**Introduction**

In the present work I’m going to analyze the characterization of women in D.H. Lawrence The Fox and see how the two women perceive the war.

The fox is a short story that provides the readers with strong images of the life of two women during WWI, March’s and Bandford’s. Their life is set in a rural environment: together they manage a farm in the English district of Berkshire and try to survive despite hard difficulties. But suddenly, a man, the soldier Henry, appears in their daily life and upsets their previous balance. The story is one of love and hatred, attraction and repulsion, stability and precariousness, which will end in a dramatic way.

Henry actually does not contribute to the farm management while March and Banford play an active role. While men used to fight in the war, women had to work in order togain their own living. All in all, a kind of women emancipation occurs since they gain responsibilities they have never experienced alone before.

**The relationship between March and Banford**

They are two women about thirty years of age working on a farm. Bandford is presented as the most delicate and weak because of her physical appearance, but March is weaker than her friend. March is able to work as hard as a man and she always plays a man's role but, to tell the truth she is often in the air and generally subdued by Bandford. March and Bandford are the women's names. They are meaningful because March as a name may refer to the month when nature awakes, and Bandford refers to something distant (to band) and strong. The names communicate the nature of the two women.

Relationships are at the center of narrative investigation and can be analysed from direct reported speech or considering the characters’ reactions through the narrator's filter.

Their bond is not balanced; indeed Banford perceives March quite as a male figure, because of her strength. The narrator himself asserts “*She would be the man about the place*”. Banford seems to feel satisfied with what she does both on the physical level and on the sentimental one. On the other hand, March looks for a male figure in her life, intimately nourishing the desire of sexual gratification

The relationship between Banford and March changes when Henry arrives at the farm. Henry and March seem to get every day closer to each other, and at the same time, he slowly seems to take distance from Banford.

March is not autonomous when it comes to choose what to do. Bandford and Henry fight to kept March, but she never seems sure of her decisions and does not know what to do.

Therefore relationships seem to limit personal autonomy.

**Women’s perception of the war**

D.H Lawrence’s The Fox is set at the end of the First World War. In all the story, even if the word “war” appears only 4 times, the intelligent reader understands that war represents its background.

War is always depicted through indirect textual references. Indeed the reader can gain a general overview only once he has read the complete story. Right from the first pages of the novella there is a clear reference to  war:

“War conditions, again, were very unfavourable to poultry-keeping. Food was scarce and bad”.

“Since the war the fox was a demon”

Lawrence is able to synthesize the meaning of the war effectively and namely as a time of famine and suffering in only two sentences.

In the economy of the text the fox is considered a demon because it represents the lack of food and the poverty that the two young ladies have to face.

Last but not least, war is quoted also in Henry’s presentation: Henry is a soldier who has fought in Salonika (now called Thessaloniki), a Greek port where Anglo-French forces landed on  October 5thy, 1915.

Reading the work, readers can trace out the negative aspects of war. Misery seems to be reflected in Bandford and March’s rural activities, especially in rearing. Indeed, as you can see right from the beginning, the omniscient narrator asserts: “ *War condition [..] were very unfavourable to poultry-keeping. Food was scarce and bad*.” Such statement makes you immediately think about the difficulties of living during the war period.

It is also important to say that Bandford and March’s living conditions are hard since they are unable to manage the farming and rearing activities properly. It follows that, even if they are independent from the juridical point of view, their independence seems not to lead them to positive results. Therefore, their living condition seems to suggest their need of somebody who can help and raise them from such hard condition.

They have also to face an economical problem : they have not enough money to start their business. Indeed, at the beginning the narrator says “*Banford's father [..] gave his daughter the start*”. They have an amount of capital that enables them to survive in spite of their difficulties in the management of the farm just thanks to some one else's help. As a consequence, their independence is not the result of self-sufficiency.

In spite of this, in Lawrence’s novella the two female characters seem to be very determined. Just consider their intention to manage a farm together without any male support.Indeed, the narrator says “*They had taken the farm together, intending to work it all by themselves*” right in the first lines of the novel. In addition, Banford’s statement is worth noticing: “We consider ourselves quite efficient”.

It unveils her awareness of being independent.

**Quotations from “The Fox”**

*Quotations about women emancipation*

During the war women acquired social position because they worked to substitute men. When the conflict ended men wanted to return to their assignment but women desired to be recognised their emancipation. So it created a conflict between men’s and women’s point of view.

*'Oh, well,' broke in March, 'we don't believe in living for nothing but work.'*

*'Don't you?' he answered. And again the quick young laugh came over his face. He kept his eyes steadily on the obscure woman in the corner.*

*'But what will you do when you've used up all your capital?' he said.*

*'Oh, I don't know,' answered March laconically. 'Hire ourselves out for land-workers, I suppose.'*

*'Yes, but there won't be any demand for women land-workers now the war's over,' said the youth.*

*(pag. 3)*

*Quotations about famine and poverty*

Even if Great Britain was one of the winners, at the end of the war inflation increased so were difficult to survive.

*War conditions, again, were very unfavourable to poultry-keeping. Food was scarce and bad*

*He was gone. The captain, upset, took a gin and bitters. Henry managed to hire a bicycle. It was twelve o'clock when he left the camp. He had sixty miles of wet and muddy crossroads to ride. But he was in the saddle and down the road without a thought of food.*

*Banford flew into the village on her bicycle to try and buy food. She was a hospitable soul. But alas, in the year 1918 there was not much food to buy.*

*'There's no food. There's nothing here. You must wait a bit,' said Banford to them.*

*(pag. 5)*

*Quotations about financial amount*

She, however, was the principal investor, for March had little or no money.

*'Why,' came March's vague voice, 'what do you want to waste your money for?'*

*'I thought it would be well spent,' said Banford.*

*'I wasn't thinking of anything except the way the wind was blowing,' said March.*

*'Oh dear,' replied Banford, 'I could have had as original thought as that myself. I'm afraid I*have*wasted my money this time*