



Dehumanisation and Mechanization of the Working Class in Lawrence's *Women In Love*

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Abstract

This study is conducted with the objective of finding out in detail the attitude of D.H. Lawrence towards technology and industrialization in relation to humans and human behavior and perceptions. The topic of this study is *Dehumanization and Mechanization of The Working Class in Lawrence's 'Women in Love'*. The primary intention of this study is to elaborate how the English working class in the mid-19th century was dehumanized as presented by Lawrence in *Women in Love* and his resistance towards mechanization of humans.

During the mid-19th century industrial revolution led to dehumanization of the working class of England the working class attempted to gain their humanity back through *The Chartist Movement*, by political reforms and establishing good communication with the masters, speaking up about the miseries and the injustices and dehumanization of the working class. The progress of the industrial revolution during the mid 19th century led to the dehumanization of the working class of England by numerous attitudes and behaviors of the employers and owners of the factories. Dehumanization included the

alienation of laborers and workers by the masters who refused to give heed to the miseries and sufferings of the workers considering them only to be machines used to increase and pile up their wealth and fortune.

D. H. Lawrence in his novel *Women in Love*, by elaborating the human psychology and understanding, provides a fertile field of inquiry to find out his attitude toward industrialization and technology in relation to human behavior and perception. In this article the focus is primarily on the gladiatorial scene of *Women in Love* through the lens of Lawrence's appropriation of the scientific concept of allotropy to describe the constituent elements of human nature.

Keywords: Mechanization, Working class, Dehumanization, Industrial Revolution.

Introduction

In 1750-1900s, the Industrial Revolution changed England from an agricultural country into an industrial developed country. It brought enormous changes in the lifestyle of the English people. The changes are indicated by beginning to use the engine power as a means of production in factories replacing human and animal power.

Lawrence, being the son of a miner, born in Eastwood, an English mining village, had quite unexpectedly idealized the intense physical labor of the mining profession. This is because, for Lawrence, the technological advances that propelled the process of human cognition and understanding undermined what he called the *societal instinct*. With the introduction of machines into this world a gap was generated between the workers and their object of work, while physiologists of the period increasingly used the machine metaphor

to describe bodily operations, Lawrence's *Women in Love*, in conjunction with his essays and theoretical writings on human psychology and understanding, provides a fertile field of inquiry to find out his attitude toward industrialization and technology in relation to human behavior and perception.⁽¹⁾

In this article the focus is primarily on the gladiatorial scene of *Women in Love* through the lens of Lawrence's appropriation of the scientific concept of allotropy to describe the constituent elements of human nature. Lawrence describes a war between two conflicting views: between Birkin, who is related with the industrial element of coal, embodies the spontaneous, the dark, and the unconscious; Gerald on the other, symbolises the spirit of industrialization and mechanization, can be compared with the diamond, that is, with the world of light and consciousness.⁽²⁾

This article focuses on the relationship between technological mechanization and the organic and spontaneous, in order to provide a clear picture of Lawrence's attitude towards the tectonic cultural shifts that were taking place during his time. From the outset, Lawrence indicates here that allotropy is indispensable to understanding his ontological theory and approach to creating literary art? Thomas Gibbons observed that the source of Lawrence's "allotrope" is a passage from "*Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*" by F. W. H. Myers, co-founder of the Society for Psychological Research in Cambridge who was enjoying, in Suzanne Raitt's words, "respectability and public profile". Myers considered that the messages and words voiced without conscious intention, which he ascribed to unconscious manifestations revealing the existence of a subliminal self: "*this subliminal self represents, more fully than the supraliminal self, our central and abiding being.*" As per Gibbons, Myers considered the secondary personalities as "*manifestations or 'allotropic states' of a unitary unconsciousness or subliminal self.*" Lawrence has an appeal for the fusion of science with the literary.⁽³⁾ Roger Luckhurst claims that it must reflect his

disagreement to Freudianism and Ouspensian mysticism that drew Lawrence closer to Myers's work, since it "*shared his disgust of mechanical or reductionist accounts for more dynamic, inherently metaphorical language.*" Gibbons concluded that Lawrence referred to Myers's subliminal self is as another ego whose action makes individual unrecognisable".⁽⁴⁾

By applying the concept of allotropy to the human condition, Lawrence (and Myers) draws attention to a radically unchanged element in human nature that can manifest itself in two different forms, which may appear on the surface as Carbon and the mines, in Lawrence's mind, were associated with the opposites unconscious, darkness, the physical and the natural, whereas the diamond represented consciousness, light, the mechanical and the artificial.

Insights of the Women In Love

Women in Love (1920) is a sequel of the earlier novel The Rainbow (1915) by English author D. H. Lawrence, which is focused on the continuing loves and lives of Gudrun and Ursula, the Brangwen sisters. This novel is both an articulate account of English society before the First World War, and a brilliant elicitation of the inevitable power of human desire. Lawrence explores big themes of the dichotomies of humanity and nature, masculine and feminine, intellectualism and spontaneity, societal expectation and individual desire through the action and dialogue of the book's characters.¹

Lawrence despised the industrial society he lived in because it corroded this "instinct of community." As he wrote in his review of Trigant Burrow's The Social Basis of Consciousness, "what must be broken is the egocentric absolute the individual," heralding a society where "the me-and-you tension and contest, the inevitable contest of two individualities" is "brought into connexion." The industrialist society gave rise to egoistic arrogance, and "so long as men are inwardly dominated... nothing is possible but absurdity pronounced." In a final twist of thought, Lawrence called upon his

readers to "shatter the mirror" of self-absorbed paralysis "and fall again into true relatedness" (PPP, 379, 382)¹. In R. E. Pritchard's words, Lawrence's work depicts the "impersonal activity of male communion has become subordinated in the sense of ease in a larger inclusive body." Pritchard in his more mature writings stated that Lawrence expressed a "yearning for a resurrection in a fantasied community of 'togetherness," for a return to his childhood, when "miners were not brutalized by the industry, but in their dark underworld knew a sort of intimate community developing their intuitive consciousness".⁽⁵⁾

Lawrence being a staunch believer of physical proximity and comradeship, bonding people in a sense of community with which they are literally in touch, united in a "naked intimacy". Industrialism reduced people to automatons. The type of society where no one is superior or inferior to his fellow human being was the vision of Lawrence, but which simply feels a "recognition of present uniqueness," an uniqueness to which we are connected closely. The industrial system destroyed this harmonious close connection: "Comparison arises only when one of us departs from his own integral being, and enters the material-mechanical world. Then equality and inequity starts at once". Lawrence stressed on the importance of the "societal instinct" as an inherently somatic experience. It is what he called the experience of the "blood," which involves the sensory and instinctive components of human nature. In his essay "Introduction to These Paintings," Lawrence described the immediacy of this idea that a deep desire of kinship joins men together, and the kinship of flesh-and-blood keeps and the of warmth of intuitional awareness between human beings maintaining intuitional and not mental awareness of one another.⁽⁶⁾

Burgess explicated the D. H. Lawrence's view of inherent and intuitional attraction between humans is really, which is beyond any judgement. Humans have become ideal beings, creatures that exist in idea, to one another, rather than flesh-and-blood kin. And with the

collapse of the feeling of physical kinship of flesh and blood, and the replacement of our ideal, social or political oneness, came the failing of our instinctive awareness, and the great uneasiness and the nervousness of mankind. We are afraid of the instincts and the intuition within us. As a result of this fear we repress our instincts, and our intuitional awareness is cut off from one another and from the world. The atrophy of the "flesh-and-blood" relationship was a sign of the industrialist spirit, causing what Lawrence called "nervousness" in people. In the shift from Thomas Crich's to Gerald's generation, we see the change in the mines from a setting in which people were communicating instinctively and physically into a mechanized setting. Thomas Crich represents the pre-mechanization era of the mines, an era that Lawrence idealized in "Nottingham and the Mining Countryside." In this essay, the mines were presented by Lawrence as a working place where physical communication was possible for the colliers: "Under the butty system, the miners worked underground as a sort of intimate community, they knew each other practically naked, and with curious close intimacy" (PPP,135). This physical communication was enabled because the darkness and the butty system in which the miners worked underground as a sort of intimate community⁽⁷⁾.

Women in Love highlights the need for these central issues to find the most fitting dialectal expression: This ambiguity for verbal realization should not be left out in art. It is the loving struggle into human being" (WL, 486). Thomas Crich, an integral part of the community, wanted his mines to be "primarily great fields to produce bread and plenty for all the hundreds of human beings gathered about them. He wanted his industry should be run on love. Oh, he wanted love to be the directing power (WL, 224-5). The unifying idea of humanity represented in his patriarchy that bonded people through the cultivation of their communal instinct. Although, the force of industrial reality seemed unstoppable.¹

With the increased industrial revolution the mines were being transformed at a fast pace. The mechanical necessity (WL, 225) became the need of the time, with Crich finding a retreat in charity work. Lawrence in his essay "Nottingham and the Mining Countryside" has summarized this new grim reality, "condemning of the workers to ugliness, poor working conditions, poor health, poor living conditions and bad relationship between workers and employers" (PPP, 138). Gerald as an "Industrial Magnate" represents the new spirit of the modern era (WL,211). Upon succeeding his father, he stopped the old system and implemented many of the latest scientific advancements. He managed the electricity to be carried into every mine. He brought new machinery from America, which the miners had never seen before" (WL, 230). These new machines, were like the "great iron men," which significantly reduced the distinction between the human and the machine. The colliers who used to be the in charge of the mines, were replaced with, "educated and expert meanwhile the miners were reduced to simply mechanical instruments". Industrialization not only lead to more work and less pay, but it also made the working "terrible and heart-breaking in its mechanicalness. the hopes were dying as the industries and workers became more and more mechanised".⁽⁸⁾

Charles Ross highlighted that in Women in Love, Lawrence rewrote scene after scene in order to accentuate Gerald's "ice-destructive" consciousness as a "nonhuman aspect of the terrible, static tip of the iceberg" of the will, reductive to phenomena, symbolic of "the resonance of this vocabulary for conveying the sterile abuse of the will...characteristic of modern society". Lawrence portrayed the transition from the butty system of Thomas Crick's epoch to Gerald's mechanical era in terms of the increasing numbing of the unconscious and instinctual, somatic drives, Gerald's treatment people as a kind of machinery that can be disposed of once used (WL, 231) brings him close to Lawrence's definition of the neurasthenic, a person dissociated from the "flesh-and-blood"

kinship was such a strange pressure upon him, as if there built a vacuum in the very inside of him, and outside were an dire tension (WL, 233). Gerald is the embodiment of "the God of the machine, whose religion is "the pure instrumentality of mankind" (WL, 223).⁽⁹⁾

David Trotter noted that "Gerald...can be compared with early twentieth-century drives for 'national efficiency': physical health; scientific and technological training military and naval preparedness; industrial modernization; a government of national unity. Conversely, while Birkin represents the fluid organic life and regeneration attempting walking nude in the forest to immerse himself in physical experience. He takes satisfaction there from the sting of the fir-boughs on his skin, from the smooth hardness of the birch-trunks, and from the "lovely, subtle, responsive vegetation," which actually enters into his blood, and "living self" (WL, 107). His worldview romanticizes experience rather than intellect, the latter bearing little homage to one's "spontaneous-creative fullness of being" (FUPU, 43). To gain knowledge of Ursula's "other self" (WL, 188).⁽¹⁰⁾

Conclusion

D. H. Lawrence in *Women in Love* explained dialectics of industrialization, human psyche, love, physical intimacy of closely associated labors and the dilemma of complication in the personal relationship, human intensity and passion.⁽¹¹⁾

Women in Love contrasts the love affair between Rupert Birkin and Ursula Brangwen with that of Gudrun, Ursula's artistic sister, and Gerald Crich, a domineering industrialist. The physical language used by each shows the different views each represents: Gerald is "frictional" and "mechanical," whereas Birkin is "abstract as to be almost intangible" (WL, 269). The absurd "impinged invisibly"

finds the forceful physical collision as imperceptible and like a garment is followed by a stress on physical contact. The word "wind" signifies a physical sort of communication that affects one's inner being, piercing one's carnal shell to reach deep inside. The wind metaphor used by Lawrence as a means of communion and connection conveying Birkin's "physical intelligence" (WL, 269) into Gerald. His mode of being penetrates, as if in a sexual intimacy, Gerald's intellectualism, "piercing in a tense fine grip penetrating into the very Gerald's being" (WL,270). Gerald, despite his resistance, felt mesmerized by Birkin's approach: to him, Birkin possessed some "great subtle energy, that would press upon the other man with an strange force, weigh him like a spell put upon him" (ibid.). Birkin has to attract Gerald's consciousness to feel his physical unconscious and recognize its nature. To this end, he moves like a "fine net, a prison, through the muscles into the very depths of Gerald's physical being" (ibid.). They finally manage to reach the desired state when they are "intent and mindless" (ibid.). Birkin's view says that physical communion is the only mean for achieving the real connection. Lawrence intended to embed Birkin in his work as the the primary representative of the unconscious and the instinctual, the "coal". He is the advocate of "the great dark knowledge you can't have in your head-the dark involuntary being" (WL, 43).⁽¹²⁾

However, Birkin fails to reach equilibrium, much like Gerald, as he is unable to communicate with others on the level he wishes. The one sees his reflection in the other and the two seem to merge as if they are the peculiar ones, both their bodies siezed into oneness" (WL, 270). Despite having the different form of consciousness, they actually represent two forms of the same kind of being. Gerald states that only Birkin relieved him from the fear (WL, 232), but he denies Birkin's offer of physical intimacy which he called "blood-brotherhood". He denies to Birkin until he understands the meaning of this bondage. In the passionately physical scene of the

"Gladiatorial," Birkin's proposal for a "blood- brotherhood" expresses his desire to have a nude intimacy with Gerald, in which sexual desire is raised to noble ideals of male dedication and fidelity.

Both characters suffer from self conflict. Gerald was "deeply bonded in fascinated attraction. He was skeptical, reluctant to the bondage, disliking the attraction" (WL, 207). At once captive by and offended of their bondage, Gerald was confused contradictory feelings. His relationship with Birkin is shown as an inexorably physical relationship that is beyond their control consciously. As the primary representative of the tendency to over-intellectualize every aspect of life and rely solely on mental reasoning, he is unable to "understand" , as regarding Gerald. Their first interaction, for instance, is described in the he says, their bond. Birkin experiences similar feelings of attraction-repulsion in following terms: "There was a pause of strange enmity between the two men, that was very near to love.

Their hostility is contrasted to an inner organic unity as "the heart of each burned from the other.". The physical, instinctual consciousness that Birkin advocates is materialized through Gerald's stout physique, a point constantly stressed in the novel. Lawrence in the "Gladiatorial" stresses the physical resistance of the two protagonists, initiating the framing of the two on the allotropic diamond-coal opposition. His description of Gerald's body as "concrete and noticeable, a piece of pure final substance" (WL, 269) is energized through Birkin's "white and thin" body (ibid.). Lawrence, following the allotropic pattern, emphasized the fact that the two men were, appearantly, "very dissimilar" (ibid.). Birkin is "tall and slim, having very thin bones," while Gerald is "much heavier and muscular having strong and round bones" (ibid.). The "Gladiatorial" represents a physical ritual allowing them to communicate through their somatic faculties and gain carnal knowledge of each other.

To conclude, Lawrence as a narrator and a structuralist in *Women in Love* enlighten the depression, loneliness, insecurity of livelihood during the industrialization era of early 19's and the human instinct of affection, and bodily intimacy by fascinating characters of Birkin, Gerald and Ursula. Gerald feels a death of the body, as if he has become a mental machine being purely driven by mental reason. Importantly, despite his rejection, Gerald could not disentangle himself from Birkin, who only could be able to take his feeling of vacuity away. Birkin ignited the spark of coal within him, but Gerald couldn't free himself from his tenacious intellectualism. Their interaction is described in religious terms. It is compared to a "church service," a communion fusing two beings into one that "seemed to contain the quintessence of faith" (WL, 232).

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