



A Critical Study of the Form and Structure of D. H. Lawrence's Novel *Women in Love*

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine David Herbert Lawrence's novel *Women in Love* in terms of form and structure. Lawrence was quite impatient of the conventional demands of a rigid and coherent plot construction made of a novelist. The novel bears witness of Lawrence as a narrator and as a structuralist, and *Women in Love* aren't without a form. In his later novels, Lawrence perfected the form that bears his distinct mark. The form, which he has evolved by combining myths, allegories and symbols, has been perfected in his second phase of writing, and *Women in Love* is one of them. He was attempting in his fiction what others before him had never been done. The analytical approach will be adopted throughout the paper. The novel discussed in this paper bears enough evidence to justify the hypothesis that although themes were what Lawrence was interested in, form and structure were his important concerns.

Key words: Form; Lawrence; Passion; Relationship; Psychic; Structure; Symbolism; *Women in Love*

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INTRODUCTION

David Herbert Lawrence, a major modern English novelist, has always been a controversial writer, equally accused and defended. Some have looked at him as the symbol of demoniac, and others as the bardic, still others have found him to be a voice coming out of the blue, reminding us of nothing that we have heard of before (Ford, 1969). The last assumption is a fallacy because as an artist, Lawrence echoes a whole range of melodies, narrative forms and techniques from the nineteenth century. He was a writer in link with the world of literature and was influenced by the traditional writers. What this paper tries to do is to shed light on the structure of *Women in Love*, and to analyze its form, with regard to the narrative techniques the author used to give his novel form. Lawrence's passion for form eventually culminates in *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1926). What it is and how he has worked it out a long with the unique themes that he has taken is the main thrust of this study, which will examine the formal qualities and the structure of *Women in Love*, one of his major novels.

Lawrence's novels, in general, have been accused of being formless. But Lawrence was quite impatient of the conventional demands of a rigid and coherent plot construction made of a novelist. He was attempting in his fiction what others before him had never done. His was a study in "patterns of psychic relationships" (Huxley, 1932, p.23). He was not satisfied with portraying "the old stable ego of the character" (Huxley, 1932, p.24), for he knew that there is an ego according to whose actions the individual is unrecognizable; and this unrecognizable individual cannot be fully and convincingly portrayed in the conventional modes of writing, nor could this kind of writing help him in depicting "the changing rainbow of our living relationships" (Ibid.). So he tried to evolve a new form to suit his purpose.

1. FORM AND STRUCTURE: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

In *Women in Love*, Lawrence uses a different technique which is contrary to the conventional to arrange the structure of the novel so as to achieve his goal. It is true that the narrative structure of *Women in Love* is complicated. On the one hand, it has lucid narration technique to draw the outline of its theme; on the other hand, it has the psychological description which is unique and has profound symbolism. It is the complex structure and unique creative writing style that aroused the interests of the critics and readers to study and further explore the exquisite literary charm of D. H. Lawrence (Zheng, 2010).

Frieda Lawrence had discussed the problem of form in a letter in 1912:

I have heard so much about 'form' with Earnest; why are you English so keen on form? Their own form wants smashing in almost every direction, but they can't come out of their snail-house. I know it's so much safer. That's what I love Lawrence for that he is so plucky and honest in his work, he dares to come out into the open and plants his stuff down bald and naked; really he is the only revolutionary worthy of the name, that I know; any new thing must find a new shape, then afterwards one can call it "art". (p.30)

The above words indicate what Lawrence was interested in; he was interested in probing deep into the subconscious of his characters in order to uncover their hidden personalities and to do so, he had to adopt new techniques that enabled him to achieve his purpose, and that is character analysis. Frieda seems to have understood Lawrence's intention and tried to defend his art from the accusation of critics.

Women in Love are not a sequel to *The Rainbow* (1915), although both of the novels originate from a unified first version, *The Sisters* (1912-1913). If *The Rainbow* is Lawrence's Genesis or Isaiah, *Women in Love* are his Jeremiah. This point has been emphasized by Sagar (1966):

If *The Rainbow* was a kind of working up to the dark sensual or Dionysic or Aphrodisic ecstasy, which does actually burst the world, burst the world-consciousness in every individual. What I did through individuals, the world has done through the war. But, alas, in the World of Europe, I see no rainbow . . . There is another novel, sequel to *The Rainbow*, called *Women in Love*. This actually does contain the results in one's soul of the war: It is purely destructive, not like *The Rainbow*, destructive consummating. (p.1)

The above quotation indicates the time when the novel was written; it was written after the war, and it depicts strong feelings excerpted by the war and reflects a culture that was disintegrating. It is also in a sense a coming to terms with death. Lawrence seems to be convinced that one must accommodate oneself, not only to the rhythm of social growth, a rhythm of individual life, but also the rhythm of social growth, a rhythm so broad and pervasive that a second in its development might cover

the entire life of any one man. An individual caught as a disintegrative phase of history might live his whole life under the shadow of death. Lawrence also wants to project that only by recognizing his part in the disintegrative process can man perceive intimations of infinity in trivial compulsions, or consummation in group endeavor. That is why Lawrence suggests that at the end of *Sons and Lovers* (1913), a man is born, at the end of *The Rainbow* (1915), a woman, and at the end of *Women in Love* (1926), a man and a woman meet and marry.

This was the simple formula underlying Lawrence's three major novels, but it led to complex structures. For one, despite the war provoked end of the world's orientation, it had the germ of a new beginning, the vision of another world distinct from the disintegrative foul one which was dead and deadening. Lawrence's own circumstances during the writing of the book sustain a utopian image that is latently present in the novel. The effect of Cornwall in England, Florida, and California is very obvious. The story line is simple. The novel studies the lives of Ursula Brangwen and her sister Gudrun in relation to the two men Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich, who are attracted to them. Birkin, who represents Lawrence himself, is an integrated human being. He has polarized within himself the two centers of consciousness, the blood and the brain; he is the central male Ursula has been waiting for. He and Ursula find fulfillment in each other. The two together hold out the theory that the sexes must fulfill each other, but if the

woman attempts to dominate, the mystery of life is travestied and conjugal happiness is jeopardized. Birkin deplores the misery of modern civilization occasioned by the old male principle of domination. He also believes in a life of pure sensation. Crich's approach to life is purely mental, and so is Gudrun's. The two fail to experience the satisfying fullness of sense life. And through her desire to dominate Gerald, Gudrun ultimately destroys him.

Birkin who thinks along Lawrentian lines says, "In the spirit I am as separate as one star is from another, as different in quality and quantity." Establish a state on that" that is a state based on star equilibrium, a *utopia*" [emphasis added], (Lawrence, 1926, p. 57). Lawrence seems to reject the old world and posits an alternative. Man has to travel to find it, travel through life, through all its misery and pain, through all its rejections and confirmation and develop a new faith. Lawrence even goes so far as to reject Christianity because of its dualism perpetuated by the conflict between mind and spirit. In place of Christianity, Lawrence preaches a *utopian* [my italic] faith, more integral and based on the fundamental cosmic harmony between the blood consciousness of man and nature. In the novel, Birkin and Ursula show a commitment to the unknown, to the transcendental, that which is beyond life and beyond faith.

This ironical utopia is one of the ways in which Lawrence gives form to his novel. He thus introduces

the metaphor of voyaging and travel in order to project dynamicity and extension. Travel functions metaphorically in four situations. In those of More, Johnson and George Eliot; it has an ultimately pejorative force-one travels into fantasy; one return to reality and responsibility. In Lawrence's novel, travel has become necessarily the desirable end. When the ultimately important end is fixed from the start; the journey is in a sense fruitless: human nature being as it is, the individual has to make a journey, but he doesn't discover anything radically new. In searching for utopia, he gets nowhere, but he perceives, with greater clarity, another goal, which he knew of before he started. In George Eliot's books, the ultimately important end is not objectively fixed, but it is quite definitely fixed in the author's mind. The important journey of Maggie is therefore to that end: the journeys into fantasy help to clarify for negatives the really desirable route-the way home. But in Lawrence, the end is fixed neither absolutely, nor relative: The important thing is to be living, not dead. Life is a process of a journey. Travel is not necessarily good, since it can be an image of tick-tack, (the "flit" of the Alps is Gerald's trip to Bohemia writ large; Gudrun finds there an extreme of the finality she has always sought; but travel as understood by Birkin and Ursula becomes an indispensable image of the commitment to the unknown, which in its earliest stage can be represented as the willingness of the seed to drop off the tree, through death, into new life. In terms of form, the consequence of these shifts is the status of utopia, and of the journey to it, is that they can no longer operate as means of containing fantasy. When utopia is plainly a never-never land, the raw human desire to go there can be disciplined within the form by means of irony.

In *Women in Love*, the contained form of art-art which is, as it was, framed, so that the reader can see its content in perspective, is quite deliberately attributed to Gudrun as a means of indicating her limitations as an individual. Near the beginning of the first chapter, she wanted to be quite definite, a desire which is radically characteristic of her, and the first stage of the conversation between the two sisters is, like many later ones, closed by Gudrun. "Exactly," she said to close the conversation. Still in the same chapter, we have her characteristic vision of

people; "She saw each one as a complete figure, like a character in a book, or a subject in a picture, or a marionette in a theater, a finished creation" (Lawrence, 1926, p.7). Her own art treats of the small figures which can be complete; when Hermonie asks to see her sketch-book, she is reluctant, "for she always hated to have her unfinished work exposed" (Ibid.). Outside her art, her vision is analogous with her reaction to Gerald at the level crossing. She enjoys the extreme experience of "blood subordination," but manages to maintain her aesthetic detachment from it: "Through the man in the closed wagon, Gudrun could see the whole scene spectacularly, isolated and momentary, like a vision isolated in eternity"

(Lawrence, 1926, p.9). As she leaves for the Alps, she sees London in a similar way, "having glimpses of the river between the great iron girders" of bridge, and the static, framed vision represents metaphorically the finality she constantly desiderates in life. The relation is made particularly clear for us in "Flitting": "She suddenly conjured up a cozy room, with herself in a beautiful gown, and a handsome man in evening dress who held her in his arms in the firelight, and kissed her (Lawrence, 1926, p.59). This picture she entitled "Home". It would have done for the Royal Academy. As always, her pictures are reductive: this is hardly an adequate picture of home-it is ironically more like a man and his mistress, the role she is at that time reacting against with all the passion concentrated into the word "type." Against her, there certainly is a recurrent irony operative: The picture imagined by this avant-garde girl, for whom the London Bohemia is too small, would have done for the Royal Academy. But she is used as a means of directing irony, and the kinds of perspective it can provide, away from the vision embodied in the open characters.

So chances do have an important role in the structure of the fiction: the distinction between fate and chance helps to define the difference between Gerald and Birkin; Birkin's acceptance to chance is an aspect of his commitment to the unknown of his voyage to utopia. But of course that role precludes the use of chance as discipline on the fantasy of utopia.

2. USING METAPHORS TO CREATE FORM

Besides travel and voyage, Lawrence also uses many metaphors from the usual art to give form to his novel *Women in Love*. Painting and sculpture, as has been noted by Aldritt (1971), are invoked in order to illuminate character (the process is rather like James's use of internal "reflectors" (p.19), and to some extent the motivation is the same: With the disappearance of the omniscient narrator, it becomes very much harder to construct centers of consciousness, but the opportunities for diversifying point of view are correspondingly greater. According to Aldritt (Ibid.), Gudrun's liking for the small, the grotesque, and the diagrammatic is part of her "camouflage" (p.20) and is linked to an "abstract" view of art comparable to Loerke's. Furthermore, Aldritt suggests that we are meant to contrast this with Birkin drawing the Chinese goose in order to discover "what centers they live from" (p.27).

The following passage from Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow* (1915), which is a sequel to *Women in Love*, shows a note of malice in Birkin's voice as he expounds his view of the goose, a malice clearly aimed at Hermonie:

I know what centers they live from-what they perceive and feel-the hot, stinging centrality of a goose in the flux of cold water and mud-the curious bitter stinging heat of a goose's blood,

entering their own blood like an inoculation of corruptive fire-
fire of the cold-burning mud-the lotus mystery. (p.23)

We are also, Aldritt (1971) claims, meant to contrast Gudrun and Loerke's self-conscious art critical dialogues with Birkin's gut response to Picasso and his "almost wizard, sensuous apprehension of the earth" (p.32). Some of the works of art mentioned do more, we know, than just illuminate character: such, for instance, are the West African statues and the two works by Loerke, each constituting a "major crisis in the story," (thus Aldritt, who also notes that "primitive" statues form part of the "initial enterprise" and the tradition of Cubism). Aldritt's arguments are sound as far as they go, but they are also misleading in so far as they pin Lawrence down to a single thesis of "line," i.e. that modern art has taken a wrong turning after Cezanne by rejecting a human perspective.

Women in Love, as a novel, is a collage of small, diagrammatic, and often grotesque episodes. Whatever else it may be, the goose is a "fleur du mal," a creature of the mud, as nowadays we all are, more or less, according to Birkin. But the goose represents an intensity of experience in dissolution. Copying is a drawing of it (it was a present from the Chinese ambassador, so Birkin's appropriation of it is a sort of subversive response to Hermoine's "collectables") is a way of coming to terms with creation in dissolution. Of course, it is true that Lawrence did take issue, vociferously, with Roger Fry and the proponents of "Significant Form," and fought to rescue his beloved Cezanne from the abstractionists; but given the vacuity of Fry's theories (despite his alert critical sense and the charm of his style) this is not all surprising. Lawrence's fascination with the complex impersonality, the pronounced anti-humanism, of the work of the Italian Futurists, should warn us against bracketing him too easily with aesthetics of empathy. Loerke is an interesting case; even if we can agree that he is a self-seeking opportunist, his intervention in Gudrun and Gerald's relationship is largely catalytic in that it was almost inevitable that Gudrun would leave Gerald in any case; and as to Loerke's arguments on art (his sculpture, he says, is a "picture of nothing" (p.33); Ursula confuses the "relative world of action with the absolute world of art" (Ibid); art should serve industry as it once served the Church) they at least make a better showing than Ursula's anecdotal commentaries. In the end, of course, he is wrong, because pictures of nothing turn into pictures of something in the process of being received and decoded. Once again we notice a utopian fantasy.

Another dynamic is generated by the sculpture of a woman in labor. An action, as we have seen, of the whole novel, she generates a Futurist "field of force" that draws in a wide range of significant elements. The dominant motif is primitivism itself: Evidently extremes have met (as Worringer discovered) when African and Oceanic carvings became the inspiration of Expressionism, Cubism,

Futurism and other manifestations of highly evolved painterly tradition. Gerald (who impresses Minette with his explorer's tales of the "savages" in his Amazon trip) gets locked in a tense debate with Birkin over whether this is art, unable or unwilling as he is to "experience" (the current jargon "relate to" is rather apt) the intense knowledge is dissolution that it represents, and which has a lot to do with him.

Halliday has a taste for these things, but cannot begin to understand their resonances. The figure in the sand grains mutates imperceptibly to encompass Minette. Gerald recognizes her in this sculpted icon of arrest, but cannot look deeper and see himself imagined there too. Minette,

the "violated slave" (p.40) of Halliday and Gerald, seems to enjoy, in some perverse way, her humiliation and rejection. According to Cushman and Squires (1990), he is a disturbing presence for Gerald, who characteristically would like to pay her for spending the night with him, as if to "finalize" the relationship (p.18). In such way to do the real and represented worlds interact dialogically? One can say may be yes and may be no.

We see that the most crucial episodes in the novel make use of "diagrammatic scenarios" (Hyde, 1990, p.65). The African carving seems to convey to Birkin "a complete truth": "it is so sensual as to be final, supreme" (Ibid.), Hyde continued. And according to Lawrence, one should maintain a balance between heart and mind, and flesh and spirit, if man-woman relationship is to succeed and last. But this is not to be because Birkin develops a fear of love. Lawrence uses the Aphrodite symbol to give form to this aspect of Birkin's psychology. It is first introduced in "Water Party," where Birkin expounds at some length his vision of ultimate evil, embracing the whole of western civilization and moving towards "universal nothing-the end of the world":

We always consider the silver river of life, rolling on and quickening all the world to a brightness, on and on to heaven, flowing into a bright eternal sea, a heaven of angels throwing. But the other is our real reality ... that dark river of dissolution ... And our flowers are of this-our sea-born Aphrodite, all our white phosphorescent flowers of sensuous perfection, all our reality, nowadays ... Aphrodite is born in the first spasm of universal dissolution-then the snakes and swans and lotus-marsh-flowers-and Gudrun and Gerald-born in the process of destructive creation. (Lawrence, 1926, p.164)

As it is understood from the above words, Birkin's fear of Aphrodite breaks out dramatically in the chapter "Moony." The inviolable incandescent white moon, reasserting itself with strange insidious triumph, reminds us of Gudrun's taunting cattle at the Water Party:

Gradually the fragments caught together reunited, heaving, rocking, dancing, falling back as if in panic ... Gudrun, with her arms outspread and her face uplifted, went in a strange palpitating dance towards the cattle ... a terrible shiver of fear and pleasure went through her. And all the while Ursula, spellbound, kept up her high-pitched thin, irrelevant song,

which pierced the fading evening like an incantation. Gudrun could hear the cattle breathing heavily with helpless fear and fascination. (Lawrence, 1926, p.201)

Aphrodite is Ursula at this point, her "female ego" that she wants Birkin to worship. Birkin demands that she should let herself go. Therefore, he tells her "I want you not to care about yourself, just to be there and not to care about yourself, not to insist-be glad and sure and indifferent" (Lawrence, 1926, p.169).

3. STRUCTURE: THE LINK IS PSYCHIC, NOT CASUAL

In the novel, we find another important symbolic episode, and that is Birkin's stoning of the moon-image in the lake. Symbols are used in the novel to link the different parts together; the attack on the moon-image is an attack on woman and woman's possessiveness and tyranny. The moon-image persists in reforming 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, self isolation and self-consciousness, qualities that Lawrence regards as feminine, and which Birkin is fighting in 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, that incident of the stoning of the moon-image has a rich and complex symbolic significance.

It can be assumed that *Women in Love* are constructed on patterns of contrasts of negative and positive; between the complete failure of one love affair and the assured success of the other. So the two love stories that we have, the Gerald-Gudrun is a closed story and the Birkin-Ursula is an open one, the one shows destruction and death, and the other a utopian new world.

The Gerald-Gudrun story forms a complete action in the Aristotelian sense, i.e., it has a beginning, middle, and an end. The Birkin-Ursula story, however, has a beginning and a development, but no end either exhibited or implied (Freeman, 1955). The future of this story is not pre-determined, and the characters move out of the last pages of the book into the freedom of continued, unpredictable endeavor. In fact, this freedom, this making of choices is a continual process, and has been a feature of this couple at every stage of the story. Gerald, on the other hand, is fated. His doom is fixed from the start, and he gives himself up to the pitiless forces which carry him to it. These forces act as much from within as from outside, but still it is not he who chooses his direction; he submits himself to it, and lets himself go. And, paradoxically, this passivity towards his fate, towards the destructive forces within himself, takes the born of an exertion of the will. Gudrun is caught up in the same processes, and although

she does not literally die, her future course too has, by the end of the novel, been rigidly and terrifyingly pre-determined.

Actually, what drives Gerald to his death is the failure of the distractions in which he used to seek escape from the boredom of life. These distractions: power, work, love-fail one by one. Confronting at last his own unmitigated emptiness, he flies from it into extinction, the oblivion of the snow. In his last moments, he finds, half buried in the snow, a crucifix. But this cannot help him now. He skis away, and his will to live breaks down. It is not that he comes to terms with death. For him to die is to be murdered. His last conscious thought is a helpless invocation of the disavowed savior "hard Jesus was it then bound to be Lord Jesus!" (Lawrence, 1926, p.290). This, with its note of awe, is immensely powerful, but its power is in irony. What it reflects is Gerald's failure to find any sustaining belief: it is surrendered, not a prayer and not an affirmation.

Gerald and Gudrun penetrate to the depths of each other with unspoken suggestiveness, and this is described by Lawrence (1926) in the following passage:

God be praised we aren't rabbits; she said in a high, shrill voice. The smile intensified a little on his face. "Not rabbits?" he said, looking at her fixedly. Slowly her face relaxed into a smile of obscene recognition. "Ah, Gerald"; she said in a strong, slow, almost manlike way. "All that, and more." Her eyes looked up at him with shocking non-chalance. (p.235)

They are implicated in abhorrent mysteries. But the mystery of life, of incarnation, is dead in them, and they are blind to the normality and sanity of the rabbit- "a sickening fool" most decidedly mad:

And suddenly the rabbit, which had been crouching as if it were a flower, so still and soft, suddenly burst into life. Round and round the court it went, as if shot from a gun, round like a furry meteorite in a tense hard circle that seemed to blind their brains. They all stood in amazement, smiling uncannily, as if the rabbit were obeying some unknown incantation. Round and round it flew, on the gross under the old red walls like a storm. And then quite suddenly it settled down, hopped among the grass, and sat considering, its nose twitching like abet of fluff in the wind. After having considered for a few minutes, a soft bunch with a black, open eye, which perhaps was looking at them, perhaps was not, it hopped calmly forward and began to nibble the grass with that mean motion of rabbit's quick eating. (Lawrence, 1926, p.235)

"As if it were a flower," "like a furry meteorite," "like a storm"-these similes place Bismarck in a universe to which he belongs, whose incantations he obeys. His singleness of being is without reference to them or to the only "life" they understand. They are baffled by him. Is he looking at them or not? That's what it is to be a rabbit.

It is essential to the budding relationship between Birkin and Ursula that it should not be a fixed thing, that they should never finally know each other, as Hermoine had wanted to know Birkin. Each acknowledges the mystery and uniqueness of the other. Each has an odd

mobility and changeableness: "each can fly from himself in reality, indifferent gaiety" (Lawrence, 1926, p.236). Like Bismarck "because it is so mysterious." Without Birkin, the world lapses into nothingness for Ursula, leaving only herself "a tiny little rock." (Ibid.) She is a hard definite core, isolated and indifferent, as Birkin has been after the blow he received from Hermoine. And this is a pre-requisite in the movement towards the relationship she and Birkin are to accomplish. In Birkin's absence, there is nothing for Gerald to fall back on:

And there were only three things left that would rouse him, make him live. One was to drink or smoke hashish, the other was to be soothed by Birkin, and the third was women. And there was no one for the moment to drink with. Nor was there a woman: and he knew Birkin was out. So there was nothing to do but to bear the stress of his own emptiness. (Lawrence, 1926, pp.258-259)

What little "quick sufficiency in life" Gerald retains derives from his contact with Birkin, whose life seems to contain "the quintessence of faith." But Gerald cannot relate Birkin's words to "the real outside world of work and life" (p.277). This is not surprising, for Birkin himself has not yet found a way of life appropriate to his faith, and is never to do so completely in all his subsequent metamorphoses in Lawrence's novels. Gerald seeks relief with women. But even "a debauch with some desperate women" (Ibid.) can no longer give him the illusion of being active. His mind must be stimulated too. He needs to bring into full consciousness the obscenity of his desires and to share with a woman of this recognition. Birkin offers a friendship whereby both men can combine resources, their reserves of sanity and hope, in mutual trust and commitment, the quality at the relationship offered is there in the "clear" happy eyes of discovery with which Birkin looks at Gerald, in the "luminous pleasure," with which his face shines, and in the "fine living hand" he extends. Faith and gaiety and wholeness are affording the same "freedom Together" that Birkin had offered Ursula without the bondage of a "personal union of love," without the eternal struggle against "Cursed Syria Dead" (Lawrence, 1926, p.265).

The rainbow was arched in the blood of men and quivering to life in their spirit at the end of *The Rainbow*. Birkin is the prophet and pioneer of this renaissance, though he is not yet aware of this. His blood, which he metaphorically offers to Gerald, would have been a saving, quickening transformation from the bright river of life. Gerald is unable to give himself, to let go. Instead, we see him enter into an obscene blood-pact with Gudrun, a blasphemous inversion of the blood- brotherhood Birkin offered, hellish and cruel, a mutual commitment to the river of corruption which flows in Gudrun's veins: "The long, shallow red tip seemed torn across his own brain, tearing the surface of his ultimate consciousness, letting through the forever unconscious, unthinkable red ether of the beyond, the obscene beyond" (Lawrence, 1926, p.235). This suggests Lawrence's point which is that the two

identities should be held separate and respected, if any relationship is to continue.

4. BIRKIN, NOT THE TWO SISTERS, AS THE LOGICAL STARTING POINT

In a perceptive essay, Surabhi and Singh (2012) suggest that the structure of *Women in Love* can be better understood by regarding "Birkin, and not the two sisters, as the logical starting- point. The Birkin theme consists in his choice of Ursula as the woman with whom he is to try the 'way of freedom' in love" (p.252). He preaches to her a curious doctrine of sexual exclusiveness that goes with it. His failure with Hermoine represents the wrong kind of relationship between a man and a woman. He has to escape from this, and he has also to escape from the temptation towards a cult of purely sensual, "mindless" experience symbolized by the African statuette. But he has also to educate Ursula out of the sentimental and romantic love-ideal which she wants to impose their relationship, continued Surabhi and Singh. He perceives behind it that devouring and essentially ego-centric possessiveness which is the enemy of human life and growth. It is this would be "education" of Ursula which makes up the main positive part of the Birkin theme; Gerald rejects Birkin's idea of ultimate marriage. Gerald's rejection and its psychological consequences underlie the story of his relations with his chosen woman right down to its disastrous close. The Gerald theme is thus both complementary and contrasting to the Birkin theme. Gerald is a man who makes the machine of his god. He has an incapacity for true love. His need for Gudrun calls out for her the mocking, destructive, and malicious side of her nature. The tragically dramatic consequences of the conflict between them are worked out in the chapter called "Snowed up."

5. TIGHTNESS OF THE NOVEL'S ORGANIZATION

Women in Love have been attacked by critics for its alleged lack of a coherent structure and want of a unity in its plot construction and design. But certain other critics have commented favorably on its structure and given convincing analysis of its design. Leavis (1955), for instance, finds the organization of this novel to be "rich and close" (p.11) from the moment, the Brangwen girls begin their conversation about marriage; the novel unfolds or builds up with an astonishing fertility of life, continues Leavis. This life is all significant life, he says. Not a scene, episode, image or touch but forwards the organized development of the themes. Daleski (1965) speaks of the "compact tightness" (p.77) of the novel's organization. The structural principle of *Women in Love*, says Daleski, is "locative" (Ibid.), that is to say, there is

a calculated movement from one place to another, each place being a representative unit in the social organism and serving as the focus of a local significance. The places are related to one another through their common location on volcanic soil. There are five such focal points in the book: Beldover, where Ursula and Gudrun live; Shortland, the Crich home; Breadalby, Hermoine's country mansion; the Cafe Pompadour, the haunt of London Bohemians; and the Tyrolese hostel, where Birkin, Ursula, Gudrun and Gerald stay during their Alpine holiday. We are required, in each place to note the shocks which anticipate an inevitable earthquake.

6. PSYCHIC DRAMA AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

In his review of *Women in Love*, Bennett (1905, p.22) complained that the book was "badly constructed." To this charge, Lawrence's reply was: "All rules of construction hold good only for novels which are copies of other novels" (Huxley, 1932, p.69), and that this book was based on "the old stable ego of character" (Ibid.), where the figures were conceived in a moral scheme and made consistent.

Lawrence's pattern in this novel is conceived not as social or moral drama, but as psychic drama. Yet Lawrence combines this with a realistic surface which evokes a complete sense of most varied social environments: the mining village, similar to the one in which he himself was born; the life of the wealthy mine-owners and his family; the "country" socialite background of the Roddice family; the lower middle-class status of the Brangwens; the Bohemian London group of characters, and the tourists in the Austrian Alps. All these settings are made strange and unfamiliar because Lawrence never sees anything external apart from the psychic life which he feels throbbing in and around it; the host of "licentious souls" in a London cafe; "the glamorous thickness of labor and maleness," among the miners, these powerful underworld men whose voices are "voluptuous like strange machines, heavy, oiled, the evening house-party at Breadalby with the women lurid with color, and underneath the social chit-chat "an accumulation of powerful force in the room, powerful and destructive" (Lawrence, 1926, p.245).

The two images of the "withering bud" and the "child in the womb," which occur several times in the book suggest the two conflicting forces of destruction and creation. Essentially it is the conflict between contemporary civilization and the attitudes it produces in human beings on one hand, and on the other what Lawrence calls "the blood," which is the dark unconscious life-force. This life-force may be ignored, as is done by all the minor characters; or it may be perverted into the death drive, as happens to Gerald and Gudrun, to

Hermione, and to Loerke; or it may be directed into the renewed and enriched living which is finally achieved by Birkin and Ursula.

Lawrence's ideas of structure as seen in this book are different from that of the traditional novel. *Women in Love* have no story in the conventional sense. Instead, it is developed in separate episodes. Yet these are meant to form a pattern of psychic relationships, a pattern of psychic movement with a large general rhythm, but without the objective or rationalized frame of the old novel. *Women in Love* give a first impression of much greater looseness and even aimlessness than it actually has. But it has its own kind of coherence, its own kind of organized structural presentation of theme. Its structure has been compared to the art of dance rather than to the traditional art of fiction. As in dance, it develops through the shifting allegiances between the members. The configuration of characters, their thematic signifying, is here perhaps the strictest of all English novels.

Another view of the structure of *Women in Love* are presented by (Galsworthy, 1926) that it proceeds by "discontinuous leaps" (p.9). In other words, there are abrupt transitions and the author seems to jump from one stage to another without establishing any apparent connection between the various stages. But, although every major section in the novel is a new leap, there are certain recurrences of language and image which ensure continuous narrative and doctrinal pressure. The theme of Gerald's guilt, for instance, in his having accidentally killed his brother, is repeated at least twice. Another important recurring theme is Birkin's sickness and his occasional glaring absurdity. The African statuette is a recurrent symbol.

7. COMPACT STRUCTURE: EVERYTHING HANGS TOGETHER

However, it is possible to say that everything in this novel hangs together. Some of the scenes and situations appear at first sight superfluous or unnecessary, but they all have their relevance. To this category belong the animal scenes, the London Bohemian scene, and the wrestling bout between Birkin and Gerald. The scene of Gerald subduing the mare shows, in a symbolic manner, Gerald's need for dominance and his desire to bend Gudrun with his will. Gudrun's victory over the bullocks releases her desire for violence against Gerald, and she suddenly strikes him on the face with the back of her hand. In the struggle with the rabbit, Gerald and Gudrun are "implicated with each other in abhorrent mysteries" (Lawrence, 1926, p.270). These three scenes suggest in a symbolic manner the nature of the relationship between Gerald and Gudrun. The episode of the cats is intended by Lawrence as a symbolic action to develop the relationship of Birkin and Ursula. This episode is regarded by Birkin as illustrative of his purpose

to establish with Ursula “an equilibrium, pure balance of two single beings” (Lawrence, 1926, p.278).

Thus we can say that *Women in Love* begins colorfully, but one soon realizes that vividness of setting or of dress (which we always associate with Gudrun) is more than offset by industrial defacement and the gathering shadows of moral disease which reach their climax in the deathly whiteness of the Tyrol. At the opening, Gudrun expresses Lawrence’s feelings on his return to the region of his birth shortly before he began *Women in Love*. Both wanted to go away, and not to know that it existed. No rainbow shone over Beldover, Lethley, and Hainor. Both were fascinated by the “strange, dark, sensual life” (Lawrence, 1926, p. 300) of the colliers, but their utterly materialistic outlook made Lawrence feel he could scream; Gudrun was tortured by the ugly, meaninglessness of their community. Lawrence looked for new life abroad, and the immediate hope of Birkin and Ursula is to escape. The positive values they display are unable to counteract degenerative influences; they are no more than the Lawrentian key to a sane society in some vaguely distant future.

The exfoliation of *Women in Love* at first suggests a novel in conventional style, and a superficial reader may conclude that characters in action are extreme and even unreal at times. As one would expect from *The Rainbow*, the main stream of events relates to those inner forces which (in Lawrence’s eyes) are responsible for the decline of civilization, or on which its upsurge depends (Moynahan, 1963). More than any of his previous works, *Women in Love* is a novel of ideas. In such fiction, the author’s major problem is to find or create an action which embodies and illustrates his theme. Lawrence did not know to what conclusion he was working when he began and the novel has no end, except for the climax of Gerald’s death. Like life, it goes on; Lawrence’s thought had not been finalized, and the theme is continued in other novels. His imagination works in scenes or episodes; the action of *Women in Love* consists of related units rather than a rounded whole. Continuity depends on narrative links, but imaginative coherence comes continually from the repetition and enlargement of ideas through forms of symbolism, sometimes recurring, sometimes in more complicated conjunction. Thematic allusiveness in scene, imagery, and other details is characteristic of Lawrence; it is very strong in *The Rainbow*, but it combines with a far less linear plot in *Women in Love* to engender greater imaginative unity than is to be found in any other of his novels.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, although the later novels of Lawrence are in a sense the distillation of the author’s craftsmanship, his

early novels, which *Women in Love* is one of them, bears witness of Lawrence as a narrator and as a structuralist, and it isn’t without a form, as some believe it to be so. In his later novels, Lawrence perfected the form that bears his distinct mark. The form, which he has evolved by combining myths, allegories and symbols, has been perfected in his second phase of writing. The novel discussed in this paper bears enough evidence to justify the hypothesis that although themes were what Lawrence was interested in, form and structure were his important concerns. They developed as he progressed as a writer. His later novels epitomize the Lawrentian cult.

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