

D.H Lawrence's philosophy and its symbolic representations in the novel *Women in love*

Abstract: D.H Lawrence, one of the important English modern writers, represents the problems of his epoch with traditional style enriched by his own original philosophy about Christianity, Socratic rationalism, love and existential crises of an individual. All these philosophical issues, covered in his novel 'Women in Love' are more or less presented by symbols. Therefore, the topic of this article is to analyze each of them in detail to perceive the depth of the writer's ideas.

Key Words: Philosophy, symbols, women in love.

Unlike his contemporary modern writers, D.H. Lawrence's works are characterized by traditional writing style which makes them easily perceptible for general readers. But his novels enriched by intertextuality and archetypal symbolism need deeper insight to fully understand the writer's philosophy. An individual's existential problem and the certain ways of finding reasons and solutions in the existing situation is an inseparable theme of all his works. The symbols which the author uses to express his philosophy in his novel 'Women in love' is the topic of this article. Before analyzing each of them in detail it is essential to comprehend the writer's philosophy itself, which covers an individual's existential crisis, the devaluation of Christianity and the danger of Socratic rationalism in the 20th century.

All the above-mentioned topics in his novel are closely connected to Nietzschean philosophy. But as Ervin Steinberg states in his article 'D.H. Lawrence: Mythographer' Lawrence always uses different resources to express his own philosophy "Instead of taking a single mythic paradigm and either expressing himself within its outlines or trimmings – or turning it- to suit his own purposes, he pulls references from a variety of sources and molds them to a pattern to suit his own needs. Thus, he uses allusions from Greek mythology, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Whitman, and perhaps also from The Golden Bough, Norse mythology, Poe, and Shakespeare, to express his hopes and fears." (Steinberg 2001:94) Variety of resources used in his novels are also visible in the number of different symbols which express the author's views from various perspectives. But what is Lawrence's philosophy itself and what does he mean in a personal existential crisis? Inner emptiness and inability to cope with unconscious demons lead an individual to question values of Christianity and rationalism. Socratic rationalism has become the basis of materialistic-industrial civilization and the Christian religion with its dogmatism has become the inaccessible Garden of Eden for an individual. Both rationalism and Christianity were unable to control human's unconscious demonic forces. Therefore, in the novel we can see a helpless human being, armed with Socratic rationalism and Christian Dogmatism, leading his life into a physical and spiritual end.

Lawrence's novel, 'Women in love', written in 1916, but published in 1920 is the sequel of his novel 'The rainbow'. The plot takes place in an industrial town, where two Brangwen sisters', Ursula and Gudrun's, love stories are described. Ursula falls in love with Birkin who represents the author himself and Gudrun becomes the lover of an industrial magnate Gerald Crich. But novel concerns itself with far more than just two women's love stories. As Joyce Carol Oates states: "Women in Love is an inadequate title. The novel concerns itself with far more than simply women in love. Two violent love affairs are the plot's focus, but the drama of the novel has clearly to do with every sort of emotion, and with every sort of spiritual inanition. Gerald and Birkin and Ursula and Gudrun are immense figures, monstrous creations out of legend, out of mythology; they are unable to alter their fates, like tragic heroes and heroines of old. The mark of Cain has been on Gerald since early childhood when he accidentally killed his brother; and Gudrun is named for a heroine out of Germanic legend who slew her first husband." (Oates; 1978) Consequently, in the novel, we see how Gudrun, with her inner coldness, abandons Gerald and makes him kill himself. As for Gerald himself, his already determined and unaltered fate conditions his tragedy. Lawrence's intention to ascribe

mythic and religious symbolic traits to his characters hints at the fact that the individual's universal existential problem, reflected in the tragedy of unaltered fate and existential nothingness, still shakes the ground of a modern man and leaves him powerless in the materialistic world. Therefore, Lawrence's novel is about how a modern man deals with his existential nothingness.

Gerald is the representative of a civilized man, who carries the mark of Cain and the burden of unaltered fate. The writer's philosophy about the tragic fate of the modern man is represented with the character of Gerald Crich with his attitude towards his life. His choice is clear, he wants to cover his tragedy by fitting in the reality of industrialism. So, he becomes the industrial magnate: "He was the God of machine" (Lawrence 1996: 257) His choice to become the industrial magnate is highly conditioned by his inner emptiness which in its way determines his surroundings. Accordingly, the miners are described as selfless individuals in the novel: "They were finished, sealed and stamped..." (Lawrence 1996:27). From this example, we see that the existing reality is conditioned by the inner content of a human being. How violent and desperate the individual is, the same happens to his reality. One of the critics of D.H. Lawrence, Jay-Kyung Kon, goes even further and states that for Lawrence repressed instinctive powers and impulses have become the reason of the Great War. Therefore, an individual is not only the creator of his own fate and life but the victim of it as well. Gerald Crich, out of his inner despair, constructs the reality full of emptiness for others which even he can't escape himself: "I don't know what the effect actually is on one," he said. There is nothing left, if you understand what I mean. You seem to be clutching at the void yourself. And so you don't know what to do". (Lawrence 1996:267) It seems that a human being, who is the creator and the victim of his own fate, is led to fatality by something bigger and deeper. And it becomes natural that the same individual starts questioning the values of Christianity and Socratic rationalism in which he can't find solace anymore.

Social-political and inner crises led an individual not only to doubt the values of Western civilization but to acquire or regain the lost knowledge about the inner true self. While describing these processes Lawrence combines his philosophy with the Nietzschean one. Like Nietzsche, he tries to dig into the depth of history to find the mistake our ancestors made which later became the curse of the modern man. Nietzsche was the first who started searching for causes in the past while talking about the replacement of Attic tragedy, containing in itself Dionysiac and Apollonian basis, with the Socratic rationalism. Namely, he talks about the great lie the humankind believes in since the Socratic time. According to this lie, humans think that he can understand his existential essence and cope with his inner demons by simple rational reasonings: "one also finds a profound delusion which first appeared in the person of Socrates, namely the imperturbable belief that, as it follows the thread of causality, reaches down into the deepest abysses of being, and that it is capable, not simply of understanding existence, but even of correcting it." (Nietzsche;2007:73) In his work 'Fantasia of the unconscious' Lawrence also considers old civilizations as the carriers of deeper knowledge about human beings' unconscious self. And this knowledge is forever lost for the modern man thanks to the dominance of the mind. In the materialistic-industrial world, Godlike mind can't perceive the potential of an unconscious inner self. Consequently, there is constant conflict between conscious and unconscious selves in Lawrence's works.

The symbolic representation of the conflict between the conscious ego and the unconscious shadow is given with the theme of 'hostile brothers' in the novel. As we know from the novel Gerald Crich carries the mark of Cain. According to Jung 'hostile brothers' theme is an archetypal motif which could be interpreted in terms of the war between ego and shadow. Therefore, by presenting Gerald as Cain in the novel, the author tries to emphasize the importance of unconscious forces that humans need to be aware of. One more example of this conflict is given with the symbol of an animal in a scene when Gerald, sat on a mare, tries to tame his frightened horse by forcing her back and making her bleed: "He bit himself down on the mare like a keen edge biting home, and forced her round. She roared as she breathed, her nostrils were two wide, hot holes, her mouth apart, her eyes frenzied. It was a repulsive sight. But he held on her unrelaxed, with an almost mechanical relentlessness, keen as a sword pressing into her. Both man and horse were sweating with violence. Yet he seemed calm as a ray of cold sunshine". (Lawrence 1996:134) In this case, the horse represents the instinctive side of Gerald which he tries to suppress. Barbara Hanna in the foreword of her book 'Archetypal symbolism of animals' states Jung's view about animals: "Jung felt that the animal

was sublime, that it was indeed the “divine” side of the human psyche. Animals live much more in contact with a “secret” order within nature itself and – far more than man – live closely connected with the “absolute knowledge” of the unconscious. In contradistinction to man, the animal is the living being that follows its own inner laws beyond good and evil. And herein lies the superiority of the animal.”(Hannah 2006)But what comes out of the constant suppression of the inner self and the dominance of the mind? Lawrence’s predictions are apocalyptic ones which he expresses in symbols as well.

Birkin, while contemplating about the sculpture of a woman with a head of a beetle scarabaeus compares it to Gerald. Scarabaeus is also called dung-beetle because it rolls its ball of dung and uses it for feeding or depositing eggs. In Egyptian cosmogony, the ball of the dung represents the earth and the beetle the sun. Therefore, scarab symbolically represents the source of existence. But how this symbol is connected to Gerald needs to be explained. According to Britannica encyclopedia in ancient Egypt, the symbol of Scarab contained the knowledge of death and rebirth of a human soul. But in the novel Lawrence tries to show us that this knowledge is no more available for a modern man with its unity and what is left is the one-sidedness of the dissolution process: “Thousands of years ago, that which was imminent in himself must have taken place in these Africans: the goodness, the holiness, the desire for creation and productive happiness must have lapsed, leaving the single impulse for knowledge in one sort, mindless progressive knowledge through the senses, mystic knowledge in disintegration and dissolution, knowledge such as beetles have, which live purely within the world of corruption and cold dissolution.” (Lawrence 1996: 292)But for Birkin, this process of dissolution happens in coldness and frost in white races. And Gerald is the best representative of the white races. Therefore, he is the first one who comes into Birkin’s head while contemplating about the sculpture: “Birkin thought of Gerald. He was one of these strange white wonderful demons from the north, fulfilled in the destructive frost mystery. And was he fated to pass away in this knowledge, this one process of frost knowledge, death by perfect cold? Was he a messenger, an omen of universal dissolution into whiteness and snow?” (Lawrence 1996:293)Birkin’s prediction becomes reality at the end of the novel when Gerald freezes in the Alps. In his death, we can reflect ‘the apocalyptic vision’ of the author itself. As Gerald, with his violence and materialism, is the representative of the modern civilization, his death should be understood as the doom of the civilization itself.

The place where Gerald dies is the symbolic one as well. As the Alps are the highest point of western Europe they symbolically represent the western civilization in its highest point of development which in its way is in the process of dissolution and coldness. Mountain is also the place where God is revealed to a human being and the sacred connection is confirmed through commandments like in Moses’ case. But in the novel god of the machine, Gerald Crich with his death becomes the messenger of the doomsday of the western civilization. But the author goes to the final apocalyptic prediction step by step by depicting death symbolism from different perspectives. There are three people dying in the novel: Diana Crich, Gerald’s father and Gerald himself.

As we have seen above Gerald’s death symbolically represented the ending of the western civilization. But Diana Crich’s death raises the question of existential essence. She drowns in a lake and in her fright she chokes another person. After this accident Birkin, who is the representative of the author’s ideas, questions the worthiness of Diana Crich’s existence: “What does it matter if Diana Crich is alive or dead? (Lawrence 1996:216) Despite the coldness of his question, it hides the bitterness of a young man who like Hamlet puts into question the worthiness of existence. It is also worth noting that water represents the depth of the unconscious which devours the superficial life of Diana. It is one more symbolic reminder of the power of the unconscious. Her death prepares the ground for the future tragedy involving everyone and everything.

Unlike her Tom Crich’s character is connected to the Christian religion and his death is associated with the death of Christianity in the novel. It is strange but Lawrence in his letters calls himself the religious person: “But primarily I am a passionately religious man, and my novels must be written from the depth of my religious experience”. (22 April 1914; Letters, 165) But like Nietzsche fights against the dogmatism of Christianity and calls it a ‘muddiness’: "I am rid of all my Christian religiosity. It was only a muddiness" (Letters 2, p.365) Therefore the way how the writer depicts Tomas Crich’s character and his death fully reflect the process of devaluation of Christianity in the modern world. Lawrence uses irony to show how good Christian Mr. Crich was: “He had

always the unacknowledged belief that it was his workmen, the miners, who held in their hands the means of salvation. To move nearer to God, he must move towards his miners, his life must gravitate towards theirs. There were, unconsciously, his idol, his God made manifest". (Lawrence;1996: 249) The transition from Christian values to the materialistic ones is shown in contrast between the father and the son. Father's mercifulness changes into son's will to power: "The sufferings and feelings of individuals did not matter in the least. They were mere conditions, like the weather. What mattered was the pure instrumentality of the individual". (Lawrence1996;257) But at the end of the novel, we see how unreliable all these values are for an individual to survive and live. Everything should not be as pessimistic and tragic as it seems because as the title suggests the novel is about women in love. And love should have a seed of hope in it. Lawrence has his own philosophy about love as well.

Lawrence is generally known for erotic scenes in his novels which were considered obscene in his time but behind this eroticism is hidden the writer's philosophical attitude towards love. In his book 'Sex, Literature and censorship' he discusses love as 'always joining together'. Though, it is not only the joining of two individuals but in it he also means unity of physical and spiritual parts. Therefore, with Lawrence love is always dual, sacred and profane. In the sacred part individual gives in his individuality to become whole in love but in profane love individual remains separate and maintains his own uniqueness: "But the love between a man and a woman, when it is whole, is dual. It is the melting into pure communion, and it is the friction of sheer sensuality, both. In pure communion I become whole in love. And in pure, fierce passion of sensuality I am burned into essentiality...The woman and I, we are the confusion of earths. Then in the fire of their extreme sensual love, in the friction of intense, destructive flames, I am destroyed and reduced to her essential otherness. It is a destructive fire, the profane love. But it is the only fire that will purify us into singleness, fuse us from the chaos into our own unique gem-like separateness of being." (Lawrence 1933 ,36) If there is one-sidedness of love then it is not whole and can't be considered as a remedy for an individual. Consequently, Lawrence's novels are full of failed love affairs. The same happens with Gudrun and Gerald in 'women in love'. Love represents its extreme opposite in their case.

The writer uses symbols as well to demonstrate barrenness of love in the novel. After the death of his father, desperate Gerald steals into Gudrun's room and makes love with her. But the way how the surrounding is described we feel that the ending of this love affair will be the hopeless one. Gerald leaves his house in rainy weather and on his way to Gudrun his boots become muddy which symbolically represents the earthiness of his feelings and intention: "Into her he poured all his pent-up darkness and corrosive death, and he was whole again. And she, subject, received him as a vessel filled with his bitter portion of death" (Lawrence 1996; 393) For him Gudrun is an instrument to satisfy his own desires. Therefore, it is natural that Gerald can't find salvation in love.

As for Birkin and Ursula, their relationship comes into terms with Lawrencian Philosophy about love but the author still raises some questions about the possibility of becoming whole in love. As it was stated above Lawrence's theory about love essentially demands the independence of an individual in a relationship but for the author over-powerful nature of 'Magna Mater' in every woman destroys chances for a man to maintain his freedom. In one scene Birkin throws stones at the reflection of the moon in a lake. The moon is the symbolic representation of a woman Birkin tries to get rid of due to its devouring nature. Therefore, at the end of the novel we see the disagreement between Ursula and her husband: "Having you, I can live all my life without anybody else, any other sheer intimacy. But to make it complete, really happy, I wanted eternal union with a man too: another kind of love," he said. "I don't believe it," she said. "It's an obstinacy, a theory, a perversity." (Lawrence 1996,542) With this ending Lawrence leaves his characters in a hopeless condition, unable to get relief in this materialistic-demonic world.

To sum up, this article covers all the issues of Lawrencian philosophy which appear from different perspectives in all his novels. Analysis of the symbolic representations of his philosophy from philosophical, religious and psychological points of view opens the gates of the innumerable recourses Lawrence included in his works.

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