

THE EQUILIBRIUM OF MALE FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS IN D.H. LAWRENCE'S WOMEN IN LOVE**Dr. Shyamalima Kashyap**

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ABSTRACT

D.H. Lawrence believes Women in Love to be an important tool that enabled him to examine the relationship between sex and power in the framework of society. Power and sex are interconnected, causing us to rethink how we interpret power in an intimate context. By disregarding conventional gender roles, the protagonists in the book transcend notions and maintain their belief of supremacy over each other. In regard to male dominance, the distribution of power does not only have an adverse viewpoint; it ought to be looked at from an alternative perspective. The sexuality of women had been suppressed in a patriarchal society since it was deemed prohibited. But D.H. Lawrence gives women ample of space to breathe in his book, revealing their control over sexuality. He provided the female characters a chance to express themselves in the light and discuss their desire for sex and determination to rule on a wider platform. Women have to assert their power over sex and embrace their actual passion in order to oppose the conventional train of thought and maintain their originality. This paper aims to understand the power dynamics in this novel and identify an equilibrium attained between the four major characters.

INTRODUCTION

D.H. Lawrence's novel *Women in Love* was discreetly published in 1920 and widely distributed in 1921. *Women in Love* pursues the characters Lawrence had developed for *The Rainbow* (1915) and explores the negative consequences of industrialization on the human psyche, concluding that only human passion and love can bring about individual and societal rebirth. In *Women in Love*, Gerald Crich, a controlling industrialist, and Gudrun, Ursula's artistic sister, are compared to Rupert Birkin and Ursula Brangwen's relationship. Rupert, a self-absorbed misanthrope, finds it difficult to balance Ursula's objective evaluation of sentimental passion with his metaphysical quest for self-fulfilment. Their romance and eventual union are shown as a constructive contrast to Gudrun and Gerald's catastrophic union. The bond between Rupert and Gerald is also discussed in the book. Critics claim that Lawrence is portrayed by Rupert as a self-portrait, while Frieda, Lawrence's wife, is portrayed by Ursula.

Moving back and forth between realism and modernism, Lawrence clearly demonstrates in this text that he is neither a feminist nor a supporter of patriarchy by providing a thorough explanation of his concept of "star equilibrium." Rupert Birkin and his sense of love for both Ursula and Gerald are used to assist him evaluate the Brangwen and Birkin romance and make it obvious. Both in his real life and in his writing, D. H. Lawrence sought out partnerships that were alive and active. What he was looking for was a live, flowing relationship that could be felt in the flesh and blood, not a rigid, uncomfortable relationship that was fixed, mechanical, and dehumanised by modern civilization. The old-fashioned human element is not what he is after in *Women in Love*, but rather "something new, that which physic-non-human, in humanity is"—not the personality or psychology of a man, but his very existence. He rejects "diamond, the character's old, reliable ego," and searches for "carbon, another ego." Instead of researching "the history of the diamond" like ordinary novelists did, he focuses on finding "carbon" and the connection between "carbon" and "carbon." *Women in Love's* latest theme is the interaction between "carbon" and "carbon." (Tokoyuni,144)

Ursula and Gudrun discuss marriage at the start of *Women in Love*. A conventional marriage, for Gudrun, is an experience of some sort that could ease her ennui and eventually offer fulfilment in oneself. Ursula, her sister, argues that marital existence might be the final phase of life. Rather than seeking romance, like their 19th-century previous generations did, both of these women are looking for validity and a way out from a barren and archaic life. This shift in mind-set is clear when Ursula disagrees with her sister, who expresses displeasure with modern

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living since "everything withers in the bud." (Lawrence, 275). Ursula concludes that marriage is "more likely to be the end of experience" since she is unwilling to establish herself in accordance with conventional patriarchal norms. (Lawrence, 280). Nigel Kelsey notes that the beginning dialogue between Gudrun and Ursula's inquiries "accumulate in severity as the inquiries themselves accumulate; there are definitely feelings of nothingness, dread, and loss." The topic shifts to a significant and ground-breaking question: Is a need for marriage an inherent trait of feminine character or a cultural construct? Later, this question became very important during the initial feminist theory. In the lack of obvious alternatives, they can only securely cement their understanding through an unease of the fewer known.

The focus of the chapter "Sisters" is the drastic exclusion of modern women from marriage and its fundamental confirmations. Ursula has reservations about the nature of marriage, but Gerald's mother's portrayal illustrates the troubling aspects of marriage. Gerald's mother submits to her husband "like a hawk in a cage" and is trapped in a marriage of "utter inter destruction" that destroys both her mind and his life. (Lawrence, 503). Ursula worries that marriage might be the end of a woman's experience; Mrs. Crich is presented here as living confirmation of her concerns. Ursula's drastic approaches to overcoming this anxiety come to define her personality, as evidenced by her repeated insistence that Rupert Birkin confess his feelings for her and by her yearning for Birkin despite her reluctance to give up her very identity to him since she understood that he could only embrace love on his terms. The symbolic representation of the submerged pair offers another unfavourable view of marriage and illustrates how one person in a male-female partnership may rule over and even obliterate the other. Sylvia Walsh writes that Birkin appears to Ursula as "a ray of basic hatred" that not just impaired her but also dismissed her completely and erased her complete existence. Her non-being was defined by his existence, and she saw him as an obvious demonstration of the biggest paradox. Birkin asserts that the old way of love seemed like hellish bondage, echoing Ursula's struggle. In reaction, he accepts a certain conjunction where man had being and woman had being, two pure beings, each constituting the freedom of the other in response to Ursula's fury about the status of marriage. He wants impersonal interactions between sincere people. Similar claims are made by Lawrence in his letter to Catherine Mansfield, "I am sick and tired of personality in every way. Let us be easy and impersonal, not for ever fingering over our own souls, and the souls of our acquaintances, but trying to create a new life, a new common life, and a new complete tree of life from the roots that are within us." (Letters 1: 359)

Lawrence's own fantasy of a happier, less stressful interchange between lovers and friends serves as the conceptual inspiration for Birkin's "star equilibrium" idea. Birkin persuades Ursula to form a relationship in which each person commits to the other while upholding their own integrity. However, Ursula prefers her own method of expressing affection for others and makes an effort to elicit verbal expressions of love from Birkin. Birkin refers to Ursula's repeated requests for confirmation of this spiritual aspect of their relationship as "Your insistence--Your war-cry--"A Brangwen, A Brangwen"--an old battle-cry. Yours is, "Do you love me? Yield knave, or die." (Lawrence, 403). Ursula is afraid of being engulfed by him, and she occasionally acts aggressively in her resistance to such envelopment, despite her want to be loved and her assertion that love comes before the individual. Ursula was portrayed by Lawrence as a contemporary woman who had the ability to perceive the deterioration of modern culture. When Birkin arrives to propose to Ursula and manages to do so while her father is present, Ursula yells out to both men, "Why should I say anything? You do this off your own bat, it has nothing to do with me," as she is startled and "driven out of her own radiant, single world" by the surprise proposal. Why do you two try to make me feel bad? "Let him be her man utterly, and she in return would be his humble slave--whether he wanted it or not". (Lawrence, 553)

Ursula attempts to strike a balance so that she may be so close to Birkin without giving up her independence. Her attempt to find some balance foreshadows the modern lady she will become. Balance, sexual or otherwise, is an important consideration in any analysis of *Women in Love*. Every character's main objective is to achieve some sort of harmony. In addition to Ursula and Birkin, Gerald and Gudrun also struggle with finding concord in a male/female relationship. For instance, Gerald, who accidentally killed his brother, is enmeshed in a deep-seated depravity that may be connected to a distressing childhood event. Gerald, in contrast to Birkin, does not have lofty

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aspirations of intellectual or spiritual growth and draws most of his pride from his vulnerable position as an economic entrepreneur. He blindly commits himself to the ongoing mechanisation of the coal mines owned by his family. He succeeds his rapidly ageing father in the prestigious job. Gerald, though, lacks his father's fatherly Victorian goodness. Instead, he views his employees as mere robots and wretched spirits. Ironically, he declares that it is "the very manifestation of his will, the embodiment of his power, a great and perfect machine, and a system, an activity of pure order, pure mechanical repetition, repetition and infinity, therefore eternal and infinite." (Lawrence, 450). Such a person, who blatantly disregards the inherent worth and uniqueness of others, is incapable of forging a genuine relationship with another person, not even in the context of basic friendship. He keeps himself from obtaining what Birkin values most: freedom for two. He is a tainted soul from the beginning. Gudrun has some artistic ability and a genuine desire to give her world spiritual value beyond the just sensual side of existence. However, her overwhelming wilfulness, propensity for manipulation, and possessiveness are all clearly visible in all of her artistic endeavours, particularly in her small miniatures. According to Charles Rossman, "Gerald and Gudrun have been embroiled in an attempt for control over one another from the outset of their relationship." After being dissatisfied and desperate, Gerald and Gudrun's accepted wills ultimately reveal themselves as an insatiable craving for authority and begin to take over what little empathy, affection, and compassion they may have. According to Lawrence, the conditions of their unsaid agreement are devilish-

The tie was forged between them, in that glance, in her tone. He and she were of the same kind, and a form of demonic freemasonry existed between them, as she made obvious in her tone. She was aware of her control over him going forward. Wherever they met, they would have a close relationship. Additionally, he would be powerless in his relationship with her. Her spirit, therefore, rejoiced.

Gerald and Gudrun's mutual repulsion is a very demeaning process. Gerald and Gudrun's shattered relationship is firmly planted in contaminated ground and is nothing less than a sheer challenge and needless viciousness. Gudrun once slapped Gerald and vowed she would deliver both the first and last blows in their relationship as a declaration of her dominance over him. The reader can deduce from Gerald's domination of the maze and miners that Gudrun will lose her struggle for power. In a sequence of potently dramatised scenes, Lawrence captures the vivid obscenity of their relationship, its destructive wilfulness, and its violent possessiveness. Gudrun and Gerald express their "mutual hellish recognition" in the "Rabbit" chapter after being both clawed by the rabbit. Winifred's decision to "frame" another animal by drawing it reveals Gerald's drive for dominance and its connection to violence. Gerald's response to Gudrun's announcement that "We're going to draw [the rabbit]" was, "Draw him and quarter him and dish him up." Gerald's ridicule makes Gudrun smile, and their eyes lock in the awareness of their innate viciousness. When they attempt to free the rabbit from its cage—another framing image—they fully reveal their shared attraction to such power manoeuvres. Gudrun's attempt to catch it is foiled by its ferocious opposition, which causes "a heavy cruelty to well [up] in her," which Gerald notices with "subtle recognition." Gerald reacts similarly to Gudrun's indignation after being scratched while attempting to control the bunny. Once again, both parties acknowledge their secret attraction and ratify their bizarre pact in what turns out to be a strangely ceremonial experience, "Gudrun's eyes were strangely darkened, strained with subterranean knowledge, and almost supplicating as if they were those of a creature at his mercy yet ultimately victorious over him. He was at a loss for words when he saw her. He sensed their shared recognition of hell."

Gerald and Gudrun continue to participate in an agenda of sexual conflict and violence, ignoring their potential for meaningful connection, taking their cue from such doubtful currents of sensation. Gudrun and Gerald coming together in the same mutual hellish recognition that they had expressed in the beginning of the chapter "Rabbits" also reflects towards the close of the chapter, serving as an effective metaphor for the intricacy of male/female interactions. Gerald searches frantically for Gudrun since she is his sole reliable source of existence and his main motivator for work. Gerald takes what food he can from Gudrun, helpless before his own emptiness. "As he got closer to her, the incredible creative warmth that seeped into his veins and gave him new life continued to envelope him. In a pool of her vibrant vitality, he felt himself evaporating and sinking to rest." (637) Ironically, Gudrun also experiences a sort of silent pleasure as a result of this bizarre encounter, "And she, subject, received

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him as a vessel filled with his bitter potion of death. She lacked the ability to resist in this situation. She was overcome by the dreadful frictional fury of death and experienced it in an ecstasy of submission while suffering from an intense, painful sensation. (649). Gerald and Gudrun both convert their propensity for healthy, natural sexuality into passion and aggressiveness. They transform themselves into murderous agents in the process.

The historical setting of *Women in Love*, a time when people no longer look to society for love advice, complicates the interactions between men and women. Ursula, Birkin, Gudrun, and Gerald re-evaluate gender conventions through their relationships with one another and raise questions about the contradictory inclinations of authority, obedience, and egalitarianism as well as their relation to human sexuality. In the gloomy, manufactured surroundings of England, Ursula, Gudrun, Birkin, and Gerald all feel the hollowness of modern existence and seek refuge in interpersonal connections. Complex issues like a struggle for consciousness, a search for definition are involved in the process of understanding one's own needs as one considers unions with others. Lawrence left it up to the reader to determine if these individuals reach the solution after years of battling. *Women in Love* by D.H.Lawrence demonstrates that experience is equivocal, ambivalent, that there are no clear answers or wholly adequate resolutions.

Lawrence asserts that it is crucial to capture the ambiguity of the human experience. When one attempts to hold anything down in the book, it either breaks down or gets up and drags the crucial piece with it. In the text, ethics is contrasted to equilibrium's fragile volatility. The work of fiction requires the balance to be disturbed and fluctuated more than any out of all the imaginative disciplines. When the novelist puts his/her thumb in the scale, to draw down the balance to his/her own liking that is immorality. In an effort to maintain the "trembling and wavering of the equilibrium," as Mark Schorer puts it, Lawrence allows all four significant protagonists, who are "composed of a dual impulse" and remain independent throughout the plot, the choice of selecting between life and its end. In the final chapters of the novel, Ursula and Rupert depart to the Alps to make a life-or-death decision while participating in a mortal struggle of wills. Gerald now frightens Gudrun because he acts "like a child that is hungry crying for the breast... he needed her to put him to sleep, to give him rest," in her words. (Lawrence, 691). Gerald strikes Gudrun as a child-man, and she rejects the nurturing role he has sought to give her. Everything has turned into "intrinsically a piece of irony" for her. She chooses Loerke, a "small, dark-skinned man with full eyes, and odd creature, like a child, and like a troll, quick, detached" to take Gerald's place. Gerald turns into a would-be killer and tries to strangle Gudrun, motivated by her infidelity and his gnawing instability. He eventually accepts death as his sole option after failing to apply the entire weight of his will to her. Despite the fact that neither Gerald nor Gudrun are intrinsically evil or demonic, their refusal to pit themselves against one another keeps them from finding harmony. They helplessly watch as their connection breaks down, allowing it to devolve into animal aggression and violent sensuality because they are unable to approximate an acceptable level of impersonal feelings. "A kind of love" exists between the two of them. But calling it ambivalent would be just as inadequate. According to Langbaum, the unbalance is caused by the underlying "hate" in their attraction to one another. According to Schneider, it is "a brutal struggle for existence, a war for supremacy, in which one partner must be master and the other slave." Both Gerald and Gudrun permanently deny themselves the priceless benefits of balanced love because they are unable to recognise the bounds of their selves, of their physical and spiritual boundaries. In contrast to the marriage of Gudrun and Gerald, Ursula's to Birkin appears to be a picture of marital harmony. Ursula "had learned at last to be still and perfect" as her steadily increasing receptivity to the stellar balanced. They share sensitive feelings in the cosy setting of a nearby inn before taking a cool drive through Sherwood Forest's gloomy woodlands. Both partners appear to have gone through significant change. However, the ambiguous conclusion, in which Birkin implies that he needs a connection with a man to be content, leaves the issue of marriage as a means of achieving self-fulfilment open. "To interpret a text is not to give it a (more or less justified, more or less free) meaning, but rather to appreciate what plural constitutes it a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signified," writes Roland Barthes. What Lawrence remarked about how "the novel most of all demands the trembling and oscillating of the balance" is echoed in what Barthes said. Although Birkin and Ursula reconcile their close friendship, they do not achieve what Birkin refers to as the stellar equilibrium because they

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are attracted to one another by their gravitational pull (love) and rejected by their innate polarity (complete singleness). As a result, the true male/female interaction is left unbalanced, and this imbalance becomes a crucial aspect of Lawrence's artistic vision.

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