

## **The Negative Effects of the Great War on Women in D. H. Lawrence's *Short Stories Tickets, Please* and *The Blind Man***

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### **Abstract**

In his two short stories *Tickets, Please* and *The Blind Man*, D. H. Lawrence has registered the negative effects of the First World War on the lives of his female characters. These characters suffer the horrible reality of this war either through the bad circumstances of it that oblige them to be involved in it, or through the pain and suffering of their relatives who have experienced the dreadful events of it as combatants. In *Tickets, Please*, Lawrence's female characters are emotionally deceived and physically exploited by the patriarchal system of the war. In *The Blind Man*, the heroine's marital life has been ruined by the destructive machine of the war. The horror and destruction of the war are subtly delineated through the vivid images of danger and darkness that envelope most of the scenes of these two short stories. Lawrence shows that the war brought destruction not only to combatants, but even to non-combatants who should be far from the direct danger of it.

**Key Words:** D. H. Lawrence, *Tickets, Please, The Blind Man*, Lawrence and the First World War, Lawrence's female characters.

## Introduction

The direct and indirect involvement of millions of combatants and civilians in the First World War made it seem a total war in a way that had not occurred in Britain before (Robb, 2002, 96). The change in Britain at this time was extraordinary. The servant class began to diminish, men enlisting in the armed forces and women going out to work, sometimes in munitions factories. Indeed women were taking over many traditional male roles—there were women bus drivers and conductors and they worked on the railways as porters and guards while government offices were filled with middle-class women (Kerr, 2014, 59). The war was a turning point that gave women the opportunity to have more liberty and financial independence (Robb, 2002, 32). Behaviour changed, too; the war also released them from the strictness of older, essentially Victorian, social conventions; the prospect of men going away to die in battles encouraged love affairs and the death-knell for the Victorian notion of female chastity (Robb, 2002, 32). Martin Pugh points out that during wartime, and as a sign of patriotism, working women responded to the attempt at economising on materials by wearing shorter skirts and reducing their weight; after the war, the shorter skirts, and the boyish physique, became fashionable and in the early 1920s, women considered the style of their clothes as a way of expressing their new freedom (Pugh, 2009, 171).

The disaster of the war goes far beyond the women who have broken the Victorian conventions. Families were devastated and young men who joined the war as combatants returned from the horrors of the front blind, having lost limbs or with minds permanently damaged, suffering from psychological trauma caused by their

horrible experiences (Kerr, 2014, 150). Ultimately the bitter reality of the war that these combatants endured is reflected on their families and relatives, especially their wives, who have to share them their pain and suffering.

Being a pacifist, D. H. Lawrence opposed the war from the start; he looked at it as being "dreadful" (Lawrence, 1956, 211) and a stupid action, as he indicated in September 1914: "What a miserable world. What colossal idiocy, this war" (Lawrence, 1956, 208). In 1915, the bitterness of the war was so intensive; the British people began to lose hope of having an end of such a disaster. Lawrence himself was very depressed; he wrote to Lady Cynthia Asquith, his friend: "the war finished me" (Lawrence, 1956, 217). He was aware that the war caused great pain to people who are very close to him, such as Lady Cynthia Asquith, whose husband Herbert Asquith, was an officer in the artillery; he was wounded and he suffered shell-shock in 1915. Lawrence describes the situation of Herbert Asquith and the suffering of his wife to one of his friends:

He is home slightly wounded [...] only his soul is left at the war. The war is the only reality to him. All this here is unreal, this England: only the trenches are Life to him. Cynthia is very unhappy he is not even aware of his existence [...] he ought to die. It all seemed horrid (Quoted in Delany, 1979, 124).

Lawrence here realises the bitterness of the war on the lives of combatants, and he becomes aware of their bitter experiences at the front, and how such experiences reflected negatively on their relationship with their relatives, especially women. As a writer he registers the destruction of the war on the life of married and single women, who endured the full burden of it, a life that is obviously portrayed in his short stories

*Ticket, Please* and *The Blind Man* that are published in 1922 in his collection *England My England*.

### ***Tickets, Please***

*Ticket, Please* which is written in 1919, narrates events in the time of The Great War. The story tells the life of a group of women who involve themselves in the male professional world of tram system. The negative effects of the war on women are registered indirectly in this short story. Even though, the war gives these women personal liberty and the chance to be financially independent, it deprives them of being feminine, living a decent life, and constructing families.

At the very beginning of the story, the narrator makes his reader be aware of the time of the action; it is the war time, in which healthy young men are at the front fighting. So the trains are driven by men who are incapable to fight: "To ride on these cars is always an adventure. Since we are in war-time, the drivers are men unfit for active service: cripples and hunchbacks [...] The ride becomes a steeplechase".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, these trains are "entirely conducted by girls" (*TP*, 335), who work at night on the Midland line, "the most dangerous tram-service in England" (*TP*, 335). They have to endure the danger of the road as well as the tramway system itself: "To be sure, a tram often leaps the rails—but what matter! It sits in a ditch till other trams come to haul it out [...] the heart of nowhere on a dark night, and for the driver and the girl conductor to call 'All get off—car's on fire!'" (*TP*, 334-335). These girls have to face the problems of traveling, caused by the war, since the trains are crowded with people:

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<sup>1</sup>D. H. Lawrence, *Tickets, Please, The Complete Short Stories of D H. Lawrence: Vol. II* (London: William Heinemann, 1963), 334. Hereafter, references will be included in the text, abbreviated as *TP*.

“The tramps are desperately packed” (*TP*, 335). The crowded trains and train stations were the dominant images in the time of the war; passing across Barrow train station in London, Lawrence registered one of these images: “[The] war was declared. And we all went mad. I can remember soldiers kissing on Barrow station, and a woman shouting defiantly to her sweetheart [...] and the thousands of men streaming over the bridge” (Lawrence, 1956, 217). The girl conductors seem able to manage these crowded trains and confront the danger of such service without being afraid: “The girls are fearless” (*TP*, 335). More than that these girls seem rough and show no kindness in dealing with the passengers:

With a tram packed with howling colliers, roaring hymns downstairs and a sort of antiphony of obscenities upstairs [... the girl conductors] pounce on the youths who try to evade their ticket-machine. They push off the men at the end of their distance. They are not going to be done in the eye—not they. They fear nobody—and everybody fears them. (*TP*, 335)

The girl conductors are totally far from keeping the Victorian conventions, and sexually liberated; they are very attractive and “most of [them ...] are quite comely” (*TP*, 336). They are described as being “young hussies” (*TP*, 335). With their outlook, they provoke the disgust of people rather than their admiration, since their work as well as their clothes are all unfamiliar to Victorian society, a disgust that is registered in the description of the narrator: “[T]heir ugly blue uniform, skirts up to their knees, shapeless old peaked caps on their heads” (*TP*, 335). Working at night in such a job that makes them away from the eyes of their families, the young girls can do whatever they like: “[T]his roving life aboard the car gives them a sailor's dash and recklessness. What matter how they behave when the ship is in port? Tomorrow they

will be aboard again" (*TP*, 336). Hence, "the lasses are perfectly at their ease" (*TP*, 335). They enjoy being involved in the male world, where everybody employed in this tram-service is young: "there are no grey heads" (*TP*, 336). This helps to create a kind of intimacy between the two sexes: "There is very good feeling between the girls and the drivers" (*TP*, 336). The girls like to listen to the courteous words of the inspectors, who are described as "hav[ing] the spirit of the devil in them" (*TP*, 335).

Annie Stone is one of these young girls; as she works as a tram-conductor, she has lost part of her feminine features of being kind and sympathetic: "She is peremptory, suspicious, and ready to hit first. She can hold her own against ten thousand" (*TP*, 335). She is introduced to the reader as having a "sharp tongue" (*TP*, 336), a girl who looks hard-hearted to the passengers, and her sir name suggests no sympathy. In spite of this, Annie seems to be a mixture of violence and romance; she has kept John Thomas, the inspector of her tram "at arm's length for many months" (*TP*, 336). The outlook of this inspector attracts Annie; he is "good-looking (*TP*, 336) and "she liked him all the more" (*TP*, 336). In the greeting scene between Annie Stone and John Thomas, the reader becomes aware of the intimacy between the two:

'Hello Annie!' [...] Oh, mind my corn, Miss Stone. It's my belief you've got a heart of stone, for you've trod on it again' 'you should keep it in your pocket,' replied Miss Stone, and she goes sturdily upstairs in her high boots [... shouting] 'Tickets, please'. (*TP*, 335)

The words of flirtation here between Annie and her inspector hint at something hidden in the atmosphere of the tram-car: "[T]here is a certain wild romance abroad these cars and in the sturdy bosom of Annie herself. The time for soft romance is in the morning, between ten o'clock and one, when things are rather slack". Annie has kept distance

from John Thomas, because she has her own boyfriend; but it seems that she is not serious in doing so, and John Thomas knows this fact and he is waiting for a chance to hunt his victim.

The personal background of John Thomas shows that he is not nice and he has got an unpleasant reputation:

There is a considerable scandal about John Thomas in half a dozen villages. He flirts with the girl conductors in the morning, and walks out with them in the dark night, when they leave their tram-car at the depot. Of course the girls quit the service frequently. Then he flirts and walks out with the newcomer: always providing she is sufficiently attractive, and that she will consent to walk. (*TP*, 336).

John Thomas, who has seduced many girls, tries, this time, to tempt Annie Stone; he is waiting for the chance to do so. At one of the nights, in November, there is a local fair at Bestwood; Annie this time has a night off: "she dressed herself up and went to the fair-ground. She was alone but she expected soon to find a pal of some sort" (*TP*, 337). While she is alone there, she sees John Thomas there; "he stand[s] on a wet, gloomy morning, in his long oilskin, his peaked cap well down over his eyes, waiting to board a car [...] he has a faint impudent smile" (*TP*, 336). Annie feels pleasant to have a fellow to accompany her: "She was very glad to have a 'boy'" (*TP*, 337). For Thomas, it is a good chance to show his masculinity: "Instantly, like the gallant he was, he took her on the Dragons, grim-toothed, roundabout switchbacks. It was not nearly so exciting as a tram-car actually" (*TP*, 337). Even though she looks happy, the description shows that Annie seems to be accompanied by a beast rather than an individual human: "John Thomas leaned over her, his cigarette in his mouth, was after

all the right style. She was a plump, quick, alive little creature. So she was quite excited and happy” (*TP*, 337). To make her feel more comfort, John Thomas shows generosity; he “paid each time” (*TP*, 338). After that they went to a performance of a cinema and then they go for a walk across the field, where he can seize the chance to be with her far from the sight of people: “He had all the arts of love-mocking” (*TP*, 338). Within time, the relationship between the two goes deeper: “Annie liked John Thomas a good deal [...] and John Thomas really liked Annie, more than usual” (*TP*, 339). But it seems that Annie looks for a husband rather than a lover only:

Annie wanted to consider him a person, a man: she wanted to take an intelligent interest in him, and to have an intelligent response. She did not want a mere nocturnal presence, which was what he was so far. And she prided herself that he could not leave her. (*TP*, 339)

But Thomas’s intention seems to be different from that of Annie’s: “John Thomas intended to remain a nocturnal presence; he had no idea of becoming an all-round individual to her” (*TP*, 339). After a period of time, “he [has]left her” (*TP*, 339) to go, as usual, with another girl. Hence, Annie is not the only victim of Thomas; he has deceived “half-dozen girls” (*TP*, 340) who work in the tram service as conductors. But Annie seems to be different from others; she does not accept being deceived by Thomas; she does not let her love story with him end as he draws. So she plans to take revenge upon him. She arranges to meet John Thomas on Sunday night “[a]t the depot [...in the girls'] little waiting-room” (*TP*, 340), where she has conspired against him with the other victimised girls:

The half-dozen girls who knew John Thomas only too well had arranged to take service this Sunday afternoon. So, as the cars began to come in, early, the girls

dropped into the waiting-room. And instead of hurrying off home, they sat around the fire and had a cup of tea. (*TP*, 340)

At a gloomy night all the girls have gathered in their room waiting for the arrival of Thomas, their wicked deceiver, who does not know what is waiting for him.

Arriving at the exact time to see Annie, John Thomas is surprised to see his girl victims in the waiting-room: “‘Prayer meeting?’ he asked [...] ‘Shut the door, boy,’ said Muriel Baggaley, [...] one of the girls]” (*TP*, 340). When he enters the room and starts being in his ease, they asked him to choose one of them for marriage: “Pick, John Thomas; let’s hear thee [...] Take a good ‘un, then. But That’s got to take one of us!” (*TP*, 342). The man starts being worried: “He was uneasy, mistrusting them. Yet had not the courage to break away” (*TP*, 342). Refusing to respond to them, John Thomas faces the severe revenge of the girls: “Annie went forward and fetched him a box on the side of the head that sent his cap flying and himself staggering [...] But as Annie’s signal they all flew at him, slapping him, pinching him, pulling his hair, though more in fun than in spite or anger” (*TP*, 342). Thomas is shocked by the girls’ violent action: “He, however, so red. His blue eyes flamed with strange fear as well as fury” (*TP*, 342). For this man, the girls, he knows, are now quite different; they are now far from being nice and kind with him. The change in the behaviour of the girls towards Thomas, a change that shows their dualism, recalls to the mind one of the thoughts of Lawrence himself; he believes that “everything that exists, even a stone, has two sides to its nature” (Quoted in Daleski, 1996, 105). Hence, the dualism of these girls seems to be increased by the circumstances of the war, on one hand and by the wickedness of Thomas, on the other hand, a wickedness that makes him see the

other side of these girls that is shown in this scene. They stop being nice and kind with him and they reveal their masculine features: "At that moment they were rather horrifying to him, as they stood in their short uniforms. He was distinctly afraid" (*TP*, 342). Thomas tries to escape, but there is no way, since the door is locked and he has to confront his inevitable punishment drawn by his victims:

'Come on, John Thomas! Come on! Choose!' said Annie.

'What are you after? Open the door,' he said.

'We shan't—not till you've chosen!' Said Muriel.

'Chosen what?' he said.

'Chosen the one you're going to marry', she replied. (*TP*, 342)

The girls know very well that Thomas dares not choose anyone of them, but they insist on saying so just to punish him violently. To frighten them, John Thomas tries to use his masculine authority: "Open the blasted door [...] and get back to your senses.' He spoke with official authority" (*TP*, 343). At this moment, the girls response negatively; they show more violence, and aggression towards Thomas, their enemy; Annie, for example "had taken off her belt, and swinging it, she fetched him a sharp blow over the head with the buckle end" (*TP*, 343) It is useless to avoid their attack on him: "Strange, wild creatures, they hung on him and rushed at him to bear him down. His tunic was torn right up the back" (*TP*, 343). Each one of these young women seems to be more vindictive than the other, Annie, for instance, wishes to kill him: "You ought to be killed, that's what you ought" (*TP*, 344). John Thomas finds himself unable to resist the attack of the girls, who turn the room to be a battle front: "At last he was down. They rushed on him, kneeling on him. He had neither breath nor strength to move. His face was bleeding with a long scratch, his brow was

bruised" (*TP*, 343); Thomas now falls victim of his victimised girls. The girls who entirely control the scene, feel themselves different: "They felt themselves filled with supernatural strength" (*TP*, 344) that makes John Thomas fails to resist.

The aggressive action of the girls ends with Thomas's failure to defend himself; he seems very tired, and unconscious of what is around him. Shirley Rose points out that painful experiences and feelings are associated with sensations of coldness, numbness and heaviness (Rose, 1975, 3-83). Hence, the painful experience that John Thomas has endured in this violent scene makes him feel this kind of 'coldness and numbness': "He laid in a kind of trance of fear and antagonism" (*TP*, 344). He remains "lying on the floor, with his torn clothes and bleeding, averted face" (*TP*, 345), surrounded by the shouting of the girls, who make him quite exhausted to the extent that he stops hearing them: "But he was quite dumb" (*TP*, 334). The downfall of Thomas that ends the action and that declares the triumph of the girls mocks at the sense of masculinity that dominates the behaviour of the two sides—John Thomas and the girls— both of them behave according to their masculine sense. John Thomas behaves as a male, seduces the girls in his wicked intention; he shows no manliness in doing so and even in his negative response towards the girls' attack that shows the loss of their feminine kindness which is defeated by their masculine behaviour.

Through the girls' violent scene, Lawrence shows how the First World War changed the Victorian woman; it masculinised her and made her lose her feminine features. The girl conductors seem wild and strange: "Their faces were flushed, their hairs wild, their eyes were all glittering strangely" (*TP*, 343). Bernard-Jean Ramadier indicates that the girls' subsequent violent reaction towards Thomas reveals their deep

frustration and the ambiguous relationships between the sexes (Ramadier, 2000, 43-54). They feel that all their dreams to construct a domestic life are destroyed by Thomas's deceit and wickedness; this can be seen in Annie's reaction towards Thomas who, under the threat of the girls, has chosen her as a wife: "But her face quivered with a kind of agony, she seems as if she would fall" (*TP*, 345). More than that, the girl conductors here are put in a confrontation with their inspector, a confrontation that is ironically presented to the readers; it shows the physical 'triumph' of the supposedly delicate sex, represented by the girls, against the supposedly stronger sex, represented by John Thomas, a 'triumph' that is achieved just in the extraordinary circumstances of the war. But even this 'triumph' shows the female tragic reality in the time of the war; the young women here assert their "brand new soldier-like authority" (Ramadier, 2000, 43-54), that makes them behave roughly, and respond violently towards their enemy. Linda R. Williams shows that Lawrence's female characters are neither guilty nor innocent (Williams, 1992, 154-161). One can say that these girls seem guilty even though they are innocent. In other words, it is the war that makes these innocent creatures be guilty; the guilt they commit is their aggression towards John Thomas, an aggression that seems to be part of their defence against his wickedness. Even though the girls are masculinised, they still show their need to be protected, secured, and loved by the other sex, a need that seems to be increased by the danger of war. This is clearly seen in their insistence on making Thomas choose one of them to marry, even though they have already refused him.

### *The Blind Man*

In his short story *The Blind Man*, which tells events in the aftermath period, in "November" 1918,<sup>2</sup> D. H. Lawrence presents the devastating effects of the war on woman through the life of a wife who suffers in her relationship with her husband. Isabel, "the thirty years" (*BM*, 348) old and her husband Maurice Pervin, who is "one year younger" (*BM*, 348) than her live in the Grange, a large house in the countryside with farm building connected to it; it is "not a very great distance from Oxford" (*BM*, 349). Even though she lives the calmness and tranquillity of the countryside, Isabel seems unhappy and she feels insecure. Like Lawrence's friend Lady Cynthia Asquith who suffers the psychological wounds of her combatant husband, as it is mentioned above, Isabel endures the bitterness of the physical and psychological wounds of Maurice, her husband. Maurice has experienced the horror of the war as a combatant; he "had been blind in Flanders [...] and had a disfiguring mark on his brow" (*BM*, 347). Maurice's wounds still need time to recover: "He had been home for a year now" (*BM*, 347). As a wife, Isabel tries her best to please her "totally blind" (*BM*, 347) man and help him forgetting his wounds; she shares him some activities: "They talked and sang and read together in a wonderful and unspeakable intimacy" (*BM*, 347). She has succeeded to make Maurice overcome his physical wounds and the loss of his sight: "With his wife he had a whole world, rich and real and invisible" (*BM*, 347). Maurice "occupie[s] himself a good deal with the farm" (*BM*, 347). Sightless, he works in his farm: "He milked the cows, carried in the pails, turned the separator, attended to the

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<sup>2</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *The Blind Man, The Complete Short Stories of D H. Lawrence: Vol. II* (London: William Heinemann, 1963), 347. Hereafter, references will be included in the text, abbreviated as *BM*.

pigs and horses" (*BM*, 347). Yet his life still lacks something: "Life was still very full and strangely serene for the blind man, peaceful with the almost incomprehensible peace of immediate contact in darkness" (*BM*, 347). Maurice's 'serene' life seems to hide a sense of torture that gradually engulfs him and blackens his relationship with his wife.

The destructive circumstances of the war that has deprived the girl conductors, in *Tickets, Please*, of living a peaceful domestic life, has also deprived Isabel of being a happy wife. Even though Isabel aids her husband to resist his physical lack caused by the war, she fails to do so with his psychological trauma: "And sometimes he had devastating fits of depression, which seemed to lay waste his whole being. It was worse than depression—a black misery, when his own life was torture to him" (*BM*, 347). Ultimately, these traumatic symptoms torment not only Maurice, but even his wife who feels the torture of her husband: "[H]is presence was unbearable to his wife. The dread went down to the roots of her soul as these black days recurred" (*BM*, 348). Maurice's depression provokes her anxiety: "He became impatient and irritated, she was wearied" (*BM*, 348). Hopelessly, she tries to make her life be better: "She forced the old spontaneous cheerfulness and joy to continue. But the effort it cost her was almost too much" (*BM*, 348). It seems that nothing can make her get rid of her heavy load that she cannot escape: "She felt she would scream with the strain, and would give anything, anything to escape" (*BM*, 348). In spite of her suffering, Isabel shows no complaint so as not to hurt her husband; silently and lonely she suffers the psychological pain of her husband, a pain that ultimately dominates their life and marks it with a sense of loneliness.

Loneliness and emptiness dominate the marital life of Isabel and her husband. It seems that the psychological and physical wounds of Maurice make the couple detached from their relatives and friends: "[They] had been almost entirely alone together since he was wounded" (*BM*, 347). Isabel and Maurice live isolated from the outer world; solitude becomes part of their life: "So they lapsed into their solitude again. For they preferred it" (*BM*, 348). This kind of life seems to increase the suffering of the couple; Maurice cannot stop being depressed, a sense that negatively affects his wife: "And yet, when again he was gone in a black and massive misery, she could not bear him, she could not bear herself; she wished she could be snatched away off the earth altogether, anything rather than live at this cost" (*BM*, 348). Ultimately, Isabel feels detached from her husband; with him, she finds herself living "a terrifying burden" (*BM*, 348) that is intensified day by day. Even though she engages herself in "review[ing] books for Scottish newspaper" (*BM*, 347), Isabel fails to overcome her sense of emptiness. She feels that she is no more pleasant with her husband than before and her peaceful life is threatened: "[S]ometimes the rich glamour would leave them" (*BM*, 347). As time wears on, "a sense of burden overc[omes] Isabel, a weariness, a terrible ennui, in that silent house" (*BM*, 347), since she could not bear such isolated life.

The disaster of the war that deprives Isabel of living a happy life with her husband, also threatens to deprive her of being a mother. Her first baby "had died, an infant, when her husband first went to France [the Western front]" (*BM*, 348). Now, she does not want to lose her coming baby: "She looked with joy and relief to the coming of the second [...] But also she felt some anxiety" (*BM*, 348). She looks at this child as "her

salvation"(BM, 348), and as a hope by which she would regain the happiness that she has lost because of the war: "The child would occupy her love and attention" (BM, 348). Sometimes, Isabel's joy created by her sense of maternity is faded by her constant anxiety about her husband: "And, then what of Maurice? What would he do? If only she could feel that he, too, would be at peace and happy when the child came! [...] How could she provide for him, how avert those shattering black moods of his, which destroyed the both?" (BM, 348). Isabel cannot help feeling afraid even though she knows that her husband "want [s] the child" (BM, 348) too. She hopes that the coming child would help her and her husband to be out of their black and empty life.

As an attempt to cure the psychological wound of her husband, Isabel tries to break the loneliness of their life. She does not stop helping her husband to be out of his 'isolated world' and come back to social life: "She invited friends, she tried to give him some further connection with the outer world" (BM, 348). But it seems that her attempt "was no good" (BM, 348). Isabel, who loves her husband too much, knows that he is "over sensitive"(BM, 349); therefore she tries to make him feel comfortable even if it costs her to lose her friends. When Maurice was at the front, "going out to France" (BM, 349), Isabel stops contacting Bertie Reid, the barrister and "her old friend, a second or third cousin" (BM, 348); in spite of the fact that she treats Bertie "like a brother" (BM, 348), Isabel does not see him at all: "She felt that, for her husband's sake, she must discontinue her friendship with Bertie" (BM, 349). Now Bertie writes telling her that he needs to visit her; his letter makes Isabel "sigh[s] with fear" (BM, 349), fear of her husband's reaction. She knows that "the two men did not like each other" (BM, 349). She knows that her husband is "like an ominous thunder-

cloud" (*BM*, 350); he negatively behaves at the presence of Bertie, and now sightless what would he do? A question that occupies Isabel's mind and makes her feel worried. Before writing to Bertie, Isabel has to take Maurice's agreement; she reads the letter to Maurice, who seems "abstruse to [her]" (*BM*, 350) and agrees to meet Bertie: "I might think differently of him now [...] Let him come" (*BM*, 350). Isabel has "always suffered from this pain of doubt, just an agonising sense of uncertainty" (*BM*, 350), a sense that makes her sacrifice anything for the sake of her husband.

### **Images of Darkness in *Tickets, Please* and *The Blind Man***

By the mid of November 1914 Lawrence felt the immense darkness of the war, a darkness that threatened to swallow everything beautiful in the British society, as he wrote to his friend Amy Lowell: "The war atmosphere has blackened [...] it is soaking in, and getting more like part of our daily life, and therefore much grimmer" (Quoted in Delany, 1979, 20). Hence, the negative effects of the war on the characters, especially the female ones, of *Tickets, Please* and *The Blind Man* are portrayed through images of darkness that colour their life, and the place of the action. Waiting for Bertie's arrival in the evening of "the November rain and darkness" (*BM*, 350), Isabel, Lawrence's heroine in *The Blind Man*, has "lighted a tall lamp" (*BM*, 350) in the dining room; the description of the room shows that it is still dark: "The long dining-room was dim, with its elegant but rather severe piece of old furniture. Only the round table glowed softly under the light" (*BM*, 351). On her way to the stable, where her husband prefers to spend his time with his horses, Isabel confronts darkness. When she goes out to the farmyard, the whole place sinks into darkness: "The flagged passage in front of her was dark, puddled and wet" (*BM*, 351). As she

walks in the yard, "the darkness seem[s] deeper" (*BM*, 352), to the extent that she looks "unsure of her footing" (*BM*, 352). This provokes her fear and anxiety: "She wished she had brought a lantern. Rain blew against her. Half she liked it, half she felt unwilling to battle" (*BM*, 352). Isabel here is portrayed as if she is in a battle struggling to see her way through the deep darkness. At last she has come close to "the just invisible door of the stable. There was no sign of a light anywhere" (*BM*, 352-353). Once she opens the door, her fear is increased; she sees nothing, save darkness; she feels that she has drowned into darkness: "[S]he looked in: Into a simple well of darkness [...] she listened with all her ears, but could hear nothing save the night, and the stirring of a horse [...] she was afraid" (*BM*, 353). The nothingness that she sees and the stirring of the horse which she hears seem horrible to her: "Then she heard a small noise in the distance [...] and a man's voice speaking a brief word. She stood motionless, waiting for him [her husband] to come through the partition door. The horses were so terrifying near to her, in the invisible" (*BM*, 353). Even the voice of her husband, whom she cannot see, seems dark to her: "She could hear and feel her husband entering and invisibly passing among the horses near to her, in darkness as they were, actively intermingled. The rather low sound of his voice as he spoke to the horses came velvety to her nerves. How near he was, and how invisible!" (*BM*, 353). Suffering alone this immense darkness, Isabel feels insecure: "The darkness seemed to be in a strange swirl of violent life, just upon her" (*BM*, 353). To comfort herself, Isabel calls Maurice, and he replies, but again she sees nothing: "[S]he saw only darkness. It made her almost desperate" (*BM*, 353). The invisible sight of her husband provokes her fear: "While he was so utterly invisible she was afraid of him" (*BM*,

354). A fear that her husband himself becomes aware of: "'You' re all right, aren't you' he asked, anxiously" (*BM*, 354). Being out of the dark world of her husband—the stable— Isabel feels relief: "Isabel was always glad when they had passed through the dividing door into their own regions of repose and beauty" (*BM*, 354). The darkness here which is caused by the advent of night separates Isabel from her husband, it is a darkness that Maurice himself suffers from, but his darkness, which is caused by the war, is permanent; it is the only thing he can see day and night. Through Isabel's experience of this transient darkness, Lawrence makes his character—Isabel— and even his reader feel the pain of combatants who endured the loss of their sights because of the war, as Maurice, Isabel's husband suffers from.

Like Isabel, Bertie, Isabel's cousin and the guest of the family, also has experienced a transient darkness when he visits Maurice in the stable. At the evening of Bertie's arrival, Maurice as usual goes out to enjoy being in his stable; his wife sends Bertie to see him, and to give the two men a chance to know each other and be friends: "Bertie put on an old overcoat and took a lantern. He went from the side door. He shrank from the wet and roaring night". (*BM*,362). He unwillingly has accepted to go there: "Such a weather had a nervous effect on him [...] unwilling, he went through it all" (*BM*,362). The sight of Maurice accompanied by his animals in the dark stable invokes Bertie's fear and anxiety: "Bertie watched the scene, then unconsciously entered and shut the door behind him" (*BM*, 362). Talking to the blind man in such a dark place, "Bertie actually feels a quiver of horror" (*BM*, 363). Throughout the story, the reader is informed that there is no friendship between the two. It is just in the deep darkness of the stable, Maurice tries to achieve a kind of friendship with Bertie: "I

don't really know you [...] Do you mind if I touch you?" (*BM*, 363). He touches him to know his physical features. Mark Spilka points out that the friendship which is achieved between the two men is 'a kinetic transformation of being'; Maurice moves towards the greater fullness of being and his blindness is transcended (Spilka, 1963, 115). But the daily work of the farm that Maurice has occupied himself with shows that he has overcome his blindness before this episode; it is his sense of lacking something that is overcome here rather than his blindness. Maurice feels that Bertie is physically better than him and this sense is transcended once he touches Bertie: "[He] knocked off Bertie's hat. 'I thought you were taller'" (*BM*, 363). On the other hand, the world of darkness—the stable—that Maurice prefers to be in makes Bertie be detached from him: "The lawyer shrank away instinctively" (*BM*, 363). While Maurice seems "indeed so glad" (*BM*, 365) with this friendship, Bertie "trie[s] by any means to escape" (*BM*, 364). Bertie is frightened by this friendship that he has accepted unwillingly. This shows that Maurice has failed to achieve a friendship in his world of darkness, a world that makes not only his wife feel relief to leave it but even Bertie.

Maurice's world of darkness that evokes the fear of his wife and even Bertie seems the source of his happiness. Nils Clausson describes this world as being "rich positivity" (Clausson, 2007, 106-128). But it seems that this world is positive to Maurice only, not to others. It is this world that makes him work without thinking of his blindness: "He was still busy, attending to the horses" (*BM*, 353). Even his voice in the stable reveals his happiness: "His voice was pleasant and ordinary" (*BM*, 353). But for his

wife and Bertie; this world seems quite different, a world that makes them do not be at their ease and comfort.

In *Tickets, Please*, images of darkness are portrayed to mirror the grimness of the war itself that brings with it danger and disorder and they also delineate the cruelty of the human individuals in the time of this war. The girl conductors experience danger every day in their work, since they travel in deep darkness: "It is quite common for a car, packed with one solid mass living people, to come to a dead halt in the midst of unbroken blackness, the heart of nowhere on a dark night, and for the driver and the girl conductor to call, 'All get off-car's on fire!'" (*TP*, 335). The love scene of Annie Stone and John Thomas is enveloped with darkness: "Of course, during these performances pitch darkness falls from time to time, when the machine goes wrong. Then there is a wild whooping, and a loud smacking of simulated kisses" (*TP*, 338). When they go for "a walk across the dark, damp field" (*TP*, 338), they sit "on a stile in the black, drizzling darkness" in the deep wildness of the farm" (*TP*, 338). The darkness of the place here probably reflects the grimness and vagueness of their relationship. Images of darkness are also used in the scene of punishing John Thomas; the girl conductors, prefer the darkness of night to attack their ex-lover: "[T]he girls dropped into the waiting room [...] Outside was the darkness and lawlessness of wartime" (*TP*, 340). Two struggles are portrayed here; inside the little waiting room of the girls there is a "sex-war" (Draper, ed., 2002, 188), where John Thomas has failed to resist the wildness of the girls, outside the room there is the danger of the war, represented by the darkness and disorder.

### **Animal Images in *Tickets, Please* and *The Blind Man***

In 1917 the destruction of the war and its negative influence on people leads Lawrence to be hopeless and feel that human beings turn to be brutes; he wrote to J. M. Murry telling him: "I am weary of humanity and human things" (Lawrence, 1956, 409). He realises that all human individuals are "the trunk, limbs and head of the one body of the destructive evil" (Lawrence, 1956, 407). This leads him to think of leaving Britain and be "far-off wilderness" (Lawrence, 1956, 393). The 'wilderness' of the human individuals that Lawrence talks about here are portrayed in his animal images used in *Tickets, Please* and *The Blind Man*. In *Tickets, Please* the girl conductors are described as being wild animals in their attack to John Thomas: "Behind his back they all grimaced, tittering" (*TP*, 342). Annie is described as being "a swift cat" (*TP*, 342) ready for attacking. John Thomas finds himself like a little creature confronting these wild animals: "He faced them, at bay. At that moment they were horrifying to him [...] he was distinctly afraid" (*TP*, 342). Shirley Rose points out that "[t]he infliction of pain or pain resulting from a violent action turns the perpetrator into a maddened animal" (Rose, 1975, 3-83). Thus, the victimised girls here react according to their pain caused by the wickedness of John Thomas; that turns them to be violent. In *The Blind Man*, animal imagery is delineated in presenting the life of Maurice and Isabel. Like the girl conductors, Maurice also endures a bitter experience, represented by the horror of The First World War that turns his life to be a "violent life" (*BM*, 353). He spends most of his time in his stable, in his "hot animal life" (*BM*, 353), where he seems to be connected with wildness. Isabel herself feels this wildness once she enters the stable: "Something wild stirred in her heart" (*BM*, 353). When Bertie visits

Maurice in his stable he sees him occupied with his wild animal: "A large, half-wild grey cat was rubbing at Maurice's leg. The blind man stooped to rub its sides" (*BM*, 362). In this wild and dark world Maurice prefers to "sp[ea]k to his horses" (*BM*, 353), while he keeps silent out of it: "In the house-passage he wavered, and went cautiously, with a curious look of silence" (*BM*, 354). At the dinner scene, where Maurice tries to check what are on the dining table by his touch, he is portrayed through animal imagery: "Maurice was feeling, with curious little movements, almost like a cat kneading her bed, for his place, his knife and fork, his napkin" (*BM*, 358). This wild animal life becomes part of Maurice's daily routine that he cannot be out of it, a life that reflects the wildness of the war that he has experienced. Ultimately this has negatively affected his relationship with Isabel, his wife.

Obviously, in the two short stories Lawrence presents the suffering of the female in the time of the war, a time in which the human individual is physically and psychologically destructed. Both Isabel and the girl conductors are victims of the war; they feel the need to be loved by their lovers and to be treated as beloveds rather than being emotionally exploited and consumed. Isabel, the sensitive wife, suffers the pain of the war through her relationship with her husband; in spite of being together, Isabel feels the need to be with her husband, to possess him and feel that she is his wife not his nurse: "She longed to possess her husband utterly; it gave her inordinate joy to have him entirely to herself" (*BM*, 348). Annie Stone, the girl conductor tries also to possess her lover, John Thomas and persuades him to marry her: "And she prided herself that he could not leave her [...] The possessive female was aroused in Annie" (*TP*, 339). Although they seem living a different life, these two women show their

need to feel that they are females; Isabel is burdened by her husband who is physically and psychologically wounded; ultimately she feels that she is lost in her relationship with him: "And now Isabel felt a great indifference coming over her, a sort of lethargy" (*BM*, 348). Annie also endures the sense of being lost; when she feels that John Thomas will leave her, she becomes frustrated: "She was staggered, and everything became uncertain to her [...] Then she had a spasm of despair" (*TP*, 339), a despair that leads her to be aggressive against Thomas. Describing the situation of both Isabel and Annie, Judith Puchner Breen suggests that in *The Blind Man*, the woman at her most loving conceals her ruthless power; in *Tickets, Please*, the woman at her most aggressive conceals her fundamental impotence (Breen, 1986, 63-74). This ultimately shows that the two women in the two stories have failed to gain the love of their men: Isabel, the kind wife of Maurice has failed to be his beloved; Annie Stone, the tentative beloved of Thomas does not succeed to be his wife. Thus the two women are emotionally destroyed and exhausted; they feel lost in such bitter relationships which are the outcome of the war, a war that turns the human being to be psychologically and emotionally tired.

## Conclusion

*Ticket, Please* and the *Blind Man* show that D. H. Lawrence was quite aware of the disaster of the First World War on the life of the human individual, especially women who either experienced the war directly by being part of it, or indirectly by enduring the suffering and pain of their male relatives who experienced this war, as combatants. Lawrence has presented his female characters in these two short stories, as being victims of this war. The extraordinary circumstances of the war lead the female

characters like the girl conductors in *Ticket, Please* to be involved in male jobs and ultimately be easily seduced and hunted by wicked men, represented by John Thomas, who has physically and emotionally exploited them. Similar to these girls, Isabel, Lawrence's character, in *The Blind Man*, suffers the bitterness of the war, represented by the physical and psychological wounds of her husband. She has been deprived of living in peace and being happy in her marital life, a life that is blackened and drawn by the war itself that turns it to be a real torture.

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