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### D. H. Lawrence, America, and Classic American Literature: A Relationship of Attraction, Disappointment, and Abhorrence

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**D. H. Lawrence, America, and Classic American Literature: A Relationship of Attraction, Disappointment, and Abhorrence****Taher Badinjki**

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**Abstract**

D.H. Lawrence's relationship with America and American literature is a relationship of attraction, disappointment, and abhorrence. This paper investigates Lawrence's increasing interest in American as a new and promising place, and records his attempts to emigrate there. It sheds light on his involvement in American public life and literary circles, and records his disappointment and frustration. It also records his critical views on the works of Benjamin Franklin, Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman and other famous American literary figures. The final part offers a critical examination of his essays and shows how his highly personal feelings, disappointment, and experience of exile altered his tone and views on American culture and literature as seen in the third version of these Studies.

**Keywords:** America, attraction, emigrate, hatred, studies

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## Introduction

Although the words "America" and "American" occasionally crop up in his early novels and short stories, Lawrence had no direct connection with America until 1911 when his first novel *The White Peacock* was published there on 19th January of that year and was reviewed by some American critics. Following this initial brush with fame on the other side of the Atlantic, Lawrence became intensely interested in America as a new and promising place. In 1911, Harriet Monroe, an American poet, returned from China to Chicago and founded a monthly journal under the name *Poetry*, and Ezra Pound, its foreign correspondent, wrote an extremely favourable review of Lawrence's book *Love Poems and Others*. Pound was the leader of the Imagist Movement and was later followed by Amy Lowell, who during a visit to England, met Lawrence and presented him with a typewriter on that occasion. Expecting Lawrence to become a poet of importance, Lowell asked him to join their Movement hoping that his association would make Imagism popular. Lawrence did not take Imagism too seriously, but, taking into consideration the financial advantages at a period of strain and poverty, agreed to join. She paid him well for the poems she published in the anthologies for 1915, 1916 and 1917, and so did Harriet Monroe, who went on publishing his poems in *Poetry*, and both Monroe and Lowell continued to give him practical assistance when he needed it.

While Lawrence's outlook became more favourable towards America, life at home became gloomy and miserable because of his position with Frieda, and it was not easy for him to be comfortable with friends and acquaintances. The death of his mother, the scandal preceding his marriage, and the outbreak of war in 1914 affected him greatly and ruined his dream of making "two thousand pounds a year" and living "in a large house" (Aldington, 1961, p. 160). The periodicals for which he wrote were either closing down or taking only war stuff. Towards Christmas 1914, Lawrence began to fall into moods of acute depression. In his letter to Edward Marsh, he wrote, "The war is just hell for me. I don't see why I should be so disturbed —but I am. I can't get away from it for a minute I live in a sort of coma, like one of those nightmares when you can't move." (Zytaruk & Boulton, 1981, p. 211).

The withdrawal of *The Rainbow* from circulation and its destruction under a court order (Aldington, 1961, p. 171) left him calumniated, persecuted and penniless. He lost all chance of earning anything for three years of work; was publicly stigmatized as "obscene", and his name was made so notorious that publishers and periodicals for a long time avoided accepting his work. In his despair, Lawrence turned to the thought of emigrating to America. He wrote to Edward Marsh "I am so sick, in body and soul, that if I don't go away, I shall die" (Zytaruk & Boulton, 1981, p. 429). The idea of emigrating and establishing "Ranim" utopian society was at the back of his mind, and he was about to sail there when he heard about that the suppression of *The Rainbow* might be raised in court. He cancelled his plan and agreed to stay in England to deal with this legal battle but it never materialized. The following months had been disastrous for him and his wife. He accepted the use of an empty house in Cornwall as a stopping place on the way to Florida hoping that his next move would be out of England.

Lawrence did not seem to get on well with the locals. Hostility to the red-bearded man and his German wife grew, and they were, on more than one occasion, suspected of spying activities. Moore

reports that:

On one occasion, Lawrence and Frieda were suspected by Cornish people of provisioning German submarine crews on that coast, though, as Frieda pointed out, "they could not have spared even a biscuit a day, in their poverty." On another occasion, the Coast Guards leaped out at them from behind a bush on the moors and accused Frieda of carrying a camera which, on searching, proved to be no more than a loaf of bread; and during a visit to Cecil Gray's house for dinner, the wind disturbed one of the curtains so that a flickering light was there which convinced the snoopers that Gray and the Lawrences were communicating with a submarine by showing a light. (1954, p. 33)

On 11 October 1917, their cottage was searched and Lawrence's personal address book and a few old letters were taken away, and later, they were forbidden to reside in Cornwall or in any coastal place. The eviction from Cornwall "was a disaster. In London, they had no money to pay for accommodation and were homeless. As late as 1919, the censor was still opening Lawrence's mail" (Worthen, 2005, p. 191). Thwarted, dejected and bitter, Lawrence saw London in the image of hell and he felt he could no longer stay in England. In his letter to Catherine Carswell he wrote, "I find I am unable to write for England anymore....If I am kept here I am beaten for ever" (Zytaruk & Boulton, 1981, p. 87). In his despair of England, Lawrence turned towards America. He started to write a series of essays on American literature in the hope that he would be able to go to New York and give lectures there. By the end of 1918, he finished his first draft.

### **America Is My Virgin Soil, Truly**

During the destitute period in Cornwall, he was partly supported by gifts of money from Americans, and American magazines were paying him for three or four poems as much as an entire volume of verse earned him in England. In his letter to Catherine Carswell on 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1916 he wrote "I believe that England... is capable of not seeing anything but badness in me, for ever and ever. I believe America is my Virgin soil, truly" (Boulton & Robertson, 1984, p. 58). He asked Cynthia Asquith to help him obtain passports to the United States "I am pretty sure of selling my stuff if I am in America... it is quite useless my trying to live and write here. I shall only starve in ignominy, should be starving now if an American hadn't given me £60" (Huxley, 1932, p. 392). On the anniversary of his birthday he wrote "always lived with no money —always shall— very sick of the world, like to die with the nausea of it" (Worthen, 2005, p. 200).

During these difficult years, any chance connection with American life was apt to rouse a renewed desire to travel to the new world. Within six months after the Armistice, he felt the pull of America. The preoccupation with America had some influence on his work. In 1920, he wrote an essay "America, Listen to Your Own", which was published in the *New Republic* on 15th December. He congratulated Americans on having no European tradition of the old natives. In *Sea and Sardinia* (1921), he was disappointed with Sardinia, but he hoped for an American empire, "As sure as fate we are on the brink of American empire". In *Aaron's Rod* (1922), America is mentioned a dozen times and American figures like Woodrow Wilson Lincoln and Whitman were referred to. His next book *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922) was dedicated to America, and in *Kangaroo* Lincoln, Whitman, Poe, Wilson, and Marconi were mentioned.

**All Is Comfortable, I Really Hate This Mechanical Comfort**

From the moment of his arrival in San Francisco on 4th September 1922, Lawrence found America a strange mixture of generosity and self-indulgence. He regarded American life with distrust, "All is comfortable, comfortable, I really hate this mechanical comfort" (F. Lawrence, 1934, p. 145). The undependability of the foundation of America's industrial civilization was impressed upon him almost immediately after he alighted from the train at Lamy Station. On the drive to Santa Fe, they stopped in the middle of the road, Frieda suggested that Lawrence get out and help. Lawrence retorted angrily, "you know I don't know anything about automobiles, Frieda! I hate them! Nasty, unintelligent, unreliable things!" (Luhan, 1932, pp. 38-39).

During the first weeks, intense feelings of antagonism developed between the Lawrences and Mabel Dodge. Lawrence saw in her the typical American woman, bullying everybody and directing her life by sheer force of will. "What you dislike in America", he wrote, "seems to me really dislikeable, everybody seems to be trying to enforce his, or her, will... all people must have an inferiority complex somewhere, striving to make good over everybody else." (Roberts, Boulton & Mansfield, 1987, p. 305). She had done her best to pit herself against Frieda, to attract Lawrence. To avoid further differences, he left Taos and settled in a bungalow in the mountains. Lawrence was very much depressed, and his health was not too good. It was in this atmosphere that he wrote the final version of the *Studies*, The winter of 1922-23, was for him a period of nervousness and sterility. He did not write much and decided to go to Mexico. In Chapala (Mexico), Lawrence started *The Plumed Serpent*, but he could not advance very far. Frieda sailed to England alone on 17th August. He could not live without her for long, and he sailed from Vera Cruz for Plymouth; and as a parting gift he wrote "Au Revoir, U. S. A." for *The Laughing Horse*.

He and Frieda sailed for New York on March 5th, 1924 and back to Taos. Mabel Dodge who had reconciled herself with them presented Frieda with her Lobo Ranch, and Lawrence accepted the indirect present gladly, but insisted on giving her the manuscript of *Sons and Lovers*. During his stay at the ranch, Lawrence wrote three short stories, *The Princess*, *St. Mawr* and *The Woman Who Rode Away*. In Mexico, Lawrence finished *The Plumed Serpent* and wrote the last chapter for *Mornings in Mexico*. He became very ill and was advised to travel back to the mountain climate of the ranch as quickly as possible, but the United States Immigration Officials put every obstacle in his way. Finally, he was allowed to enter with the help of the American Embassy in Mexico and was granted a visa for six months only. In the autumn of 1925, Lawrence left for London. It was the second and the last time. He spent a short time in London, and soon after he went to Italy, where he lived during the next two years.

Though Lawrence left America, he was constantly planning to go back there. In his letter to Brett on 15th May, 1926 he wrote "I often dream of the Azul, Aaron, and Timsey (the domestic beasts at the ranch). They seem to call one back, perhaps even more strongly than the place" (Boulton & Vasey, 1989, p. 453). About his longing for the ranch, he wrote, "I wish I was really there. I would love to see the flowers, and ride up the raspberry canyon, and go along the ditch with a shovel." His discontent with Italy and the whole of Europe increased with the advance of his illness, "I feel sometimes tempted to go to America. Europe is like a dying pig uttering a long, infinitely-conceited

squeak. At least America isn't so depressing" (J. Boulton, M. Boulton & Lacy, 2002, p. 82). In his letter to Witter Bynner, he wrote,

I meant to answer you long ago, but the flesh is very weak. My health is very tiresome, and I don't feel like doing a thing, unusual for me. But I do believe the root of all my sickness is a sort of rage. I realise now. Europe gets me into an inward rage, that keeps my bronchials hellish inflamed. I believe I'd get better in no time in New Mexico, because I'm really not weak. But I can't digest my inward spleen in Europe—that's what ails me and in New Mexico I can. Now I have come really to this conclusion, I shall try all my might to arrange getting back, in the New Year. I wish there weren't all these passport difficulties. And if we come we should probably try to make some little furnished place in Santa Fe for the first month or so, to get used to the altitude—and also to look round for a winter house near Santa Fe, and just summer at the ranch. That is what Frieda wants. (Boulton & Vasey, 1989, p. 574)

On 2nd March, 1930 Lawrence died. He was buried at Bandel. Later, his body was exhumed again and taken to America. Now he lies buried just behind his ranch above Taos.

### ***Studies in Classic American Literature, Critical Analysis***

The first collection of essays, consisting of twelve original essays, was written in Cornwall in 1917-18, out of which eight were published in the *English Review* from November 1918 till June 1919. The second version was revised in Sicily in 1920; and the third and final version was written in winter 1922-23 in the United States after his arrival. He told his new American agent that he was "doing Studies again—Americanising them, much shorter" (Huxley, 1932, p. 664). He published them in a book form in 1923. The introductory chapter — "The Spirit of Place" which will be dealt with later in more details — begins with the question what was the American artist, and what self was he seeking in his departure from Europe? The old answer is, of course, a self which should be free; free from the institutions of European Society, from both Church and State, and from the identity which these imposed upon the individual. The attitude of the American was negative and therefore he could never achieve real freedom. Lawrence concludes the first essay with his belief in a self-restricted freedom "Men are free when they belong to a living, organic, *believing* community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealized purpose. Not when they are escaping to some wild west" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 9). In his essay on Benjamin Franklin, Lawrence attacks Franklin's belief in the perfectibility of man and laughs at his list of virtues. He claims that Franklin's error was to assume that he could provide a complete definition of man. He rejects Franklin's creed because man is always more than any such idealized conception suggests. He concludes the essay with the idea that America had broken away from her mother Europe like a bad child, before being grown up. Because of this she is, instead of being free, chained by her machines and her industry. That is why Europe has now the last chance to get America, and the essay ends with an appeal to Europe, Let hell loose, and get your own back, Europe (Lawrence, 1923, p. 31). Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, is the subject of the third essay. Though treated somewhat more objectively, he is also ridiculed extensively. Lawrence finds *Letters from an American Farmer* completely unconvincing because Crevecoeur is neither a farmer, nor a child of nature. He is "a friend of Rousseau's Madame d'Houdetot and a good business man who goes off to France in high-heeled shoes and embroidered waistcoat, to pose as a literary man, and to prosper in the world" (Lawrence, 1923, pp. 32-33).

In his two essays on Cooper, Lawrence is more positive. He divides Cooper's novels into two classes "*The White Novels*" and "*The Leatherstocking Series*". The first deals with two of what may be loosely termed as Cooper's society novels. He condemns the democratic perfectionist ideal of equality and declares that Cooper instinctively knows himself to be a natural aristocrat, and yet must consciously endorse the ideal of equality. This is why "one rather gets impatient with him" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 62). In his second essay on the *Leatherstocking Tales*, his impression was favourable and Cooper seems to stand near the top together with Melville and Whitman. Cooper's idea of blood-brother relationship between Natty Bumpoo and Chinagachgook is, Lawrence thinks, only an instance of wish-fulfilment. He says probably one day America will be as beautiful in actuality as it is in Cooper. This possibility, according to him consists in a spiritual reconciliation. In order to create this new spirit it would be necessary to open out a new wide area of "consciousness" and "slough the old consciousness. The old consciousness has become a tight-fitting prison to us, in which we are going rotten. You can't have a new, easy skin before you have sloughed the old, tight skin" (Lawrence 1923, p. 75). If only the White Man could renounce the little white self to which he clings, a great new era of human consciousness would open to him and a deeper level of human relationship will be possible, and he concludes his essay by praising *The Deerslayer* as "a gem of a book" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 87).

In his study of Edgar Allen Poe, he links Poe to his fictional characters, and his qualities as a literary critic are not taken into account. He describes Poe as "rather a scientist than an artist" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 94), and describes his style as "meretricious" which has "mechanical quality" and his poetry has "a mechanical rhythm". He never sees anything in terms of life, almost always "in terms of matter, jewels, marble, etc.. —or in terms of force, scientific"; and "his cadences are all managed mechanically" (Lawrence, 1923, 100). He attacks Poe's theory of love and sees love in *Ligeia* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* as a destroying power which transcends the law of organic life, breaks the intrinsic isolation and singleness of each organism, and leads to actual mixing and confusion. He says that Poe insisted on "oneness" and on his nerves vibrating in the intense and exhilarating unison with the nerves of another being and was doomed. He died wanting more love, and love killed him" (Lawrence, 1923, 120). He ends his essay with the conclusion that Poe's tales are the horrible literary record of a "vampire fiend... who is telling us of his disease, trying even to make his disease fair and attractive. Even succeeding. Which is the inevitable falseness, duplicity of art, American Art in particular." (Lawrence, 1923, 120). After Poe, Lawrence looks at Nathaniel Hawthorne and his works. To him, *The Scarlet Letter* "isn't a pleasant pretty romance. It is a sort of parable, an earthly story with a hellish meaning" (Lawrence, 1923, 121), and he chooses this discrepancy as typical of all American art, "On the top, it is nice as pie, goody-goody and lovey-dovey", but "look at the inner meaning of their art and see what demons they were" (Lawrence, 1923, 121). Hester and Dimmesdale share the subtlest delight in keeping up pure appearance. The power "of pure appearance is something to exult in. All America gives in to it. LOOK pure!" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 129). Surprisingly, after his disparaging criticism he ends the essay with a very appreciative judgement of *The Scarlet Letter* as "a marvellous allegory. It is to me one of the greatest allegories in all literature" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 147). To our wonder, and to justify the attacks of some critics on the book, the inconsistency and contradiction of his views appear here clearly. Throughout the

essay, Lawrence said no positive word about the novel and his appreciative conclusion comes as a surprise. This fluctuation in his assessment will be dealt with in the coming sections.

In his essay on Dana's *Two Years Before The Mast*, Lawrence starts with the idea that the "Americans have never loved the soil of America as the Europeans have loved the soil of Europe". America has "never been a blood-home-land. Only an ideal home-land, the home-land of the idea, of the *spirit*" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 164). Americans turned to the sea. Not to the land. "Earth is too specific, too particular. Besides, the blood of white men is wine of no American soil. No, no" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 165). Some Americans tried to love the sea instead of the soil and they made the most vivid failure. Dana, according to him, "took another great step in knowing, knowing the mother sea. But it was a step also in his own undoing. It was a new phase of dissolution of his own being" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 166). At the end, he comes to the conclusion that the world is exactly as it must be, a place of fierce discord and intermittent harmonies. Melville is criticized as a writer who is "sententious" who tries "to put something over you" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 215). He praises Moby Dick as a great book, yet he is not happy with its style which "reads like journalism" and "seems spurious." Despite these remarks on its style, Lawrence at the end of the essay can hardly hide his admiration for the book. He praises it as "a great book, a very great book, the greatest book of the sea ever written. It moves awe in the soul" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 287). His last essay is on Whitman. It consists of two parts and seems to make contradictory assertions in its two halves. In the first part, Lawrence scoffs at Whitman's trust in American democracy and subjects him to derisive criticism. He stamps without mercy on Whitman's cherished concept of a democratic emotion. In the second half of the essay, and after howling him down, Lawrence confesses that Whitman was a great poet, "the one pioneer" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 258), and great moralist; "he was a great leader. He was a great changer of the blood in the veins of men" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 254).

### Critical Assessment

Like everything else that Lawrence wrote, *Studies in Classic American Literature* precipitated a great deal of diverse and often amusingly intemperate critical opinion. When the third (final) version of the book appeared in 1923, it was, on one side, well received, greeted extensively and reviewed in the most important papers. Kurt L. Daniels reviewed it for *The New Republic* on 24th October under the heading "Mr Lawrence on American Literature". Daniels did not think highly of the American classics himself; he supposed that they were only read by children. After fully appreciating the book, he comes to the conclusion that the book "gets its originality from the playing of new psychoanalytically derived methods on old, familiar and hence unknown subjects; from a mixture of introspection and examination, from a fervour of expression and a great deal of common senses". *The New York Evening Post Literary Review* (20 October 1923) published a highly favourable review by Stuart P. Sherman under the title "American is Discovered", and *The New York Times* (September 26, 1923) published a favourable and appreciative review by H. I. Brock, who expressed his admiration and surprise at this "new and excellent" type of literary criticism. H. J. Seligmann was the first to dedicate twelve pages of his book to Lawrence's account on American literature. In his praise of the book, Seligmann wrote that America "Welcomes (Lawrence) because he achieved for American literature and the American psyche, what no other writer has done" (1924, p. 56). On the other side, it was attacked by many critics. Conard Aiken reviewed it for the *Athenaeum* and *The*



*Nation* (12 July, 1923) under the heading "Mr Lawrence-Sensationalist", and came to the conclusion that Lawrence had lost the distance between the object and himself and that "the result when he turns to criticism, is a kind of sensationalism—awkward, harsh, jocose, violent, and often offensive" (Aikens, 1923, p. 92). On July 24th, 1924, a long anonymous review appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* which found Lawrence the critic wearisomely didactic "because he is at the same time bent on teaching and disdainful of the world for being so foolish as to need to be taught".

In Britain, Bonamy Dobree was the first English critic to appreciate the book. In *The Lamp and the Lute*, Dobree described *Studies in Classic American Literature* as an "admirable piece of criticism" and "the best book on the subject so far written" (1929, p. 94). The next Englishman to praise Lawrence and appreciate the book was F.R. Leavis who saw it as a "neglected critical masterpiece" and considered Lawrence as "the finest literary critic of our time" (1952, p. 233). Even Henry Seidel Canby, who wrote a negative review of the book, corrected his statements later and gave a positive appreciation of Lawrence and his work (1936, p. 163). Nathan A. Scott praised the book and "its flashes of true and remarkably penetrating insight" (1952, p. 168). As a result of continued interest in Lawrence and his work, *Studies in Classic American Literature* was republished in 1953 and won great popularity.

The difference between the first version of the essays and the third version is not merely a matter of rewording and rephrasing. To a large extent they are written in different ways. In his study of the history of the book, Armin Arnold explains the difference in terms of insufficiency or fault. He claims that "the first version is spoiled by Lawrence's philosophizing, which has little to do with American literature, and that the third version is spoiled by its hysterical quality". He believes that the second version of which only four essays survive, was "probably the best one because it was purged of "the philosophical passages", and it was not yet "hysterical about America and Americans, but ... apparently, it was inaccessible (1963, p.101). There are important differences between the early version of the *Studies* and the final edition published in 1923, they deal with the same subject and comment on the works of the same authors. The third version published in 1923 was an American book; it was revised, rewritten, and published in the United States. The intense, style and the aggressive tone of this version reveals the sense of somberness of a displaced person who struggles to find a space out of place away from his homeland and culture which makes him feel alienated. Though the title refers to American literature, the book is much more about America itself. In the introductory chapter, he says that the proper function of a critic is to save "the American tale from the American artist who created it" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 4). He describes the old American artists as "hopeless liars" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 2), and their fundamental ideals about freedom, democracy and equality as "big lies". He describes America as "a vast republic of escaped slaves ... and a minority of earnest self-tortured people" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 7). The American ideal of freedom is self deception and pure negation, and the pilgrim father, the old body of American idealists drifted over the Atlantic not in search of worship, they "didn't come for freedom... They came largely to get away... to get away from what? In the long run, away from themselves", they get

away from everything they are and have been. Henceforth is masterless... it isn't freedom. It is the reverse... A hopeless sort of constraint. It is never freedom till you find something

you really *positively* want to be. And people in America have always been shouting about the things they are not. Unless of course they are millionaires, made or in the making. (Lawrence, 1923, p. 5)

Like freedom, he rejects the notions of equality and the other American ideals of democracy and equality. He "methodically marches down a line of classic American authors, and in turn, "pierces the heart, bashes-in the head, rends out the soul, and furiously shakes the corpse of the unsuspecting greats" (*Review of D. H. Lawrence's Studies in Classic American Literature*, 2016). The earlier philosophical ideas of the first version have fallen away, and in their absence, Lawrence provides us with a psychological portrait of himself without disguise and without the claimed objectivity. He conveys his bitter feelings and does not hide his sense of disappointment and isolation. This brings to mind another disappointing experience of an English writer in America. In 1872, James Anthony Froude received an invitation to give a series of lectures in America. His lectures raised unexpected controversy and met public opposition which caused Froude to cut his trip and return to England feeling disappointed with the result of his mission (Paul, 1905, p. 227).

Describing his life at Taos Lawrence wrote to Earl Brewster "if freedom means that there isn't anything in life except moving *ad lib* on foot.... It is just the life outside, and the outside of life. Not *really* life", and later he wrote to Catherine Carswell whom he imagined envying him for the new experience "it only excites the outside of me. The inside it leaves me more isolated and stoic than ever. That's how it is" (Worthen, 2005, p. 274). He came to America for a new experience and a non-European world. What he discovered was white world at its most "willful and domineering" Americans who "try hard to intellectualize themselves... white savages with motor cars, telephones, income and ideals! Savages fast inside the machine; yet savage enough, ye gods!" (Lawrence, 1923, 49). Doubtless, Mabel, the stronger-willed woman who tried to impose her will on everything around her was the target of such an attack. The hatred which had sustained him almost more than anything else, came to be expressed in an increasingly concrete way more than in his early essays. In his "Introduction" for Edward Dahlberg's *Bottom Dogs*, Lawrence wrote, "It is not till you live in America, and go a little under the surface, that you begin to see how terrible and brutal is the mass of failure that nourishes the roots of the gigantic tree of dollars" (1929, p. 119). The America of his dreams was quite different from America of reality.

### Conclusion

The book is not a dispassionate examination of the strengths and weaknesses of Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, or any of the other American writers discussed therein; it is rather Lawrence's highly personal feelings and impressions at the time he wrote the essays. He re-wrote these essays in the light of his actual contact with the America and Americans. He comments on his experience in a harsh, disdainful and jocose style, "The land of the free! This is the land of the free! Why, because if I say anything that displeases them, the free mob will lynch me, and that's my freedom Free? Why I have never been in any country where the individual has an abject fear of his fellow countrymen. Because, as I say, they are free to lynch him the moment he shows he is not one of them" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 4).

This reflects clearly his disappointment in America and the increasing feeling of self-detachment and alienation. The alienation was not only cultural and social, it was also emotional, an alienation from the woman whom he deeply loved. His marriage and love relationship with Frieda was faltering. While he was dangerously ill with tuberculosis —that was eventually to kill him— Frieda "preferred to occupy a separate bedroom, and later started a love affair with Angelo Ravagli, an army officer" (Worthen, 1929, p. 248) whom she later married after Lawrence's death. Lawrence's frustration at his own illness, his turbulent relationship with Frieda, and her love affair might have indirectly contributed to the feeling of frustration, hostility, and the punchy, hard hitting, abrasive style of the book.

Apparently, Lawrence did not allow himself to experience the American scene in an ingenious way. Instead, he merely displaced his sense of disappointment and frustration onto America, carrying with him that sense of persecution and alienation that prevented him from feeling at home anywhere. Despite the controversy it created, *Studies in Classic American Literature* remains a useful work, if not so much for the light it sheds on American literature, it is useful for understanding Lawrence himself.

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