



# A Critical Study of the last tales of D.H. Lawrence: An Overview

Dr. Satyendra Kumar Singh

Ph.D in English, PGCTE & PGDTE, EFLU, Hyderabad

An Assistant Professor (Guest Faculty), M.M. College, Gopalganj,

J.P.U. Chapra, Bihar

## ABSTRACT

D.H. Lawrence, the man of creative genius, who was often misunderstood and commonly criticized during his life time, had woven a neat and beautiful fabric out of numerous strands of novels, tales, poems, plays, travels and adventure books, literary, social and political essays. He left remarkable marks of his genius in each of these genres. He was hated as a black devil, disbelieved as a prophet and loved and valued as a man and writer. Now that it is more than ninety years since he died, can we not rid ourselves of the black devil and prophet and find the man and writer.

Like a great artist Lawrence has turned his personal experiences into the perfect pieces of art. In early tales the conflict between Eastwood and London has been dramatized objectively. Lawrence's friendships and quarrel with Jessie Chambers and Louie Burrows gave rise to a number of stories like "A Modern Lover" and "The Shades of Spring" "England, My England" etc. In the later period Lawrence has transformed his experiences of friendship and fued with John Middleton Murry into beautiful stories like "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman", "The Border Line", "The Last Laugh" and "Smile". Although in these stories Murry has been cruelly ridiculed, it is the 'Murry-type which is Lawrence's satiric target. The biographical materials of the most immediate relevance to the genesis of these four stories are the events and feelings of Lawrence's brief visit to England and the continent in fall and winter of 1923-24.

## KEYWORDS

Fabric, Strands, Genres, Fued, Genesis, Ridiculed.

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In my article, I will attempt to analyse the varied themes and aspects of his Last Tales with endless possibilities and rich experiences. It is surprising that his novels and poetry have been thoroughly examined and evaluated almost from every angle by eminent critics but his tales and novellas have not attracted the attention they deserve and remained by and large, a nebulous subject frequently discussed but seldom probed in spite of an almost chaotic and unmanageable critical material at hand.

The modern writers, by experimenting with various levels of realism, has freed and matured his creations, making it flexible and capable of immense development. The greatest triumph in this direction has been 'the stream of consciousness', not an altogether new technique, but one which evolved out of the literary realism influenced by Burgeon's philosophy of Time, Bradley's theory of Time and revolutionary discoveries of Freud and C.G. Jung's attention towards analytic psychology in the realm of subconscious.

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There are multiple levels of meaning in these tales – from literal surface meaning to the deeper emotional and psychic levels of the subconscious. We can't deny of the fact that there are different opinions about the last tales of D.H. Lawrence but all agree with the importance of compression and brevity in them. The language in these tales is a model of economy. Every word, every sentence contributes to the final effect. These qualities remind me of what Sherwood Anderson opines, "A short story is not a shortened novel nor is a novel a long short story. The purpose and field and the technique of the two are different from each other and they can't replace each other". The last tales of D.H. Lawrence do not abide by H.G. Wells (1972) who calls the short story, "the jolly art of making something very bright and moving : it may be horrible or funny or profoundly illuminating, having only this essential, that is should take only from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud". Needless to say that most of the last tales of D.H. Lawrence are longer tales. These tales hover precariously between realism and fantasy.

These tales were written between 1923 and 1929 and have been called the last tales of D.H. Lawrence. In these tales Lawrence has transformed his experiences of friendship and feud with John Middleton Murry.

Lawrence's Major Novels sometimes alienate readers with their ecological insistence but their stories, by contrast, play to Lawrence's strengths in the acuteness of their psychological analysis, their powerful use of setting and symbolism, and their characteristic open-endedness.

In this short expansion of time (between 1923 and 1929) he wrote some memorable tales. The important tales of this phase are:-

The Boarder Line; The Last Laugh; Smile; The Captain's Doll; The Woman Who Rode Away; Jimmy and Desperate Woman; The Princess; Wilful Woman (Unfinished); The Horse Dealer's Daughter; St. Mawr; The Fox; You Touched Me; The Virgin and The Gipsy; Two Blue Birds and the Thimble and Things.

Lawrence tales very well express the idea that he has a grim opposition with the so-called civilized world. In his opinion, “this so-called civilized world is rotten within and it is full of hypocrisy. He believes in the religion of blood and almost all his tales present a psychological study of men and women relationship”. Lawrence evokes the life of the urban middle with ease and assurance.

The Lawrence world is not the Joycean world of spiritual love. If turmoil exists between the couple, Lawrence at once exposes it. His tales say that men and women can find self fulfillment through harmonious relationship with each other. His tales are full of autobiographical elements. He was born in a mining village in Nottingham which remained for him the country of the heart. His father was a regular drunkard who never treated him with true fatherly affection. His parents lacked harmony in their relationship and this left an unremittingly dark scar on the souls of the children. Lawrence was attached to his mother very much who, in her all bitterness, had diverted her passion towards her children and was very possessive about them.

Thus he found himself lurking between Miriam and Clara to get love and affection. This phase of life has been reflected beautifully in his novel as well as in his tales.

It goes without saying that Lawrence’s tales formed an important part of his total work. These tales are widely different kinds.

“The Border Line”, the first Lawrence’s Sexual Ghost Story, emerges out of the biographical and archetypal situation of the competitions of two men, representing the opposites of light and dark for the love of a woman at the boarder between life and death. In this story Katherine has been described as a queen-bee. She tips porters handsomely out of a morbid fear of underpaying anyone, but particularly, a man who was eager to serve her. She only wanted to alter everything, to alter the part, to alter all the flow of history – the terrible flower of history.

Katherine Farquhar, after the death of her husband Alan Anstruther in World War I, married Philip Farquhar, a friend of Alan. The ghost of Katherin’s first husband, even in the spirit form asserts the inevitable superiority of Lawrence dominance in blood consciousness to Murryan manipulation in flawing weakness. The ghostly husband frees Katherine from Philip’s clutch of death and takes her to bed and Philip dies.

“Jimmy and the Desperate” is far lighter and defter in touch. It is not so much allegory or symbolic drama. The presentation is more interesting and complex.

Although “Smile” is, on one level, a rather tasteless psychological satire on Murry’s personality, it also has mythic level which gives structural and thematic coherence to what would otherwise be the pointless narrative most critics take it to be. Although, the narrative seems to be sardonic, the satire beneath the surface is very serious. Employing the mock heroic device of the ludicrously overstating a trival subject by comparing it to an exalted one, Lawrence compares the morally blind Mathew, in his melodramatic journey, directly to the Christ on the Cross.

“The Princess” is a brilliantly realized ironic romance. In this story Lawrence implies, first, the fairy tales of the sleeping beauty, and second, “the separation, initiation return” pattern of romance. In “The Woman Who Rode Away” Lawrence judges what he takes to be the decadence of the European civilization.

“The Rocking Horse Winner” is a flawless parable. It possesses the simplicity and the force of the parables in the New Testament. The story “The Thimble” expresses the idea of resurrection while in “Things” Lawrence artfully introduced exaggeration and fiction to create a story of delightful comic ironies impersonal and delightful malice.

The characters in these tales offer signs of progress and perform the function of completing the narrative pattern. They are sound characters who get modified or modify the happenings in the tales. The women characters have been portrayed with a close and natural insight. The stream of consciousness technique has been emotional reactions of characters to external events.

These tales are written in objective and fluent style on the verge of irony and are full of symbols, analogies and imagery which provide richness and intricacy to his tales. His philosophy is always the study of man. His main interest lies in human experience, living in its totality. To grasp this he would bring glimpses into the realm of non-human life. He wished the reform in the society through and individual. He wanted an individual to live life spontaneously and be conscious of the “Blood” and not trapped into economic prosperity and social well-being.

To express his themes more effectively Lawrence has used abundance of symbols and images throughout his fiction with interlacing pattern of complex episodes to explain indirectly what his characters are and do. He has evolved a set of symbols that enriched the theme of his short stories. His symbols relate to one another. He used various symbols for experiencing the same feeling in different stories and felt that man could identify himself with the primitive industrialization.

“The Fox” is the triumph of the superb use of the fox symbolism. Lawrence has successfully used the symbol of fox to reveal March’s different stages of consciousness. F.R. Leavis (1964) truly writes – “The whole fox-motive in all its development is remarkable for its inevitability of truth and the economy and the precision of art”. In the story entitled “You Touched Me” “touch is used symbolically by Lawrence for a kind of physical contact that evokes that lies beneath everyday consciousness”. In the use of imagery is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex at an instant of time”.

Lawrence Last Tales are full of animal, water and other imageries. The second part of the last long story entitled “The Man Who Died” is full of imagery. The story, in fact, is a parable of rebirth. There is abundance of sexual imagery. For example, the woman for search, was waiting, “for a Lotus to stir, in other worlds symbolic for coborn man and she could “open like a flower to the sun of their maleness”. The man who died is the lotus, she sees who at last rises into life and is ready again to touch and be touched : when the priestess has conceived this he withdraws : “I have sowed the seed of my life and my resurrection”. The tales are so deep that coming generation has to delve deep for more and more clear conception but it can be concluded that he had made his innovations better than any other writer of his time. His tales and characters open before us a very interesting vista. His emotional and intellectual horizons were obviously wider and he did not confine himself with any wall of consciousness. His characters may cast greater influence upon the coming generations and writers and invite more psychoanalytical in – depth analysis of his characters. They are more complex than vague and offer many interpretations and give different meaning of life.

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