

D. H. Lawrence's Observation of Life: The Instinct for Aggression
and a Path to Union in *The Plumed Serpent*

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Many critics argue that Kate, the central protagonist of *The Plumed Serpent* (1926, hereafter abbreviated as *TPS*), has experienced the death of her Western ego and rebirth as a restrained Mexican-like woman in the novel. However, it is obvious that she has not lost or repressed her will for she keeps provoking violent conflict, caused by her vacillating between the alternatives of living as a Western woman or becoming a typical Mexican-like woman. On the other hand, there are studies which focus on Kate's agony and contradictory thoughts, though they nevertheless conclude that Lawrence's ideal that Western people should abandon their egos in order to be united with others in an equal way, is at odds with the depiction of Kate's emotion and the relationships of the characters. However, the characters' inner qualities and the psychological plot of the novel should be thoroughly examined before considering this argument. The instinctive self-assertion involved in both Kate's and the Indians' aggressiveness implies that the human's ego is too firm to free oneself from. In the final moment of the novel, however, Kate gives vent to her feelings towards Cipriano by not parting with her Western ego, and he accepts it by showing his kindness for the first time. Therefore, it can be ultimately understood that the union of souls can be achieved by their meeting half-way and not by abandoning their egos, and Lawrence has demonstrated a conclusion which surpasses his own ideal theory.

In the first chapter, the Indians' aggressiveness in *TPS* is discussed. Their aggressiveness is by no means emphasized as an inhuman quality; it is an active manifestation of one's self to acquire the sensation of life, and an energy inherited from the old days which destroys the binary oppositions. It demonstrates that it is not only Kate but also the Indians who have powerful egos and thus they cannot open up their hearts to her.

In the second chapter, the strength of the ego of Kate who keeps yearning for love and recognition is analyzed through her aggressiveness. The source of the instinct can be traced to her ardent passion for Ramón and its setback, and accordingly she is even more tightly fettered by her Western ego.

Her aggression which is directed not only towards others but also towards herself, is analyzed by the “death instinct” theory.

In the third chapter, the confrontation of Kate’s religious rapture and the resurrection of her ego is analyzed. Kate senses the pleasure of submitting herself to Cipriano’s ancient divinity, though it is clear that she emerges from the religious ecstasy and regains her ego even more strongly than before. Furthermore, a scene in which Kate recognizes her real desire and becomes satisfied with its realization, confirms the presupposition that she kept holding onto her will.

The final chapter argues that Lawrence’s warm observation of life, expressed in his travel book *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), is also present in *TPS*, and dissolves the aggressiveness between living things which belong to different dimensions. From his travel writing, it seems that he has already found a solution to the union of souls which does not require discarding one’s ego and he depicts an omen of this in the relationship of Kate and Cipriano. Hence, *TPS* ends with a bright prospect since it indicates the possibility of unity by not denying the essential difference between the two. In the conclusion, by making the religious plot and Kate’s psychological plot struggle against each other, Lawrence’s idea dialectically made its way to a path to the union of souls, achieved by the concession of the different races or cultures.