

THE DYNAMICS OF GENDER AND RELATIONSHIPS IN D.H. LAWRENCE'S *WOMEN IN LOVE*

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Abstract: The masterpiece of modernist literature *Women in Love* by D.H. Lawrence delves into the complicated dynamics that existed between gender and romantic relationships in the early 20th century. This research delves into the intricate depiction of women in the novel, including their place in society, the evolving dynamics of their interactions with men, and the recurring ideas of love, power, and freedom. Through the lens of feminism, this research examines D.H. Lawrence's critique of the conventional gender roles that have been placed on men and women, as well as his characters' attempts to forge their paths and the impact of societal pressures on their romantic relationships.

Keywords: Gudrun and Ursula, complexities of gender, societal expectations, love, power, control, liberation, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Lawrence was a prolific writer of considerable power. During the nineteen years of his continuous writing, he produced forty volumes of fiction, poetry, plays, treatises, essays and critical writings. However, he is mostly remembered as a powerful and unconventional novelist. The study's goals are to examine instances in which women characters assert their authority in interactions with males and to look at the fact that, in most of Lawrence's works, the female characters play active, dominant roles before becoming empowered in the chosen novels. There are novels in the canon that support women's empowerment, despite feminists' emphasis on criticising women's enslavement. Consequently, it is important to look at Lawrence's writings regarding the power and personalities of his ladies. As a result, the researchers find that in women's lives, power knowledge is just as significant as knowledge power. A sequel to his first novel, *The Rainbow* (1915), his later novel, *Women in Love*, describes the lives and loves of two Brangwen sisters, Gudrun and Ursula. Artist Gudrun Brangwen and businessman Gerald Crich are not happy together. Lawrence draws a comparison between this marriage and the estranged intellectual couple Rupert and Ursula Birkin, who exhibit a wide spectrum of opposing views. Among Lawrence's most well-known works are *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Lawrence lived in an industrial environment while researching the possibilities for life. Lawrence is especially curious about the kinds of relationships that might arise in these kinds of settings. Lawrence's use of characters is best understood in terms of his philosophy, even if he is considered a realist. Even if it was shocking at the time, his sexual behaviour was a result of this very private way of thinking and being. Lawrence had a special interest in human touch behaviour. His motivation for pursuing physical closeness was his wish to counterbalance the Western civilization's persistent emphasis on the mind, which he saw as placing too much emphasis on the body.

2. BREAKING TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

The traditional gender roles assigned to men have encompassed the responsibilities of providing for oneself, leading, and protecting. For instance, girls and women are anticipated to exhibit conventionally feminine qualities such as politeness, accommodation, and nurturingness. There are preconceived notions that men are aggressive, powerful, and audacious. Although they vary considerably, gender role expectations are present in every nation, ethnic group, and culture. Sexism pertains to the conviction that traditional gender roles and an intrinsic disparity exist between males and females; conversely, feminism advocates for equitable access to political, social, and economic opportunities for all men and women. The prevalence of discriminatory beliefs in the United States has been declining since the early 1970s.

Gudrun and Ursula Brangwen

Sisters Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen reside in the English Midlands in the early 20th century. Ursula is a schoolteacher, while Gudrun is an artist. They meet and become good friends with Rupert Birkin, a neighbour, and Gerald Crich, the heir of a coal mine. Romantic pairings develop throughout the story. The four of you care deeply about gender roles, politics, and other societal issues. Some have speculated that Lawrence based Ursula on his real-life wife Frieda. Among the Brangwen sisters, Ursula is the matriarch. Her personality is one of seriousness, responsibility, shyness, and deference. While she is close to both her father and sister, she does find herself in disagreement with them on occasion. Ursula had a much larger role in preventing the collapse of Birkin than she gives herself credit for. She must not only arouse and satisfy his spiritual aspirations but also his bodily ones: in certain respects, she must adopt the active, masculine role in their relationship. After Diana Crich and her young guy are killed, Ursula is the one who forces them into an intimate connection. Their love could have become as spiritualized and poisoned as Birkin and Hermione's if Ursula hadn't felt the urge to drive Birkin into a sexual relationship.

Gudrun is unpredictable; she plays with Gerald, bringing him agony she is unable to comprehend. She feels something for him at the end of the novel, but it doesn't matter because she doesn't hesitate to dump him for another man. She is oblivious to what she desires. She must display a strong desire to have been born a male, as well as an uncontrollable desire for deep violence against Gerald, whom she loves in another way. Gudrun, who is much more intriguing than her sister Ursula, is tragically imprisoned by her self-centred drive to hold herself up as the standard for everything. Lawrence attempts in *Women in Love* to capture the sameness that characterizes all happy households. First, whether the female protagonists "prevail" at the end of *Women in Love* is disputed. The final scene, and especially the last sentence, depicts Rupert affirming his right to an open marriage that would accommodate his yearning for equal love with a man - i.e., his bisexuality - in the face of Ursula's loudly voiced resistance and disgust. Even if the female characters win, Lawrence claims that it is natural for women to be subservient to males; that it is like women to be masochistic; and that women are "closer" to nature and animals than men. Lawrence has developed two distinctive characters in Gudrun and Ursula, who, despite being related and seemingly identical, evolve into starkly opposed personalities. The characters are wonderfully developed, with their aims, dreams, and uncertainties, for example, Ursula demonstrates all of these. She is having second thoughts about her love for Rupert, and although she acts as if she knows, she needs to be reassured.

The sisters as independent and educated women

A confident woman is not afraid of being alone. She is competent at handling problems and doing things on her own. She is not dependent on other people's presence, thus she may eat alone, drive alone, stroll alone, and so forth. A self-sufficient woman does not have to be single. Historiographic analysis of Lawrence's novels indicates that his heroines do not invariably embody modernity or liberation. Although these women are initially portrayed as intellectual and liberated, they ultimately yield to the authority of males.

Gudrun's artistic pursuits and Ursula's teaching career

Sisters named Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen inhabited England in the 1910s. Gudrun paints, and Ursula teaches in a public school. A fictional character in the book named Gudrun Brangwen has a modernist temperament and is an artist. In contrast to her sister Ursula and Rupert Birkin, who had a genuinely gratifying relationship, she has a toxic infatuation with Gerald Crich. The catastrophic love affair Gudrun had with Gerald Crich contrasted with Ursula's connection with and subsequent marriage to Rupert Birkin. The personality of Frieda, Lawrence's wife, is claimed to have served as the inspiration for Ursula.

The sisters' defiance of societal expectations for women

Lawrence disagreed with other literary Modernists because of his great belief in the power of nature and his criticism of industrialisation. They saw nature as something incomplete that had to be finished by humans before it could be considered substantial or real. Therefore, nature can be improved, altered, and rearranged in the service of society. People in the early 20th century believed that the past was lost and lived in anticipation of the future. The present, though, was overlooked. According to Lawrence, this change to pure rationalism resulted from the voluntary centre's replacement of the sympathetic centre, which aspires to harmony with the cosmos, with the sympathetic centre. People lost contact with nature as a result of this disconnection from the natural world and lack of access to the chance to contemplate their hollowness. Lawrence saw the dehumanization of miners who lived and worked but were unable to achieve inner peace as a result of the effects of industrialization in his native country. As a result, many of Lawrence's works feature coal mines as a backdrop and touch on the subject of industrialization and dehumanization. Both works show Lawrence's critical viewpoint on how society evolves. Lawrence attempted to investigate social tendencies that caused England to lose its organic whole and instead made people reject their inner selves and convert them into machines through the experiences of Connie, Mellors, Birkin, Gerald, and the

Brangwen sisters. The protagonists have found their allies and partners who will stand with them in their struggle against the mechanical, dehumanized society, but they still have to defend their right to be who they are.

Hermione's challenges to traditional gender roles

Hermione's fervour is metaphorically conveyed by this act of desperation, which unveils her exasperation towards a gentleman who rejects her affection. The intensity of her misery is heightened by the ineffectiveness of this attempt to penalise him for his acts of cruelty. Birkin's conduct remains unchanged, so leaving Hermione in a state of solitude with unfulfilled desires.

3. RELATIONSHIPS AND POWER STRUGGLES

Power confronts are typical in relationships, especially when two people with opposing personalities and histories come together. It is natural for each person to have their interests, ambitions, and expectations, which might sometimes clash with those of their spouse. Power issues in a partnership can take various forms. One person may attempt to exert emotional control over the other, while the other may attempt to exert physical control over the relationship. A power struggle, in whatever form it takes, can be harmful to the health of the relationship, leading to feelings of resentment, wrath, and frustration. In a relationship, a power confrontation is a dynamic in which both partners compete for control, authority, or dominance. It entails a perpetual battle for influence and decision-making power, which frequently results in conflicts and discontent. Differences in ideals, communication styles, or personal fears can all lead to power battles. They can take the form of one partner asserting power over the other, influencing the other, or indulging in passive-aggressive behaviour. Such conflicts have the potential to damage trust, intimacy, and overall relationship happiness. When one spouse controls decision-making in a relationship, the other feels unheard and ignored, leading to anger and discontent.

Birkin and Gerald as Representations of Masculinity

Lawrence reiterates the ideas of flesh and penetration throughout the discourse, saying that even intelligence is physical. Not out of resistance, as in rape, but rather because they tried to unite such unlike people, the two protagonists forcefully melt into one another. Spilka calls the event a "spontaneous rite" and rejects both the theory of friendship consummation and the doctrine of sexual fulfilment (79). He claims that they are connected spiritually and that they transcend heterosexual marriage to make it possible to be married. Additionally, he draws a clear line between sensual and sexual love, which he ascribes to wrestling (80). This is essentially a male connection, both corporeal and nonsexual, that is necessary for marriage yet is religiously equivalent to it. In contrast, Craft offers a comprehensive portrayal of the homosexual experience, where the reader assumes the role of a voyeur, observing the struggle between two lovers, bodies, characters, class, race, society, and writers (144). According to him, one can only experience homosexuality in light of all of these factors—not in isolation from them. Aggression is how the gay urge is satiated, and wrestling is the gay equivalent of sodomy. The homosocial motif resurfaces, despite the obvious sexual parallel—which even extends to the exhaustion that ensues after the act as they collapse into each other's arms, a feeling Craft compares to "falling" in love on page 143. The characters engage in non-genital love through the manly act of wrestling as a reaction to homophobia. By engaging in this male bonding, they sate their homosocial cravings and affirm their heterosexual identity. They share a physical connection without doing things they think are only appropriate for heterosexual couples in love. Gerald Crich controls his homosexuality to pursue a more traditional and respectable relationship with Gudrun. He refuses to love Rupert Birkin, putting his own sexual and social demands last.

The power dynamic between the male characters

Power dynamics, or the capacity to affect and, to some extent, control the other person, exist in all male-female interactions. In healthy, balanced relationships, the balance of power between the spouses is typically equal or almost equal. Power may be balanced by one couple being in charge of finances while the other has more control over how the children are raised, but the impact is mutual. Decisions are made with mutual respect and consideration for each other's preferences. However, power disparities in relationships between men and women are more often than not a result of a mix of gender, societal, and cultural issues, as well as individual childhood wounds.

Love and Control

Women in Love by Lawrence characterises women as resilient individuals whose sexual orientation is not predetermined by societal norms. They are unique individuals with the capacity to withstand conventional forms of oppression. By delivering a ferocious strike to Birkin's head, Hermione was able to not only him as the dominant force but also the societal authority that sought to control the female gender. Foucault's 'repressive hypothesis' posits that the novel's characters possess the agency to engage in dialogue regarding their sexual orientation, thereby granting us a more comprehensive perspective that enables us to analyse each character not solely in terms of their gender or sex distinctions, but also as an autonomous entity.

The intricate love triangles in the novel

Maybe it's the need for intimacies that love triangles satisfy in pairs, or the fact that they highlight a less idealized, more difficult side of romantic relationships. Whatever it is, love triangles captivate audiences and pique their curiosity. Sternberg then drew his triangle. The three points of the triangle are intimacy, desire, and commitment. Intimate love is the triangle's corner, encompassing the strong links of loving relationships. Triangles of desire appear throughout Lawrence's novel, implying that human desire circulates in part by witnessing and replicating the desire of another person. Gerald adores Birkin but sees him yearning for Ursula, which fuels Gerald's passion for Birkin as well as his want for Gudrun as a substitute. Birkin notices Gerald lusting over Gudrun, which increases his attraction to Gerald and makes him reluctant to marry Ursula for fear of dividing the two men. At the end of the novel, a triangle forms between Gudrun, Gerald, and Loerke, sparking Gerald's violent attack on them and ultimately leading to his death by exposure.

The characters' struggle for control in their relationships

Women who are unable to regulate their inner emotional state tend to look to the outside world for things they can control. Many women deal with difficulties of control, which show as food or body image disorders, jealousy, guilt, overprotectiveness, anxiety, addiction, or even self-harm. Other causes include personality disorders, traumatic experiences, and learned behaviour. Depending on the woman in question, any of the following could be at the root of her controlling behaviour. She does not trust people to love her unconditionally.

4. THE THEME OF LIBERATION

Liberation in literature encourages people, communities, and the continent to recognise the positive aspects of their past and to seek answers to their difficulties. Numerous themes are presented in the literature to the reader and are then used to entice them to read the novel. The reader is better able to relate to the story's emotions thanks to these topics. Some subjects are utilized so frequently that they have attained the status of myth. These three mythic ideas—freedom, self-reliance, and independence—are prevalent in American fictional literature.

The Search for Personal Freedom

Personal freedom is a fundamental concept that shapes the very fabric of modern society. It speaks to people's capacity to make decisions about their lives without excessive intervention from other factors like the government or societal conventions.

Gudrun's pursuit of a liberated existence

Constantly in conflict with this deeper stratum of the feminine psyche, which she also possesses and which frequently infiltrates in moments of ecstasy in the presence of the masculine, is Gudrun's free spirit, which is more attuned to independence and logic. Gerald mounted on his horse, initially a "picturesque" sight that elicits only a sardonic grin from her, transforms almost immediately into an object that induces a "poignant dizziness" and "spell-bound eyes" in her as he forcibly commands the horse to comply with his authority (111). According to Julian Moynahan, Gudrun empathises with the mare and finds masochistic gratification in this display of masculine dominance. Gudrun possesses an ingrained desire for both union and destruction, as well as creation; this desire is inherently metaphysical, a mystic impulse that defies social and psychological explanations. She seeks dominance and is willing to assume any potential danger in pursuit of attaining it. During the exchange with the bullocks, Gudrun seizes an opportunity to exhibit her peculiar, extraterrestrial strength.

The sisters' contrasting paths to liberation

In his story, Lawrence creates two superficially identical but opposed characters Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen. While they appear to be close at the start of the novel, the sisters' personalities become highly mismatched towards the end. Gudrun and Ursula begin the novel on a sour note, discussing marriage. In this exchange, Ursula comes across as a romanticist, believing that marriage is likely the "end of an experience," as opposed to Gudrun, who is more realistic, perhaps even cynical, believing that marriage "is bound to be an experience," even if an "undesirable one." They appear to have opposing views on children. However, at this point, they are inseparable. We can still see that they respect each other's opinions and have an unsaid kinship as they share their seemingly hopeless admiration for her with all their souls, Ursula. The sisters' perspectives on love are also remarkably different. Ursula allows Birkin to express himself, argues with him, and initially disagrees with him because she does not comprehend his yearning for 'freedom together'. However, as their relationship progresses and they experience highs and lows, they eventually discover each other, and she is ready to figuratively 'surrender' to him. Gudrun, on the other hand, appears to be committed to Gerald despite her uncertainty about herself. This is most evident when she ultimately abandons him and begins an affair with another artist, Loerke, whom she believes will appreciate her newly reformed and clear outlook on life. Gerald is eventually unable to accept this and commits suicide. The sisters' perspectives on fidelity differ as well.

6. CONCLUSION

Lawrence attempted to introduce various levels of reality. He emphasized that reality is rationalized differently by different people, and hence has multiple levels. His characters strive to express themselves in the current conditions, resulting in confrontations, and each character is restless to depict the activity in them that is driven by their inner impulses. Lawrence's story also delves into the notions of chaos and instability that are prevalent in modernist literature. Both of the relationships represented in the text are extremely volatile and alter regularly. *Women in Love* was written against the backdrop of the First World War; however, the fighting is not explicitly referenced in the novel. Gerald, who is overwhelmed with fury and envy, attempts to murder the woman he claims to love so much, exemplifying the violence of the day. Lawrence's novels are distinguished primarily by the socio-psychological aspects of human relationships. One aspect of his distinctive identity is his effective use of female characters to animate the uneven nature of man-woman relationships. These characteristics of his creative endeavours to show a specific component of social reality set him apart from other male novelists who deal with the harsh truth of a woman's life through a variety of issues. As a result, the researchers of this study believe that the current writers have their own socio-literary culture and image of patriarchal conditions in man-woman relationships, which exist inside the larger sphere of male novelists. Lawrence understands the enormous region of women's patriarchal interaction with males and the consequences for women's lives. The novel's male protagonist develops heightened sensitivity over time, which is mostly caused by a lack of parental affection and male-dominant patriarchal circumstances in the household. Though his initially banned writing now appears tame, Lawrence paved the way for other writers after him to depict sensuality. In *Women in Love*, he says that the creative soul should be honoured and that he owes no apologies to those who have accused him of creating pornography or degraded sexuality.

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