

Sex in the Novels of D.H. Lawrence : A Psychoanalytical Approach



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ABSTRACT

D.H. Lawrence's portrayals of the vital experiences, of which most importance appears to be sexual relationship, indicate that he is deeply conscious of their religious nature; so that though sex is frequently there, it is handled as a sacred thing, spiritual not animal. Lawrence is, then, fond of primitive instincts and passions; his own appeal is to the heart rather than the head.

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D. H. Lawrence used his novels to present to his readers his own interpretation of life; he was concerned with the basic problems of human existence-man's relationship with his fellows and with the universe beyond himself. He combined a violent hatred of the primitive and natural and a passionate belief in the importance of the development of everyone's unique individuality. Scorning the merely intellectual faculties, he placed his trust in the experiences of the senses, which for him seem to gain in value as they become more violent. Lawrence believed that man's primary instincts and the impulses which spring from his unconscious mind are his safest guides.

His portrayals of the vital experiences, of which most importance appears to be sexual relationship, indicate that he is deeply conscious of their religious nature; so that though sex is frequently there, it is handled as a sacred thing, spiritual not animal. Lawrence is, then, fond of primitive instincts and passions; his own appeal is to the heart rather than the head. He seeks to persuade, not by the reasoning faculty, but by the emotional appeal that he went on for an uninhibited unfolding of the truths about sex and his preference for instinct and passion over intellect are some of the issues which have made Lawrence the most controversial and the most compelling figure of the twentieth century.

Lawrence's use of sex, which is more important and crucial to the meaning of his novels as well as understanding his belief, opens new vistas for every incipient reader. "To Lawrence, sex is not a dirty

word-what is dirty is the taboo around it, the inhibition, the psychology of repression. It is a vital part of his creed that the social pattern itself is a reflection of the private sexual pattern" (Salgado 34). He proclaimed that sex is a fundamental fact of life which was being corrupted by the modern western society. He reviled what he called 'sex in the head'-the modern degradation of the sex act which to him was attraction and copulation based on personality and thus superficial, not lasting and ultimately unfulfilling because it was performed merely for momentary pleasure of social purposes. Sex, for Lawrence, was not a social function but a natural manifestation of the primal force of the universe. As he says in the *Lady Chatterley's Lover*- "The body's life is in the life of sensations and emotions. The body feels real hunger, real thirst, real warmth and real passion"(67). Lawrence believed that through sex a man and a woman could go beyond their conscious personalities. It was union that obliterated the barriers of their individuality and connected them with their transcendent true selves in a marriage of the physical and the spiritual. Sex in Lawrence's view was a mystic ritual to integrate to a higher and complete state of awareness through a merging of with what he defined as "blood consciousness."

Lawrence glorifies sex as a liberating agent from the sterility of industrial civilization. He was influenced by Otto Weininger's book *Sex and Character*. In the book *The White Peacock* Lawrence has described the outer fringes of sex attraction and repulsion. "Be a good animal; trust

your animal instinct" was his motto. "He was, too opposed to an excessive importance being attached to the intellect, and wanted that we should follow our instincts" (Meyers 113). Philip Callow writes: There seems nothing which (Mr. Lawrence's imagination) cannot enter into, either in nature or the instinctive life of man and woman. It recoils solely before most of the things which the imagination has till now found its inspirations, and problems, the tragedy and comedy of life as we know it. Mr. Lawrence has deepened these for us, but he has also dived beneath side of instincts, and against all the forms, emasculated or formed in which they can be manifested in a civilized society His view of life is one-sided in a magnificent and obvious way, like the instincts, or like nature (174).

Lady Chatterley's Lover is a novel in which sexual experience is handled with a wealth of physical details and uninhibited language. It is Lawrence's last embittered fling at what he felt to be the prudence of mind which sheltered behind the conventional notions of sex, and he claimed that "it was very truly moral."

Lady Chatterley's Lover is a vivid and lively portrayal of the grim necessity of sex in life-Lawrence advocates the primordial nature of sex-one of the basic biological drivers, very like hunger and thirst. Clifford's impotency left his marital life with Connie a complete fiasco-it never had a firm sexual foundation. Clifford considered sex necessary only for procreation and that the bond between him and his wife is formed on a superior intellectual plane. The shallows and empty life Connie leads is destroying her physical and spiritual vitality: "Old at twenty, at twenty-seven, with no gleam and sparkle in the flesh, old through neglect and denial"(67).

A sense of rebellion is shouldered in Connie. And an irresistible fire of passion took the shape of conflagration within her. She was compulsively dragged by some invisible force towards Mellors, the gamekeeper. Although it was fair for Connie to begin an affair with servant which meant breaking a taboo of the rigid English class system and revolting against the 'false' social structures of the society. But it is the 'hunger and thirst' of the body, the natural instinct operating within, the call of that primary force in life for which all her 'share died'-"Shame which is fear, the deep organized

shame, the old physical fear which crouches in the bodily roots of us, and can only be chased away by the sensual fire, at last it was roused up and routed by the Phallic hunt of the man and she had come to the real bedrock of her nature, and was essentially shameless- that was how it was! That was life! She was dreaming life together with him: 'Just a life'" (123).

Lawrence, thus, in Lady Chatterley's Lover, provides a lively aspect to sex. " He almost personifies it and in doing so dismisses every other possible interpretation of it which is not only wrongly constructed but at the same time devastating and destroying" (Brenda 203). He declares rightly, "Sex lashes out against counterfeit emotion, and is ruthless, devastating against false love" (139).

It has been Lawrence's ceaseless endeavor to reorient rather than revolutionize the traditional taboos regarding root female relationship. He gave a unique treatment to colloidal activities in pursuance of his conviction that sex is a primary fact of life and an undeniable reality and that it is the very source, the pure central fire of life. The intrinsic quality and the inherence of sex are revealed through Paul Morel and his varied relationships. But this aspect being secondary to the novel, the primary hold is given to what, we term as Lawrence's apotheosis of sex. Lawrence categorically asserts that sex is the synthesis of flesh and spirit, the impulse-reason that can yield joy and happiness. It is the marriage of the vital and the psyche, physical and the spiritual. Either of the two can't supplement the other....It has been Lawrence's constant effort to expose the catastrophe through the relations (Gertrude-Walter, Paul-Mirian, Paul-Clara) that may invade a relationship of love where sex is not completely understood or perfectly performed.

At the age of twenty-three, Gertrude, who later became Mrs. Walter Morel, met Walter and liked him for his physical self: "He was erect and very smart. He had wavy black hair and a vigorous black beard His cheeks were ruddy...he had a rich ringing laugh...so full of colour and animation" (23).

So, the first phase of Walter-Gertrude relationship begins with Walter being passionate, instinctive, virile and impulsive. Evidently, such features of man's personality constitute the life of

the flesh or the element of the blood. After marriage, for three months she was perfectly happy: for six months she was very happy. Then, she began asserting the life of intellect, started feeling miserable and made others more miserable. Gradually her married life becomes hell because of her sophistications. Beyond the instinctive attachment, she started using her intellect. She felt that lack of intellectuality in Walter "killed her efforts at a finer intimacy." Thus, all through her relationship with Walter, Mrs. Morel tries to civilize him and, in the process wants to put down all that was instinctive within him. As it goes with Walter Morel he is a creative of impulse and instinct. On the contrary, his wife does more than everything to reform him. She talks religion and philosophy and in the process destroys him both as father and social being. In the same way Paul-Miriam relationship fails to reach a satisfactory emotional adjustment. The main cause behind this failure is that Miriam is too intelligent to appreciate much that is emotional. Miriam's life is much short of the wholesome mark because "learning was the only destination which she thought to aspire" (45). Again, Miriam is gripped by the habit of raising everything to level of spiritual intensity. At one moment Paul caught her and "down to her bowels went the heat wave" (123). However, losing her so was hard with Miriam; it was never her real self. In fact, she was physically afraid and always brooding, it is not too far to see

that despite their often spending time together neither Paul nor Miriam acknowledged any love. It is wondered "Why was there his blood battling with her?" Therefore, despite Miriam loving Paul "absorbedly" she never realizes the "male" he was. Miriam had nothing to offer and as their relationship is between love and hate.

As against the spiritualism of Miriam the ghost of Paul-Clara attachment was virtually physical. Clara loved him for his quick, unexpected movements like an animal. And Paul turns away from her in disgust as earlier he had turned away from Miriam the fact, however, can not be ignored that Paul's experience with Clara serves as a training ground for satisfying experience in life whenever integration of spirit and flesh has to take place. Lawrence, in the novel *Sons and Lovers*, advocates that sex is neither sheer animalism nor a destruction of the mind. As it has become intuitional and fallen into imbalance on the side of the intellect, Lawrence "emphasizes the need on our part to revive its emotional value and restore the balance" (Popalwski 113). Creative impulses of man and woman are the gifts of nature, and as such they should not be ignored. This, however, does not mean that physical sex is enough. Should it be merely physical sex it would lead us nowhere. A balance between the physical and the spiritual is needed. In fact, intellect must seek a happy reunion with the impulse.

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