

Symbolism in Women in Love

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Abstract

"In the usage of literary historians, however, Symbolist Movement designates, specially a group of French writers beginning with Charles Baudelaire (*Fleurs du mal*, 1857) and including such later poets as Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Stephane Mallarme, and Paul Valery. Baudelaire based the symbolic mode of his poems in part on the example of the American Edgar Allan Poe, but especially on the ancient belief in correspondences-the doctrine that there exist inherent and systematic analogies between the human mind and the outer world, and also between the natural and the spiritual worlds. As Baudelaire put this doctrine: "Everything, form, movement, number, color, perfume, in the spiritual as in the natural world, is significative, reciprocal, converse, correspondent." The techniques of the French Symbolists, who exploited an order of private symbols in poetry of rich suggestiveness rather than explicit signification, had an immense influence throughout Europe, and (especially in the 1890s and Arthur Symons and Ernest Dowson as well as W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Dylan Thomas, Hart Crane, Dominic Cummings and Wallace Stevens. "

Here we are concerned with D.H. Lawrence's use of symbols in his novels namely *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. In these two novels Lawrence created a new kind of novel and a new way of treating human personality with the help of symbols. Lawrence uses a lot of symbols in these two novels to present his leading ideas such as arch, rainbow, cathedral, symbolic characters, ritual scenes, Gerald's destructive nature, his will for chaos, his handling of his mare, Gudrun's encounter with the bullocks, the struggle with the rabbit, aggression against the life force, the river of life, and the river of dissolution and corruption, stoning of the moon image, the African statuette, the wrestling bout, and the London Bohemia.

The modern novelist often merely gives the materials and lets his symbols and other devices suggest whatever the reader can make of them. Furthermore, his symbols themselves will not always be clear-they may be in many different forms: short incidents, casual images, broken conversations, minor characters, peripheral scenes. And as the novelist gains in imaginative power and maturity, he refines his symbols and makes their importance more subtly provoking. For the novelist realizes that as new areas of knowledge open up, new symbols are needed for expression; so the reader must be on close guard or a major theme or motif may be lost; and in novels like *Nostromo*, *A portrait*. *Ulysses*, *Point Counter Point*, and *A Passage to India*, which proceed by motifs and recurrent themes, one loses entire sequences if he is not completely alert to what the novelist is doing.

Keywords: Realism, Consciousness, Reflection, Intellect, Abstraction.

Introduction

The objective of this study is to reveal the significance and the meaning of symbols implied in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. In order to reach the answer, the writer employs the theory of symbolism in literature together with the implication. The study employs a qualitative method. This study uses library data that are characterized into two, namely the primary and secondary data. The primary data source and the object of study is the novel *Women in Love* itself, meanwhile the secondary one is any literature related with this study. The data collections are gained from both, primary and secondary data source in sort of document as evidence. The study uses study research to collect the data. The collected data are analyzed by means of descriptive and hermeneutic analysis. The outcome of this study affirms that the novel of *Women in Love* is full of symbolism that can be seen through the reflection of

the character, setting, action, object, plot, and style. Women in Love describe English society who tries to define their self-actualization in their effort in transcending the difficulties of the modern life in the beginning of the twentieth century. D. H. Lawrence creates the story as a form of his commentary, allusion, and criticism to the continuous upheavals in the society and also England's degenerating process in all forms of life.

This broad anti-realist and anti-bourgeois disposition had already surfaced in many writers and movements : in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of artists formed in 1848 in England which looked back to the direct and morally serious art of the Middle Ages prior to the advent of the Renaissance artist Raphael; in the Parnassian poets of France, inspired by Theophile Gautier and Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894), who adopted an ethic of "art for art's sake", and in the theories of poetic composition elaborated by Edgar Allan Poe. Baudelaire and his successors, such as Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), Arthur Rim bund (1854-1891), and Stephane Mallarme (1842-1898), where the heirs of these aesthetic tendencies; and they have all been associated with French symbolism. This affiliation is retrospective since the symbolist movement as such arose somewhat later, it would free literature from the bondage of rhetoric, externals, regular beat in poetry, from the cataloguing of nature and the chance accidents of daily life, freeing the literary arts of all elements of materialism, which hitherto had prevented the disengagement of the ultimate essence of soul from its significant externals. Literature can, in these terms, attain liberty and authentic speech, becoming as its English interpreter Arthur Symons put it, "a kind of religion, with all the duties and the responsibilities of the sacred ritual.

"What one may ask, are the sources of symbolist doctrine? What are the poems like in which sound, color, taste-the whole range of the senses are expressed through words which no longer tell a story or point a moral? Charles Baudelaire, perhaps the finest French poet of the nineteenth century, was the origin of many symbolist ideas, although no one person can be said to have originated the movement. His *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857) demonstrated a new voice in poetry, and his sonnet *Correspondences*, suggested many of the ideas that later becomes symbolist dogma. The poem reads, in a literal English translation.

Analysis

Women in Love, is like *The Rainbow*, another offshoot of the material on which Lawrence started working under the title *The Sister* in 1913. Lawrence considered various titles for this novel such as *The Latter Days*, *Dies Irae*, *Noah's Ark* and *Day of Wrath*. He described *Women in Love* as "a sequel to *The Rainbow*". As Harry T. Moor says:

"I have written a novel, called *Women in Love*. It is a sequel to *The Rainbow*, but very different. But whether, after *The Rainbow*, being also what Dr. Horton would call a pernicious book, it will find a publisher, I don't know, and don't very much care. It is a very good piece of work: in fact, a masterpiece. So it will keep. What is the good of its coming out into the orgy of baseness which is today."(495)

It was several of the same characters and Ursula is the central figure in both the novels; yet it is an altogether independent unit in itself, and not simply a continuation of *The Rainbow*. Of all the novels of Lawrence, *Women in Love* is decidedly most laboriously composed. The white Peacock and *Sons and Lovers* were subjected to many revisions, but neither work called for that kind of prodigious application which Lawrence showed in the composition of *Women in Love*. Lawrence accomplished this novel by December 1916, nearly a year before the Lawrence was expelled from Cornwall, and it was published in the beginning of 1921 by Martin Secker in England.

Symbolism is an important characteristic of Lawrence's fiction and *Women in Love* is not different. In *Women in Love* not only most of the characters have a symbolic significance but the important incidents and important physical objects also. Actually, symbolism is the key to his technique. Lawrence uses a lot of symbols in *Women Love* to present his ideas. Let us see what sort of symbols he uses in the novel.

Most of the characters in *Women in Love* are symbolic telling the leading ideas and views of Lawrence. Gerald and Gudrun represent the death drive and a destructive nature. Ursula and Birkin are symbolic of the life

force. Hermoine represents the power of the intellect over the emotions. Dissolution and degeneracy which Gudrun also shares are represented by Loeke.

Actually Gerald is the central human symbol actually of death drive. It is presented before us in the very beginning of the novel when we are informed that he had, in his boyhood, accidentally killed his brother. As Ursula tells Gudrun:

Didn't you know? Oh yes! I thought you knew. He and his brother were playing together with a gun. He told his brother to look down the gun, and it was loaded, and blew the top of his head off. Isn't it a horrible story?(41)

Birkin also talks about this unfortunate incident and says that there is no such as an accident. Ursula comments that there must have been an unconscious will behind this accident. As she says:

"Perhaps there WAS an unconscious will behind it,... This playing at killing has some primitive DESIRE for killing in it, don't you think?"(42)

Since to Lawrence the creative element is always associated with the dark and the warm, Gerald's "gleaming boldness" is always emphasized in the novel in order to convey his destructiveness: his fair hair is "a glisten like sunshine refracted through Crystals of ice".

F. R. Leavis says: The Psychological pattern created by Lawrence is used to describe the characters and to promote the development of their relationship. (Leavis: 1995, p. 135)

A "will for chaos" is represented by Gerald that produces the imposition of a mechanical, intellectual order upon human feeling and the family business. He thinks himself as the "god of the machine" and the workmen as mere insignificant instruments. He is literally against the brotherhood of man, and this spirit affects his work. Once the men have submitted to the perverse satisfaction of being part of the huge machine, Gerald has no further purpose. He feels himself empty and meaningless, his face seems to him like a mask, and his eyes only "bubbles of darkness". As observe an extract.

"But they submitted to it all. The joy went out of their lives, the hope seemed to perish as they became more and more mechanized. And yet they accepted the new conditions..... The men were satisfied to belong to the great and wonderful machine, even whilst it destroyed them..... It was the first great step in undoing, the first great phase of chaos, the substitution of the mechanical principal for the organic. It was pure organic disintegration and pure mechanical organization. This is the first and finest state of Chaos". (206-207)

Then there are the animal scenes in the novel that can undoubtedly be called symbolic in their significance. There is, for instance, Gerald's coercive handing of his mare. Going home from school in the afternoon one day, the

Brangwen sisters stop at the railway crossing because the gate is shut Gerald arrives there riding a mare. The girls see Gerald, but Gerald is not aware of their presence. Suddenly, at the sound of the railway locomotive, the mare feels terrified and jumps. But Gerald forces the mare to stay close to the railway crossing. The mare jumps again, and spins round and round as if it were in the centre of some whirlwind. The mare is in a state of frenzy, but Gerald struggles with all his force in order to keep it under control. There are trickles of blood on the sides of the mare now, but Gerald does not relent toward the mare in the least, and keeps using his spurs against the mare's sides with great violence in order to maintain his supremacy over it. This scene surely shows the energy of will in Gerald as something cruel and ruthless. But it is also a symbolic representation of the outrage Gerald commits against the lives of the miners. In both cases, he has an overriding purpose, to make both the mare and the miners realize that they are mere instruments. The scene is also an indication of Gerald's attitude as a lover. The description has unmistakable sexual overtones, and there is obvious sexual symbolism in some of the images employed.

But he held on her unrelated...keen as a surd pressing into her. (75)

Gudrun's encounter with the wild bullocks shows in a symbolic manner the violence that lies hidden within her. She dances toward the bullocks, with her arms outspread, her breasts lifted, in a state of voluptuous ecstasy. It would seem that Gudrun dances her desire for dominance, matching her will against that of the bullocks and testing her power. Immediately afterwards, she strikes Gerald on the face with the back of her hand.

The struggle with the rabbit is another symbolic incident. This scene shows Gerald and Gudrun in a state of sadistic cruelty which is at the same time masochistic. It is in keeping with the subtlety of their relationship that after the rabbit has been forced to submit, Gerald and Gudrun should feel a "mutual hellish recognition". Both Gerald and Gudrun experience a malicious pleasure in the subjugation of the rabbit. It also seems that they recognize something common in each other.

"There was a league between them, abhorrent to them both. They were implicated with each other in abhorrent mysteries."(216)

In trying to subdue his mare (which is a symbol of the pure living organism), Gerald is trying to destroy part of himself, to Lawrence the essential part. In the equally powerful scene with the rabbit, Gudrun too is involved. The rabbit again is the pure life-force, and it puts up a fierce resistance first to Gudrun and then to Gerald. The gashes on their arms are a horrible initiation rite which unites them. The gashes symbolize the spiritual wounds they will receive from the explosive sub-conscious forces within themselves which they thus misuse and attempt to destroy. No fruitful union between them can take place.

In the words of F. R. Leavis The symbols in *Women in Love* can be categorized into two groups: Images indicate life, vitality, hopefulness and prosperity: and images that suggest coldness, hopelessness, decadence and death. (Leavis: 1995, p. 205)

Eventually Gerald and Gudrun go for a holiday in the Tyrol, as an experiment. The ice-white mountains represent the inhuman abstraction associated with Gerald and modern civilization that makes individual sensuality hotter and more extreme by contrast. Gerald now becomes for Gudrun a symbol of the brute and the mechanical. Gudrun can now only respond to dark corruption and perversity, symbolized by Loerke: "To Gudrun there was in Loerke the rock-bottom of life" Loerke is described as "a gnawing little negation, gnawing at the roots of life." He is "the wizard" rat that swims ahead in the sewers. It now seems to Gudrun that Gerald cannot satisfy a woman in her nature. Loerke has an approach and a power that Gerald never dreamed of. Loerke can penetrate a woman's mysteries, a woman's inner darkness. He promises subtle trills of extreme sensation. Thus Loerke symbolizes every possible and conceivable sexual perversion.

Birkin and Urshula, as was said at the outset, represent the life-force, the will to live, the determination to find a satisfactory way of life. In speaking of the two rivers of existence, the silver river of life and the black river of dissolution and corruption, Birkin insists that the latter is "our real reality", "it is the process of Creative destruction" in which everyone is involved. Birkin asserts the decay and death are part of the human condition, and need to be accepted for full existence. The silver river symbolises the seminal flow, and the dark river symbolizes the excremental flow. Ursula and the conventional idealists accept only normal sexuality, which Birkin demands the acceptance of the entire bodily process, particularly perhaps the excremental, wherein lies the "real reality". What is conventionally regarded as morally corrupt is as much part of nature as conventional morality.

Birkin's stoning of the moon-image in the lake is an important symbolic episode. The attack on the moon-image is an attack on woman and woman's possessiveness and tyranny. The moon-image persists in re-forming itself, and that perhaps shows that woman's possessiveness is difficult to drive away. In addition to that, however, the stoning is also an attack on the moon-principle of self-contained, sterile isolation and self-consciousness, qualities that Lawrence regards as feminine, and which Birkin is fighting within himself. The stoning may be regarded as an act of creative violence. This is an act which destroys a perfect stillness to create the vitality of the active interchange between light and dark, male and female, which produces momentary peace. Thus the incident of the stoning of the moon image has a rich and complex symbolic significance.

The African statuette seen by Birkin and Gerald at Halliday's flat is a recurrent image with considerable symbolic significance. Birkin is persistently haunted by the statuette, not because of its aesthetic value, but because it tells him something about the history of civilization and about his own future. The statuette embodies "purely sensual, purely unspiritual knowledge". The figure is distorted, so that there is emphasis on the weighty, protuberant buttocks; the nature of this "inverted culture" where mind and consciousness are annihilated, is "beyond any phallic knowledge, sensual, subtle realities far beyond the scope of phallic investigation". "Phallic" here implies normal sexual experience, whereas the sensual realities and knowledge referred to are knowledge of the corruption at the centre of the body, that is, all knowledge. There is an insistence upon the "great mysteries to be unsealed, sensual, mindless, dreadful mysteries, far beyond the phallic cult."

Birkin contemplates two modes of being: the north-European "white" process, as seen in Gerald, of "ice-destructive knowledge", where the sensual being is sublimated, and the African process of submersion in dark sensuality, that destroys "humanity" as he has known it. He rejects both these modes, and hopes for a "paradise entry pure, single being". Eventually he achieves, a satisfactory relationship with Urshula in the chapter "Excuse", though what is described there does not exactly correspond to what Birkin had aimed at.

Then there is the wrestling bout between Gerald and Birkin. The wrestling bout serves a symbolic purpose too: it serves as a non-bloody pledge of brotherhood and loyalty (as distinguished from the blood brotherhood which Birkin had proposed). The wrestling bout has sexual overtones:

"So the two men entwined and wrestled
with each other, working nearer and
nearer. Both were white and clear,
but Gerald flushed smart red where he was
touched, and Birkin remained white and tense.
he seemed to penetrate into Gerald's more
solid, more diffuse bulk...."(241)

The language used to describe this bout seems to show a latent or repressed homo sexual tendency in the author. From the symbolic point of view, the description here should be regarded as parallel in function to the means by which Birkin and Ursula establish contact at the inn in the chapter "Excuse". However, in the case of the man and the woman, the occasion marks their full acceptance of the bond between them, whereas the pledge to brotherhood between the two men is only tentatively affirmed.

Hormoine symbolizes pure intellect, in spite of her emphasis on spontaneity and the importance of impulse. She intellectualizes even sex and therefore comes to grief. She symbolizes female aggressiveness and possessiveness. For both these reasons, her intellectuality and her tyrannical nature, she loses the love of Birkin. Her hitting Birkin on the head certainly seems to be an impulsive action, but actually it is the result of prolonged meditation on her relationship with Birkin and her feeling of frustration.

Psychic impulse in Birkin can be interpreted in terms of Freud as Karen Horney states that, Freud regarded the human body as an organic septum that consumes food, converts it into energy & uses this energy to perform both physical & mental activities. Energy is used to fuel the activities of three hypothetical personality structures - the id, ego & super ego. The id is a part of our biological make up. The ego operates on the reality principle; the super ego provides a set of internal social controls over behaviour. Freud proposed that the three structures are constantly competing for psychic energy to provide them with the power to control behaviour. The person is thus constantly in a state of intra psychic conflict - a clash among the opposing forces represented by the Three Psychic Structures. (Horney: 1939, p. 502)

Lawrence believed that the healthy way of the individual's psychological development lies in the primacy of life impulse or the sexual impulse. Human sexuality to Lawrence is a symbol of life force. Through presenting psychological experience into individual human life and human relationships and exploring the personalities of his characters, Lawrence has opened up new territory in the writing of novel.

The chapters containing pictures of Bohemian life have not been included for their own sake and should not be regarded as a fault in the novel. They also have a symbolic purpose which is relevant to the development of the specific theme of the novel. The vague, dim world of shadowy drinkers in the smoke filled café, which typifies Bohemia, is not far removed from Beldover, "the world of powerful, underworld men who spend most of their time in the darkness". What the two worlds have in common is a failure of meaningful life. The description of London Bohemia justifies also Birkin's disgust with society as a whole. Not surprisingly the Café Pompadour is described, towards the end of the novel, as "this small, slow, central whirlpool of disintegration and dissolution" a phrase which connects London Bohemia with the main theme of the book Minette's sudden attack on a young man shows an urge towards "disintegration and dissolution", and links up with Hermione's on Birkin. Minette herself is a symbolic figure, representing the aimlessness, casualness, and rottenness of the Bohemian world.

Conclusion

One of the most important facts about D.H. Lawrence as a novelist is that he led the revolt against reason. He became the spokesmen of all who viewed contemporary civilization with discontent. The contributed to his development, certain ideas are recurrent in Lawrence's writings. He hates the machine, and his contempt is shown in the treatment of many of his characters, such as Tom Brangwen in *The Rainbow*. All these characters are prosperous, and they destroy the lives of those who are nearest to them. Most of the titles of his novels are symbolic. The white peacock is a symbol of a selfish woman. In the rainbow, Ursula Brangwen sees "the earth's new architecture. The old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world built up in a living fabric of truth, fitting to the arching heaven. "In the *Plumed Serpent*, Ursula has a vision of the gigantic horses pursuing her and hemming her in *In Women in Love*. Birkin's stoning of the reflection of the moon in the lake, and his wrestling match with Gerald, are among the many symbolic incidents.

Lawrence novel stems from his shifts from one type of narrative to another, from Naturalism to Symbolism. As Graham Hough points out, for the sake of the symbolic value, Lawrence often makes us believe what is impossible naturalistically, and thus seems.

Both of these trends-Symbolism and Naturalism are visible in *The Rainbow* although the former predominates, heightened though it is by Lawrence's use of symbols. In that novel, however, the symbols are evident and traditional symbols as every novelist has used them, without the peculiar evocative and musical value the

twentieth century novelist has placed upon them. In Lawrence also working, however, the symbolist ideas of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Mallarme, whose overall influence can be found in several scenes in *The Rainbow*, *Ursula and the moon*, *Ursula and the horses*, *Will Brangwen* and *his cathedrals*, in *Not only* in individual scenes was Lawrence strongly influenced by the French symbolists but also in the structure of the whole. Lawrence's novel, and parts of *The Rainbow*, demands a different kind of reading, in its way the type of reading that must also be given to *Ulysses* and certain of Virginia Woolf's novels. Cognizant of different values, one finds, as Mark Schorer has termed it, a "pattern of psychic relationship," an undertone more in the sub-surface of the novel than in the story line. The novel's coherence must be found in terms of rhythms (musical or dance-like, as in the symbolists), nuances of feeling, varied reactions and interactions of characters, common symbols, and so on. The pulse of *Women in Love* is revealed in the unstated, what an abstract painter tries to convey through colour rather than through pictorial representation, what a rationalist attempts to present through an infinite counter pointing of seemingly unrelated notes rather than through a long melodic line. The looseness, then, of *Women in Love* and *The Rainbow* is only an apparent looseness; the novel actually, contains a strict development, one that proceeds, however, according to its own dictates and not to an established style.

Lawrence drew freely on his personal obsessions; experiences, and relationship in his fictional writings with the help of symbols. He was a pre-eminent artist in the strictest sense of the term and included some significant episodes from his life in symbolic ways. Fact and fiction are inextricably intertwined in his novels with the help of symbols. A careful study of his use of symbols in his novels reveals his commendable capacity for control and selection as well as his constant concern for fictional truth. A study of the symbolic elements enhances understanding and appreciating his major obsessions well as philosophy of life.

Women in Love can be praised on several grounds for structural simplicity and toughness, for psychological penetration and for the ambitious presentation of men and women in relation to the forces of modern industrialism. In some sense Love is the subject of *Women in Love* as the title suggests, but in the novel Love is not a simple romantic concept. It is a double love story involving two sisters, one ends badly, the other more or less well, but neither confirms to the orthodoxies of conventional love affairs as depicted in popular romantic fiction. The plot of the romantic love story is distorted out of all recognition by Lawrence's extensive analysis of individual Psychology and his examination of modern industrial society.

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