

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN
in
THE NOVELS OF D.H. LAWRENCE



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ABSTRACT

The thesis deals with D.H. Lawrence's ideas about the love relationship between men and women, about their failures to understand each other, about their maturity in learning to respect each other. The failure of the love relationship, as represented in several novels, is basically caused by false idealism, or by possessiveness, or by excessive spirituality. The ideal man-woman relationship, represented in other novels, is seen in terms of opposites. It is a completely polarized relationship, in which the individualities of the lovers are kept intact, and their love remains in balance because they support and fulfil each other. The development and explanation of Lawrence's ideas about this ideal love relationship, viewed from physical and spiritual needs, is the purpose and design of this thesis.

PREFACE



In this thesis the author has attempted to develop the dominant theme in the novels of D.H. Lawrence—the relationship between men and women. The novels were chosen for study because they are the central part of Lawrence's achievement. However, since Lawrence's ideas are also expressed in his other works, the author has found it necessary to support some points with reference to short stories, essays, and letters. The author approached the novels chronologically because this was the most effective way of tracing the development of Lawrence's thoughts.

The author should point out that he has not concentrated on Lawrence's art or controversial biography, that his only concern in the thesis is Lawrentian doctrines about love, as they are represented in the novels. However, he realises that to know the events of the writer's life is to gain more understanding of his ideas, and thus some parts of Lawrence's personal history which influence his concept of love are given briefly in the footnotes.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Abstract.....	111
Preface.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I : The White Peacock and the Trespasser...	9
Chapter II : Sons and Lovers.....	15
Chapter III : The Rainbow.....	33
Chapter IV : Woman in Love.....	53
Chapter V : The Lost Girl.....	75
Chapter VI : Aaron's Rod.....	81
Chapter VII : Kangaroo.....	89
Chapter VIII : The Plumed Serpent.....	95
Chapter IX : Lady Chatterley's Lover.....	102
Conclusion.....	116
Footnotes.....	127
Bibliography.....	179

INTRODUCTION



The subject matter of D.H. Lawrence's novels deals with those kinds of human relationships in which are shown the direction of man's soul and the emergence of man into greater fullness of being. "The goal of life," Lawrence tells us, "is the coming to perfection of each single individual."¹ Yet the individual can come to life only through an ever moving and changing relation with other selves: "No human being can develop save through the polarized relation with other beings."² The function of art, for him, was to show the struggle of man from some partial state of being into organic wholeness through the contact with his fellow creatures.³ Lawrence's chief preoccupation in his novels, therefore, is always the individual life in its essential and inescapable relation with others.

Of all human contacts the relation between the sexes is regarded as the most necessary and the most important, since man and woman, the complex separate beings, are complementary to each other, and "the source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and the meeting of these two..."⁴ Thus in dealing with human relationships Lawrence particularly concentrated on the relation between man and woman, the fount of life itself: "From it all things human spring, children and beauty, and well-made things; all the creation of humanity."⁵

"I can write what I feel pretty strongly about," Lawrence once wrote to his literary agent, "and that, at present, is the relation between men and women. After all, it is the problem of today, the establishment of a new relation, or the readjustment of the old one..."⁶ These words announce the theme that dominates all his novels, from The White Peacock to Lady Chatterley's Lover, the relation between man and woman. Dissatisfied with conventional marital relationship under the surface of which he noticed frustration, deadness, and distortion in the life of the individual, Lawrence tried to make a search through his novels for a proper relation. For him it was the business of love, marriage, and society to bring about fulfillment in the individual. He saw human relationship in terms of its effect on the soul's vitality, and his moral criterion for love may be this: "Does it affirm or deny, renew or destroy, the sacred life within us?"

A Lawrence novel is used as a medium of revealing visions of man-woman relationships, and Laurentian doctrines about love are usually summed up by some particular symbols, which must be accepted and understood, if he is to be read with pleasure and profit. Lawrence's first important symbol is the white peacock, used in his first novel, The White Peacock, to symbolize the unsatisfied, proud woman who dooms herself by allowing the factitious social ideals to thwart her natural desire. A living relationship cannot be achieved

unless man and woman are honest to themselves and to the other. Believing in the intuitive wisdom of the blood Lawrence felt that any denial of the instinctive impulses was a blasphemous crime against the Holy Ghost, the God of Life, who existed within human blood; and in The Trespasser he uses a familiar Christian word, the trespasser, to refer to the man who sins against life by refusing to acknowledge the dictates of his profound desire.

Lawrence's study of man-woman relationship in Sons and Lovers illustrates the distortion of love by feminine possessiveness. The symbol which is the key to the theme is flowers, with their roots thrust deep in the nourishing earth, and their faces uplifted in perfect singleness, are a symbol of the vital separateness and aloneness of being. Lawrence, as Aldous Huxley pointed out, could see the "divine otherness" of every living entity in nature.⁷ In Laurentian world man, plants, and animals are on the same level; i.e., they have their own peculiar identities; each is separate and individual "other," and none of them can readily usurp the other's souls. Man, Lawrence emphasizes, must not presumptuously assume the things of nature to be merely instruments for the expression of himself, and should not attempt to exercise personal possessiveness over other people. Women, as he represents in Sons and Lovers and in other novels, have the motherly instincts to possess what they love, and thus they pay no attention to the

separateness of others. Their maternal possessiveness is symbolically shown in their attitude toward flowers, which they love as possessions, as something that must belong to them, and their love for men are as egocentric and possessive as their love of flowers. Love is a prime requisite of life, but too much love can kill life, real life which exists only in the individual. The relationship between man and woman is seen in terms of a fight by the woman's attempt to possess her lover, and of the man's furious struggle to keep his own aristocratic uniqueness.

In The Rainbow, the rainbow is used as a symbol of the attainment of a complete polarized relationship in which the lovers, while remaining individuals, achieve through each other, fulfillment beyond physical and sensual love. In other words, it is a religious, mystical meeting of the sexes, where the self is nourished and renewed, and the lovers have some contact with the living universe. Another dominant symbol in the novel is the phoenix, representing the regenerated people who, destroyed by industrialism, and the conventional barren form of life, are resurrected into wholeness, joy and fulfillment through a living relationship with others. According to Lawrence, "man who would save his life must lose it,"⁸ i.e., man must die first, and then, like the phoenix, he will rise up in triumph from his own ashes. This symbol reappears in the novella written after The Rainbow, and in some stories like The Man Who Died.

Women in Love is Lawrence's attempt to show how single-ness, the great reality, and love, the great necessary, can be brought together. The ideal man-woman relation is identified with the relation of the stars: it is a balanced communion between two pure beings, paradoxically each remaining free, yet united, so that they balance each other like two stars. The conflict between man and woman, represented in the novel, is a fight by the man's endeavor to make the woman (symbols: The Magna Mater, the devouring Mother, the moon, the goddess of fertility) accept this "star-equilibrium".

A symbolic figure in Women in Love is Gerald Crich, the "industrial magnate," whose inability to function as an integrated man, is a representative of a peculiar Twentieth-Century businessman who, devoted completely to the "Bitch-Goddess, Success," is unable to achieve a balance between sex and purpose in life; and of the "mental consciousness" which Lawrence regarded as non-creative and non-constructive. Love, he emphasizes, must be a spontaneous union between man and woman; if it is an act of Will by which he means the integration of the drive of the ego toward power, and dominance, love becomes destructive. The mind or "will" is mechanical, and its symbol is therefore the machines; its social embodiment is industrial society in which aliveness and animation in man are destroyed. Animals, especially horses, are used to represent spontaneous life, denied to the people who rely solely on their "will" and "mental consciousness." This idea about the importance of man's spontaneity is emphasized in

The Lost Girl.

Different from Women in Love, The Lost Girl is a simple love story, told directly without any symbolic complexity. In the novel Lawrence deals with the search of an unconventional girl, "the lost girl," for fulfillment through a living relationship with a man. However, the novel does point out another Laurentian vision of man-woman relationship, which is based on the primitive idea of the relation between the sexes; i.e., "He for God only, she for God in him."⁹ In other words, it is a reverse of the "star-equilibrium".

Again in Aaron's Rod Lawrence is concerned with the distortion of the balanced relationship by possessive love. In The Lost Girl it is the man who successfully demands submission from his wife; but, here, the woman, driven by her impulse toward personal possessiveness, insists on her husband's surrender to the "life-source" which she claims to be. Believing in the sacredness of his organic individuality, the man violently resists against his wife's personal and imprisoning love, and by so doing makes their relationship sterile. The inviolable aloneness and singleness of being is symbolized by the lilies, with which Laurentian men like to identify themselves. For Lawrence a vital relationship cannot be attained so long as man and woman have no reverence for the "otherness" of each other.

The dominant symbol in Kangaroo is the Dark God who symbolizes the dark and mystical Unconscious, the store of

the "primal forces" that underline and determine human behavior. His belief - that the Edenic innocence of man and woman existed in the Unconscious - made Lawrence insist on the "mindless" communion of the sexes. According to him man and woman must enter the sex experience wholly and "unconsciously"; i.e., sex must be a spontaneous activity in which man proves his maleness and woman her femaleness. This doctrine is fully developed in The Plumed Serpent, where Lawrence uses the old mythical Mexican religion - the cult of Quetzalcoatl or The Plumed Serpent - to refer to the life-giving blood relationship between man and woman. The name of the old Aztec God, Quetzalcoatl, meaning bird-serpent and twin,¹⁰ indicates duality, the bird standing for the above, the snake for the below, the twin for their union. Lawrence believed that naturally man and woman are opposite to each other like the bird and the snake, and that only in the blood relation can their separate selves be transformed into a perfect and absolute union with each other. Sexual act is regarded as a blood-contact between man and woman - between the two rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, which encircle Paradise.

The vivid blood relation between man and woman is explored fully and finally in Lady Chatterley's Lover, written in order to clear away the atmosphere of moral stuffiness and sexual hypocrisy. The main symbolic figure is Sir Clifford Chatterley, created, as Lawrence himself said, as a representative of modern intellectual people who associate sex with

something shameful and degrading, and whose emotions and passions are paralyzed by their over-intellectuality. Unless man and woman approach sex, the very root of their beings, naturally and healthily they do not achieve a creative relationship in which the vitality of being is renewed. "Sex must be a real flow," says Lawrence, "a real flow of sympathy, generous, and warm, and not a trick thing, or a moment's excitation, or a mere hit of bullying."¹¹