature and evidence of his understanding that a slight variation in circumstances or in character entails new possibilities. In "Fanny and Annie" we have once again a story of a young woman who is pulled between her conscious aspirations and images of herself, and deeper feelings that she is hardly aware of.⁸ The situation and imagery of the opening paragraphs suggest that Fanny regards her return to town as ignominious, almost degrading. The description, with its emphasis on flickering flame and shadow,

suggests a descent into the infernal. She is obviously disappointed in the lot that has fallen to her—having to return to marry her first-love, a foundry worker, after losing the man she says she loved, after other affairs which had come to nothing, and after having served in Gloucester as a lady's maid. She explicitly asks herself why she has returned, whether she loves Harry, who has remained single, if not celibate, for these dozen years, asserting clearly "No! She didn't pretend to [love him]" (*EmyE* 154). Comparing in her mind this return home to her entry into Gloucester, she is convinced that she has returned to "the deadly familiarity of an old stale past!" (*EmyE* 155). And this ignominy is reinforced for her by Harry's lackadaisical workman's manner and his low dialect. To all appearances the return confirms Fanny's sense that "she seemed to be doomed to humiliation and disappointment" (*EmyE* 155).

But as the story unfolds, Fanny's feelings are shown to be more complex than this opening would suggest. That Fanny senses something more in Harry than she consciously admits is suggested in a number of ways, including subsequent more positive use of the flame imagery that seems so ominous in the opening paragraphs: listening to Harry's singing, "Fanny felt the crisp flames go through her veins" (*EmyE* 161). And we have Fanny's own explicit evaluation of Harry in conversation with her aunt: "Harry is common, but he's not humble. He wouldn't think the Queen was any too good for him, if he'd a mind to her" (*EmyE* 156).

The complexity of her feelings for Harry surfaces in Fanny's memories and reflections as she attends the service at Morley Chapel, and in her response to one untoward event. The September Harvest Festival at Morley Chapel revives in Fanny memories of another festival service ten years ago, when her beloved cousin Luther was at her side, and at which Harry had sung solos. But there is something strikingly anomalous about her memory of that event: her mental image of Harry is much more vivid and detailed than her memory of Luther: "Harry had sung solos then—ten years ago. She remembered his pale blue tie, and the purple asters and the great vegetable marrows in which he was framed, and her cousin Luther at her side, young, clever,

come down from London, where he was getting on well, learning his Latin and his French and German so brilliantly” (*EmyE* 159). The abstract, colorless image of Luther contrasts sharply with the vivid, detailed picture she has of Harry, remembered as if he were some vegetation god among the asters and marrows—the virtual centerpiece of the Harvest Festival. One delightful feature of the story’s style is the contrast between Harry’s coarse, uncultured speech, and the clichéd images and phrases of Fanny’s recollection of her days with Luther and at Gloucester. Harry’s singing, common as his pronunciation is, prompts other revealing memories and reflections in Fanny: “Because there was about him a physical attraction which she really hated, but which she could not escape from. He was the first man who had ever kissed her. And his kisses, even while she rebelled from them, had lived in her blood and sent roots down into her soul” (*EmyE* 160). How conscious, how close to the surface of her mind, these reflections are, we cannot say, but they do not assuage her deep misgivings about her present situation and prospects: “She knew that what she was doing was fatal” (*EmyE* 160).

The untoward event that reveals Fanny’s underlying attitudes is Mrs. Nixon’s denunciation of Harry as “[a] scamp as won’t take the consequences of what he’s done”—that is, as the one responsible for daughter Annie’s pregnancy (*EmyE* 161). After the service, but still in public, when Fanny confronts Harry about Mrs. Nixon’s charge, Harry does not deny the accusation, saying simply “It’s no more mine than it is some other chap’s” (*EmyE* 163), and he even presumes to make arrangements to sing again at the evening service. And in response to Fanny’s private query, “And it’s yours as much as anybody else’s?” Harry simply answers shortly, “Ay” (*EmyE* 164). The first indication of Fanny’s response to this episode is this statement, immediately following: “And they went, without another word, for the long mile or so, till they came to the corner of the street where Harry lived. Fanny hesitated. Should she go on to her aunt’s? Should she? It would mean leaving all this for ever! Harry stood silent. Some obstinacy made her turn with him along the road to his own home”

(*EmyE* 164).

Her action here might seem to arise from fear or lack of courage and to involve her simple capitulation to the forces around her—a paralysis such as that of several characters in Joyce's *Dubliners*. But something more positive is suggested by Fanny's misgivings about leaving "all of this," and the term "obstinacy" suggests that she regards the episode as something of a challenge. Whether Fanny consciously knows it or not, she is acting out of more positive motives and is not so deeply disappointed about having to accept Harry as she claims. For in fact Harry speaks to her emotional needs quite well; it is only her image of herself he is incongruent with.

The delightful ending of the story is tangible evidence of Fanny's real response to all that has gone on, but it calls for explication, for the reasons behind her action may not be clear even to Fanny herself. There is no dearth of talk in the Goodall household about Mrs. Nixon and her accusation. But Fanny holds her own counsel during all of it, leaving the family uncertain whether she will condescend to accept a match with this shameless young man: "Upstairs Fanny evaded all the thrusts made by his mother, and did not declare her hand. She tidied her hair, washed her hands, and put the tiniest bit of powder on her face, for coolness, there in front of Mrs Goodall's indignant gaze. It was like a declaration of independence. But the old woman said nothing" (*EmyE* 165). The situation remains unresolved and Fanny's intentions unrevealed until time to return to the chapel for the evening service, when Fanny briefly throws them all into consternation by saying, "I'm not going to-night," and then plays her trump by declaring, "I'll stop with *you* to-night, Mother" (*EmyE* 166).

This adroit move works on two levels. First there is the overt, public level of Fanny's relationship with her new family (and of course with Harry): the effect there is to put her in the driver's seat by her generous act of accepting Harry even under these less than desirable circumstances. She has earned, if not their undying gratitude, at least a bit of leverage she can put to use in various ways in the weeks and months ahead.

But on another level, her strong position of advantage in regard to the Goodall

family, perhaps even in regard to Harry, provides Fanny with an overt, pragmatic justification for doing what she really wants to do—marry Harry. Fanny’s return to her village was bitter to her largely because of her sense that she was returning in ignominy, virtually in defeat. This new development enables Fanny to feel she is exercising an option, rather than being trapped. In fact she is attracted to Harry, and among the things she does find appealing about him (though she might never admit this) is just that jaunty cockiness and high opinion of himself alluded to by Fanny to her aunt, illustrated in both his lusty singing through his deplorable accent and his unwillingness to grovel in the face of Mrs. Nixon’s accusation. Harry is very much his own man, and Fanny would not really have it any other way—though at the same time she does not disdain the leverage these developments have thrust in her lap. Acting now on her own terms, even out of an apparent generosity, she both enjoys a position of strength, and has found a pragmatic reason to do what she had really wanted to do.⁹

Before leaving this story, I want to consider a possibility that adds another perspective to it—the possibility that Fanny, returning to her village to marry Harry, is pregnant. Whether this is true probably must remain conjectural; there is no passage in the text that clearly confirms her pregnancy, and I know of no critic who has suggested it. But it does seem subtly hinted by several details, and if true it provides a fascinating slant to the evolving relationships.

First of all there is the strangeness of Fanny’s having already agreed to marry Harry as she returns to the village, even though they have not seen one another for some time. Given her purported ambivalence about Harry, it seems that she would simply have returned to the village uncommitted, to see how things would work out. But more suggestive are certain comments made by Fanny and her aunt, when the former first returns:

“So you’ve really come back, child?” said her aunt.

“I really have, Aunt,” said Fanny.

“Poor Harry! I’m not sure, you know, Fanny, that you’re not taking a bit of an advantage of him.”

“Oh, Aunt, he’s waited so long, he may as well have what he’s waited for.”

Fanny laughed grimly. [. . .]

“Yes,” mused the aunt; “they say all things come to him who waits—”

“More than he’s bargained for, eh, Aunt?” laughed Fanny, rather bitterly.

(*EmyE* 156)

In what way is Fanny taking advantage of Harry, and he getting more than he has bargained for? Perhaps the women are referring to Fanny’s independence and their presumption that she will rule the roost—though this hardly meshes with the insouciance in Harry that Fanny herself has already acknowledged. Unless Fanny is pregnant, it is hard to know what to make of those suggestions. And it does give the story a nice symmetry if the promiscuous Harry, so cool about the question of paternity, should find that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. This would of course add another dimension to Fanny’s motives in keeping her own counsel and deigning to accept the “soiled” Harry. It is, though, uncharacteristic of Lawrence, almost O. Henry-esque, to have a story turn on something so tangible and specific, and so it is appropriate that the question of her pregnancy remains implicit, indeterminate. And even if Fanny is pregnant, her ambivalence in regard to her homecoming and her feelings toward Harry remain the story’s psychological center.

Detailed discussion of these three stories shows that what holds the *England, My England* volume together is not primarily the war and its effects—something totally absent from these last two stories. Rather, these stories involve Lawrence’s subtle, complex exploration of characters who exemplify a spectrum of responses to the perennial tension between the need for openness and venturesomeness and the fear that manifests itself in self-protection and defensiveness.

I have aimed as well to show how deserving of close scrutiny these three neglected stories are. Among Lawrence’s fifty-odd short stories, there may be some that are

utterly bland or lacking in skill or insight, some that are unrewarding. But in my close work with the stories over the past several years, I have often seen stories that I had elided or dismissed take on life and reward the careful scrutiny I had presumed they could not sustain. I hope my analysis of these three unappreciated stories will prompt readers to look anew at some they may have dismissed.

Notes

1. In my *D. H. Lawrence: A Study of the Short Fiction* I discuss four stories from this volume—"England, My England," "The Blind Man," "Wintry Peacock," and "You Touched Me"—and provide critical context for the interpretation of the three stories discussed here. See especially pages 3-29, where I attend to subtleties of point of view in Lawrence's stories, to the need to "contextualize" the characters' immediate psychological situation, and to the kinds of judgments that Lawrence evokes in regard to his characters.

2. See Lawrence's letters to J. B. Pinker of 20 May and 18 June 1919 (*L* iii 360, 365), and Bruce Steele's note in *England, My England and Other Stories*, xxxvi-xxxvii (subsequently, *EmyE*). The story appeared in the American magazine *Sovereign* on 22 August 1922; there are no substantial differences between the magazine text and that in *EmyE*. No manuscript or typescript survives.

3. Janice Hubbard Harris points out that "The Fox," "You Touched Me," "Wintry Peacock," and "Monkey Nuts," involve "a triangle made up of a same gender couple set in opposition to a figure of the opposite gender," and she calls attention to the complementariness of the situations in the first pair of stories and the second (153). Harris reads these stories in terms of leadership and sees them as reflecting Lawrence's rather traditional sense of male and female roles. While the stories do involve issues of mastery or control, they are more fundamentally about the dilemma of needing meaningful relationships, but needing at the same time to retain control of one's self. And rather than sanctioning traditional roles, Lawrence reveals in these stories the great costs involved in maintaining stereotypical masculinity—in Henry, in Hadrian, in the unnamed narrator of "Wintry Peacock" (and to a lesser extent in Alfred), and in both Albert and Joe.

4. Ironically, a biblical allusion suggests that if murder were done, it would be by Albert, who casts himself as Cain when he asks, "'Am I my brother's keeper?'" (*EmyE* 74)—perhaps because Joe's "offering" is so warmly received, his own rejected.

5. Bruce Steele says this is "the only story in the *England, My England* volume to come from Lawrence's pre-war period of short-story writing" (*EmyE* xliii), having probably been completed in July 1913. It was never published in a periodical. Because of typist Douglas Clayton's extensive interference with the 1913 typescript version—which formed the basis for the typescript from which *England, My England* was set—Steele has gone back to Lawrence's manuscript for the Cambridge edition text. Most of the critical comments on the story have been colored by biographical assumptions. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. sees Daniel Berry as "identified with Lawrence by his mother's death of cancer" (106); Janice Hubbard Harris describes the story as "apparently a character sketch of Lawrence's maternal uncle. [. . .] It seems to be a story about shallow sensuality and a guilt-ridden marriage, but its overall intention or point is unclear" (270). Kingsley Widmer takes the story more seriously and sees the limitations of the perspective character, whom he assumes to be the virtual narrator of the story; he calls him "somewhat priggish (and autobiographical)" (25); he refers to the "moralistic narrator" (25), and accuses him of "superficial Anglo-Saxon moralizing" (26).

6. Widmer refers to “the pat mockery of the title” (26), and it does not seem entirely apt. Lawrence, who re-titled many of his works during composition, was dissatisfied with this title, and even asked his typist to come up with something better. In his 28 July 1913[?] letter to Douglas Clayton, he says, “If you don’t like the title, try and think of something better, will you? I loathe finding titles” (L ii 52).

7. Widmer treats this virtually as a first-person narrative, but the story goes beyond what Berry can know. This is most obvious in Sutton’s visit to his dying wife, where Berry does not accompany him—but there are authorial statements about Sutton’s feelings throughout the narrative. And some of these statements tell us things about Berry himself that enable us to take his measure.

8. The composition of “Fanny and Annie” probably dates from the spring of 1919; see Lawrence’s 30 April and 14 May 1919 letters to J. B. Pinker, the first promising to write some short stories, the second saying that he is sending “Fanny and Annie”—and offering to rewrite the ending if Pinker thought it advisable! (L iii 355; 360). A 5 December 1918[?] letter to Katherine Mansfield evokes a scene similar to that of the story’s opening paragraph: “The weekend I was at Ripley. Going, on Sat. night, the train runs just above the surface of Butterley reservoir, and the iron-works on the bank were flaming, a massive roar of flame and burnt smoke in the black sky, flaming and waving again on the black water round the train. On Butterfly [sic] platform—where I got out—everything was lit up red—there was a man with dark brows, odd, not a human being. I could write a story about him. He made me think of Ashaburnipal” (L iii 302). No manuscript of the story survives. It first appeared in *Hutchinson’s Story Magazine*, 21 Nov. 1921, and in substantially the same form in *England, My England and Other Stories* (1922). The main changes from magazine to book publication (reflected in the textual apparatus of the Cambridge *EmyE*) ameliorate Fanny’s chagrin over Harry’s coarse pronunciations. For reasons explained in my review of his edition, I decline to follow Steele’s story retitling, “The Last Straw.”

9. Most commentators on the story have recognized Fanny’s ambivalence toward Harry, but none has attended to the motives she feels subsequent to Mrs. Nixon’s accusation, or to her skillful playing of her hand with the Goodall family. Kingsley Widmer sees Fanny’s change of heart as “somewhat abrupt” and says “Fanny submits [...] to the moral and social indifference of the working-class family and to a marriage based on passion rather than social pride” (125).

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