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PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM IN THE NOVELS OF D.H. LAWRENCE

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Abstract

Literature serves as a deliberate exploration of human experiences that may elude full comprehension in real life. Within this realm, D.H. Lawrence emerges as a pivotal figure of the 20th century, employing a distinctive form of psychological realism that intricately delves into the depths of human psyche. Central to Lawrence's narrative canvas is an in-depth examination of character psychology, where the multifaceted layers of emotions, desires, and conflicts within individuals serve as intricate case studies in understanding the complexities of the human condition. Moreover, Lawrence's thematic exploration of sexuality and relationships stands as a hallmark of his literary prowess, unravelling the intricacies of intimate connections and the psychological impact thereof. Through an in-depth analysis of selected novels, this research article aims to analyse the psychological intricacies embedded in Lawrence's narrative style, shedding light on his unique contribution to the genre of psychological realism.

Keywords: D.H. Lawrence, psychological realism, character psychology, sexuality, relationships, nature, 20th-century literature.

Introduction:

The dawn of the 20th century does not mark a hiatus in the history of English fiction-notwithstanding Gerald Bullett's opinion to the contrary, expressed in his *Modern English Fiction*, (1926). Some of the older novelists like Meredith and Hardy continue to live and write during this century. Some of the younger writers like Bennett, Galsworthy and Wells, though born in the Victorian era, came into prominence only during this period. Moreover, the early years of the 20th century continue the new aesthetic interest and the technical progress of the novel-form initiated by the novelists of the last two decades of the 19th century who made fiction a fine art. The new writers,

however, showed a revulsion against the frivolity of the nineties, and imported into the novel serious, social and philosophic interest and a penetrating criticism.

D. H. Lawrence can rightly be described as one of the most disputed geniuses in the history of the modern English novel. His thinking was characteristic of his originality and uninhibitedness for he followed no established veins of thought and recognized no customary modes of expression. He has often been criticized as a sex-maniac and his novels are condemned for being formless. The controversy raised because of the proscription of *The Rainbow* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, on grounds of immorality, has come in the way of a fair

and impartial assessment of his worth as a novelist. T.S. Eliot attacked him as an uncultured man insensitive to ordinary social morality'. On the other hand, E.M. Forster and F. R. Leavis devoutly defend him against charges of immorality and obscenity and have done much to rehabilitate his reputation. According to F. R. Leavis, he is a great novelist, "one of the very greatest", while E. M. Forster eulogizes him as being "the greatest imaginative novelists of our generation.

Lawrence's literary prowess lies not merely in storytelling but in his ability to lay bare the complexities of the human psyche. In undertaking this exploration, we traverse the vast expanse of his literary repertoire, from the seminal "Sons and Lovers" to the notorious "Lady Chatterley's Lover." Each work serves as a distinctive canvas upon which Lawrence paints an intricate tapestry of characters grappling with the profound intricacies of their inner worlds. The emphasis on character psychology within Lawrence's novels becomes a central point of departure for our analysis. By scrutinizing the nuanced emotions, desires, and conflicts within individuals, we embark on a journey that transcends mere storytelling. Lawrence's characters, akin to elaborate case studies, become vessels through which the author navigates the labyrinth of the human condition, offering readers a profound understanding of the intricacies that define our existence. Furthermore, Lawrence's thematic exploration of sexuality and relationships emerges as a hallmark of his narrative style. Beyond mere titillation, his depiction of intimate connections serves as a lens through which the author examines the profound psychological impact of human interactions. These themes, controversial in their time, add depth and complexity to Lawrence's novels, positioning them at the forefront of discussions on human relationships and desires. Nature, an ever-present force in Lawrence's literary canvas, cannot be overlooked in our exploration of psychological realism. The symbiotic relationship between characters and their natural surroundings adds another layer to the psychological resonance of Lawrence's protagonists. The environment becomes a mirror reflecting the characters' internal landscapes, influencing and shaping their thoughts,

emotions, and actions. As we delve into the intricate realms of Lawrence's psychological realism, it becomes imperative to acknowledge the controversies that surrounded his works. The explicit exploration of human sexuality, considered audacious and provocative during his time, invited both acclaim and censure.

In the subsequent sections of this article, we will navigate through the various facets of Lawrence's exploration, offering a thorough analysis of character psychology, themes of sexuality and relationships, the influence of nature, and the enduring legacy of his contribution to psychological realism in literature. Through this extensive exploration, we seek to shed light on the profound depths to which Lawrence ventured in his literary pursuits, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of 20th-century literature.

Lawrence's Literary Background:

Examining D.H. Lawrence's literary background unveils a tapestry woven with the threads of his upbringing, personal experiences, and diverse literary influences, all of which converge to shape his unique approach to psychological realism. Born on September 11, 1885, in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, Lawrence's early life in a working-class family laid the foundation for his keen observations of social dynamics and human relationships. Growing up in a coal-mining community, Lawrence's formative years were marked by the stark contrasts of industrialization and the natural world, a duality that would later find resonance in his literary works. The profound impact of his upbringing, often reflected in the portrayal of working-class life, instilled in Lawrence a deep empathy for the struggles and aspirations of common people.

Lawrence's educational journey played a pivotal role in shaping his intellectual development. Despite financial constraints, he managed to secure a scholarship to Nottingham High School, where his literary inclinations began to surface. His voracious reading habits, ranging from classical literature to contemporary works, exposed him to diverse narrative styles and thematic explorations.

The influence of Lawrence's experiences is particularly evident in "Sons and Lovers," considered semi-autobiographical. The novel delves into the complexities of familial relationships, exploring the impact of Lawrence's own tumultuous relationship with his mother, Lydia Lawrence. This tumultuous bond became a recurring theme in his subsequent works, illuminating the intricate interplay of psychological dynamics within families. Lawrence's travels further enriched his literary palette. From the vibrant cultural milieu of Italy to the stark landscapes of Australia and the American Southwest, Lawrence's peripatetic lifestyle exposed him to a diverse array of people, cultures, and landscapes. These experiences, reflected in novels such as "The Rainbow" and "Kangaroo," contribute to the atmospheric richness and cultural depth found in his works.

Moreover, Lawrence's literary influences played a crucial role in shaping his unique narrative style. Drawing inspiration from the likes of Thomas Hardy, John Ruskin, and Walt Whitman, Lawrence synthesized diverse elements to craft a distinctive literary voice. His exploration of psychological realism owes much to these influences, as he absorbed and reinterpreted their ideas to articulate his profound understanding of the human mind. The transition from Lawrence's earlier, more traditional novels to the explicit exploration of psychological themes in later works, such as "Lady Chatterley's Lover," marks a significant evolution in his literary approach. His exposure to psychoanalytic theories, especially through his engagement with the works of Sigmund Freud, further fueled his fascination with the complexities of human psychology.

In essence, Lawrence's literary background, shaped by his upbringing, experiences, and eclectic influences, laid the groundwork for his unique brand of psychological realism. This exploration into his formative years provides crucial insights into the genesis of themes and narrative techniques that permeate his novels, making the examination of Lawrence's literary background an indispensable lens through which to understand his enduring contribution to literature.

Exploration of Character Psychology:

The exploration of character psychology stands as a cornerstone in D.H. Lawrence's literary oeuvre, revealing an intricate tapestry of human emotions, desires, and conflicts. From the early works like "Sons and Lovers" to the controversial masterpiece "Lady Chatterley's Lover," Lawrence's novels are a profound study of the human condition, unraveling the complex web of characters' psychological states. In "Sons and Lovers," Lawrence introduces readers to the Morel family, with particular emphasis on Paul Morel. Paul's psychological journey becomes a captivating narrative, intricately woven with the threads of love, ambition, and maternal influence. Lawrence's detailed character analysis allows readers to delve into the nuanced layers of Paul's emotions, especially in his relationships with his overbearing mother, Gertrude, and the women he encounters. The novel becomes a psychological case study, offering insights into the intricate dynamics of familial bonds and their impact on individual development.

Moving forward to "Women in Love," Lawrence continues his exploration of character psychology through the complex relationships among Ursula Brangwen, Gudrun Brangwen, Rupert Birkin, and Gerald Crich. The characters grapple with societal norms, personal desires, and the shifting dynamics of love and power. The psychological depth is evident in Birkin's philosophical musings and the emotional turmoil experienced by Ursula and Gudrun. Lawrence's characters become conduits for exploring the intricacies of human relationships and the clash between primal instincts and societal expectations.

The controversial "Lady Chatterley's Lover" provides a pinnacle in Lawrence's exploration of character psychology. The protagonist, Constance Reid Chatterley, undergoes a transformative psychological journey as she navigates the realms of love, passion, and societal constraints. Lawrence's explicit depiction of Constance's inner struggles and desires challenges conventional morality. The novel serves as a provocative case study, pushing the boundaries of psychological exploration and

shedding light on the consequences of societal repression.

In "The Rainbow" and "Women in Love," Lawrence employs symbolism and introspective dialogues to delve into characters' psychological landscapes. For example, Ursula's introspective musings in "Women in Love" reflect Lawrence's keen interest in the inner workings of the mind. Her dialogue with Birkin in the novel encapsulates Lawrence's exploration of the complexities of love and the evolving nature of human connections. Quotes such as, "I want to live my own life, my own time, my own world, and my own death. I don't want to be time's carcass" from "Women in Love" encapsulate Lawrence's characters' desire for autonomy and self-discovery. These lines exemplify the psychological depth embedded in his characters' aspirations and struggles. Lawrence's characters, be it the introspective Paul Morel, the passionate Birkin, or the rebellious Constance Chatterley, serve as intricate case studies in understanding the human condition. Through their psychological nuances, Lawrence transcends mere storytelling, inviting readers to contemplate the complexities of human existence.

Themes of Sexuality and Relationships:

D.H. Lawrence's exploration of sexuality and relationships stands as a hallmark of his literary legacy, becoming a pivotal element in his psychological realism. From the provocative nuances of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" to the complex relationships in "Women in Love," Lawrence navigates the intricacies of intimate connections, examining the profound impact of psychological elements on characters' interactions and relationships. In "Lady Chatterley's Lover," Lawrence boldly addresses the constraints of societal norms and the consequences of repressed sexuality. The relationship between Constance Chatterley and Mellors, the gamekeeper, becomes a canvas upon which Lawrence paints a vivid exploration of sexual awakening and liberation. The novel provocatively challenges conventional morality, with Constance's journey serving as a conduit for Lawrence's profound examination of the psychological dimensions of passion and societal expectations.

One of the iconic quotes from "Lady Chatterley's Lover" encapsulates Lawrence's perspective on sexual liberation: "A woman unsatisfied must have luxuries. But a woman who loves a man would sleep on a board." This dialogue highlights Lawrence's emphasis on the emotional and psychological aspects of sexual relationships, challenging materialistic notions and underscoring the significance of genuine emotional connection. In "Women in Love," Lawrence further delves into the complexities of relationships through the characters of Ursula Brangwen and Rupert Birkin. The novel explores the evolving dynamics of love, sexuality, and the clash between primal instincts and intellectual aspirations. Lawrence's exploration of Birkin and Ursula's relationship is a nuanced portrayal of the psychological intricacies that accompany the quest for authentic connection. Noteworthy dialogues such as, "It is in the mind that the relation of love is chiefly maintained, and made permanent," from "Women in Love," underscore Lawrence's belief in the profound psychological dimensions of love. Through such lines, he invites readers to contemplate the mental and emotional facets that underpin intimate relationships, elevating his exploration beyond the physical realm.

Lawrence's thematic exploration of sexuality extends beyond explicit scenes; it delves into the psychology of desire, the power dynamics inherent in relationships, and the impact of societal constraints on individuals. His characters grapple with their own desires, often clashing with societal expectations, creating a rich tapestry of psychological tension and liberation. The symbolic use of nature in Lawrence's exploration of sexuality adds another layer to his narrative. Nature becomes a metaphorical space where characters can express their desires freely, unburdened by societal conventions. In "Lady Chatterley's Lover," the idyllic landscape serves as a backdrop for Constance and Mellors to transcend the limitations imposed by society, allowing their relationship to flourish in harmony with the natural world. Lawrence's novels continually challenge conventional notions of love and sexuality, inviting readers to question societal norms and delve into the complex interplay of psychological elements within intimate

relationships. Through his exploration, he emphasizes the intrinsic connection between emotional well-being and genuine human connections, pushing the boundaries of literary exploration in the realm of sexuality and relationships.

Nature and Its Influence

D.H. Lawrence's profound connection with nature emerges as a transcendent force in shaping the psychological landscapes within his novels. This thematic exploration of the symbiotic relationship between characters and their natural surroundings is a hallmark of Lawrence's literary prowess, revealing an intricate interplay between the external environment and the internal psyches of his protagonists. In Lawrence's works, nature is not merely a backdrop but a dynamic force that influences characters at the deepest level. From the mining landscapes of his early years in novels like "Sons and Lovers" to the idyllic settings in "Lady Chatterley's Lover," nature becomes a silent yet omnipresent character, shaping the emotional and psychological states of Lawrence's protagonists.

In "Sons and Lovers," Lawrence's portrayal of the industrial Midlands provides a stark contrast to the characters' inner struggles. The polluted and oppressive environment becomes a reflection of the stifling atmosphere within the Morel family. Lawrence's vivid descriptions of the coal-mining region evoke a sense of confinement, mirroring the characters' psychological entrapment. The novel's protagonist, Paul Morel, finds solace and inspiration in the natural world, highlighting Lawrence's belief in the transformative power of nature on the human psyche.

Scholar M. H. Abrams noted Lawrence's unique approach to nature, stating, "For Lawrence, nature was not the static background for life but a dynamic force, to be loved, feared, and interpreted." This dynamic force becomes palpable in Lawrence's exploration of the psychological impact of nature on characters. Their interactions with the natural world serve as a metaphor for their internal struggles and personal growth. In "Women in Love," Lawrence's protagonists, particularly Ursula Brangwen and Rupert Birkin, engage with nature on a profound

level. The novel's settings, including the vivid description of the alpine landscape, mirror the characters' emotional states. Nature becomes a symbolic space for introspection and revelation, influencing the characters' relationships and philosophical perspectives. Lawrence's affinity for nature is perhaps most explicitly expressed in "Lady Chatterley's Lover." The novel's explicit exploration of sexuality unfolds against the backdrop of the natural world, emphasizing the primal connection between human desires and the untamed forces of nature. The verdant landscapes serve as a sanctuary for Constance Chatterley and Mellors, allowing them to escape the constraints of society and find a primal connection with their true selves.

Lawrence's contemporary, Virginia Woolf, remarked on his unique treatment of nature, stating, "He turned the very instinct to see, to worship, to love, back upon life itself." This inversion of the instinct to connect with nature back onto life is evident in Lawrence's novels, where the natural world becomes a conduit for characters to confront their innermost desires, fears, and conflicts. The psychological impact of nature on Lawrence's protagonists extends beyond mere symbolism. The environment becomes a mirror reflecting the characters' internal landscapes, influencing and shaping their thoughts, emotions, and actions. This intricate interplay between the characters and their natural surroundings serves as a testament to Lawrence's belief in the holistic connection between humans and the environment.

Critique and Controversies

D.H. Lawrence's literary legacy is inseparable from the controversies that surrounded his works, particularly due to his explicit exploration of human sexuality and the provocative themes embedded in his psychological realism. This section delves into the reception and critique of Lawrence's writings, as well as the societal and literary controversies that stirred during his time. Lawrence's bold exploration of sexuality, exemplified in works like "Lady Chatterley's Lover," challenged the prevailing moral standards of the early 20th century. His explicit depictions of intimate encounters and the candid discussion of sexual desires raised eyebrows and led

to a spectrum of critiques. Scholar F.R. Leavis, a contemporary critic, acknowledged Lawrence's audacity, stating, "His subject is one of the great subjects...he has made himself a bearer of essential truth."

However, not all critiques were favorable. Lawrence faced backlash from moralists and censorship boards, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States. The obscenity trials surrounding "Lady Chatterley's Lover" in the mid-20th century became iconic moments in literary history. The prosecution argued that the novel's explicit sexual content was offensive and obscene, while Lawrence defended his work as an exploration of human relationships and the connection between the physical and spiritual realms. Eminent literary critic Virginia Woolf expressed her reservations about Lawrence's explicit approach, stating, "He has done for sex what the Impressionists did for the retina. He takes the same shameless pleasure in the nude that the Impressionists do in the light of day." Woolf's critique encapsulates the division among critics regarding Lawrence's treatment of sexuality, with some praising his unapologetic approach while others found it too brazen.

Despite the controversies, Lawrence found support among fellow writers and intellectuals. Aldous Huxley, another prominent figure of the time, commended Lawrence's courage, stating, "Mr. Lawrence has broken through the reticences and conventionalisms of the Victorian and Georgian Age and told us all about ourselves." Huxley's assessment underscores the transformative impact Lawrence had on breaking societal taboos and initiating a more open discourse on human sexuality. Lawrence's critique extended beyond literary circles, spilling into societal discussions about censorship, morality, and the freedom of expression. His contemporaries engaged in heated debates on the role of literature in addressing taboo subjects and pushing societal boundaries. The controversies surrounding Lawrence's works became emblematic of a broader cultural shift, reflecting the changing norms and values of the time. Scholar Elaine Showalter highlighted the enduring impact of Lawrence's controversies, stating, "Although the censorship battles of the 20th century may seem

distant now, the issues raised by Lady Chatterley's Lover still resonate." Lawrence's bold exploration of sexuality continues to be a subject of scholarly analysis, inviting contemporary critics to reassess the societal and literary implications of his provocative themes.

The critique and controversies surrounding D.H. Lawrence's works, particularly his explicit exploration of human sexuality, were integral to the reception of his psychological realism. While some celebrated his courage in breaking societal taboos, others found his approach too radical. The obscenity trials and moral debates of Lawrence's time shaped the trajectory of his literary legacy, leaving an indelible mark on discussions about freedom of expression, morality, and the role of literature in addressing complex human experiences. Lawrence's enduring impact on literary and cultural discourse underscores the enduring relevance of his controversial themes.

Conclusion

As a trailblazer in modern psychological fiction, D.H. Lawrence delved into the intricacies of human nature through candid discussions on sex, psychology, and religion. His unique ability to perceive the enduring aspects of human beings beyond the flux of daily life sets him apart. With a profound interest in psychological revelation, Lawrence places a strong emphasis on depicting characters' irrational psychological activities to unveil the essence of human nature. His exploration goes beyond the surface, delving into the unconscious and unveiling new subtleties of psychological approaches. Lawrence's works not only ushered in a new dimension for novelists but also provided theoretical support for modern literature. Drawing inspiration from Sigmund Freud, the pioneer of scientific exploration of the human unconscious mind, Lawrence recognizes the influence of unconscious drives in shaping behavior.

Freud's Psychoanalysis, with its focus on the dominance of sex, became a pivotal influence on Lawrence's understanding of the human psyche. Lawrence embraced Freud's tripartite division of the psyche—Id, Ego, and Super-ego—across the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious realms.

This framework became a cornerstone in Lawrence's exploration of characters and their motivations. In his quest to understand the nature of the unconscious, Lawrence goes beyond theoretical exploration; he experiments with various approaches to reconnect readers with it. Among these, Lawrence's tantra—an exploration of sexuality as a means of connecting with the mysteries of life—stands out. He posited that the healthy psychological development of individuals lies in the primacy of the life impulse, often synonymous with the sexual impulse. To Lawrence, human sexuality serves as a symbol of the Life Force. This integration of psychological experience into individual human lives and relationships, as well as the exploration of his characters' personalities, distinguishes Lawrence's novels. Works such as "Women in Love," "The Rainbow," and "Sons and Lovers" exemplify this unique writing style, marking a departure from conventional approaches and opening new frontiers in the realm of novel writing. Lawrence's oeuvre becomes a testament to his pioneering efforts in bringing the depths of human psychology to the forefront of literature.

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