

# D. H. Lawrence's "The Woman Who Rode Away"

— The Woman Who Died and Revived —

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Until recently, D. H. Lawrence's short story "The Woman Who Rode Away" has been either ignored or criticized severely. Julian Moynahan regards "The Woman Who Rode Away" as "a heartless tale *au fond*" in spite of "Lawrence's most brilliant renderings of landscape."<sup>1</sup> Anthony West says that the whole thing is "a forgery,"<sup>2</sup> concluding that the story is "actually corrupt"<sup>3</sup> as Lawrence's shallow, bad work. Frank Kermode maintains that "the end of the tale is naked doctrine, racial mastery."<sup>4</sup>

A few critics are, however, in favor of "The Woman Who Rode Away." F. R. Leavis favorably looks upon the tale, saying that it gives us "an astonishing feat of imagination" because of its "reality."<sup>5</sup> He also praises: "The poetic power of the tale is, in its creative way, an earnestness and profundity of response to the problems of modern civilization."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Graham Hough considers the tale as a success-

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Moynahan, *The Deed of Life, The Novels and Tales of D. H. Lawrence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony West, *D. H. Lawrence* (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1966), p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Kermode, *Lawrence* (Fontana/Collins, 1976), p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> F. R. Leavis, *D. H. Lawrence, Novelist* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978, First Published 1955), p. 332.

ful one in finding "a mode midway between realism and symbolism,"<sup>7</sup> with the statement that it is Lawrence's "completest artistic achievement" and "his profoundest comment on the world of his time."<sup>8</sup> L. D. Clark admires this story as "one of Lawrence's most startling and intense works," adding that the offer of the heroine as human sacrifice is "completely credible."<sup>9</sup>

In his recent article, Peter Balbert makes an attempt to demonstrate that the story "offers a more sensible understanding of intercultural conflict than his irate critics acknowledge."<sup>10</sup> He also admits that such a disturbing fable about religious practice and sexual sacrifice might produce "impassioned critical response" in "this era of women's liberation and heightened political consciousness."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the Indian's triumph and racial mastery over the white woman and her cruel sacrificial death are, it seems to me, unacceptable from the realistic and moral point of view by most European and American critics. Consequently, it can be said that the story has been neglected for a long time.

This paper is, therefore, an attempt to elucidate "The Woman Who Rode Away" from the viewpoint of symbolism, and to shed new

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Graham Hough, *The Dark Sun, A Study of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Duckworth & Co. LTD., 1956), p. 140.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>9</sup> L. D. Clark, "D. H. Lawrence and the American Indian," *The D. H. Lawrence Review*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Fall 1976), 353.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Balbert, "Snake's Eye and Obsidian Knife: Art, Ideology, and *The Woman Who Rode Away*," *The D. H. Lawrence Review*, vol. 18, no. 2-3 (Summer/Fall, 1985-1986), 256.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

light upon it.

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Mrs Lederman, the heroine, is an American woman of thirty-three who married "a wiry, twisted man"<sup>12</sup> twenty years older than herself. Her husband is more or less rich, owning silver-mines in Mexico. Her surroundings are also squalidly dead:

And in his battered Ford car her husband would take her into the *dead, thrice-dead* little Spanish town forgotten among the mountains. The great, sun-dried *dead* church, the *dead* portales, the hopeless covered market-place, where, the first time she went, she saw a *dead* dog lying between the meat stalls and the vegetable array, stretched out as if for ever, nobody troubling to throw it away. *Deadness* within *deadness*. (italics mine) (pp. 45 - 46)

As is easily known from the above-mentioned quotation, the words "dead" and "deadness" are repeatedly used here to stress the death image of the Mexican town. The town also symbolizes the dead end of their married life because there is no real communication between man and wife; her husband is a boss, an industrial tycoon, and lives the life of the will while she is still "the girl from Berkeley" swayed by

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<sup>12</sup> D. H. Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away," *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977, First Published 1928), p. 45. Further references to this tale will be cited parenthetically in my text.

him. The church and the market-place are dead because they are a "grim symbol of modern Western civilisation"<sup>13</sup> rotten among the powers of the primitive nature. The place where they live is a tiny, forgotten settlement of Western civilization with inward emptiness and none of the excitements.

When a young man tells her about the Chilchui Indians living in a high valley of the mountains in Mexico, Mrs Lederman is overcome and fascinated by "a foolish romanticism more unreal than a girl's" (p. 48). She thinks it is her destiny to go and find the timeless, mysterious Indians of the mountains. One day when her husband is away on business for several days, she sets off by herself, riding on her "strong roan horse." Her riding away is her "separation," the first step in the rites of passage of the monomyth,<sup>14</sup> from the world of Western civilization. The horse stands for "sun" because it is a solar animal related to the wheel and Helios; it is sacred to the Great Mother Goddess or the moon.<sup>15</sup> It is also a symbol of "fertility," "death," and "the unconscious."<sup>16</sup> The horse, which helps her escapade from dead, modern civilization, gives her not only death but also a kind of resurrection in the end.

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<sup>13</sup> Hough, p. 142.

<sup>14</sup> See Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, First Published 1949), p. 30. According to Campbell, the nuclear unit of the monomyth is "separation — initiation — return." Campbell explains, "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."

<sup>15</sup> Ad de Vries, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (Amsterdam & London: North-Holland Company, 1976), p. 259.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 260-261.

The woman travels on and climbs the slopes where flowers lapse and pine trees grow. The pine tree is symbolical of "sun" and "fire," hence, "immortality" and "fertility"; it is also related to the fertility deities such as Adonis, Attis, Dionysus, and Osiris.<sup>17</sup> When she sits by her small camp fire, she feels strangely elated:

It was very cold before dawn. She lay wrapped in her blanket looking at the stars, listening to her horse shivering, and feeling like a woman who has *died* and passed beyond. She was not sure that she had not heard, during the night, a great crash at the centre of herself, which was the crash of her own *death*. Or else it was a crash at the centre of the earth, and meant something big and mysterious. (italics mine) (p. 51)

She realizes that she is already dead; namely, she knows the death of her old self. The quotation prefigures the actual death that she will experience at the hands of the Indians. Her riding off from home has been "the sacrifice of her old way of life — a kind of psychic death."<sup>18</sup>

The woman travels on to the south:

But she had no will of her own. Her horse splashed through a brook, and turned up a valley, under immense yellowing cotton-wood trees. She must have been near nine thousand feet above sea-level, and her head was light with the altitude and with weariness. Beyond the cotton-wood trees she could see, on each side, the steep sides of

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>18</sup> Hough, p. 142.

mountain-slopes hemming her in, sharp-plumaged with overlapping aspen, and, higher up, with sprouting, pointed spruce and pine tree. Her horse went on automatically. In this tight valley, on this slight trail, there was nowhere to go but ahead, climbing. (p. 52)

There grow cotton-wood trees or aspens, spruces, and pine trees on the mountain slopes. The cotton-wood tree or the aspen represents the "horror," "fear," and "arrogance"<sup>19</sup> of the heroine, the white woman. The spruce or the fir symbolizes "immortality," "regeneration," "sun," and "fire"<sup>20</sup> like the pine tree. In mythology, Attis, the Phrygian fertility-god, was changed into a fir; it is also sacred to Artemis, the Greek moon-goddess, of child-birth; it is related to Dionysus, who was born from a fir.<sup>21</sup> The spruce and the pine tree symbolize the immortality and regeneration of the Indian tribe.

The mountain, where the Chilchuis live, is related to the sun, and means "resurrection"; it is also a symbol of "death."<sup>22</sup> Mircea Eliade says: "The mountain occurs among the images that express the connection between heaven and earth; hence it is believed to be at the center of the world."<sup>23</sup> The mountain is, accordingly, a holy and sacred place of old religion in contrast to modern Christianity. Law-

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<sup>19</sup> Ad de Vries, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329. See Gertrude Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*, part 2 (New York: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1962), p. 1129. Jobes says that the mountain symbolizes "aspiration," "life of man," "mystical realm, in contrast to flat land realm of reality," and "light."

<sup>23</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1957), p. 38.

rence says that a man must bring his spirit "into contact with the life of the mountain," and "draw strength from the mountain":

It was a vast old religion, greater than anything we know: more starkly and nakedly religious. There is no God, no conception of a god. All is god. But it is not the pantheism we are accustomed to, which expresses itself as "God is everywhere, God is in everything." In the oldest religion, everything was alive, not supernaturally but naturally alive. There were only deeper and deeper streams of life, vibrations of life more and more vast. So rocks were alive, but a mountain had a deeper, vaster life than a rock, and it was much harder for a man to bring his spirit, or his energy, into contact with the life of the mountain, and so draw strength from the mountain, as from a great standing well of life, than it was to come into contact with the rock. And he had to put forth a great religious effort. For the whole life-effort of man was to get his life into direct contact with the elemental life of the cosmos, mountain-life, cloud-life, thunder-life, air-life, earth-life, sun-life. To come into immediate *felt* contact, and so derive energy, power, and a dark sort of joy. This effort into sheer naked contact, *without an intermediary or mediator*, is the root meaning of religion, and at the sacred races the runners hurled themselves in a terrible cumulative effort, through the air, to come at last into naked contact with the very life of the air, which is the life of the clouds, and so of the rain.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Phoenix, The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Edward D. McDonald (Penguin Books, 1978, First Published 1936), pp. 146-147.

In the extract Lawrence maintains that the effort to come into "direct contact with the elemental life of the cosmos," mountain-life, is the basic meaning of religion. Furthermore, the mountain has "the cleansing effect" which is "the positive of the tale."<sup>25</sup>

The woman meets three Chilchui Indians on the trail of the mountain:

'Where do you come from?' the same man asked. It was always the one man who spoke. He was young, with quick, large, bright *black* eyes that glanced sideways at her. He had a soft *black* moustache on his *dark* face, and a sparse tuft of beard, loose hairs on his chin. His long *black* hair, full of life, hung unrestrained on his shoulders. *Dark* as he was, he did not look as if he had washed lately.

(italics mine) (p. 53)

Especially, the young Indian is a dark, intuitive Dionysian type of man<sup>26</sup> — the gipsy of *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, Count Dionys of *The Ladybird*, Cipriano of *The Plumed Serpent*, and Mellors of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* — with whom Lawrence sympathizes. In the above extract, the "darkness" and "blackness" of the Indian is consciously contrasted to the "whiteness" of the white race.

The heroine feels powerless and knows that she is dead:

<sup>25</sup> Philip Hobsbaum, *A Reader's Guide to D. H. Lawrence* (London: Thames and Hudson LTD., 1981), pp. 109–110.

<sup>26</sup> See Takashi Toyokuni, "D. H. Lawrence's *The Ladybird* — A Modern Myth," *The English Literature in Hokkaido*, vol. 17; "A Note on *The White Peacock* — The Fall of Dionysiac World," *Memoirs of Muroran Institute of Technology*, vol. 10, no. 1.



All was silent, mountain-silent, cold, deathly. She slept and woke and slept in a semi-conscious numbness of cold and fatigue. A long, long night, icy and eternal, and she aware that she had died. (p. 56)

The Chilchuis take her off to their village in the valley where pine trees and aspens grow. There are clusters of "low flat sparkling houses," pastures, stretches of maize, and corn fields. Both maize and corn are symbols of "fertility" and "abundance," and related to such fertility gods as Attis, Adonis, and Osiris.<sup>27</sup> After all, maize and corn represent the regeneration of the dark race and the heroine herself.

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The woman is kept in an honored imprisonment in the Indian village. She has lost the power over herself as a white woman, and is under the magic spell of the Indians:

The days and the weeks went by, in a vague kind of contentment. She was uneasy sometimes, feeling she had lost the power over herself. She was not in her own power, she was under the spell of some other control. And at times she had moments of terror and horror. But then these Indians would come and sit with her, casting their insidious spell over her by their very silent presence, their silent, sexless, powerful physical presence. As they sat they seemed to take her will away, leaving her will-

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<sup>27</sup> Ad de Vries, p. 112 and p. 309.

less and victim of her own indifference. And the young man would bring her sweetened drink, often the same emetic drink, but sometimes other kinds. And after drinking, the languor filled her heavy limbs, her senses seemed to float in the air, listening, hearing. (p. 67)

Her will has been taken away by the emetic drink given by the young Indian who is darkly and powerfully male in some mysterious way. Some occult power has influence upon the woman, and her ego and arrogance of a white woman gradually disappear. Her succumbing is, it seems to me, an inevitable process because the spell worked by the Indians is so strong and persuasive.

One day she climbs to the top of the house where she is, and looks down the square of the Indian village. It is the day of big dance of the Chilchuis. A drum starts on a high beat, and many men sing a savage music. It goes on all day, "the insistence of the drum," roaring sound of male singing:

For hours and hours she watched, spell-bound, and as if drugged. And in all the terrible persistence of the drumming and the primeval, rushing deep singing, and the endless stamping of the dance of fox-tailed men, the tread of heavy, bird-erect women in their black tunics, she seemed at last to feel her own *death*; her own *obliteration*. As if she were to be *obliterated* from the field of life again. (italics mine) (p. 69)

This quotation shows that the heroine again realizes her death, her obliteration of the old self. The drumming and dancing give the

hypnotic effect on the woman. We are told her abandonment of the old self as a white woman, and her unconscious acceptance of a sacrificial death to come.

At this stage the young Indian tells her about a tribal prophecy that the Indians regain their lost power over the sun when the white woman offers herself as a sacrifice:

'White people,' he said, 'they know nothing. They are like children, always with toys. We know the sun, and we know the moon. And we say, when a white woman sacrifice herself to our gods, then our gods will begin to make the world again, and the white man's gods will fall to pieces.'

(p. 70)

According to the old Mexican myth or ritual, the Mexicans offered a human sacrifice to the sun in order to recover their lost power over the sun:

Les Mexicains, eux, assuraient la pérennité du Soleil en lui sacrifiant sans arrêt des prisonniers dont le sang était destiné à renouveler les énergies épuisées de l'astre. Mais cette religion est toute pénétrée d'une sombre terreur de la catastrophe cosmique périodique. On peut lui offrir tout ce qu'on veut de sang, le jour viendra où le soleil tombera; l'apocalypse fait partie du rythme même de l'univers.<sup>28</sup>

R. Aldington says: "Power could be acquired by cutting out the

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<sup>28</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Traité d'Histoire des Religions* (Paris: Payot, 1975), p. 134.

heart from a living victim to hold up, still palpitating, to the blood-red sun.”<sup>29</sup> This terrible ritual is also similar to the following Mexican fertility festival depicted by J. G. Frazer:

And the end of the festival was this. The multitude being assembled, the priests solemnly incensed the girl who personated the goddess; then they threw her on her back on the heap of corn and seeds, cut off her head, caught the gushing blood in a tub, and sprinkled the blood on the wooden image of the goddess, the walls of the chamber, and the offerings of corn, peppers, pumpkins, seeds, and vegetables which cumbered the floor.<sup>30</sup>

This is the myth on which the tale is based.

The woman suspects that she is actually intended as a living sacrifice. After she is given a drugged drink by the Indians, her human consciousness is increasingly in retreat, and she accepts her dreadful fate. Through such a process of the story, “her personal consciousness is superseded by the sort of cosmic, impersonal awareness.”<sup>31</sup> At length, in this mystic and esoteric state she is supernaturally conscious of the movements of the physical world of nature. She has a feeling as if she were diffusing out into the harmony of things:

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<sup>29</sup> Richard Aldington, Introduction to *The Woman Who Rode Away*, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Macmillan & Co. LTD., 1967, First Published 1922), pp. 773-774.

<sup>31</sup> Hough, p. 145.

This at length became the only state of consciousness she really recognized: this exquisite sense of bleeding out into the higher beauty and harmony of things. Then she could actually hear the great stars in heaven, which she saw through her door, speaking from their motion and brightness, saying things perfectly to the cosmos, as they trod in perfect ripples, like bells on the floor of heaven, passing one another and grouping in the timeless dance, with the spaces of dark between. And she could hear snow on a cold, cloudy day twittering and faintly whistling in the sky, like birds that flock and fly away in autumn, suddenly calling farewell to the invisible moon, and slipping out of the plains of the air, releasing peaceful warmth. She herself would call to the arrested snow to fall from the upper air. She would call to the unseen moon to cease to be angry, to make peace again with the unseen sun like a woman who ceases to be angry in her house. And she would smell the sweetness of the moon relaxing to the sun in the wintry heaven, when the snow fell in a faint, cold-perfumed relaxation, as the peace of the sun mingled again in a sort of unison with the peace of the moon.

(p. 72)

Now she can contact with the cosmos — stars, snow, the moon, and the sun. We can say that she is now in her "initiation," the second step of "the nuclear unit of the monomyth."<sup>32</sup> The woman can first communicate with the cosmos by the drugged drink and the obliteration of her self, and feels "the beauty and harmony of things": she comes to life again from her death-in-life as Juliet, the heroine of

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<sup>32</sup> Joseph Campbell, p. 30. Campbell says, "A hero returns forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder."

*sun*, is reborn by her contact with the sun:

It was not just taking sunbaths. It was much more than that. Something deep inside her unfolded and relaxed, and she was given. By some mysterious power inside her, deeper than her known consciousness and will, she was put into connection with the sun, and the stream flowed of itself, from her womb. She herself, her conscious self, was secondary, a secondary person, almost an onlooker. The true Juliet was this dark flow from her deep body to the sun.<sup>33</sup>

The state of consciousness into which the woman enters is "the Dionysian festival in which the women who participate in the rites are led back to 'the heart of nature' and brought face to face with the naked energy of the cosmos — the sun."<sup>34</sup> She becomes "integrated with the universe, with both the microcosm and the macrocosm."<sup>35</sup>

The young Indian again tells her that he will give the white woman to the sun, and that the sun will leap over the white man and come to the Indians:

"The white woman got to die and go like a wind to the sun, tell him the Indians will open the gate to him. And the Indian women will open the gate to the moon.

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<sup>33</sup> D. H. Lawrence, "Sun," *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories*, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> Eugene Goodheart, *The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 133.

<sup>35</sup> Ian S. Macniven, "D. H. Lawrence's Indian Summer," *D. H. Lawrence, The Man Who Lived*, ed. Robert B. Partlow, Jr. and Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), p. 45.

The white women don't let the moon come down out of the blue corral. The moon used to come down among the Indian women, like a white goat among the flowers. And the sun want to come down to the Indian men, like an eagle to the pine-trees. The sun he is shut out behind the white man, and the moon she is shut out behind the white woman, and they can't get away. They are angry, everything in the world gets angrier. The Indian says, he will give the white woman to the sun, so the sun will leap over the white man and come to the Indian again. And the moon will be surprised, she will see the gate open, and she not know which way to go. But the Indian woman will call to the moon, *Come! Come! Come back into my grasslands. The wicked white woman can't harm you any more.* Then the sun will look over the heads of the white men, and see the moon in the pastures of our women, with the Red Men standing around like pine-trees. Then he will leap over the heads of the white men, and come running past to the Indians through the spruce trees. And we, who are red and black and yellow, we who stay, we shall have the sun on our right hand and the moon on our left.'

(pp. 74 - 75)

The above quotation shows the Indian's recovery of the lost power over the sun and the moon. In general, the sun symbolizes "light," "healer," and "fertility" as well as "the underworld" and "death."<sup>36</sup> The moon stands for "birth," "becoming," "resurrection," "fecundity," and "death."<sup>37</sup> Besides, the sun and the moon respectively signify the real masculinity and femininity here. The eagle is a symbol of "heavens,"

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<sup>36</sup> Ad de Vries, pp. 447 - 448.

<sup>37</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 156.

“regeneration,” and “fertility.”<sup>38</sup>

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When the winter solstice, the day of her sacrifice, comes at last, all personal emotions have been lost, and she knows that she is about to die in the glistening snow and ice at the hands of the Indians:

And as she stared at the blaze of blue sky above the slashed and ponderous mountain, she thought: ‘I am dead already. What difference does it make, the transition from the dead I am to the dead I shall be, very soon!’ Yet her soul sickened and felt wan. (pp. 78 - 79)

She was stripped, washed with water, and sweet-scented oil was rubbed all over her body the previous day. She now wears a big blue blanket because blue is the color of the wind which goes away and never comes back; the color of the dead. She is placed in a litter with four priests moving ahead. The whole valley glistened with white snow, away to the walls of the standing rock. There the woman is placed on an alter in the cave sinking into the rock.

They were anxious, terribly anxious, and fierce. Their ferocity wanted something, and they were waiting the moment. And their ferocity was ready to leap out into a mystic exultance, of triumph. But still they were anxious.

Only the eyes of that oldest man were not anxious. Black, and fixed, and as if sightless, they watched the sun, seeing beyond the sun. And in their black, empty



concentration there was power, power intensely abstract and remote, but deep, deep to the heart of the earth, and the heart of the sun. In absolute motionlessness he watched till the red sun should send his ray through the column of ice. Then the old man would stike, and strike home, accomplish the sacrifice and achieve power.

The mastery that man must hold, and that passes from race to race. (p. 81)

The end of the tale represents a mystery of death and rebirth. Particularly, the setting sun has an ambivalence of light and dark, and of life and death. The rock stands for "the womb of sun-deities": Mithra, the Persian sun-god, was born from a rock, wedded to a rock, and parent of a rock; it is related to Cave-birth; sun-kings sat on rocks when they were crowned.<sup>39</sup> The cave means "the womb," and "mother": many sun-heroes and gods were born, or grew up, in a cave. It is a symbol of "resurrection" and "fertility" as well as "the tomb" and "Hades."<sup>40</sup> So the cave of the rock symbolizes "birth," "resurrection," "fertility," and "death." Both snow and ice represent "death" and "purity."<sup>41</sup>

The terrible closing, the ritual climax, is rendered not realistically but poetically<sup>42</sup> or symbolically by the author. R. P. Draper says, "The sentences become shorter again because of the dramatic tension, they remain within the influence of the now established mode. Style

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<sup>38</sup> Ad de Vries, pp. 152 - 153.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87 - 88.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267 and p. 430.

and matter move together in perfect accord to the horrible climax,"<sup>43</sup> concluding that the ending is "the only one that can be imagined for such a tale as this."<sup>44</sup> Although Lawrence describes the scene of the white woman's sacrifice, he does not make it realistic or bloody. He simply says: "Then the old man would strike, and strike home, accomplish the sacrifice and achieve power."

Finally the Chilchui Indians can revive and take back the lost sun. In other words, the white man's consciousness, the "mental consciousness" is overcome and superseded by the Indian's consciousness, the "blood-consciousness" with which Lawrence deeply sympathizes. Though the woman, who lived in death-in-life before, actually dies, she can be said to be resurrected since she is a "messenger from the far-away" who has to die and go to the sun to tell him to come back to the Indians (pp. 74-75). We can say that the woman obtains "the power to bestow boons" on her fellow men, the Indians, which is the last stage of the "unit of the monomyth."<sup>45</sup>

Thus far we have analyzed "The Woman Who Rode Away" from

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<sup>42</sup> See F. R. Leavis, p. 332; Ronald P. Draper, *D. H. Lawrence* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1964), p. 135; L. D. Clark, 353. Leavis tells us about the poetic power of the short story; Draper maintains that the method used by Lawrence is to combine repetition with alliterative and assonantal association of words so that they fuse into a poetic matrix; Clark says that the language of the tale is trancelike, building as it goes until style and action are in perfect accord for the ritual climax.

<sup>43</sup> Ronald P. Draper, p. 138.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Campbell, p. 30.

the symbolic and mythical point of view according to the development of the narrative story. The outline of the story is very simple and clear: an American woman, bored of her death-in-life state on a silver-mine in Mexico, rides away to find the Chilchui Indians who preserve the ritual of the old Aztec gods; she meets the Chilchuis and is imprisoned; she knows that she is intended as a living sacrifice to get back the sun for the dark race; the tale ends just as the knife is descending on her heart in the sinking sun.

The summary of the tale accords to the old Mexican myth or ritual that the Mixicans offered a human sacrifice to the sun to regain their lost power over it. Moreover, the woman's riding off, her imprisonment, her reconciliation, and her final death coincide with Campbell's "unit of the monomyth," "separation—initiation—return" though she can never return to her own race. Instead the heroine experiences the propitiation with the cosmos, and bestows boons upon the Indians. It can be said that she is resurrected and ordained because of her suffering and death.<sup>46</sup> She is probably considered as a Christ-like character because there are a number of parallels:

her age, thirty-three; her journey of three days, a metaphorical descent into hell; her ritualistic anointing with oil and perfume; her sign of peace to the ancient *cacique*, a symbolic Gethsemane; her cup of liquor, an analogy to the chalice of the Last Supper; her being stripped for the sacrifice; and finally her death for the sins of her race and the redemption of the world.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 196.

"The Woman Who Rode Away" is regarded as a myth or a fable<sup>48</sup> of death and resurrection, not a realistic short novel.

The keynote of this tale is death: her living place is squalidly dead; Western civilization is decadently dead; she realizes again and again that she herself is already dead in a sense; in the Indian village, the dying old cacique touches her body "as if Death itself were touching her." The story is full of death-images till the end of it. She actually dies in the closing of the story.

However, after her imprisonment in the Indian village, the woman can communicate with the cosmos or nature, and feels the beauty and harmony of things, which hints her resurrection in a certain sense. The Indians are also reborn, and recover their power over the sun and the moon by her voluntary death for the sins of the white race. Lawrence lays stress upon resurrection and rebirth as well as upon death.

Many things in nature are used to symbolize death and rebirth—the theme of the tale: the horse which she rides is a symbol of life and death; the pine tree and the spruce, which grow on the mountain slopes, are symbolical of the immortality and regeneration of the dark race while the cotton-wood and aspen trees stand for the horror, fear, and arrogance of the white woman; the mountain itself

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<sup>47</sup> James C. Cowan, *D. H. Lawrence's American Journey, A Study in Literature and Myth* (Cleveland/London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970), p. 77.

<sup>48</sup> See Graham Hough, p. 145; John B. Vickery, "Myth and Ritual in Shorter Fiction in D. H. Lawrence," *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 1959), 70; James C. Cowan, p. 74. Hough says that the tale is nearer to a fable than to a realistic novel; Cowan also looks upon the tale as a fable patterned on the myth; Vickery regards the story as the myth of the reviving god.

represents resurrection and death, and it is also a sacred place of old religion because it is considered as "the earth's navel, the highest point at which the Creation began"<sup>49</sup>; the maize and corn in the Indian village are symbolical of fertility and abundance; the moon symbolizes birth, death, and resurrection; the eagle represents regeneration and fertility; the cave of the rock stands for resurrection, fertility, and death; the setting sun in the final scene means not merely death but also resurrection; snow and ice are symbols of death and purity. In short, things in nature represent the main theme of "The Woman Who Rode Away" — the death and rebirth of the dark race and the heroine, the white woman.

Judging from my consideration and analysis of the tale, "The Woman Who Rode Away" is a brilliant, symbolical story based both on the myth of death and resurrection and on "the nuclear unit of the monomyth." The woman who died in the sacred cave of the rock later develops into the man who is resurrected in the cave of Isis, Christ-Osiris of *The Man Who Died*, D. H. Lawrence's last short novel.

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<sup>49</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 16.