

Psychoanalytical Analysis of Gerald's Three Coverts to Perpetrate Violence in D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*

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Abstract—D. H. Lawrence is well known for creating psychologically deep characters. Since contemporaneous with Sigmund Freud, he has been familiar with his groundbreaking theories about unconscious mind. Moreover, he utilizes them for creating his characters in his novels. For instance in his *Women in Love*, Freud's impact on him is striking. Freud holds that human beings are primitive by nature and their primitive attitudes can emerge anytime. In this regard, this paper aims to draw on Freud's idea of unconsciousness to analyze Gerald, one of main characters in the novel in question. To do so, it will primarily focus on his violence. According to Freud, human beings aspire for the violence in their unconsciousness; nonetheless, they cannot answer their psychological need easily because of social norms. However, from the view point of Freud, there are some coverts through which people can meet/justify their urge for violence. Thus, the present study endeavors to bring into light these coverts by focusing on the life of Gerald in D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*.

Index Terms—covert, unconscious, Freud, war, Gerald, violence, *Women in Love*

I. INTRODUCTION

D. H. Lawrence was born in 1885 in Nottinghamshire. His father was a miner but his mother was a literate school teacher. As a child, Lawrence suffered from tuberculosis. He was closer to his mother in his family. She did her best to keep him away from mines; instead she directed his life toward school and books. His relationship with his mother is represented directly in his autobiographical novel, *Sons and Lovers*. At the age of 15, he left school and started working in a factory. Later on he became acquainted with Jessie Chamber who appeared as Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*. His first publication was his poetry published in 1909. Much to his disappointment, his works were banned in England until 1960s. Not only was he persecuted for his words but also he was under the pressure and suspicion during WWI due to marrying Frieda, a German. As a result, he left England and traveled to Italy, Germany, USA, Mexico, New Zealand and Australia. His major literary works include *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The White Peacock*, *The Trespasser*, *The Lost Girl*, *Aaron's Rod*, *Kangaroo*, *The Plumed Serpent* and the *Virgin and the Gipsy*.

Summary of *Women in Love*

Women in Love is a sequel to *The Rainbow*. It is the story of two sisters who came to know two other characters, Gerard Crich and Rupert Birkin. Gudrun is just back from London where she was studying at an art school. Ursula, the older sister develops affair with Birkin, the only male character who has unconventional ideas about life, human being, love and death. While loving Ursula, Birkin also believes in a different greater love which might be gratified through his relationship with another male human being. Throughout the novel he comes up with his unconventional ideas. While Ursula and Birkin have primitive attitudes through the novel, Gerald, the son of the local mineowner, is an industrial magnate. He believes in leading people and managing the business which he inherited from his father. Later on, he desires to strangle Gudrun when he witnesses that Gudrun flirts with Herr Loerke, a decadent German sculptor. At the end of the novel, he dies of cold weather alone on a snow covered mountain.

Review of Literature

In his book, *Freudianism and Literary Mind*, Fredrick Hoffman (1967) compares Freud's perspectives with that of Lawrence in terms of sexuality, and highlights their similarity in this regard. To do so, he chooses Lawrence's autobiographical novel, *Sons and Lovers* and applies Freud's psychoanalytical theories to it.

Daniel Wack in his book entitled, *The Great War and its Effects in D. H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover* examines the effects of war in *Sons and Lovers* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, but not in his other novels like *Women in Love* and *The Rainbow*. In his study, initially he presents a short background of European society right after the Great War, and its impacts on writers such as T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Aldus Huxley. Then he focuses on Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which as published after the war.

In *D. H. Lawrence's Language of the Apocalypse*, Mario Domenichelli (2004) explores Lawrence's writings, to detect those sections in which he reveals his apocalyptic vision. The scholar in addition expatiates about Lawrence's tendency towards 'utopia' and 'pastoral dream and primitivism'. Moreover, he sheds light on the novelist's "struggle to [travel to] utopia or to some arcadia ... and return to nature" (p.282). Furthermore, he points to Lawrence's and Freud's different perspective concerning the unconscious part of the mind. According to him, for Freud 'unconsciousness' was the locus of suppressed unconscious materials while for Lawrence it was the spontaneous spring from which life oozes. Then he clarifies why Lawrence disagrees with Freud, "the Freudian unconscious is the cellar in which the mind keeps its bastard spawn. The true unconscious is the well-head, the fountain of real motivity" (p.297).

Last but not least, in *The Influence of Congregationalism on the First Four Novels of D.H. Lawrence*, M. J. Masson discusses the implications of the war on D. H. Lawrence's doubt toward Christianity. According to him, Lawrence had a firm belief that the Great War was the byproduct of degenerated Christianity.

II. LAWRENCE, WAR AND *WOMEN IN LOVE*

Lawrence's *Women in love* is different from *The Rainbow*, although it is a sequel to it. There is a gap between *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. In general, the setting of *Women in Love* does not bear resemblance to the pastoral atmosphere of *The Rainbow* because the ban on *The Rainbow* and the catastrophes of WWI seem to be effective in this regard. This explains his lack of interest in using another pastoral setting for *Women in Love*. Additionally, he wanted to reflect upon the negative impacts of the war on those involved in it. Meanwhile he was in touch with Freud's latest works through his wife Frieda. Freud published his new essay entitled *Reflection on War and Death* in 1915, in which he studied the relationship between war and death. After reading this essay, Lawrence began to write his new novel. Both for Freud and Lawrence, the Great War was the utter frustration of England and the world. His disappointment reminds back Freud's quotation: "we expected that these nations would find some other way of settling their differences and conflicting interests" (Freud, 1918, p.6). It was war that generated in him the desire to escape "with a few chosen spirits...to an island" (Kingsmill, 1938, p. 99). As Murry wrote "if ever a man suffered from the war... it was Lawrence" (ibid.).

Lawrence's first book after the war is rife with pessimism. Death and destruction take the place of life in it, and even sincere in the work love is fulfilled through death. He himself felt the same in his real life. As Chambers (1936) points to it in his biography,

Lawrence skipped from one white boulder to another in the vast amphitheater of the bay until I could have doubted whether he was indeed a human being. I was really frightened then — not physically, but deep in my soul. He created an atmosphere not of death, which after all is part of mortality, but of an utter negation of life, as though he had become dehumanized. (p.128).

Due to these sufferings, he could not be indifferent to the war even if he was not amid the chaos of war. One can observe the pernicious effects of the war in his created characters' discourses, their beliefs on life and death, as well as their acts. An obvious example is Birkin since his "consciousness is profoundly affected by that holocaust" (Lawrence, 1998, p.12). Lawrence himself directly states that: "I should wish the time to remain unfixed, so that the bitterness of the war may be taken for granted in the characters" (p.10). In fact "the nature of the characters in *Women in Love* is predominated by what Freud calls the death instincts" (Meilebreuk, 2013, p. 5). For instance, for Birkin the humanity "is dead" and "dry-rotten" because they are "apples of Sodom" (Lawrence, 1998, p. 130). In *Women in Love*, death and destruction are intermingled.

As Freud mentions, the human beings have the "tendency to put death aside, to eliminate it from life." That is to say, they do not like to think about their death; however they would rather think of others' death,

We cannot, indeed, imagine our own death; whenever we try to do so, we find that we survive ourselves as spectators. The school of psychoanalysis could thus assert that at bottom no one believes in his own death, which amounts to saying: in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his immortality. (Freud, 1918, p.16)

Nevertheless, he believes that during great wars like WWI the whole story changes. "Death" is "no longer to be denied" because every day they see people dying, "not one by one but in large numbers, often ten thousand in one day" (p.17). One of the reasons that Lawrence altered his subject matter from 'life' (in *The Rainbow*) to the study of the concept of 'death' stems from Freud's essay mentioned earlier. Above all, Freud's influence over the novelist is great. In general, Freud believes that the human beings have some basic needs like violence, but by nature they are social beings, that is to say, they need to live close to each other to benefit from the society. Life in the community demands the human beings to regulate/suppress their need for violence. Nevertheless, the suppression makes them feel miserable in their life. This explains why they seek to find some coverts [strategies] to satisfy their need for aggression. He points to some of the coverts like being a child, a leader or a soldier. Freud believes that children are freer, and this explains their violence during their games, albeit sometimes. Leaders normally justify their savagery and brutality by expressing their wish to promote justice in the society. But the only available covert for them is to conceal themselves behind social values and norms like the nationalistic and patriotic sentiments in particular when people go into the war and fight for the nation. In the following parts, the coverts which Gerald deploys in three stages of his life will be discussed in details.

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Covert one: Gerald at the age of 6

Adopting a critical view towards the advancement of technology which brought about the catastrophes of the First World War, Lawrence expresses his (new) primitivism in the character of Gerald whose life mirrors Freud's ideas. When he was a child, he killed his brother by accident via an unused old gun that never worked. While he was playing with his brother, he asked him to look into the gun. Meanwhile it suddenly went off and he killed his brother by 'accident'. Through different discussions, Lawrence attempts to convey that it cannot be a mere accident.

Based on Freud's theories, children are freer when compared with adults in satisfying their basic needs through more acceptable ways like their play. In contrast to them, the adults are not supposed to mention someone's death in their presence but children "ignore this restraint" (Freud, 1918, p.16). For example in the case of death, children easily threaten each other,

As far as the death of another person is concerned, every man of culture will studiously avoid mentioning this possibility in the presence of the person in question. Only children ignore this restraint; they boldly threaten each other with the possibility of death, and are quite capable of giving expression to the thought of death in relation to the persons they love, as, for instance: Dear Mama, when unfortunately, you are dead, I shall do so and so. (ibid.)

Almost all main characters in the novel either discuss the death of Gerald's brother by him or analyze it in their minds. In chapter four, for the first time, this story is put into discussion between Ursula and Gerald. Ursula who is direct in expressing her mind, believes that "there was an unconscious will" and "primitive desire" behind it (Lawrence, 1998, p.80). In fact she calls the whole story as "playing at killing" but that's obviously not the way others thought about this incident. (ibid.). Gudrun has spent many years of her life in a city, thus she is frightened of the rural area of colliery region (which for Lawrence is a symbol of pastoral primitive milieu). Therefore the girl who has spent many years in civilized atmosphere has learnt how to adapt herself to the social norms. It is obvious that she rejects Ursula's opinion concerning Gerald as a deliberate killer. Unlike her sister, Ursula is the only true remaining primitive member of the first Brangwen family. Hence, she acts and behaves on the basis of unconscious impulses. In her discussion, one can sense that she firmly believes that there is a hidden intention behind it. Lawrence is taking Ursula's sides and indicates it through Ursula's words "he shot his brother" (p.79). Almost all the main characters accept it. Birkin rethinks about Gerald's act which was told as "pure accident", instead he refutes it and views it a covert for an instinct. Unlike other characters in the novel, Gudrun regards Gerald's killing utterly unintentional since she regards the human beings by nature good, who act decently and morally in their society. Her rejection of the intentionality of death, without even knowing much about the story, just at the beginning of the discussion, resembles to what Freud calls 'Defense Mechanism' which is done to safeguard the civilization against immorality, chaos and confusion,

And isn't it horrible too to think of such a thing happening to one, when one was a child, and having to carry the responsibility of it all through one's life. Imagine it, two boys playing together—then this comes upon them, for no reason whatever—out of the air. Ursula, it's very frightening! Oh, it's one of the things I can't bear. Murder, that is thinkable, because there's a will behind it. But a thing like that to HAPPEN to one (p. 80).

While Ursula is expressing her thoughts about the matter calmly, Gudrun is always "cold and angry" and talks "stiffening" (ibid.). She is angry because she assumes herself a decent social being who cares about the civilization and makes her contribution to it. She cannot admit this idea, since it suggests a pessimistic view toward human nature. As mentioned before, there is the clash between two different ideas whether human beings are good or bad by nature. Gudrun believes that human beings by nature are good but neither Lawrence nor Freud accepts in it. In *Reflection on War and Death* Freud clearly states that "What no human being desires to do does not have to be forbidden". The fact that the human beings are commanded not to kill other humans means "that [they] are descended from an endlessly long chain of generations of murderers, whose love of murder is in their blood as it is perhaps also in ours" (Freud, 1918, p. 21).

Even Gerald himself in his inner thoughts is not denying his intentional act. The author shows Gerald's inner thoughts: "He suffered badly. He had killed his brother when a boy, and was set apart, like Cain" (Lawrence, 1998, p.314),

Then he remembered, with a slight shock, that that was Cain's cry. And Gerald was Cain, if anybody. Not that he was Cain, either, although he had slain his brother. There was such a thing as pure accident, and the consequences did not attach to one, even though one had killed one's brother in such wise. Gerald as a boy had accidentally killed his brother. What then? Why seek to draw a brand and a curse across the life that had caused the accident? A man can live by accident, and die by accident. Or can he not? Is every man's life subject to pure accident, is it only the race, the genus, the species, that has a universal reference? Or is this not true, is there no such thing as pure accident? Has EVERYTHING that happens a universal significance? Has it? Birkin, pondering as he stood there, had forgotten Mrs. Crich, as she had forgotten him. He did not believe that there was any such thing as accident. It all hung together, in the deepest sense (p.38).

In addition, the author rejects the idea of love because he finds it disgusting since people hypocritically cling to it. Every day they are repeating that 'love' and 'charity' and claim that they are living for the sake of them while at the same time they are doing horrible deeds. They lie about love and it's the most horrible act. In his opinion, love is just a feeling exactly like hatred. He goes further and mentions that we should not delimit human beings (p.277). He also

states that “If we want hate, let us have it—death, murder, torture, violent destruction—let us have it: but not in the name of love” (ibid.). When Ursula suggests that love is the greatest, Birkin responds that one “might as well say that hate is the greatest, since the opposite of everything balances.” (ibid.). For Freud (1918) “love cannot be much younger than the lust for murder” (19). He believes that these notions are of “eternal polarities” (Kaes et al. 1994, p.31). He believes that “notions of good and evil... can operate rarely in isolation” or in another word, as he puts, they are “alloyed” (ibid.). For Freud humans’ good and evil deed is often done “with a certain dosage of its opposite, which modifies its aim or even” and “in certain circumstances, is a prime condition of its attainment” (ibid.).

Covert Two: Gerald at the age of 10

With regard to his second covert, the novelist reveals it in the form of desire to murder. At the age of ten when Gerald was watching a group of protesters against his father’s business, he wished he had a gun so that he could kill them all. When miners protested, and soldiers shot them, and one protester was killed. Looking at the scene, Gerald entertaining the idea of attacking and killing them with ‘delight’ (Lawrence, 1998, p. 418),

Gerald, who was a boy, was filled with the wildest excitement and delight. He longed to go with the soldiers to shoot the men. But he was not allowed to go out of the lodge gates. At the gates were stationed sentries with guns. Gerald stood near them in delight, whilst gangs of derisive miners strolled up and down the lanes, calling and jeering (ibid.).

He “longed to be a man, to fight the colliers” since all his life he has been “tortured by a furious and destructive demon which possessed him” (p.419). His desire to imitate the soldiers and hold a gun to shoot the protestors in a deeper level bespeaks his unconscious impulse to perpetrate violence. Instead of shunning the violent scene and sympathize with the killed miner and the injured miners, he delights at watching it. From his reaction toward the incident, one can safely conclude that his approval of the soldiers’ violence attests to the fact that the soldiers are doing what Gerald himself wants to do. In fact, his delight and fascination with soldiers’ inhumane act is his psychological covert for violence.

Covert Three: Gerald at the age of 18

In the chapter *Industrial Magnate*, the idea of sympathy or antipathy of human beings toward other’s miseries is discussed. One idea is that human beings on the surface are charitable and generous. But due to the advent of a new generation and modernization, people especially those in power, find it easier to show their real nature in different situations. Gerald’s father was the follower of the old belief. More than being the boss of his workers, he resembles a benefactor. When he wants to give the reason for the kind treatment of his workers, he sounds religious. He cares about “charity” and “his love for his neighbor” (p.397). The “welfare of the people” matters a lot to him because they are “nearer to God” and “in their hands” they have “the means of salvation” (p.224). If he wants to feel nearer to God “he must move towards his miners”. He will generously accept all the miners who came for his help saying: “it doesn’t hurt me to hear what they have to say. And if they really are in trouble -well, it is my duty to help them out of it” (p.400). But her wife and Gerald are completely different. Mrs. Crich doesn't sympathize with anybody. Not even with her husband. This is the reason why she sends “the dogs” on the workers who come to ask for help and would stand there “watching with an eye like eagle’s” how they escape. For her, they are “rats” (ibid.). She believes “her antagonism was passive” and “terribly pure” (p.401). By “pure” she means being “unconscious”. Therefore she feels “isolation” in her “surrounding country” (p.224). She has ironical description of Mr. Crich’s values. She ridicules it in her thoughts that he has this high values like chastity and purity, that he loves her and she is his “white flower of snow” but when he dies all his “ideas and interpretation” and values also die with him. Lawrence takes sides with Mrs. Crich who does not believe in these values. Mrs. Crich believes that these are all lies and only “death would show the perfect completeness of the lie” (p.403). As Freud (1918) refers to it in *Reflection on War and Death*, in our mind we always think of our close friends and family dying (p.23). In fact Gerald and his mother are manifestations of Freud’s ideas about true human nature, because by them, Lawrence is showing the true human nature. Gerald is closer to his mother in this matter than his father. He is the destructive force in the story. He always desired to break apart “the frame of life” (Lawrence, 1998, p.409). During all “his childhood and his boyhood he had wanted a sort of savagedom” (ibid.), to return and live and do freely. He always hated “remorselessly the circumstance of his own life” (p.224). For him the world was a wild and lawless space He is against “all authority” and wants an anarchistic and pleasure seeking way of living. He considers “life” as a “savage freedom” (p.410). He also detests school which is the oppressor of humans’ freedom and their instinctual needs, and thus Lawrence is its critic. He is sent to a German university where he discovers war as his amusement. War is the way out of this misery. In war he could satisfy his thirst for killing, blood and a savage way of life that is completely anarchistic.

Freud states that:

[W]hen a nation is summoned to engage in war, a whole gamut of human motives may respond to this appeal, high and low motives, some openly avowed, others slurred over. The lust for aggression and destruction is certainly included” (Kaes et al, 1994, p.31).

During war, patriotism and heroic acts as holy words are accepted by the civilized world; therefore, the humans can satisfy their thirst for barbarity, and accordingly free themselves from the shackles of civilization. Freud believes the same. He (1918) holds that the “slaughter of a foe gratifies an instinctive craving” (p. 28). Gerald goes for it and he finds it more amusing than what it looked like from outside. When he experiences it, he realizes that even the old savage way of living is “duller, less exciting than European” one (Lawrence, 1998, p.229). Because Europeans by

hiding behind these patriotic and heroic values are freer to fulfill more destructive deeds. "Idealism", Freud states, can "facilitate" the "release of these destructive impulses". In fact "Ideal motives" occupies the "foreground of consciousness" when actually these impulses come "from the destructive instinct submerged in the unconsciousness" (as cited in Kaes et al, 1994, 31). War is a good covert. It destroys the,

Later deposits of civilization and allows the primitive man in us to reappear. It forces us again to be heroes who cannot believe in their own death, it stamps all strangers as enemies whose death we ought to cause or wish; it counsels us to rise above the death of those whom we love (Freud, 1918, p.24).

In order to benefit from this privilege on the highest level, Gerald "took hold of all kinds of sociological ideas" (Lawrence, 1998, p.410). He knew that all these "ideas of reform" were "reaction against the positive order". It was "the destructive reaction", which can be fulfilled by having more freedom. Then he found the "real adventure in the coal-mines" (p.411). The "suffering and feelings of individuals didn't matter" at all (Lawrence, 1998, p.233). Lawrence is implying that the true nature of human beings can be found in those who are in power and are not afraid of displaying it because they are justified to be strict while ruling. As Freud states, after the elimination of violence by the might of law in the society, "members of the ruling class" start to set "themselves above the law's restrictions" (as cited in Antos Kaes et al, 1994, 29.). But we cannot expect this from ordinary people of society because they need to cling to social values and norms to have a normal and easy life, otherwise they will be expelled from the civilization. For people in power who are closer to the true human nature "the pure instrumentality of individual" matters so that they can satisfy their unconscious instincts (Lawrence, 1998, p.412).

IV. CONCLUSION

In this article, D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* has been analyzed according to Freud's theories which have been put forward in *Reflection on War and Death* and *Civilization and Its Discontent*. Freud holds that the mind of human is the arena of primitive instincts such as Eros and aggressive instincts. By default, they are supposed to answer these needs just like other animals. Nonetheless, they are social beings, and need to benefit from their community. In order to use the advantages of being in the community, they define the shared identity which results in limiting their needs and instincts. As a result of this exchange, Freud believes, they feel discontent. Therefore, they seek coverts to gratify these instincts. For Freud, children are exempted from the restraints of society. When adults are not expected to act according to the unconscious demands, children are free in this sense. In *Reflection on War and Death*, Freud directly explains this matter. When adults do not talk about someone's death in their presence, children may talk boldly of it without any fear or a sense of regret. As mentioned earlier, in *Civilization and its Discontent*, he expresses his ideas about the fact that human beings are social beings; they needs limit their primitive instincts such as Eros and Aggression. But in his letters, he explains about another covert to satisfy these instincts. He holds that, as soon as the foundation of a civilized community was laid, some people set their basic instincts. They are the leaders with enormous power at their disposal. This disagreement points us to the next covert which is being a leader. Leaders have justified their aggressiveness by claiming that they restore peace and order from the war and conflict torn zones again to people sorely in the need of stability in their society. Moreover, social norms and values are another coverts for ordinary people in the society because they too, want to have share in these coverts. Freud believes common people conceal themselves behind the values and ideals like patriotism to rush into the war to slaughter their supposed foes while in reality their main object is gratifying their hitherto oppressed instincts. This article applied these ideas of Freud to Lawrence's *Women in Love* in some stages. Firstly, the effects of war were traced in Lawrence's life. Then the character Gerald's psychological coverts such as killing his brother which in the eyes of the novelist is not a mere accident but a deliberate act, his desire to kill his father's protesters when just ten years old, as well as his fascination with war and primitivism. Given reasons offered here, Gerald is a complete depiction of Freud's ideas in this matter.

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